

In Synch with God's Agenda



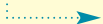
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ARK, THE FRONT DESK MANAGER WE MET in the previous snapshot, had turned down several opportunities for promotion, much to the surprise of both his supervisors and his coworkers. Here's what we know of Mark from the previous snapshot:

Mark was a married father of three young children, and had been at the same job for nine years. His warm personality won fans among the guests from the first moment he waited on them, and his problem-solving, guest-soothing skills were legendary. Mark could turn a ranting angry alcohol-fueled desk-pounder into a groveling, grateful, and meek person almost effortlessly. Mark was also the go-to person of faith in the complex. Anyone who had a struggle came to Mark for prayer, and sometimes help.

Whenever his friends or coworkers asked him why he wouldn't leave his position, he always gave the same answer: "Because I've found the place God wants me."

What do you think he means by that? Why would he turn down opportunities for more influence (for his faith) and more money (to care for his family.) Was he right to do so?



Scripture Passage

Acts 8:1-40

Study

What do you think the phrase "in sync with God's agenda" means?

How do you think someone knows if they are in sync with God's agenda? What does it feel like?

Following is a list of some of the characters we encounter in reading Acts 8. Describe what you've discovered about each one in your reading. You may need to use a concordance or a Bible dictionary if some terms are new to you. Commentaries on the passage are also very helpful. There are excellent concordances, Bible dictionaries and commentaries online if you don't own them.

Philip

Samaritans (especially describe their relationship with the Jews)

Ethiopian eunuch

Philip's journey to the city of Samaria mirrored Jesus' own outreach to this group. (Remember the episode with the woman at the well in John 4?) It was risky from the standpoint of both cultures, his own and the Samaritans'. Why?

Are there similarities between our workplace culture and the Samaritan culture? List them.

Read Acts 8:8 and 8:12. What was the reaction in the city of Samaria?

Now look at Acts 8:14 to see the response of the Apostles in Jerusalem. What did they do?

With Peter and John reinforcing his efforts, Philip could rejoice in the fruits of his risky efforts. In fact, verse 25 describes a victory lap of sorts as the trio worked its way back south to Jerusalem. How do you think Philip must have felt at this turn of events? How would you feel if you saw such an immediate response?

But look what happens next. Read verse 26. Instead of a victory lap, Philip gets sent to a desert road south of Jerusalem and isn't even told why. How would you respond to this?

Verse 27 gives us Philip's response in five simple words: "And he arose and went..." No evidence of whining, no signs of foot-dragging, just simple obedience. What character traits does this imply of Philip? Whose agenda is he focused on?

What implications might that have for us in our decision-making process?

Now read the triumph of the rest of the chapter, verses 27-40. Remember Jesus' charge in Acts 1:8: "...witnesses to me in ... Samaria ... uttermost parts of the earth." Because of Philip's obedience, two both Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth were reached.

Where does Scripture teach us Philip's direction comes from? What does this say to us today?

One of the perpetual questions of the Christian faith relates to how active the Holy Spirit is in our era. Scripture is very clear about the role the Holy Spirit plays in the life of the believer. What is not so clear, and is the subject of frequent debate, is how active is the Holy Spirit in supernatural activity like visions, speech, etc. At Marketplace Network, we teach that Western culture should expect to see fewer such miraculous reinforcements of the power of God than Eastern cultures. This is because the Word of God (the Bible) is readily available to Western cultures. The Bible is the full and final revelation of God, and no new information in the form of visions or messages will ever contradict it. Ever. Thus there is less need for supernatural reinforcement in Western culture. Eastern cultures, though, and places where access to the Bible is severely restricted may reasonably be expected to see more supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit as God makes Himself known to His children.

Finally, read verse 40. Azotus was north of the place where Philip met the Ethiopian. From there Philip worked his way back up to Caesarea, returning to the point of the world where the story began. Are we prepared to make such parenthetical journeys for God? Is our focus on His work and His kingdom? Or is it on our own victory laps—our own needs/wants/wishes? Think about it. Only in close fellowship with the Father can such ready responses come.

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- We must know Scripture intimately if we are to know the Father intimately.
- Only by knowing the Father intimately can we be in synch with His agenda.
- We must be willing to change directions at any season in our life when asked to do so by God.
- When God asks, there's always a good reason. He doesn't make us jump through hoops just to show us off.
- Only when our agenda is the same as God's can we be certain of His instructions to us.