

Week of May 20-26

## **UNEXPECTED**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Acts chapter 8

Today's devotional is the first of a three-part focus on the theme of the unexpected. Life is filled with expectations isn't it; those we have of ourselves and others and those others have of us? When I do premarital or marital counseling with couples, I often have them list expectations they have of each other. I find that bringing the expectations out into the open can help couples discover whether the expectations are realistic or not and how previously unspoken but unrealized expectations might have led to conflict in their relationship.

Life is not just filled with expectations we each have of each other, though, it's also often filled with expectations we have of God. It's almost like we can't help ourselves. We think we have God figured out. We know the way he is supposed to work, how he is supposed to answer our prayers, how things are going to turn out. And, then, God doesn't meet our expectation and we get confused, even mad. God, however, is Sovereign and this means He is in control. He knows those times when what we want may not be what we need and he gives us an unexpected answer. Other times, he has a plan that we can't see from our limited perspective but he can and he calls us simply to trust and obey him.

Such is the case with Philip in our chapter reading today. You may remember Philip. He was one of the seven men, along with Stephen, chosen to assist in the distribution of food for the widows. He started his ministry as a servant to those in need. In time, the Lord enlarged his ministry and empowered him to perform signs and wonders as he preached the gospel in Samaria. Folks were getting saved, healed and delivered of demonic oppression. A powerful and supernatural revival from God was taking place and, then, in the midst of very successful ministry, the angel of the Lord called Philip to a place of obscurity. *"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* Did you catch that? The desert road! Not exactly a place of bustling ministry. The desert road!

And what was Philip's response to this unexpected ministry transition? Did he whine about it? Did he question it? Was he mad about it? No, he simply trusted and obeyed the Lord's leading even though it probably made no sense to him at all. And, wouldn't you know it? The God who knows everything had already set up a divine appointment for Philip in the form of an Ethiopian eunuch. Where was this appointment? You guessed it. On the desert road! By the time the conversation was over, the eunuch had come to faith in Christ. According to tradition, it was this conversion that led to the establishment of the Christian faith in Ethiopia, a faith that endures to this day in that country. All this, simply because Philip was willing to trust God when he acted in an unexpected way. How about you? Are you ready for God's unexpected in your life?

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Be on the lookout today for unexpected doors of ministry to open to you. Pray that you don't miss them and that, rather than whining or complaining that it wasn't what you expected, simply trust and obey God.

**Take-a-way:** *When God acts in an unexpected way, your job is to trust and obey.*