

Engage Glocally
Acts 8:26-40
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I came across some word combinations that are awkward and yet surprisingly useful.

- **Cellfish** – *An individual who continues talking on their phone so as to be rude or inconsiderate of other people.*
- **Carcolepsy** – *A condition where a passenger falls asleep as soon as the car starts moving.*
- **Unkeyboardinated** – *When you're unable to type without repeatedly making mistakes.*
- **Youniverse** – *Used to indicate that a person has knowledge only of him or herself; their universe consists only of them.*

Here's one more awkward word...

- **Glocal** - *Reflecting or characterized by both local and global considerations since we're called to make disciples both locally and globally.*

It's not either/or but both/and. It's not whether we minister locally *or* globally but that we minister locally *and* globally. It's not my neighborhood or yours, but my neighbors *and* your neighbors. It's not Rock Island or Davenport but Rock Island *and* Davenport. It's not one of the Quad Cities but the entire Quad Cities area. It's not Illinois or Iowa; it's Illinois *and* Iowa. It's not our country or the continents but our nation *and* all the nations. It's not local or global but *glocal*, because we're called to engage globally *and* locally.

We see this clearly in Acts 1:8. Listen for the word “and” as I read: ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***

Here's a helpful way to see the balance between local and global:

Jerusalem:	Natural spheres of influence of the church
Judea:	Geographically near, culturally similar people
Samaria:	Geographically near, culturally different people

Ends of the Earth: Geographically distant, culturally different people

We've been looking at ways that God is calling us to engage this fall – so far we've focused on engaging in prayer, engaging in groups and engaging in the ordinances. It's our pleasure to have Manuel and Kim Contreras with us this weekend as they help us engage Glocally. They are members of our Go Team serving in the inner city of Fresno.

Let's turn to Acts 8 and discover four different phases of living Glocally.

1. Preparation. As the early church was beginning to experience growth, the disciples realized that they were dropping the ball by not caring for the widows among them. So seven men were chosen who according to Acts 6:3 were known to be ***“of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom.”*** Among these first deacons of the early church was a man named Philip.

BTW, I must give full disclosure at this point. Our grandson is named Philip and he and his mother were here last weekend. It's going to be difficult to not insert the nickname Pip whenever I come across the name Philip. Let's see how I do with this.

The first phase of living on mission is *preparation*. Philip had the job of making sure that widows were not overlooked in the distribution of food. I'm sure he worked hard at his new responsibility. *All of life is preparation, isn't it?* God in His sovereignty uses all of our experiences, both good and bad, the little and the big, the visible and the invisible, to prepare us for what He wants us to do.

Do you feel like you're not doing anything incredible for the kingdom? Do you sense that your ministry or job is not all that important? It's not true – God uses every one of our experiences in order to prepare us because His purpose is in the process.

Later Pip [oops] went to Samaria, where he faithfully preached and experienced great fruit. In fact, there were so many new believers that the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to help him out.

Let's pause and ponder something. In Acts 1:8 the believers are told to share the gospel in Jerusalem and then move to Judea and then to Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth. But this process doesn't take place until persecution comes. If you take Acts 1:8 and flip the numbers you have Acts 8:1 – ***“And there arose on***

that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...” Verse 4 tells us that as they were scattered they *“went about preaching the word.”* Do you see the first three spheres of glocal outreach here? They started in Jerusalem and then went to Judea and then to Samaria.

In this first stage of *Preparation*, Philip is practicing obedience and working in partnership with God. Since his life is submitted to the will of God, he’s eager to do whatever God directs him to do, and to go wherever He sends him.

Before we hear how God prepared Manuel and Kim, let’s watch this overview of their ministry in Fresno.

