



## **Gospel Advance 7**

### **Knowing How the Scriptures Use Us**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

I recently returned from my undergraduate alma mater after being there for hours and hours of board meetings, and this time because of scheduling, we were in a conference room that had a window that looked out into the plaza of the college. And of course, it's this time of year where everyone is packing up their stuff. And we saw for two days here people with their luggage heading out to the parking lots and getting picked up and getting in taxis and all the rest and heading away from the campus.

And I thought about that as I thought about my last day as a student there on that campus and leaving. And it took me back to the more dramatic day, which was the first day I was ever on that campus. And I was absolutely lost. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know the campus map. I hadn't been there for any visitation day. You know, I was just clueless. And thankfully, my college had anticipated my bewilderment, just as every college does with something called Freshman Orientation Week, which is helpful because when you don't know anything about where you're supposed to go or how it works or where the dining hall is, it's good to have some people there with T-shirts that immediately see you pull up with that sense of confusion and ignorance. They spot you and they're there to help. And they come and they see your duffle bag and your backpack, and they look at your paperwork and say, "OK, you go this way." And in my case, up to the 16th floor of the dorms, you'll be here in this building. And then we're going to show you around into the library and about your meal cards and here's how you get to the dining hall. All those things were definitely needed. I needed a helpful guide to get me around when I didn't know which way was up.

We in the Christian life, more than we choose to believe, we are playing that role in this world as people are bewildered about what we believe, about what God has taught, what the Bible teaches. We've been studying Acts Chapter 8, and we see a great example today as we have broken up this narrative about the Ethiopian eunuch coming to faith in Christ and Philip being that guide. He was a guide as he saw the bewilderment in the eyes of this Ethiopian official who was in this chariot going along this desert road and he was opening the scroll of Isaiah and didn't understand what it meant. He was a much better Bible school freshman than I was because he knew that he didn't know and he said, I need some help, I need a guide. By God's grace and through Philip's preparation, he was able that day to walk this Ethiopian from the text that he was wondering and confused about all the way to faith in Christ. We'll look at his response to the gospel next week.

But I want to look today, if you take your Bibles, at this very interesting passage and have you think about what if God had tagged YOU to step up and answer somebody's question about the Bible, ultimately in need of a clarification regarding Christ in the gospel, would you be ready for that? Matter of fact, I would like you to think if God had tagged you as the passage last week helped us to think through and said, "Hey, here is a guy who's confused about an Old Testament passage, and what he really needs is for you to explain Isaiah 53 to him." I just wonder if it wasn't Philip, but your name was in the text and you were called into that chariot



to sit down next to him, how would that narrative have played out? How would that have gone?

This is not Peter. This is not the preaching pastor. This is Philip. Philip was in charge of setting up tables for the Hellenistic widows in the church. So it's not as though God tapped a seminary grad to do this. He tagged this guy who was in the church as a servant, like many of you are today, and he says I need you to explain this confusing text to this guy and ultimately clarify where he needs to be with Christ. I want you to think about your role and think about how ready am I to answer questions in other people's lives regarding the truth of Scripture.

So let's dive into the middle of this. We broke it up into a few parts here. But let's look at the middle of this narrative in Chapter 8 verse 30, we're going to read and study through verse 35 this morning. As the English Standard Version puts it, here it goes. "So Philip," verse 30, "ran to him," that Ethiopian official, "and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'" Do you understand it? "And he said," talk about a good Bible student, here it comes, "How can I, unless someone guides me." I don't get it. I can't. "And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him." Pretend that's you, "Here... can you explain this?"

Now, Luke breaks into the narrative here in verse 32 and tells us about the text that he was reading and records it here for us. Isaiah Chapter 53. This specifically is verses 7 and 8. And he quotes it this way. It says, "Now the passage he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or someone else?'" It's already odd that he's speaking about this person in the third person. So it doesn't seem like it's about him. And yet we have examples like of Jeremiah breaking into a lament about his role in the nation as a prophet and how embattled he was. And so maybe it's like that Jeremiah passage where it seems like everything fits together well, that he's talking about himself in the third person and how hard it is to be a prophet.

Now, is that what's going on here? And of course, all the rest of the context would help us understand that this is far different than just it's really hard being a preacher these days. It gets into all these things about being crushed by the Lord, becoming a guilt offering for the sins of people, justifying by the death the lives of other people, being raised from the dead, even though they were in the grave. They come out and see their generation, their offspring. I mean, this is really odd if this is about Isaiah. So is it about him? Is it about something else?

Verse 35, "Then Philip opened his mouth," which I pray that you will this week, "beginning with this Scripture," whatever the question might be, whatever the biblical idea might be, the confusing thing about Christianity or the Bible might be, "and he told him the good news about Jesus." That's what this series has been about, eight weeks on advancing the gospel, Gospel Advancement. We're talking about how we in our generation are to be Philip to our coworkers and our neighbors and our extended family to be able to preach the good news to them.



That's our job. It's not about the preacher's curriculum and the thing that preachers are supposed to do. This is about every person in the church, regardless of what your role might be in terms of service for the church, to be useful to God to help guide people through the truth to Christ. They got questions about it.

You say, "Well, my friends don't have any questions about the Bible. My friends are not reading the Bible." Well, before you go there, let's first start with that idea of you being on the campus as someone who should be experienced and kind of know your way around with a T-shirt on that says, "Here, I'm here to help. Ask me." I need you to start identifying yourself the way that Philip here is going to be identified. Let's just look at that word again at the beginning of this passage. It says, "How can I," verse 31, "unless someone guides me?" Philip's running up, there's a connection, a relationship, verse 30. He asks the question, so he starts the conversation, "Do you understand what you're reading?" And he says, "How can I unless someone guides me?" That's a very important word used a few times in the New Testament to describe people who are trying to guide other people into the right understanding of the truth.

"I need a guide," he says. And so he said, "Philip, why don't you be my guide?" Number one in your outline, it'd be good for us to think of ourselves this way. You need to "See Yourself as a Bible Guide." If you're a Christian here this morning, you are a guide to other people and you might as well wear a T-shirt that says, "If you have questions about the Bible, ask me." We're going to pass those out at the end of the service. That at least ought to be your mindset. We have no T-shirts for you. We get a lot of free T-shirts here at Compass, but that's a theoretical T-shirt that I want to put on this morning. I am ready to see myself as not just a student of the Bible so that I can sit back and go, "Wow, I've really got a lot of great spiritual truths in place to live my Christian life. And it sure is nice because I got all my questions answered." No, no, no, no. It's not about you getting your questions answered. That's important, it leads you to faith in Christ. But now, as a Christian, I see myself as entrusted with the message of reconciliation. "Well, I got the gospel." Well to get people to rightly understand the gospel, they've got questions. They're confused.

