

ACTS 8:26-40
THE BIBLE – IMPACT

You are being driven in your limo; you're sitting in the back reading the Bible; you're not sure that you understand it but it will change your life for the much better. You're in church, sitting waiting for the service to begin; you pick up the Bible from the seat and begin to read the passage for today; it makes sense and begins to change the way you think about life. You're sitting in the café waiting for your friend, who is late; you take out your phone and open up the Bible Society Lyfe app that you downloaded two days ago and begin reading; you find it fascinating and it begins to open your eyes to what Jesus is like. You are chatting with your friends over dinner, and one of them tells of the story of being driven home in his limo and of the bible that he's picked up and he says "here's what I discovered" and he tells you about what he read and how someone explained it to him; you want to know more and you are full of questions and together you explore the Bible and find Jesus.

In all kinds of ways, we can explore the Bible. That's what the man in his chariot was doing on his long journey home from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. He was reading Isaiah 53 when we find him; he's not sure who he is reading about. But God has sent Philip to meet him on the road and Philip begins to explain, helps our man explore the Bible and find Jesus coming up out of the pages of the book. He meets Jesus; he finds faith in Jesus; meeting Jesus changes his life and he wants to show that by being baptised. Off he goes home to Africa, taking the Bible with him; taking his faith with him; and in a sense taking Jesus with him to share his faith with the people he meets. The gospel begins to go to the ends of the earth.

The Bible leads us to Jesus. The Bible doesn't want us just to become experts in Bible knowledge; there is nothing wrong with knowing about the books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. But that is not what the Bible is about. The Bible leads us to Jesus! "Who is this about?" asks the man in his chariot. Jesus is the answer! He's not there on every page, but Jesus is the heart and the centre of the story; the Bible is a signpost with "Jesus" all over it. We read stories about Jesus; we read Isaiah 53 telling us six or seven hundred years before what Jesus would do; we read letters telling us how to live because we believe in Jesus. The Bible leads us to Jesus.

The Bible leads us to faith: the man believed in Jesus because of what he read. The best response to reading the Bible is to believe in Jesus and then later to read more so that our faith in Him will grow stronger. Faith grows as we read the Bible; it is food for our faith; it is what makes faith grow stronger. It tells us of people who wrestle with faith; of people who want to do God's will but it's a struggle; of people who rejoice in finding treasure; of people who learn to trust God every day no matter what. God speaking to all of these people and loving them and helping them and speaking to us through them – that's what we find when we read the Bible and that's how our faith grows. The Bible leads us to faith.

The Bible makes an impact! Over the next 15-20 minutes it will be for you to decide what kind of impact this story makes on you; or what kind of impact the Bible as a whole makes on you. There are different ways to consider this impact: there are pictures for those who think in pictures; you can listen to the story again; you can reflect quietly in prayer; there are things to make; you can ask questions; you can talk to your neighbour about how the bible has shaped your life. All of these are designed to help you consider what kind of impact the Bible makes on your life; how is God speaking to us today; how can we be like Philip and help others understand the Bible?