

# Arise and Go

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. That was a great song. Amen. Appreciate that very much. And it's an honor to be here tonight for this graduation service. And let me say, that group up there, I'm not sure what I'm looking at.

I don't know if it's a advertisement for Hawaii Five-0 or maybe NCIS or with Juan, maybe 007. Amen. And so I don't know about any of those things. And so, but we're honored to be here with you tonight. And what a great treat. I'm glad to have the opportunity to preach to these graduates. And what a great group of students. Amen. I was thinking of some of the places they've been. And I guess looking back a long, long time ago, when I was in high school, I probably didn't even know where those places were on the map. And they've already been to those places. And I've seen Juan around and Chase and Anna and the services. And then Greg is really the only one I can say anything about.

Greg, I'm glad he graduated, but he is a terrible chaperone. He was chaperoning for Bethany and Kaysen before they were married. And we were in Ohio and we went to a restaurant together and we were walking back to the car. And my wife and I were walking out in front. Kaysen and Bethany were behind us and Greg was with them because he was chaperoning.

And I look back and Kaysen and Bethany were holding hands. And I'm like, Greg, what are you doing? He's like, Mr. Staley, they're not in my eyesight. I was like, come on, Greg, help a man out. But I am proud of them. And I thank the Lord for this opportunity to be here tonight and preach a challenge to them, even though their lives already have been a challenge to me. I'm thankful for young people that begin to serve the Lord even before they've graduated from high school. See, you don't have to wait till you're an old person to serve God. It's best to get involved now and get started now and find your place and say, God, what is it you want me to do? And I believe that would be a great blessing. And so thank you to the students. Open your Bible, if you would, tonight to Acts chapter number eight. Acts chapter number eight tonight. We're going to begin reading in verse number 28.

Acts chapter number eight. And we'll begin reading in verse number 28 this evening. And Miss Betty, I'm going to say it is, I'm honored. I tell you, I do not know. I'm speechless almost.

[ 2 : 21 ] Amen. Well, I can't be totally speechless because I got to preach, right? So like it'd be a silent message if I was speechless. So I have to have a little bit of speech left. But Acts chapter number eight, let's begin reading in verse number 26, if we could. The Bible says, and the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went, and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem for the worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot, read Isaiah the prophet. Then the spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.

Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Isaiah and said, Understand this, understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?

And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, like a lamb dumb before his shear, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. The title of the message we found this evening in verse number 26, Arise and Go. Arise and Go. What happens in this passage of scripture is really an amazing thing about Philip? But the Lord came to Philip and said, Hey, I want you to arise and go. And the one thing I love about Philip and we learn about in scripture is that Philip, wherever he was at, he just desired to serve God. See, Philip started out as a faithful layman in the church. He was just somebody there that was there every Sunday morning,

Sunday night, Wednesday night. Whenever they got together, Philip was there. And so he served as a faithful layman in the church. And then in Acts chapter number six, when there was murmuring because the widows were being neglected, they came to the apostles and they said, listen, the widows being neglected, nobody's taking care of them. And the apostle said, listen, it's not right for us to leave the word of God to serve tables. Look out among you seven men of honest report, men full of the Holy Ghost, men of wisdom. And they selected those men. And Philip was one of the men that was selected.

I believe those were the first deacons in the church. So not only was Philip a faithful layman, but he was a serving deacon in the church. And then in the beginning of Acts chapter number eight, there was persecution that came. Why did the persecution come? I would say to you this, I say it was God that allowed the persecution to come because when Jesus ascended back to heaven, he said, you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth. And in Acts chapter number eight, there, everybody's still in Jerusalem. You know, it's an amazing thing, Vision Baptist Church, because people are always leaving Vision Baptist Church.

[ 5 : 41 ] People are always being sent out of Vision Baptist Church. And we might think, man, it would be great if everybody would just stay here. Think of how big the church would be. But that was never God's intention. Amen. God's intention, God's goal was always to evangelize the world. And so Philip goes to Samaria in Acts chapter number eight. He preaches Christ there. People believe the message. People are baptized there. And great things are happening in Samaria. But when we come to verse 26, notice it was the angel of the Lord that spake to Philip. And he said, arise and go toward the south under the way they go down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went. I want to give the graduates and also everyone listening tonight. I want to give you three attitudes that we need to have if we're going to arise and go, if we're going to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in these last days.