"Pastor Mike, I already told you none of my friends read the Bible." Wrong! Your friends do read the Bible. It may not be Genesis to Revelation, it may not be that they're opening up a printed book of the Bible. But let me turn you to Romans Chapter 1 and remind you that God is constantly speaking to every non-Christian associate in your sphere of activity every single week. He is constantly speaking. I'll give you four ways. As the starting of the book of Romans is getting us to Chapter 4, which is the justification by faith, I'm going to be justified, made right before God, by my trust in the Messiah. That transfer of trust is going to make me right before God. My sins forgiven, that's how it starts. "How blessed are those who sins are forgiven." That's a great, great thing in Chapter 4.

But we got three chapters of preparation. And part of this is that no one should have an excuse about not knowing the basics. And the basics are learned in four different ways in chapters 1 through 3. So let's take a look at them. One in Chapter 1, two in Chapter 2, and one in Chapter 3. Let's start in the middle of Chapter 1, Romans Chapter 1, drop down, if you



would, to verse 19. Romans 1:19. "For what can be known about God is plain to them." Who's them? In verse 18, those who are in the threat of God's wrath, God's judgment. So God has got non-Christians in view here and the God-information they need, you're thinking, well, it's between Genesis and Revelation. Well, it is. It's there propositionally, clearly taught. But the Bible says God's already making it known to them. Right? He's made it known to them and it's plain, he's even describing it, it is a plain communication of his truth to them.

How can that be? "Because God has shown it to them." You don't think your coworkers are reading the Bible? They're reading the Bible. They're reading the other category that we would call God's revelation. We call it in theology the difference between "special revelation" and "general revelation." Some might say, "Well, general revelation is not much help." Oh, it is helpful. Matter of fact, verse 20 says, "His invisible attributes," the things about God we need to know, that he's a creator, that he's holy, that he's just, that he's loving, those kinds of things. Oh, they've been seen. Right? "The power of God, the divine nature of God have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world." God has put it all on display. The billboards are there "in the things that have been made."

How clear is God communicating? How much are your non-Christian friends reading God's book? Well, they're reading it every single day, so much "so that they are without excuse." They can't say, "I didn't know. I never read the Bible. I can't be judged." The Bible says there's enough information coming through general revelation for everyone to have enough information to know some basics about God, God's information, God attributes that assemble together in my mind to make me know that I need Christ. That's important, and here's the thing, they're interpreting that book of revelation every single day. And they talk to you about it. Sometimes they might even muse about being inquisitive about it. You're there to be their guide.

Have you ever had a coworker talk about what a beautiful day it is? I mean, maybe one of those days when they really mean it, "What a beautiful day, a nice day to go out, it's beautiful out there." There's God speaking to them. It's not like they're saying, "Hey, I read Isaiah 53 this morning, I don't understand it, would you help me?" But they are saying, "Man, I read the Book of Creation this morning. I was really impressed with that." Maybe they get up early and before dawn like I did the other day and saw the moon setting over the Aliso, you know, mountain range over here, this hill, this ridge before you get to the ocean. And I saw it and it always looks so big when it's down by the horizon. And it's just like it's an amazing thing, this giant satellite. A moon that makes no sense that it would ever be put into orbit around this planet.

If you don't know anything about the moon, it's a fascinating satellite that not only does things in our tides and makes things work here in our little ecosystem of earth. But there's no rational explanation as to how it got here. There's no evidence as to how it got here. It's just an amazing thing and it's beautiful. People take pictures of it. I was even dumb enough to take my phone out and try and take a picture, which looks like a dot, once I looked at the photo. But I was so impressed with that. And I'm thinking, you know, non-Christians are impressed with that. They might even say it, "Man, I saw the moon and I could see that, it's just huge, it



looked huge." "Do you understand what you're reading?" It'd be good for me to start a conversation.

They might see something that's put out in National Geographic about some Hubble telescope pictures and looking at the satellite universes out there, right? Look at the solar system here and the galaxy over there. And these are amazing photos like we've never seen before. "It's amazing and I'm in awe of that." Well, the passage goes on, we won't take time to read it, but they get around to basically worshiping the created things rather than the creator, but you're supposed to step in and go, "Hey, let me help you interpret that." Guess what Isaiah 53 is not about? It's not about Isaiah. Right? Philip had to say, "No, I know you're reading Isaiah 53, it's not what you think it is." It is about Christ and creation is about God.

Matter of fact, jot it down, if you don't know it by heart, Psalm 19 verses 1 through 6. God says he's "declaring every day his glory from the heavens from the sky," from space. "He's pouring forth speech," every day in creation. When your coworkers hear about maybe the news story is some hurricane in Florida, or some big tornado in Kansas, or that we have some big earthquake here. We're all talking about that. Amazing. Like, how does this work? The destructive power of the universe or some volcano on some island somewhere. Right? Here's what you should say, "Do you know what you're reading? Do you understand what you're reading? You see here in creation, some things that you need to understand and you need to filter it and interpret it through what God has revealed in the clear propositional statements of the Bible. "You're a Bible guide. You are to bring them onto the campus, if they're wandering around across the street by saying, "No, no, no. Here are the signs to the school. Here's how you get in. Here's how you get around in this thing called God's revelation." God is speaking in creation.

You know where we're going if you know your Bible. Go to Chapter 2. He's also speaking to them every day internally. Look at verse 15 of Chapter 2. Romans Chapter 2 verse 15. "They," again look back, we're talking about people who have no... they've never been to a Bible study. These are the Gentiles that don't have the Jewish Torah. They're not reading Isaiah 53. But "They show that the work of the law," this is Romans 2:15, "is written," written, that's communication, "written on their hearts." Well, how is it written on the hearts? Because that software, that communication, that revelation from God is manifest in their conscience, "while their conscience also bears witness," it's actively bearing witness, "their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." You get some coworker who is down, you start asking questions, maybe they trust you, a confidant, tells you about their guilt. They feel guilty about something they've done. They feel guilty about it. You might want to ask, "Do you understand what you're reading? Do you understand what you're reading? I'm a Bible guide. I'm here to help you understand your conscience and how that's put there, that ethical moral communication of God that is written on your heart. God is speaking to you in that. Hey, when you were falsely accused and you sat there in your own heart indignant about the fact that I didn't do that. Hey, do you understand what you're reading? God is speaking to you in that in you excusing yourself in that situation because you know that you're innocent of what you've been charged. That's God at work." We're not relativists. We don't believe that whatever the majority of people think about me, well, that's true. See, they know that, it's written on their



hearts that they know that. God is speaking to them. God wrote a book. It's a book of nature. It's a book of conscience, the internal conscience of human beings, the moral direction and compass in their lives.