→ Show PPT Presentation

KIM - *You grew up here at EBC and were in Pastor Ed’s youth group. How did God use your past to prepare you for what you’re doing now?*

MANUEL - *Tell us briefly about what your life was like before you met Christ and then how He saved you. How did God use your past to prepare you for what you’re doing now?*

2. Positioning. God first prepared Philip and then He positioned him. Look at verse 26, *“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place.”*

Philip is told to leave Samaria and to travel on the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. [Show map] By direct route, this would be a 48-mile journey through steep mountain passes and hilly country. Yet, despite the poor prospects for converts on the road, Philip books his flight and heads south. He left a place of blessing and traveled to a barren place. Some of you feel like you’re in a desert place but remember that God has not deserted you in the desert. He’s positioned you where you are for a purpose!

Notice the first phrase of verse 27: *“And he rose and went.”* Let’s pause and point out that God doesn’t give him any more information. Just that it’s time to get up and go. This is similar to what Paul was told in Acts 9:6: *“But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”* God said go and so Philip got up and went.

What Philip didn't know is that there was someone God had prepared for him to meet. Verse 27 continues: “...***And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship.***” We're now introduced to someone not from Jerusalem or Judea or Samaria but from the ends of the earth. In fact, it was common back then to think of Ethiopia, which was all of Africa south of Egypt, as the literal end of the earth.

Eunuchs often served in positions of power and this guy would have been like the CFO for the Ethiopian queen. The name “***Candace***” was not really her first name but was more like a title, much like Pharaoh or Caesar. If Philip had not “started out” by taking that first step, he never would have met this man who was spiritually searching. He had traveled over 200 miles to get to Jerusalem and was now on his way home. Don't miss this – God loves to position us to speak with people He has prepared.

Sometimes I wonder how many opportunities I've missed simply because I've not been willing to take that first step. Maybe it's a phone call I didn't make, or a meeting I didn't attend, or a neighbor I didn't say “hi” to, or a smile I didn't give to someone who was hurting. Listen. God will position us exactly where he wants us to be when we obey His promptings. Don't ignore those gentle nudges from the Holy Spirit. Opportunities only come when we place ourselves in direct contact with people.

MANUEL - *I remember you telling me that some time ago you and Kim sensed it was time to move out of a neighborhood in Fresno because it had been “reached” and that God wanted your family to find a new place that would position you for greater gospel impact. Could you describe how God moved you to your present neighborhood (prayer walks seeing graffiti, prostitutes, etc.).*

KIM – *You began your August Prayer Letter like this: “Our Mercy Street Team finished praying and began walking toward Motel Drive. A constant prayer as we walk along the 99 Freeway is that God would lead us to one whose heart He is working on. We saw her as soon as we stepped out on the street. ‘Could we give you a carnation?’” Could you pick up the story and tell us more about it? In what ways are you reaching out to women who have been trafficked into prostitution?*

3. Proximity. Stage 1 is *Preparation*. Stage 2 is *Positioning*. In verse 29, we come to the 3rd stage -- *Proximity*. Take a look: “***And the Spirit said to Philip,***

‘Go over and join this chariot.’” It’s interesting that in verse 26 it was an angel who gave Philip a message and now it’s the Holy Spirit (BTW, our topic in two weeks will be “Engage with the Holy Spirit”). And notice that the Holy Spirit wants Philip to go. His desire is the same for us; that’s why our fourth “G” is to go *with the gospel*.

Notice that God doesn’t tell him anything else -- he’s just supposed to go and get close to the Ethiopian and stay there. We know from verse 28 that he’s reading from the Book of Isaiah, but Philip doesn’t know that...yet. God is getting his servant in proximity to someone who is searching. In verse 30 we read, **“Philip ran to him.”**

The phrase **“go over and join”** is very vivid. It’s an imperative that means to *“glue or cement oneself.”* He was to go and get close to this man and not let go. It literally means, *“Give yourself to the man; hang on tenaciously until your mission is accomplished.”* Perhaps he’s standing on the running board of the chariot as it’s barreling down the deserted highway!