And I believe these are the last days. Amen. I'm looking for the Lord Jesus Christ to come anytime. And he could come at any time. And so we have to understand if we're going to serve the Lord, we need to begin serving the Lord now. So I want to give you these three attitudes that I believe we find in this passage of scripture. The first attitude is this. Number one is we must be submissive to the will of God. God has a will for your life. God has a purpose for your life.

Graduates, I'm excited about what you've already accomplished, what you've already done. And some of you are going to enter the training center. Some of you are going to go to college to become an English major. And you'll scare Trent and me for the rest of our lives every time we get up to preach. And I can understand with Trent on that. And you're going to serve God. But you have to always say, God, what is your will for my life? And we must be submissive to the will of God.

But it's not just the graduates. See, God has a will. God has a purpose for every person in this room tonight. And we have to ask ourselves, God, what is your will for my life? What is your purpose for me? Why am I alive? Why am I still breathing? God, what do you want me to do? And many times our flesh and God's will conflict. Many times there's a struggle. And so we must learn to be submissive to the will of God. I remember when I was a young preacher and God had called me to preach. And I thought, I said, we would have evangelists come. And I know how much Greg loves brother, the brother in Maryland, what's his name? Brother Kenny Baldwin. And so we would have preachers like Kenny Baldwin come to our church and they'd be an, they called them evangelists. I didn't even know, really know what evangelists was, but whenever they came, everybody was excited when they came.

And I said, Lord, that's what I want to do. I said, I want to be like that. If not, Lord, I just want to pastor a perfect group of people. Amen. A group of people with no problems, no issues.

[ 8 : 26 ] Amen. And I later learned that you can't do that. There's no perfect churches. And then, but we, whenever we had missionaries come to our church, it was kind of always the sad meeting because sometimes the missionary would come and they, they, they didn't preach like the evangelist. And so I would, I would tell the Lord, I'd say, God, I'd love to be an evangelist. I wouldn't mind being a pastor, but I don't want to be a missionary. And I said that for several years and it wasn't until I really surrendered my heart and in my life and said, God, I'm tired of telling you what I want to do.

God, I'm willing to do whatever you want me to do that God began to move in my life. And it was shortly after that, that brother Austin and miss Betty came to England when I was still in the air force. And I learned about Peru. And later I would take a trip to Peru and we would go and we'd serve in Peru. And I've enjoyed being a missionary, but listen, you have to be submissive to God's will.

Let me share some things with you about God's will real quickly that we see in this passage. Number one, God's will is often unexplained. When I look at this passage of scripture, the angel of the Lord said to Philip, arise and go. And Philip arose and went. He didn't, the angel of the Lord didn't say, Philip, this is why you need to go. Here's the reason you need to go. Here's who you're going to meet. No, the angel of the Lord just said, arise and go. And Philip arose and went. See God's will does, God doesn't have to explain himself. Amen. God says it, that settles it. We just obey God. We trust God and we follow God. So God's will is often unexplained. God's will is often unusual. When I read this story, I'm amazed. I'm like, Philip was in a great place. Philip was in Samaria. Philip was seeing people saved. It was so exciting there that Peter and John even came down to Samaria to see what was happening and see all that was going on. I mean, what an exciting place.

But now the angel of the Lord said, I want you to leave there and I want you to go to the desert. Notice what it says in the text. He says, I want you to go down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. Now, let me ask you this. We have a lot of missionaries through here. There's a lot of missionaries on Thursday night that presents their field. When's the last time you heard a missionary say, I'm a missionary to the desert? Why would somebody go to the desert? What's in a desert?

Nothing. Sand. There's no housing development. There's no people. It's just sand. And so you might say, well, that would be weird if a missionary was going to the desert. But that's where God wanted Philip to go. And Philip arose and went. So God's will is often unusual. But I would say this also, what's unusual about it is that God would use us. Amen. That God would allow us to be in the ministry.