Now, can creation be wrongly read? Absolutely. We're supposed to get in before they start bowing down to creatures and becoming so infatuated that they worship and make an idol out of creation. The same thing with conscience and we just let this internal guide become some subjective rudder for their lives. So we have to get in there and say, "Well, let me tell you what the conscience is doing. You got to go and recognize that God wants you to understand it in light of what he's revealed." And there are so many things that are going to testify to the truth of God's written law. And he's written a part of that, the essence of part of that, on your conscience. So I got to get in there and I got to be their guide. "Don't walk into that room. That's not the right room. Walk in over here. You're on the right path, at least in sensing that there's something here. Let me just explain to me what it is."

As long as we're in Chapter 2, let's get the third one here in verse 17. The Jews, of course, as compared to the Gentiles, at least theoretically in this discussion, are those who do have the law. They're reading the scrolls. And he says, hey, you have been to Sunday school, "If you call yourself a Jew or rely on the law and you boast in God and know his will," you can see the dripping sarcasm about to start here, "and approve what is excellent, because you're instructed from the law; and if you're sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind and a light to those in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law," this information, this holy book, "the embodiment of knowledge and truth -- you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?" That's how the chapter started, the hypocrisy of those who pull out the law and they say, "Look, I can quote these things when I am in a pickle or I'm in a situation where I need to say, 'Hey, they're wrong.'"

Have you ever heard a non-Christian quote things like, "Hey, don't judge lest you be judged?" Those are the holy words of Christ. Those words, all down to every jot and tittle as it's put, every stroke of the law, every letter of every word, he says, "My words," Jesus said, "will never pass away." It's said of the Old Testament in Isaiah 40. It's said of Christ in the gospels, "What I say will never pass away." You are quoting Holy Scripture and you're doing it in a way that, by the way, is not quite the way Christ intended for that axiom to be stated. As a matter of fact, when they say that, say, "Do you know what you're reading? Do you understand what you're reading?"

People in hurt, they've seen enough television shows and movies to watch at least five or six or seven or eight or nine scenes through their life of some pastor or priest standing by a graveside quoting Psalm 23, there are a lot of non-Christian who know Psalm 23, at least in our culture, who you can rub shoulders within your office. And they think perhaps "You know, I'm going to hold on to God. He's my good shepherd and gets me through the hard times. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." They're quoting Holy Scripture. And you need to say, "Oh, this is not fox-hole religion. Do you understand what you are reading? Do you understand what you are quoting?" There's a lot of golden rule, you ought to treat others the way you want to be treated. I've known a lot of non-Christians



that have stated that. My job as a Bible guide, "Do you understand what you are reading? I want to take you to rightly understand that."

Oh, by the way, and if you're thoroughly, thoroughly impressed with our culture or you're a product of our generation and the epistemology and philosophy of our generation, all this sounds really, really abrasive to you because you're thinking, "Well, I'm going to walk in with all the answers? How can I do that?" You can because there is objective truth. If unfortunately your brain has been washed by thinking that everyone has their own truth and their own truth is valid, even if they conflict with other people's truths, then you don't understand reality. Matter of fact, you don't want your surgeon or your accountant to be relativists. You just don't. You want them to play by rules that everyone agrees upon, the general accounting principles. You'd like that to be the reality for your tax guy. Those are the realities that we live with when it really matters. And if we want to say now everything else, morality, ethics, God, religion, afterlife, that's all just up to whatever people think or want. Well, there is a God and he is who he is. And he has revealed himself. He's revealed himself most clearly within Scripture. And that needs to be rightly understood. Don't just quote Scripture without knowing what you're saying. Matter of fact, he's reflected that pretty clearly with some basics about his attributes in creation. He's speaking morally and ethically in your conscience.

Fourthly, Chapter 3, Romans Chapter 3. You say, "All my friends don't read the Bible." I bet they read the headlines, though, don't they? Do you think they ever read the headlines? You ever think they throw up their hands and say things like verse 12? "All have turned aside; together they've become worthless; no one does good, not even one." I mean, they lose hope, right? They groan at the headlines. Matter of fact, they look at the violence, they say, "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness." Anyone who's got a Twitter account knows the reality of these things, right? Everyone sees it. "Their feet are swift to shed blood," verse 15, "in their paths are ruined in misery, and the way of peace they have not known." Those are biblical commentaries on reality. And when they read the news about the Palestinians and the Israelis fighting on the Temple Mount, they're like, "I don't get it. Why can't we have peace? We can't have peace." Here's one thing, I think it was Chesterton or someone pithily said, "You want the most empirically evidential proof of the Bible, right? It's this. It's that all have sinned. Every skeptic should be able to say, I see what God is saying in the Bible. And when they read the headlines and they groan over it and they wonder why we can't have peace in the Middle East or unity in our culture you need to say, "Hey, do you understand what you're reading? Do you understand what you're reading?"

Because you know what? A lot of people struggle with the whole issue of evil and why it exists. Even when those tornadoes, when they're impressed with the power of a storm or hurricane or typhoon they still struggle with why does this happen? Why does it become such a violent expression of nature? If God has created a world for us to live in, then why are these issues of birth defects? And why are people, you know, smacked by these hurricanes and have their houses fall down on them? Why are there tornadoes? Why are there volcanoes on these islands? Why does this happen? It's such a hostile thing. You know what? We have the answer to that. We have to ask, "Do you know what you're reading?" When you see crime,



when you see violence, when you see abuse, when you see catastrophe in moral evil and natural evil, you know, I want to be able to say, "Hey, do you know what you're reading? Do you understand? I'd like to guide you to think rightly about the problem of evil. It's clear in the Bible as to why it's there. It's clear why natural evil becomes the frame for moral evil in Genesis Chapter 3. I'd like to help you understand that."

Some complain, "My non-Christian associates, they don't read the Bible." They do read the Bible. God is speaking to them every day, creation, conscience. Scripture, they know enough of that, just kind of rubbing shoulders with everybody in the world. And certainly they know about the problem of sin, they groan about it all the time, they wish the world were different than it is. All of these things we have answers to. Philip says, "I can answer that for you." And so you and I need to say that's my job. I'm a Bible guide, that's my job. "I want to get you into the Bible, I want to help you understand what God has said, God has spoken. Here he is being very clear. Let me help you understand it."

