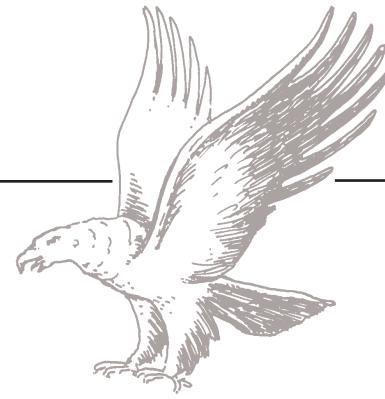


# Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."*  
Isaiah 40:31



December 14, 2014

## A Heart Prepared

Conversion to the Lord is not a matter of slick presentation or cleverly designed arguments, but of the right kind of heart in the hearer. A major part of our task is to prepare that ground.

*"Now as they went down the road,  
they came to some water. And the  
eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What  
hinders me from being baptized?'" (Ac.  
8:36).*



Every preacher dreams of encountering this kind of prospect. A brief Bible study with a total stranger, then—*presto!*—a baptism. Philip's success in this episode was not due to his powers of persuasion or the polished handouts he used in his presentation. The preacher is not the highlight here, but the prospect—specifically, the prospect's *heart*.

God once promised forgiveness to everyone “who prepares his heart to seek God” (2 Chron. 30:19). Jesus described a prepared heart—“a noble and good heart”—as the rich, fertile soil in which the seed of God’s word can take root and grow (Lk. 8:15). In the Ethiopian eunuch, we see that kind of heart. Consider the evidence:

First, this man had traveled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God (v. 27). That was a long and difficult journey just to exercise his

faith, but for this man, it was serious business that was worth the trouble.

Second, his travel reading on this long trip was not business paperwork or the latest Clancy novel, but the book of Isaiah. The fact that he (a) bothered to take along a large bulky scroll for this trip, and (b) chose to read it rather than a more entertaining pastime, is testimony to a heart that was thirsting to know the mind of God. There was no better way to spend his spare time than in reading God’s word.

Third, he had no reservations about talking Bible with a complete stranger. Notice that Philip did not press himself upon the Ethiopian. Instead, when the Ethiopian caught the barest hint that Philip was a man of the Book, he invited him to come up into the chariot to talk about it. He had no idea who Philip was, but a fellow Bible student had to be interesting company—and in this case, providentially so.

Finally—and most importantly—this man had humility. It took humility to admit he didn’t understand what he was reading. It took even more humility

to honestly consider what Philip was teaching him. His fellow Jews in Jerusalem were shutting their ears against this teaching, even trying to stamp it out. But not this man; his heart was eager to listen and learn.

All these qualities prepared him for this unique moment. So when Philip unfolded the remarkable story of Jesus, there was no hesitation, no pushback, just one simple question: “What hinders me?” The answer: nothing! The seed had found a noble and good heart, and a new child of God was born that day. The eunuch “went on his way rejoicing” (v. 39), thrilled at the new relationship with God he had discovered.

Today, people who have that same kind of heart are rare. But they’re out there, and our task is to find them. Sometimes, like the eunuch, they are already disposed to listen, and conversion is quick. Other times, we may need to gently massage and soften cold hearts to help them become more receptive to the truth. That takes time. But however that state of mind is achieved, once it is obtained, God’s word will do the rest.

—David King