[ 11 : 10 ] That's the unusual part to me because I look at God and I say, God, why? There's people more intelligent than me. There's people that have better English grammar than I do. There's people that can remember all the books they read and they have a photographic memory. They'd be better preachers than me. But God says, no, I want to use you. And so God's will is often unusual. But let me say this. God's will is often unforeseen. It's unforeseen. What do I mean by that? Well, look at what the passage says in verse 27. And he arose and went speaking of Philip and behold, a man of Ethiopia and eunuch of great authority. It's like when Philip obeyed God, God put a whole bunch of things in motion. God begins to describe who the Ethiopian eunuch is. He begins to tell us about him and he begins to tell us some things about the Ethiopian eunuch. See, we never know all the results of our obedience to God's will. When God lays something on your heart to do and you obey it, you never know all the results that take place. I was in Virginia in a church and the pastor was in the army.

And I asked him, I said, how long have you been in the army for? He said, I was in the army for three years. And I always like to ask our veterans, when did you get saved? You get saved before you went in the army, while you were in the army or after you got out of the army. And he said, brother Mike, I got saved while I was in the army. I said, well, tell me your story. He said, well, one day I was at the chow hall. I got my tray. I walked through the food line. I got the food I wanted. I went and sat down at a table. In the middle of that table, somebody had put a gospel track. I picked that gospel track up. I read it. I glanced at it. I put it in my pocket. I said, I'll take a look at this later. He got home that night after his duty was over. He took that gospel track out. He read it.

There was a church stamped on the back of that gospel track. On Sunday morning, he went to that church and he heard the gospel preached. And at the end of the service, during the invitation, he went to the altar and he asked Jesus Christ in his heart and in his life. I'm saying God's will is unforeseen. That individual that left that gospel track, they didn't know anybody was going to pick it up. They didn't know who was going to read it. They didn't know what was going to happen.

But now that pastor got out of the army, went to Bible college, and now he pastors a church in Virginia and he's led people to Christ. And there's going to be somebody that gets to heaven someday and there's going to be a whole bunch of people around him. And he's going to say, where did all these people come from? And God's going to say, you remember when you left that gospel track? There was a young man that picked that up. And these are all the people he led to the Lord because of your obedience to the Lord's will. See, we give in the offering, but we never know all the results that take place of our giving as we give to missions, as we give to the church.

We never see all the things that take place until we get to heaven. So the first attitude we have to have is we must be submissive to the will of God. God's will is often unforeseen. But I want you to skip down to verse 29. Notice the next thing, if you would. The next attitude. It says, Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Isaiah and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? So the second thing, the second attitude is this. We need to be sensitive to the ways of God. Notice first it was the angel Lord said, Arise and go. Now it's the Spirit that said, Go near and join. Now I got a question for you, your Bible scholars, Bible students. If Philip didn't obey the first command, would he have gotten the second command? I don't think he would have because he wouldn't have been in the right place. He wouldn't have been in the right position. He wouldn't even know there was a chariot passing by. But because he obeyed the first command, God could come to him and say, Hey,

[ 14 : 54 ] Philip, I want you to go near and join to that chariot. And Philip, the Bible says that Philip took off and he ran. He ran thither to him and he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. And so the second attitude we have to have is be sensitive to the ways of God. What are the ways of God? The ways of God I see in this passage are two things. Number one is that God uses the word of God. Notice the Ethiopian eunuch was reading the word of God. He was trying to understand the word of God. He wanted to learn about the word of God. And listen, it's always God's word that doesn't return void. Amen.

It's God's word that doesn't return void. I mean, we can give our testimony, we can share our experience, and all those things are good, but they don't compare to the word of God because the word of God will continue to convict in an individual's heart long after what you said is, is passed and is forgotten. It's the word of God that God uses. And I would encourage our graduates to stay in God's word, read the word of God, hear the preaching of the word of God, study the word of God, make this the book that you want to remember more than anything else is the word of God because God uses his word. The second thing I want to point out here in this, to be sensitive to the ways of God is that God uses people. God uses people. Now see, God is a big God. God could have wrote it in the sand for the Ethiopian eunuch. Amen. If he desired, God could have put a billboard out there for the Ethiopian eunuch if he desired. And somebody would say, well, there weren't billboards built in those days. Well, do you think the creator of the heavens and the earth could not build a billboard? Amen. But you know what God used?