Some avoid this by saying, "Well, I don't think I'm going to be very good at it." Let's get you better at it. Let's get you better at it. Take a look at this text. Go back to Acts Chapter 8. In Acts Chapter 8, here you have, and I tried to at least get you to think what it might have been like to have someone say, "Hey, I'm here in, you know, Isaiah, can you help me with this passage?" You'd be like, "Oh, man, I don't know. That's going to be hard." And so the passage that he, quote unquote, happened to be reading was, "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearers is silent, so he doesn't open his mouth and in humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." I mean, is this like he's talking about his death? No, it's not Isaiah. Matter of fact, I've studied that passage before, and it is about the Messiah and the Messiah has come and he's Christ. I mean, that's something that, guess what, Philip knew. He was able to... We know that's going to end starting with this passage, beginning with this Scripture, he went on. So that meant he covered it, logically, he explained it.

What if Philip had grown up saying, "You know what I really like? I like the law of Moses, man, and I even like some of the history, the early history of Israel. I like the stories in Samuel and First and Second Kings, but the prophets, I don't know much about them, I don't like those. And I know a lot of people struggle with questions about who's this and what's that and how does this go and when is this? Is this a prophecy? Is this past? They worry about it. I don't worry about all that. I just don't worry about that. I mean, I'm convinced of theism. I'm convinced of the need to trust in Yahweh. I'm convinced there's a coming Messiah. But I don't want to get into all that."

It's kind of like my illustration of the welcome week people. If I get on campus and go, "Hey, you know what? It says here I'm in this dorm on this floor, and can you tell me where that is?" And the guy going, "I never go to that side of the campus. My dorm is down over here. I hang out on that side of the campus. You reply, "Oh, your T-shirt said you could help me." They say, "Yeah, I can show you my dorm." "But I don't want to see your dorm. Where am I supposed to live?" Or I say, "You know what? I'm kind of a mama's boy. I send packages to my mother every week. Can you share... Can you tell me where the shipping and receiving

is?" They mock, "Ah, you need that? Do you do that? What a sweet guy you are. But you know what? I never send any packages. I don't know... I don't even... I never go to the mail center." "But your shirt says, you can help me." "Yeah, but I don't see a need for that." You reply, "No, but I do." Do you understand what I'm saying? If I say, "Where do I make a copy? In the library, I know on these floors I have the library, but where's a place where I can make a copy of something?" They say, "Ah, I never make copies. I just stay late in the library and I just study there. I never make copies and take them back to the dorm. I don't worry about that." You say, "Well, yeah, but I do. And I'd like to know..."

Here's the thing, some of you love to study the Bible in the areas where you like to study and some things you think I never worry about that. "That whole creation/evolution thing, I'm not interested. We're here. It doesn't matter. God was involved. I don't worry about it." OK, I'll bet one of your coworkers worries about it. I'll bet someone you run into is going to want to know what is that all about? "You know, I don't read much of the Old Testament. I just stay where Christ is." Well, you know, your non-Christian friend and colleague is going to say, "Well, I was reading in Leviticus or someone told me Leviticus says, and, you know..." "I don't really read that." Wait a minute. If you're a Bible guide, which of course you are and you should be, you should see yourself as that, I can't see Philip being much good by saying, "I don't really read Isaiah." Right? So it's not helpful. There are things that you know that the world is asking and you never really make it personal by thinking, "I'm going have a coworker who will ask me this, but you think I don't really... I'm not... the historicity of the Bible, manuscript evidence, you know, how the Bible came to be. I don't know. I just don't really worry about that. I trust the smart guys at my church that have figured that out. So I don't.. I've never read anything. I don't study that."

You may be reading a passage like this saying, I never have anyone say answer my Bible or theological questions or ethical or philosophical, maybe God's not reaching into the toolbox to grab you for those things because you're just not sharp. And I don't mean you're dumb, you got all it takes to be sharp it's just that you haven't gone through the hard work of having that edge filed down and made sharp. You've got to know your Bible. You need to know it better than you know it now. You don't just need to know your Bible well enough to be a Christian and to get through your Christian life. You need to know the Bible well enough to become a Christian, get through your Christian life, and help other people answer their questions so that they can come to faith in Christ. And then when they have problems that you don't have be able to use the Bible to understand how that problem has come to be and how to get them out of that problem. You need to learn the Bible WAY MORE than you need to know the Bible. You need to learn the Bible well enough to be able to help other people or you're going to sit in the tool drawer just collecting dust.

Number two, you need to "Get to Know the Bible Much Better," much better, much better. Some people are thinking, "Here we go again, he just wants us to be Bible scholars." I want you to be Bible scholars. Busted. Right? Busted. Yeah, that's what I want. You're absolutely right. And I'm not being sarcastic. We need to master the book and all the implications. "Well, I can never do that." You can do better than you doing now. Notice the point, read it carefully, get to know the Bible MUCH BETTER. I could have written "know everything you can know



about the Bible." That's not what I'm saying. Well, if really Philip is going to be prepared, he better be ready to exegesis Nahum Chapter 1 and Leviticus Chapter 23 as well as Isaiah 53. Well yeah, maybe he didn't, but God picked him up to get in this chariot knowing that he knew Isaiah 53 and could respond to that question. And all I'm saying is you're going to be much more useful to the Lord the more you know. So I want you to know more. You've got to know the book better and all the things on which it's based and everything that helps us think through the implications of it and what it would say to this movement or that fad or this theory or this philosophy or the way this group says we ought to do church. We ought to know that. We ought to know the Bible.

I had a choice to make as the pastor to look at this passage and get into the details of Isaiah 53 and work through it, even some of the nuances between the Septuagint and Masoretic Text and how this is all laid out. And I thought, I can do that, we can roll up our sleeves and do Bible study in Isaiah 53, or I could do something pastorally that I think may be more important, and that is you and I make a commitment to be more like Philip. Which means we're not going to sit here and exegesis Isaiah 53, although we could and I have and you can look those up. But it's for us to think about do we know enough to be more useful this year than we were last year? So I want to help you through that.

This may seem an odd part of the sermon, but let me help you through it. I'm going to do it with a series of letters. Let me give you some letters, OK? Can I start with this? I'll give you three letters to start with. Sub-points. Ready? CBI. Let's start with those three letters, C. B. I. Guess what CBI is intended to do. Well, you can quote the second point - to get to know your Bible much better. That's what Compass Bible Institute is designed for. "Yeah, but well, I go to church." You go to church. That's great. Good for you. I've never read your papers. I've never assigned textbooks and then quiz you on whether or not you knew that material and got it well and weren't sleeping through it thinking of sports when you were reading those paragraphs. I've never had that chance to have that kind of interaction with you, Professors at CBI have the chance to do that with you as you matriculate through a classroom and you learn important things that will help you when someone at work says, "I don't understand why if God is so good there's so much evil in the world." Studying the Bible and the understanding of sin and its origins and what God has done to curse the fabric of the universe, those are the kinds of things you would learn to be much more apt and fluent and conversant in if you studied more formally.

