



21 April 2008

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The Roads Best Travelled Part Thirty-two

The Road To Gaza (Based on Acts 8:26-40)

small correction to last week's WakeUPCall see end of this

How long does it take to achieve something of significance? Traditional wisdom seems to follow the 'Rome wasn't built in a day' approach. Older people will tend to concur that nothing of significance is achieved overnight.

So most qualifications are obtained with a year or more of study and can take seven to eight years depending on your profession or trade. Experience, by definition, is only gained over significant periods of time.

But there are occasions when a moment must be seized. Within the course of an hour, a day, or a few minutes, something must be achieved or the moment and the opportunity will pass.

Such was the character of the old Gaza road - a busy road full of trading and domestic traffic. A senior and powerful financier was travelling south on this road. He had been to Jerusalem because he was fed-up living and working with finance, loose morals and many gods. This we know because he had converted to Judaism as a proselyte and the reason people converted was to find deeper meaning and purpose in a one-stop, high morality faith rather than wasting energy pleasing the self or the committee of capricious gods on offer.

So he was a traveller on a pilgrimage - an active explorer wanting to make sense of his life and his world. He already had power and status and he already had money but this was not enough. He already had found a faith in the true God who helped him live a life of integrity and worship. But even this was not enough.

It is well worth remembering that there is no such thing as a completely satisfied or fulfilled person without a relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. Money, religion, status and influence can be real fun and quite satisfying but it is ultimately illusionary to conclude that this is enough. Please do not assume it is possible to live a fulfilled life this way for yourself or any around you. This is not the Christian world view. It is only the bliss of the ignorant, the satisfaction of the second rate, or the full stomach from junk food. Light, truth, and tastes are to be had which far exceed the present experience of apparent contentment giving the lie to the now and bringing colour to the black and white vision. The present doesn't become irrelevant, just transformed by the entry of the Carpenter.

So look around you at your fellow employees or your correspondents

on the screen and remember the new world beyond the visible.

Which is where Philip comes in. A supernatural voice spoke into his mind like some ethereal GPS navigation aid and directed him to the old desert road southbound from Jerusalem to Gaza – not to be confused with the new Gaza road, built forty years after the destruction of Old Gaza Town.

These directions were specific because they were time dependant – there was no time for error.

So with specific but incomplete instructions, Philip joins the road. Clearly he is a good listener because the angel's voice is now replaced by the Spirit Himself and Philip is instructed to join the Ethiopian's pilgrimage. Now Philip listens to the official and only when he has heard this third voice does he speak, and then it is a question. It is at this point that the official speaks the musical words for a person of the Way to hear – "Tell me please".

Philip started where the man was and told him the good news about Jesus.

And in that moment achieved something of significance. The encounter was over in less than a day, more likely in hours or minutes but the official went back to his work with a new understanding, a new friend, a new outlook, a new language and a new heart. You can be sure that good news came to the treasury and the court when he returned.

The old Gaza road was the classic brief encounter. It was possible because Philip had learned to listen. He had learnt to take a step at a time. He had learnt to ask good questions and he had learned to begin where someone is and tell them the good news. He had learned to bring someone into real spiritual life.

Like cardio-vascular fitness prepares you for a sprint, so lifelong learning prepares you for the moment. When you keep learning all these skills that Philip demonstrated each day, it tunes you up to perform under pressure.

How long does it take to achieve something of great significance - an instant and a lifetime – no time and all time – one day and every day. Have a good day.

Work well,

Geoff Shattock

Please note that in last week's WakeUpCall there was a sentence which read 'The most notorious of Christians has arrived in Damascus'. It should have read 'The most notorious murderer of Christians has arrived in Damascus'.-apologies for the error.

If you would like some help reviewing your life, work or career path, we offer one-to-one coaching sessions for just such purposes. Please email comms@worknetuk.org for details.

*Archives
Updated*



*see News
below*

Here is some Biblical background for this week's Wake Up Call

Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40

26Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

30Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

33In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

34The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" 38And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

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Also remember to have a look at the Bible sections for the biblical background to your Wake Up Call

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