God called a man from Samaria to go to the desert. Why? Because God uses people. You know, one of the great things about the testimony these young people said, they thanked people in their lives, whether it was a youth pastor, a parent, a mom, a dad, a pastor. It was people that influenced them. And God uses people in our lives. Let me prove it to you. I want you to think of who was instrumental in getting you in church or leading you to the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was instrumental in getting you to church or leading you to the Lord Jesus Christ? Everybody that has a name on their mind, raise their hand.

Look at that. All over the auditorium. Why is that? Because there was an individual responsible in your life. Austin Cook, for you, who was it? Pastor Joe Hoffman. For you, Trent, who was it?

Your sister. For you, brother Jeff Bush, who was it? Everybody has a different person. And if we went around this room, there's probably not too many people that have the same person.

[ 17 : 49 ] That's your Philip. Amen. That was the person that prayed for you. That was the person that invited you to church. For my wife and I was a co-worker by the name of Eric. He would always invite us to Victory Baptist Church in England. He would always invite us to the picnics. And he would invite us to the revivals. And he would always invite us. He would leave. He worked day shift.

My wife worked the night shift. And he would leave a to-do list. And on the bottom of that to-do list, he would put a Bible verse. He was our Philip. And the person you raised your hand for, they are your Philip. But here's my question for you. Who are you trying to be a Philip to? Who are you praying that'll come to Vision Baptist Church? Who are you praying in your family, in your workplace, in your school? Who are you praying for that would come to know Jesus Christ this coming year?

Who are you praying? See, not only do we need a Philip in our life, we need to be a Philip to somebody else. Amen. Hey, there should be somebody we're praying for. There should be somebody we're inviting. Hey, there should be somebody we care about. And we say, hey, we want to see that person saved. We want to invite him to the activities at Vision. We want to invite him to special days. We want to invite him whenever we can. We want them to be in church. We want them to come to know Christ.

And graduates, I would say to you, God wants to use you. The one great thing in each of your testimonies, you've already led people to Lord, whether it be in your family or other people.

What a great testimony. Hey, continue to do that because God wants to use you. So be sensitive to the ways of God. We're going to skip down to verse number 39. The first attitude, be submissive to God's will. The second attitude, be sensitive to God's way. But I want you to look down at verse 39 if you would. It says, and when they were come up out of the water, they've, Philip, an Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip about baptism. Philip said, if you believe in your heart, you can be baptized. The Ethiopian eunuch says, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and he baptized him. And so verse 39, when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. So notice it was the angel of the Lord at first, then it was the spirit of God. Now it's the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more and he went on his way rejoicing. The idea of that word caught away there is how we'll be caught out of this world at the rapture. When the rapture comes, we'll be caught out. We'll be snatched out of this world. And the Bible says that when they come up out of the water after Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, that Philip was caught away. And the Bible says the Ethiopian eunuch saw him no more. You say, preacher, explain that to me. I can't, but Greg has graduated high school and he can explain it to you. Amen. All I know is that the Bible says he didn't see him. And so that means he didn't see him anymore. But notice what the Ethiopian eunuch did.

[ 20 : 33 ] He went on his way rejoicing. Why? Because he had Jesus Christ in his heart and in his life. He had met the most important person he needed to meet in life. Amen. He had met the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so with or without Philip, he could go on his way back home rejoicing because he found what he was looking for. Amen. He found Jesus Christ. He was looking into scriptures. He was trying to determine, hey, who is the prophet talking about? Is he talking about himself or some other man? And Philip preached Jesus to him and he was saved and he followed salvation with baptism. And now he can go on his way.

He's rejoicing. Why? He had Jesus in his heart and in his life. But look at verse 40. But Philip was found at Azotus and passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Philip was caught away. He's found at Azotus. He makes his way north preaching. We know he preached Christ. He preached Jesus. He all the way to Caesarea. Now what's important about Caesarea?

Well, that's where Philip's home would be. The apostle Paul in Acts chapter 21, verse number 8, will go to Caesarea. He'll go to the home of Philip. Philip will open his house to the apostle Paul. And the Bible says that Paul abode with him many days. Now here's what the Bible says about Philip. Philip, an evangelist, one of the seven, he had four daughters. They were virgins. They prophesied.