People make excuses, "Now I'm old. I can't go to college." Yeah you can. I don't know what our oldest student is, but we're happy for you to break our record and we'll get you in the classroom. There's something to aim for, be the oldest CBI student. And I'm not here at all, you can accuse me of it, but you'd be absolutely dead wrong. I'm not at all trying to be self-aggrandizing or pat myself on the back or our team or our church. But I am saying this: do you know how privileged you are to have 120 feet away across that street over there to have an institution that is ready to have you apply and then register for a class to give you an education that is a top-drawer Bible school education that is even at a bargain rate, if you want to talk about money, that is one-tenth of really what it would cost you to go and take those very same classes by the same professors at other schools. I've taught in a number of



seminaries across the country, and I don't think there's a better deal going on in terms of per-unit costs than what you're getting here. And we just had a meeting last week, by the way, looking at our budget. Guess what? We're losing massive amounts of money on CBI. Right? And you know what? That's my intention, not because I'm into making bad business decisions, but that's my intention, because our goal is to keep all of this affordable. And it's all going to be transferable, but it's affordable.

So in that affordable model, we're saying this: we're just going to trust that God is going to bring some wealthy donors and benefactors to give money to underwrite all this. Right? We're in the red, big time and we will be. And we expect that until God brings people to make that happen. We trust God in that. It's going to happen. We're going to work toward it but we're going to trust him. But when you say, "Hey, I want to take a college-level course," on say, I don't know, Theology 1 that's being taught and offered and if you were awake during announcements, you heard that we're going to have Theology 1 taught by Pastor Elliot and he's going to come and take us through the basics of the first levels of theology. You're going to do that, three-unit class, for \$100 a unit, for \$300 plus a registration fee. That's bargain level. You get a strip mall college anywhere in Southern California it's going to be \$500 to \$600 a unit. You want to go to a university, a well-known, respected Bible college somewhere. Great. Well, you going to get the same assignments, the same kinds of lectures, the same kinds of assignments and papers and reading and the same textbooks, and you're going to pay 10 times, \$1,100 to \$1,500 a unit. And again, all I'm saying... and if you can't afford it, fine, talk to us, we'll figure out a way to make it happen and we'll trust that God brings more benefactors to underwrite all the expenses.

But what's the point? We're offering things and I just want to say how blessed you are to not have to travel somewhere except for walking safely across the street to get into classrooms to learn the Bible. Two classes this summer. The deadline's coming up quickly. We got the book of Matthew. How well do you know the book of Matthew? Maybe how Matthew is utilizing the Old Testament in ways the other gospels aren't. Why was it written the way it is? What about these problem passages? How do we understand the difference between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain? How do we figure that? What if someone has a good question about the Jewish nature of this text and how do we deal with people's inquisitive nature about the gospel or some saying of Christ. How about "don't judge lest you be judged?" How do I know what? We're going to have the two Schreiner's brought in, Patrick and Tom, to come in and teach that class. Those are some of the top professors in the country coming here. And you can audit some of these classes. Dr. Whitney's coming in. Don Whitney who wrote the book on spiritual disciplines is coming in to teach a class on spiritualism. "Oh, well, there's a class I could take because I want to learn how to do that, have a better prayer life and do better devotions and study the Bible memorize the Bible" Great.

That's good. And I'm just trying to say you're not just trying to get around the campus yourself. You should take these classes always to say, I want to go deeper, not only so I can get my Christian life arranged and make sure I know how to get to the mess hall, to the cafeteria, dining hall. I want to be able to help other people get to places that maybe I've



never even been. So I need to learn. We've got Theology 1, we got the Matthew class going on this summer and then in the fall, listen to the lineup in the fall. You tell me what embryonic Bible Institute has this kind of lineup. And I'm not doing this to blow the CBI horn. I don't care what the title or the name is. I don't even care who's running it. But the bottom line is, in what, three semesters? Here's the lineup for the fall. New Testament Survey. Can anybody use that? New Testament Greek. I know you hear people talk about Greek all the time. Maybe it would be good to learn a little Greek. Apologetics, the spiritual disciplines class with Dr. Whitney that you can audit. An evangelism class, evangelism training. A teaching the Bible class, how to teach the Bible. A biblical counseling set of classes. I don't know. I just think that's a pretty decent offering, that when you get to heaven and God says, "Well, there's a lot of people I would have loved to use you to lead to Christ, answer their questions and benefit their life, but I couldn't because you were such a dull tool in the drawer. And you go, "Well, I didn't have any opportunities to learn anything, man. Pastor Mike with my pastor, I knew nothing. I was so deprived."

Yeah, but didn't Pastor Mike get up one day and tell you there's a place right across the street with a lot of great professors who are teaching and training. It would be a waste and I don't mean this economically because we're not in it to ever even be in the black. But here's the thing. It would be a waste for those classes that are so good to be filled with five, six, seven students per class. That would be horrible. Give us the problem, not only of trying to wheel your wheelchair in there because you're 102 years old. How about you give us the problem of having way too many people signed up? What are we going to do? Where are we going to put all these people? I encourage you and here's my strong exhortation to you. When you go out here and grab your cookies and coffee after the service, look over your shoulder to the left. It's right over here in this corner. You'll see our welcome booth for all the people who come to our campus and don't know where they're going. And then right next to that is a CBI, a Compass Bible Institute booth. Our leaders are out there, our registrar's out there, our director is out there. A professor or two might be out there. You talk to them about signing up. Get the list, get the information, learn how you can apply and register for a class. I'm exhorting. What are you doing? There are churches all over the place that would love to have the advantage of you driving and parking in your regular parking spot here in our parking lot and walking into a classroom with the kind of careful, thoughtful training that we need to be able to say, I know the Bible better this year than I did last. And I dare you to take a CBI class. C. B. I.

Let me give you three more letters. Ready? D. B. R. Do you know those letters? DBR, Daily Bible Reading. Our church is big on that. "Yeah, but I got my own plan." Listen. It's like us having some kind of fitness thing here. We've got trainers here and you go, "I got my own exercise routine." You know most people who say that, most people, not you I know because you got this great workout thing in your garage. No, but most people use that as a cover to not really do what we're doing. "Well, I'm really hardcore, I'm going to read more than..." You can read our section of the Scripture five, six times in a day. Just do that if you really want to do more reps. But master the material that is there every morning. You go to our website after you go to [CompassBibleInstitute.org](http://CompassBibleInstitute.org), go to [CompassChurch.org](http://CompassChurch.org) and see the most prominent first orange button you're going to run into. And it's not "give" just so you know. Right? The first button you're going to run into is the Daily Bible Reading, because that's what we want



you to do. Don't make me quote the stats about how many people go to church for years and have never read the whole Bible from cover to cover because you would be depressed. And I don't want to depress you. I want to motivate you. And that is to read the Bible every single year.