This idea of **“going over and joining”** is a good word for those of us who are parents or grandparents. We’re to go and hang on tenaciously to our toddlers and our teens until our mission is accomplished. I’m really looking forward to having Dave and Betsy Corning from *Entrusted Ministries* here on Saturday, October 22nd. They will be leading a half-day seminar called, “Parenting on Purpose.” A number of people have already registered. The cost is only \$5 and you can easily sign up at www.edgewoodbaptist.net.

What one person can you get closer to this week? Identify a child, a grandchild, a neighbor, a co-worker or an acquaintance and then determine to stick with him or her until they come to Christ. It was that type of tenacious stick-to-it-ness that caused my college roommate to glue himself to me even when I was being a jerk to him. He was salt and light to me. And it was through his influence that I came to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Joe Aldrich says that: *“Evangelism is what spills over when we bump into someone.”* Have you bumped into anyone lately? Are you near enough to non-Christians so that the fullness of your Christianity can spill over into their lives? Have you come up alongside a hurting heart and stayed there?

I wonder how many times we short-circuit what God wants to do simply because we are not spending enough time in proximity to the non-Christians God has

already positioned us to come in contact with? Maybe it's because they make us feel uncomfortable. Or perhaps it's because we think they are the enemy. Or maybe in the busy-ness of our lives we just frankly don't think much about them.

Listen. When we're not near non-Christians we miss the cues, or signals that they send out. While we might not hear someone reading his Bible out loud, we will hear some kind of cues -- if we're close enough -- and if we listen hard enough. Maybe your friend will open up about his marriage, or his kids, or a student may share something sad, or a woman may talk about her work problems, or even ask questions about death. Listen for the cues -- when you do, you will hear them. And you might be surprised by what people are reading, watching, or thinking about.

We won't hear unless we're near!

God doesn't want us to obey Him slowly. When He prepares us and positions us so we're in proximity to non-Christians, He expects us to "run" to our assignment. He wants sold-out Christ followers who take great pleasure in whole-hearted obedience.

Manuel and Kim have certainly demonstrated that.

KIM – *Your ministry is all about developing proximity to people. I've read how you've partnered with various evangelical ministries to further your impact. One example was how Northside Christian Church put on "Bike Repair Days" for the community. Edgewood has an opportunity this next Saturday morning to do something similar as we engage with a number of ministries we support by serving at World Relief, Pregnancy Resources, Youth Hope and 180. Since you've been on the receiving end of churches partnering with you, how does it feel when a church comes alongside you in practical ways to serve the community you're called to reach?*

MANUEL – *You gave me a tour of the World Impact Center in January and I was really impressed with its strategic location and all that is happening there. Tell us how this Center is helping you get close to people in need. Can you share with us the plans for renovating and expanding this facility for even greater impact?*

4. Proclamation. We move from *preparation* to *positioning* to *proximity* to *proclamation*.

When Philip heard the man reading Isaiah, he asked him a question in verse 30, ***“Do you understand what you are reading?”*** There’s a play on words here that expects a negative answer. By the way, it’s always a good idea to ask people questions -- Jesus did it all the time. It helps them think in new ways and often reveals inadequacies and contradictions in their thought patterns.

I had the opportunity to practice this with two Mormon missionaries who came to the car show in our parking lot a couple weeks ago. I simply asked them questions about their system of works and it served to unsettle them a bit so I could then share the gospel of grace with them.

I listened to a helpful podcast recently featuring Randy Newman talking about his book, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging Hearts the Way Jesus Did.*” He argues that we should focus more on having dialogue with people instead of just giving an evangelistic sales pitch. The use of questions can cultivate two-way conversations. That’s what Philip is doing here.

In verse 31 the man responds by saying, ***“How can I, unless someone guides me?”*** The word for ***“guides”*** means, *“to bring out.”* The man recognized that he needed some assistance in order to bring the meaning out. That’s one of the purposes of our Growth Groups. We now have 36 of them and we have room in four of them for some new people so jump online and sign up.

