

**Series:** “Desperate”  
**Title:** Desperate Witness  
**Texts:** Acts 1:8; Acts 8:26-39  
**Key Word:** Steps  
**Proposition:** Everyone can be a desperate witness by following these biblical steps.

Good Morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer and I serve as one of the pastor’s. We’re thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship with us today. We’re completing our series called “Desperate.” We have learned that many folks are living desperate lives. Consciously, unconsciously, many are seeking a relationship with God who alone can give them hope, peace, and security. Many echo the prayer of the Psalmist: *“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”* (Psalm 42:2) Such desperation becomes God’s invitation to draw near to him. We learned that this desperation is rooted in the heart. Because all people have something or someone as the object of their heart’s dependence they have an internal desire to worship. We learned through the prophet Hosea that the living God desires to recapture our hearts by uprooting all those things that obstructs our heart-relationship with Him.

We also learned that prayer is the natural response of the Desperate Heart. Prayer is a heart conversation with the Living God. It is when our desperate hearts connects with God’s desperate heart to love us. Last week, Pastor Bonita, called our attention to the opportunity to become Desperate Inviters. Our faith can move God to do powerful things in people’s lives. All it takes is a simple invitation to Come and

see what God can do. Today, we'll see that this desperation calls us to impact our world with our witness of Christ.

We're excited about next weekend's Radiant Life Weekend. We anticipate this weekend to be inspired by the witness of Christ-followers. These men, women, and students may come from various walks of life but with a common love for God. They have a passion to share their lives with others. I invite you to come and participate in this memorable weekend.

Deep down inside, I believe that every radiant follower of Jesus Christ wants to become a desperate witness. Many are not sure about how to witness to their faith, but they are aware that there is something special about opening a person up to God's love and truth.

One day there was a conversation between two people in a hotel lobby. Actually, it wasn't a conversation. It was a monologue. Two women were seated on a sofa by the front desk. The one doing all the talking was telling the one doing all the listening how wonderful it is to be a Christian. The listener looked extremely uncomfortable, and the talker appeared to be oblivious. A man standing at the counter also noticed the women. He said to Steve, "Somebody ought to complain to the management. That religious fanatic cornered me in the bookstore yesterday for half-an-hour." Steve didn't know what to say. This lady was trying to share good news with others, and she seemed to be making only enemies.

One day Steve met a man once who told him of his search for meaning in life, how he pursued money, alcohol, success, promiscuity, and every vice imaginable until he finally found the Lord. The man then said, "What's incredible is that I lived next door to a preacher for years, and he never made an effort to lead me to Christ, or even talk to me."

When it comes to sharing our faith, we have to be careful how we communicate with the world. On one hand, we can't afford to be pushy. On the other hand, we don't want to seem apathetic. Where is the balance?

Today we're going to look at a Bible story of how one man shared his witness of faith with another. This story is a great example for us to follow in witnessing to others. There are four steps about witnessing that we can learn from this story. I invite you to open a Bible to Acts chapter 8 and pick up the story at the 26<sup>th</sup> verse.

**First, a desperate witness submits to the Leading of the Holy Spirit.**

This story begins with Philip going down a desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. He went because God's Spirit led him in that direction. On the road, Philip met an Ethiopian eunuch who had been in Jerusalem to worship. He was now sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Philip began talking to him, and eventually led him to faith in Christ. The first step we should learn from this is that if we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, he will lead us to people who are ready to hear our message—just like he did with Philip.

The Ethiopian was what we would call a "seeker." He was interested in things of a spiritual nature, but he didn't know Christ. In verse 27 we learn this man had tasted success, prestige, power, and wealth, but there was still something missing from his life. So, he went to the temple to worship, he read from the Scriptures, and he searched for the truth. At that right time, God sent Philip across his path.

God always puts the right person in the right place, at the right time to be his desperate witness. Like Philip, many times in our lives, decisions are up to us. God provides some general direction that he wants us to go, and then it is up to us to choose to follow him or not. In those moments we have a choice to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit or not. Sometimes it means choosing a different direction for our lives, it may mean going down a difficult, hot, desert road for some unknown reason. It may mean going at a time that doesn't make sense, like high noon in the middle of the desert. When we choose to submit to the Holy Spirit, then he gives us further instructions on what to do next. That is what faith is all about. Trust means submitting to someone we can't see to a place where we've never been before at a time when it doesn't make sense. Our certainty is found only in the One who leads. Where is God leading you? To whom He is calling you to witness?