If you've been a Christian around this church for seven years, five years, three years, well, then you've read the Bible through, I hope, at least seven times, five times or three times, because you're in it with us every single day. Every morning get up and read the DBR. Understand it. Someone asks you at work, "I heard that somebody on Twitter said there's this verse in Leviticus about X, Y, Z." Man, if you been here seven years doing what you should be doing, which is reading the Daily Bible Reading you're going to say, "Well, I've read that passage at least seven times in the last few years and I'm telling you, yeah, I've struggled with it too. I've thought about it here. Let me get you some answers." You are going to be at least familiar with this book that we're basing our eternity on.

CBI, DBR. How about this one, CB. CB? What's that? Compass Books. CompassBooks.org. CompassBooks.org. That's our website, which right now is lame. I will admit it. Because all it says is, here's our bookstore, here's the hours. It's right there by the table for CBI, just look over the shoulder of the people at the table and right behind glass walls, you'll see the Compass Books. Well, here's the thing. We just had our meeting this week about the budget. We're going to take this bookstore, not only because of our 2020 plans, it's a different story. We're going to make it bigger and put it in a big lobby over here because of our 2020 campaign, which we're about into the next phase of that. But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about that bookstore, whether it's in its current place or whether it's in the corner of a bigger lobby. What we're going to do is we're going to move it into an online selling position, because here's the thing. I know it's easier for you to click on Amazon and get all your books delivered to you, but I don't know if you know, but Bezos doesn't really like all the books we recommend. I don't know if you know that. Some of them he doesn't like. And you know what? They've been increasingly, militantly banning books they don't like. Guess what? I bet half the books on my reading list every week eventually will not be available for you to click on and have sent to your house. We're working on that, investing more money in that web-site, being able to make CompassBooks.org a place we can get all the recommended books that our pastors have read and vetted and we like. We can't vet every single word and approve every word. But we're going to make it to where you can click on it and have those books sent to you or your friends in Nebraska or Canada or whatever. We'll be able to send them out. It's going to be a start and we're going to start slow, but we're going to get this thing going.

But better than that, it's right there this morning. I mean, you're less than 80 yards, you know, you're not even that, you're 40 yards away from our bookstore. After you go get your donut, here are your three stops now, you go to the CBI. You talk about signing up for class, right? Then you go into the bookstore and it's going to be crowded and you start praying for 2020 giving so that we can make sure we get the big bookstore built. And then you say, I need to find a book here. You need to be reading Christian books every single day. You need to have one in the morning you're reading, one in the evening you're reading, you should have one sitting by the throne in the bathroom that you pick up and you read. Depending on your



movements, you may read it twice a day, maybe once a day, but you're going to read it and there are so many books. You know every week I give you a list of books, I don't know, 14, 15 books. I say these would be good to read. Matter of fact, does anybody have the printed worksheet? Flip it over, flip it over. There are books every single week. Let me see what I put down this week. Jay Adams, "Competent to Counsel." Right? You getting the idea that God has put you in a place to be able to take biblical truth and actually get it in other people's lives. That's a good book. It's a classic. Hopefully you've heard people talk about it. If you haven't read it, you should read it. It's in our bookstore. Go buy it after the service.

Alexander, David Alexander, "Zondervan Handbook to the Bible." That book, it's huge. That's a good one to put in the bathroom. It's got articles and charts and pictures. It's so good to be able to say I'm going to get a better handle on the entirety of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. A book like that just put it somewhere prominently in your house so you pick it up and you read it. Gleason Archer's book, "New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties." Why did I put it there? I put that one there this week because some people are going to ask you questions at work and say, "I don't get this part of the Bible. It's hard." Here's a good working title for this book, "Weird Parts of the Bible You Need to Explain." That would be a good title for this book. And Gleason Archer, so good, so careful, it's very concise, but tries to deal with every issue in the text. It obviously may leave out a few that you have wondered about. But all the big ones are there for you to say, "OK, I need to be able to figure out the difficulty of this passage. How do I square this particular rendering of the historical events of the resurrection in this gospel with that gospel? How does that fit?" Good book.

Abner Chou, "Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret the Scripture." Abner Chou is trying to help people who are trying to rush from whatever Old Testament passage to Christ, and that's certainly where we're going in this text. That's what Philip did. But how do you do that without really running roughshod over the intention, the original intention of an Old Testament text? That may be on another level for people who are in CBI, but that's a good book, an important book. A fairly new book. Chrispin's book, I bet none of you have probably heard about this one, few of you, Gerard Chrispin, "The Bible Panorama." That's another good one for your bathroom. It's got short... It's got 1,183 chapters in it, that sounds like a lot, I think it's that many, as to how... It follows every chapter of the Bible and in every single one of these, it just gives you a quick rundown of what are the main themes? What are the main characters? What's this chapter about? How does it fit in the whole of the book? It'd be good for you to get a handle on the word of God. There's a guy you know, Mike Fabarez wrote a book called "Bible Survey for Kids." The only reason I put that on there is because some people read that as they try to give it to their kids, and they go, "Man, I learned more about the Bible than I've ever learned before just by trying to teach it to my kids, to try to act like to my seven-year-old that I knew all this stuff, but some of it was new to me. It was helpful to learn about the minor prophets or the historical books. Very simple. But maybe if you've never done that, it's in our bookstore. I could go on and on, I could go through all of these. But the point is you need to get good Christian books. I know I say it all the time, but go buy a book today. Please go buy a book.



CBI, DBR, CB. How about this one, F. P. R. org. FPR.org. as in Focal Point Radio .org. FPR.org. That'll take you to our website that has tons of this stuff from me. Blah blah blah blah blah blah in your ears while you're working out on your elliptical, on the treadmill, and you can hear more sermons for me, if you dare, that may help you kind of think through parts of the Scripture you hadn't thought through before, Or maybe it's topical. You go looking through and just search topically and you say, I need to know... If you don't know where to start, start with the one that says Focal Point U, (FPR.org/product-category/focalpointu/) as in university. Focal Point U is nothing but 13 semesters of thinking logically and systematically through the Christian faith. I mean, it's almost 300 hours of lectures, so you'll get really fit listening to this series. And all I'm saying is put it in your headphones and as you're working out, taking your walk, doing your thing, at least get some good Bible in your mind. Because guess what? You do that for a year, I'll bet next year you'll have a much better handle on the Bible than you had the year before.