Philip is then invited to come up into the chariot and to sit down with him. Amazingly, the Ethiopian was reading out loud from Isaiah 53, which is the premier Old Testament passage on substitutionary sacrifice: ***“Like a sheep that was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not his mouth.”*** He would have also read Isaiah 53:5-6: ***“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*** And verse 12: ***“Yet He bore the sin of many.”***

Philip is ready for the next question in verse 34, ***“About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”*** I love verse 35, ***“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”*** The phrase ***“opened his mouth”*** was used of taking a cover off a box of treasure. And notice that Philip knew his Bible well enough that he

could start with this Scripture and move to sharing the good news about Jesus. Our gospel presentations must always focus on Jesus.

The man then believed and was baptized on the spot! By the way, two people came up after the services last weekend and said they are ready to get baptized.

Brothers and sisters, we need to arise and go and then get close and stick and then simply open our mouths and talk about the treasure of Christ. Tradition holds that this official went back to Ethiopia and his first convert was Candace. Thus, the gospel goes to the ends of the earth. Edgewood's missionaries and mission agencies are following people just like Philip who have taken the gospel Glocally – to our nation and to the nations.

The kingdom of God advances one soul at a time. Interestingly, in verse 8 we read that there was much joy in the city of Samaria because so many people were getting saved. And at the end of verse 39 we see that the Ethiopian “*went on his way rejoicing.*”

MANUEL – *You’ve seen lives change, haven’t you? Can you tell us a story of how someone was saved recently as the gospel was proclaimed? How is their life now characterized by joy?*

KIM – *Can you share about the joy that you have when you’ve seen someone you’ve stayed in proximity with get saved? Can you share a story with us?*

[Dismiss Kim and Manuel]

Let’s flesh out these four phases with some practical next steps.

1. **Preparation.** In what ways is God preparing you right now? Here are some ideas to help you grow in your preparation.

- Memorize Acts 1:8
- Watch some videos on RightNow Media by searching for “missions”
- If you are a student or single, attend the “Cross for the Nations” Conference between Christmas and New Year’s Day. Talk to Pastor Kyle for more information.
- Visit edgewoodbaptist.net to learn about and pray for our glocal missionaries – 55 global and 25 local (QCA and the U.S.)
- Check out the new Missions Display in hallway

- Consider attending the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* class beginning in January
2. **Positioning.** Think through how God can use your position as a platform for gospel witness.
 - Build bridges with your neighbors
 - See your home, workplace or campus as a platform for ministry
 3. **Proximity.** Identify one person right now that God wants you to stick closely to until they get saved.
 - Sign up to serve at the Engage Serving Day this Saturday morning
 - Find a ministry in the QCA and begin serving with them
 - Join the June 2017 Go Team headed to Fresno to serve with Manuel and Kim
 4. **Proclamation.** Determine to open your mouth and speak of the treasure of Christ the next time you have opportunity.
 - Ask God to give you the courage to share the gospel
 - Give towards our Christmas Offering – half will go towards the renovation and expansion of the World Impact Center in Fresno and the other half will be used to print copies of *Anchor for the Soul* in Spanish
 - Consider God’s call to full-time missionary ministry – Kim Contreras was called to missions while she was at Edgewood and God might be calling some of you right now

In [John 20:21](#) Jesus says, “*As the Father has sent me so I send you.*” That means as a church we shouldn’t focus on our seating capacity but rather our sending capacity. Consider yourself sent by the Savior. It’s time to live on mission by gathering, growing, giving and going. Let’s engage Glocally...whether we feel awkward about it or not.

Closing Song:

Final Words Saturday Night

- Ignite Game Night – Going Around the World
- Ladies Bonfire – Kim Contreras will be there

Closing Benediction

From Hebrews 13:20-21 – *“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*