**Second, a desperate witness speaks to needs of the seeker.** God had a reason for Philip to be on that desert road that day. He wanted Philip to meet someone whom He knew was seeking Him. Philip looked at this man through the eyes of Christ. He perceived his desperation for understanding, his longing for love.

So he walked up to this man and asked: *“Do you understand what you are reading?”*

*The man then replied, “How can I unless some one explains it to me.”* (Acts 8:30b-31)

Then he let the Ethiopian talk. More importantly, he listened to the Eunuch’s response. Philip understand that witnessing is not confrontation, but communication. We don’t need to do all the talking. It is shared conversation revealing the truth that sets us free.

I am confident that each of us has people in our lives right now that we see on the road of life who are seeking God’s love, who are desperate to understand and to be understood. This lonely eunuch was someone whom God wanted. He was someone longing for God. The Lord God said through my friend, Jeremiah, *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.”* (Jeremiah 29: 14a).

Friends, God calls us to leave behind our insecurities, the familiar and comfortable, and to go and see the real needs of those who God brings into our lives. These folks are our friends and co-workers. We may see them at the soccer park, the football game or at the garden club. God gives us the eyes of Christ to see them as He sees them. He gives us a love to go and reach out to tell them the Good News of Christ.

**Third, a desperate witness states the claims of Scriptures.** *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus.”*

(Acts 8: 35) I would suspect that as Philip looked at the eunuch, his eyes of faith looked

heavenward for direction. Perhaps he prayed, “Lord use me, fill me, help me to say just the right thing at the right time, in the right way.” Then Philip began with the Scriptures which the eunuch was reading. He explained that they referred to Jesus Christ. He then pointed out other passages which supported his claims.

Who is our savior? Jesus. Who is the hope of the ages? Jesus. Who is the one who died for the sins of the world? Jesus. Who is the focus of the Christian faith? Jesus. Who is the creator of the universe? Jesus. Who is our ultimate judge? Jesus. It is Jesus that we need to tell others about. This is what Philip did.

This eunuch understood that faith was spelled: DO because it consists of the things people do to try to gain God’s acceptance and forgiveness. But the problem is that one never knows if one has done enough. It is like a salesperson who knows he must meet a quota while never knowing what the quota is. The salesperson would never know if he/she has done enough. In addition the Bible teaches that we can never do enough. We always fall short of God’s perfect standard.

Philip shared that faith in Jesus Christ is spelled differently. It is spelled DONE, which means that what we could never do for ourselves, Christ has already done for us. He came and lived the perfect life we could never live and willingly went to the cross to die for the penalty which we owed for the wrong which we have done. To be a follower of Jesus one humbly receives God’s forgiveness and commits to following the Way of Jesus. At that moment one is adopted into God’s family, becoming a “child of God.” The Ethiopian came to faith in Christ and asked, “Why

shouldn't I be baptized?" A change had taken place and he wanted to mark this change with an outward sign.

**Finally, a desperate witness sends a changed life.** *"Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."* (Acts 8:38b-39) **The Eunuch was changed.**

The Ethiopian made the decision. Philip didn't push him into it. In fact, Philip qualified the decision: he said, in effect, "There's no point in doing this unless you're serious about putting your faith in Christ." The Ethiopian assured Philip that he was serious about following Jesus.

Friends, we must respect the fact that it is the individual's decision whether or not they follow Christ. As much as we may want to, we cannot make that decision for them. We can't smooth talk them into it, or bully them into it, or soft-sell them, or hard-sell them into it. Once we tell them the good news we must leave the ball in their court and let them decide for themselves.

Filled with the Spirit of the Lord the Eunuch went back to Ethiopia and testified to what He found in Christ. Tradition tells us that Queen Candace was converted to Christ through the eunuch's testimony, and that her conversion caused her to use her office to promote Christianity in her country.

Our world is desperate to know that they matter to God. We've got a story to tell the world. It's a message that truly can make a difference in people's lives—a

difference that will last forever. For this reason, we must be sensitive to the Leading of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to share this message with love. If we come across like religious bullies we may drive people away and they'll never hear what we have to say. But if we don't take the initiative to tell others, how else will they hear the gospel? We also must focus on the needs of those who are seeking. Our message claims the message of Scripture which points us to Jesus. Our witness sends a changed life. This is how Philip shared his faith with the Ethiopian. Philip teaches us that a desperate witness connects with another person so that they can connect with Christ Jesus. 2103