CBI, DBR, CB, FPR.org. How about this one? This one doesn't really work, but CA, let's call it that. ChristianAudio.com. ChristianAudio.com. A lot of times I'll talk about reading books. Some of you are like, "Well I do you have a long commute, you know, hard to hold my book up on the steering wheel when I'm driving." OK, listen, go and listen to someone read it to you. Now this is like a Christian bookstore, so you can't trust everything in ChristianAudio.com. But all it is is a collection of audiobooks. And I know you say, "Well, I'm on Audible.com." Well, guess what? Bezos has control of that as well. I'm not a conspiratoralist, but I am saying in time, the good books that you need aren't all going to be there. But at least on ChristianBooks.com, at least for today, you can get most of the good Christian books available that have been produced in an audio format, you can get those books read to you. Which is better than listening to me yak sometimes the way I do in ineloquent sentences and you can have a nicely written, carefully, systematically constructed set of sentences and paragraphs, which I wish I could speak extemporaneously. But that is what you're going to get in good Christian books.

And I pulled it up yesterday and thought, OK, let me just make sure what's on there. What's on the best-selling list? The second one on the best-selling list, I think was A.W. Tozer's "Knowledge of the Holy." I bet all of you have heard us talk about that. If you have never read it, then have someone read it to you on the way to work. Right? Go to ChristianAudio.com and get "Knowledge of the Holy." I saw in there "Mere Christianity," I think it was number four, C.S. Lewis, I don't know if you ever read anything by Lewis, but it would be good for you to read some Lewis. It would be good for you to have someone read it to you. "Mere Christianity," a basic fundamental Protestant explanation of theism and why it makes sense. It would be a good place for you to go. J.I. Packer's "Knowing God," that was in the top 10. J.I. Packer's, "Knowing God." If you never read that book, have someone read it to you in the car. This guy will read it to you and you'll have it. You'll have it on your phone and you'll be ready to go. Talk about books that I recommend, talk about people like Don Whitney coming, it was in the top, I don't know, 25, Don Whitney's "Spiritual Disciplines," those spiritual disciplines. Have the book read to you before you go to the class in the fall. "Well, it costs money," you say. It does cost money. Yes, I understand. You go in and buy the book or you can join their club at \$14.95 a month or whatever it is. And I have no vested stake in this, you understand.



But you say, "I don't want another thing to ding my credit card." Well then drop Hulu or Netflix. Figure out how you're going to do this and spend the 15 bucks a month. Right? Or don't get a latte one day a week and go and get this in your phone and then you get four credits every month. Right? And most books, you can get at least two books for that every month and you can have good Christian books read to you.

CBI, DBR, our Compass Books, CB, FPR.org, download the app, that's another thing to click on and that will help you, ChristianBooks.com or ChristianAudio.com. It's just some ways... We could have explained Isaiah 53, I want you to have a commitment to have your biblical knowledge sharpened. So if God calls you in when someone says, "I really don't know why God would allow," or "I didn't really know why the world works this way," or "I don't really understand why my conscience does this," "I don't know why people can't be at peace," "I don't understand why the Bible was written this way." All of that, you'll be greater prepared, more aptly prepared to deal with those issues.

Back to our text, Acts Chapter 8. "The eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?'" It's a good question. "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus." And not just about you studying about textual criticism or, you know, the problem of sin or theodicy or whatever it is. It's about you being able to lead people to Christ. It's about you being able to answer questions so you can navigate them to Christ. I mean, ultimately, even the welcome week people with the T-shirts should know it's really about him getting a good education. That's why we're here. I want them to get in the classroom and learn. Well, that's the point for a welcome week person. But the point for us is not just for them to learn, it's for them to come into relationship with God. That we should be able to do as the goal of all of our question answering. We should, number three, we should "Get the Inquisitive to Christ." We want to get them in relationship with Christ. We are proclaiming and have been entrusted with a message of reconciliation. I want them to be reconciled to God and that means they have to trust in Christ.

So I want all of the biblical information that is codified from creation and conscience and even the problem of sin, all of that in the Bible, I want you to understand it, I want you to know it, I want you to get it so that you can know Christ. It's like John 6 says, all of these things Jesus said, the Scriptures, they're all written ultimately about me so that you would know me. That's the point. So that's what we want. Not knowledge of Christ and how many years he hung out in Perea or Galilee or Judea. It's not about that. I mean, it'd be good to know all that, but it's so that you would know him personally, have his righteousness clothing you, so that when you die, you stand before God and he doesn't say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." That's the goal.

I love these two phrases "beginning with." It "begins with this Scripture" and then he goes from there. That's the goal of us being able to say whatever the question on the table, I want to get you from there to Christ, because I can do that. Matter of fact, let me end with this passage. Go to Luke Chapter 24, the same phrase is used of Christ. As Luke describes his discussion with these people on the road to Emmaus. In verse 25, "He," Christ, "said to



them," these guys on the road, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Man, just studying Christ and how he keeps pointing to the Scriptures as this is it, you have this. That parable about the rich man and Lazarus, it's like you have the Scriptures. I've given you my testimony. Yes, it's reflected in creation and conscience and in evil, but you need to know, here is my information. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all of the prophets have spoken." That's what we want for people. Is that your desire? "Wasn't it necessary that the Christ should suffer these things," death, "and enter into his glory?"

Which, by the way, there are two things you want headings, what does it mean to get them to Christ, to Christ in two ways, not through two pathways, but to two ways to think of him, to suffer in this way. As Isaiah 53 goes on to say "the Lord was willing to crush him, putting to death that he might offer his life a guilt offering, that he might atone for the sins of many." The point is that we celebrate a suffering Christ. The suffering servant is crushed, the sin of our lives should be punished, and God has punished Christ so that he will not punish us if we trust in him. That redeemer. There's a heading, right? I'm getting you to Christ the Redeemer. And then the second phase, look what he says here, "And to enter into his glory." Enter into his glory. There is his exaltation. Here is his Lordship, his sovereignty over all things. What am I leading them to? I want to get them to Christ the Redeemer and Christ the Lord, Christ the King. I mean, that's the goal. I want my coworkers to have questions about this, that or the other to get to the place of saying, Christ is my redeemer and Christ is my king. And so, he is the guide and he guides these men on the road to Emmaus.

