

“The Truth about Understanding the Word of God”

Acts 8:26-40

So today is all about Understanding what the Bible says. How many of you really think you completely understand the entire Bible? Okay...how about parts of the Bible?

It's hard to understand the Bible. It was written in the days when people told common stories, used poetry, music, allegories, genealogy, history, and even engineering....yep...what were those dimensions of the Ark???

The readability of a text is measured by certain formulas. When Philip the Evangelist finds a man struggling to read the Bible, he throws away the formulas and does something different to help the man understand the Bible.

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In our reading of God's word, we encounter a person who's experiencing readability discomfort. Does it surprise you that he's reading the Bible — what we call the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament? And would it surprise you to know that he's not reading the story of David and Goliath? Nor is he confused by the riveting account of the baby Moses floating on the Nile in a basket made of bulrush reeds. No, he's plodding through Isaiah 53. Just for the fun of it...why not

try reading Isaiah 53 tonight with the whole family? Enjoy a dish of ice cream or fresh fruit to put you into the right mood as you share this passage.

It is very unusual that this Ethiopian was reading at all, let alone reading something from the prophets. The literacy rate in the first-century was barely 1 %. In most villages, only one person — usually the leader of the synagogue — could stand up on the Sabbath in the synagogue and read the Torah. The literacy rate in the United States is 99 percent. The truth is that we probably have more in common with the Ethiopian than we’d care to admit.

So...Philip hitches a ride with the Ethiopian and sits beside him, he sees that the man is troubled. The conversation begins with a question: “Do you understand?” No, he doesn’t. “What don’t you understand?” And the Ethiopian explains. And then Philip explains.

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Philip asked the Ethiopian dignitary in the chariot — in so many words — “Just what don’t you understand?” And the Ethiopian was like, “Everything!”

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What Philip was doing was sharing his faith. What we need to do is to share our faith. Too many people believe that this is too hard to do. I really think that we over-complicate this fact of sharing our faith. We could simply ask someone, “What don’t you understand — about life, your life, your faith, your journey, your mission, your purpose?” Let them tell their story and after they do simply say, “Let me tell you about Jesus.”

Wow...that is actually kind of easy and not hard at all.

Maybe we need to ask ourselves, “What don’t I understand?” The answer to learning what you don’t understand is to:

- Take a closer look at the text.
- Ask Pastor Eric for a few minutes to explain the text you are reading.
- Find a teacher and explore the history of the text’s interpretation.
- Listen carefully to the lyrics of Christian music
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Finally to give a direct answer to the question of the sermon title is... do not try to understand the Word of God in a vacuum. Be like the Ethiopian and ask for help and admit that we don’t know the answer.

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