Here's the same exact Greek phrase and the same English phrase, verse 27, "And beginning with..." I'm going to start where they're at. Let's open up the Bible, "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." You need to know me as your suffering lamb who died in your place and the risen king "entered into his glory." Which, by the way, I'm thinking about Patrick Schreiner, who's coming to preach here, teach in our CBI this summer in the Matthew class. He wrote a book recently called "The Ascension of Christ," which I'm in the middle of reading. I actually texted his dad, Tom Schreiner, and said, "You should be proud of your son. It's a great book. I'm really enjoying it." The book is about the fact that there are very few books written on the Ascension, "entering into his glory," and what are the implications in Scripture about the ascension. I mean, we read about it in Luke 24 when we studied that not too long ago. We read about and studied in Acts Chapter 1 not too long ago. And what does that mean? What are the implications? Why was it necessary? Couldn't we have skipped that part? The Ascension. I mean, good books will do nothing but increase your understanding of Scripture and in this case, to know that we're presenting to our world Christ the Redeemer and Christ the king, the Lamb of God and the Lion from the tribe of Judah.

Drop down in this passage as long as we're here, verse 44, "Then he said to them, 'These are my words I have spoken to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' And he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." I know it's more than just giving them information, though you need to have the information. But we're praying that God will open their minds.



"And he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should,' here are our two things again, 'suffer.'" There's the Christ the Redeemer, the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. "And on the third day rise from the dead," the glorified Christ, the exalted Christ, the Lord, the King. "And," here's our message, "that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed," that's your job and mine. We take the inquisitive there. We're going to try and raise questions by asking them, do you understand what you're reading? "Beginning in Jerusalem," they're going to go to all the nations to be "proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." Every time you sit in a sermon, every time you sit in class, every time you read a good Christian book, you are, in the passive sense, "witnesses to these things." And then just like a witness is also used in our language as an active verb, you now have to witness to these things. You have to get up, raise your right hand, tell you the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. Here comes the truth. I'm going to tell you what it is. God is investing in you, not just so you will be satisfied in your biblical knowledge, but so that you will take that knowledge to other people.

I know one of the stumbling blocks in our passage, it's just too idyllic, I don't have those experiences. Yes, I need a guide to help explain Christianity to me. But just like when I was a freshman on that first day of class, I'll never forget it, first day of school, freshman orientation week. I pull up, I'd never been there, I'd never been to some visit-the-campus-week, I was there because my dad told me I had to be there or I would not exist, or whatever the threat was. It was like, you got to go to Bible school. I had no choice. And so my bewildered look, it was bewildered, I didn't know what end was up, I'd never been there. I don't know anything about it, but I get there and here come these way too happy and helpful people to try and help me. Have you seen a disgusted look on Pastor Mike's face? Put it in a 17-year-old body, it was like, I don't care. I don't care what dorm I'm in, I don't care where the library is, I do care what the dining hall is. But just can you stop being so happy? I'm not interested in your help, you know. And there they were. Help! Help! Help! Help! Help! Help! Help! Help! Help!

I was the opposite of the Ethiopian eunuch, I was the worst Bible school freshman. I did not want to be there. Some of you had heard my testimony, I did not want to be there. I was there under duress. My dad had said I had to, and so they dropped me off. They literally spend, what, 45 minutes, an hour, you know, unpacking me. We walk to McDonald's across the street. This is in downtown Chicago. And then they go, "See ya," and they drove away. And I'm like, "I hate this." That was my attitude. They said, "Can we help you find a library?" I said, "No." But you know what happened? In time, their helpfulness, their willingness, they're willing to say, "Hey, I know you didn't really like it here, I know you don't want to be here, but, you know, if we can be helpful, we want to be helpful." And in time, I guess it was October, I think the second week or the 9th somewhere in there, so I got dropped off at the end of August, by October I was... you couldn't have pulled me away from the school. I mean, God had gotten a hold of my heart, I became a Christian my freshman year in Bible school because God had broken me down. Not just because he was putting me on some, you know, afflicted deathbed, in part because I was being killed with kindness by welcome week people. Right? It was like they just wanted to help. And in time, I was like, I think I do need help because something's going on in your life that's not going on in my life. I was fighting it.



You're going to be useful to God and God is going to bring you some Ethiopians and they're going to be like, help me, guide me, answer my questions, and then you're going to be having the joy of seeing them baptized as we will see next week. But then you're going to run into some Saul of Tarsus and they're going to throw rocks at you and they're going to, as he tells later to King Agrippa in Chapter 26 of Acts, "I was kicking against the goads." Christ says to him, "Why are you persecuting me Saul?" It's hard to kick against the goads." And the goads of this pushing back, it's what a lot of people do, but, you know, it's the consistency of guys like Ananias, and we'll read this in Chapter 9 of Acts, people like Barnabas, that he keeps saying, "Let me be helpful. Can I guide you?" We're going to see this in Chapter 9, but the blindness that God brings to him, the literal blindness, to remind us of just how we just need the scales to fall off our eyes. And part of that, just like it was literally for me, literally for me as a 17-year-old, was the kindness of people who said, "I'm here to help. If you have any questions I want to answer them. Do you understand what you're reading?" And they knew and they were able to take me from where I was to where I need to be. And I'm just telling you, BE THAT PERSON. Be Philip this week. Get sharp, I know it's going to take some time. Don't wait until you think you've mastered everything to start asking people, "Do you understand what you're reading?" But get at it twofold. I want to be willing to help. I'm a Bible guide and I keep getting sharper and I'm praying that I can lead people to Christ.

Let's pray. God, help us all as Christians in this world wanting to be found faithful, we'd like to hear from you, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It's not just because we've had great quiet times and learn things about the Bible that we enjoy. It's about us knowing enough to be helpful in the lives of other people. We know it's not just an intellectual battle, just as we read in Luke 24, you have to open their minds to understand the Scriptures, but that's not going to happen with people who aren't willing to be helpful. So God, we would ask that you make us those kinds of helpful Philips to the coworkers and people in our sphere of activity every week so we can say, "Wow, yeah, the creation. Let's talk about the creator." Conscience, "Yeah, let's talk about the lawgiver." Scripture. "Let's talk about what those passages mean. And even the evil in this world, let's talk about how God is going to bring that to an end. God, we want to be the agent of truth, and I know we need to be more immersed in it. So I pray even now as we dismiss after this quick song that people get their donut and their coffee, but then they'd seriously look at what class they can take in CBI this year, this summer, this fall. They'd literally go into the bookstore and buy a book today. But let us be more of what we need to be so that when the questions come our way, when the curiosity, inquisitive nature of a non-Christian says, "I just wonder about..." that we jump into action and be ready to kill them with kindness. Be the kinds of agents that I've seen in my life that I know God many of us have benefited from. Let us be that helpful Christian, who is willing to answer questions.

In Jesus name. Amen.