[ 21 : 55 ] This is some 20, 25 years later and Philip is still serving God. Philip still loves God. He's still preaching Christ. He's still preaching Jesus. He's still in love with the Lord. And the final attitude I want to give you tonight is this. Be surrendered to the work of God. Be surrendered to the work of God all the days of your life. Hey, you've had a great beginning. You've started well, but just continue to serve God until God takes you home. Amen. Be surrendered to God's work. Just be involved.

You don't, you can be a faithful layman. You can be a serving deacon. You can be, when persecution comes, you can go and preach. You can be a missionary to the desert. You can be an evangelist, whatever. Just have a desire to serve God. I always say when I got saved in England, I went to church all my life. My mom had a rule. If you live in my house, you go to church. And so I would act like I had a headache. I'd act like I was sick. I'd act like I didn't want to go to church. But my mom was pretty strict and I'm glad she was. And so I was always in church. But when I got saved as a 23-year-old young man in England, God changed my heart. I went from having to go to church to wanting to go to church. I couldn't wait for Wednesday night. I couldn't wait for Thursday night. I needed the fellowship. I needed the singing. I needed to hear the preaching of God's word. And so God changed my desires. And then God even changed more desires in my heart. Because I stopped thinking about myself and I started thinking, hey, what can I do for God? How can I serve God? And so I went to my pastor and

I said, pastor, I said, I just gotten saved, but can I do something in the church? And the preacher said, you know something that would help with brother Mike, if you would clean the baptistry before we baptize somebody. So my first job in the church was cleaning the baptismal pool. Amen.

And so we don't have one of those here. We set it up temporarily and take it down. But we had a baptism pool. It was outside the church. And so I went to men's fellowship and the men's fellowship was on a Saturday. We had breakfast, we prayed, and then everybody went to their job.

So we had breakfast, we prayed. I went to the cleaning closet. I got spick and span, soft scrub, Mr. Clean, every cleaning product that was in there, grabbed the broom, went to the baptistry, took my shoes off, took my socks off, rolled up my pants. I got in that baptistry, got the spiders out, put soft scrub, spick and span, Mr. Clean in there. I had a, I had, we in the air force, we said, the better it smells, the cleaner it is. Amen. And so that was my motto.

[ 24 : 24 ] So I scrub, I'm scrubbing away, getting that clean. Some of the men came in there and they're like, brother Mike, does your wife know you can do that? And I said, no. And don't you tell her. Amen. What happens at men's fellowship stays at men's fellowship. Amen. Hey, there's some things your wife don't need to know you know how to do. And so I said, don't you tell her I'm doing this for the Lord. Amen. And so that was my first job in the church. And then I would come to him. I went to my pastor. I said, pastor, I'll keep cleaning the baptistry. Is there something else I can do?

Can I be involved in the church? Is there some, as a class I can teach? Is there a class I can help in? And I said, preacher, can I teach the adult class? I don't know why everybody wants to teach the adult class. I said, can I teach the adult class? He said, brother, brother Mike, we already got somebody there. I said, okay, what about the teens? I mean, the teens like pizza. They like activities.

Can I teach the teens? He's like, brother Mike, we already got somebody there. We have a lot of singles in the military ministry. And so I said, can I work with the singles? He said, we already got somebody there. I said, preacher, is there any class I can help in? I want to do something else besides just cleaning the baptistry. He said, brother Mike, there is one class we need somebody in.

I said, what class is that? He said, the two and three year olds. Now you got to understand my wife and I were newly married. We had no children. Amen. You know what that makes us, right? Experts in child ring. Amen. You ever realize that before you have kids, you know everything. And then you have kids and you're like, oh Lord, please help us. I mean, so that's where we were. But I said, hey, I want to do something for God. I want to serve God. So I said, I'll take the two and three year olds. I said, preacher, we'll take the class. So we got in there. We had six or seven, two and three year olds.

And we had a very young church. And so we had six or seven, two and three year olds. I got them, sat down in the class. By this time, God's called me to preach. So I know I need an introduction, three points and a poem. Amen. And so I got those little kids sit down. I began in my introduction.

[ 26 : 11 ] I'm going to town. All of a sudden, one of those little boys raised his hand. He said, brother Mike, we forgot to sing. I said, oh, I said, well, I can't sing. Amen. Me and Trent sang one time and it didn't turn out very well. Amen. I said, I can't sing and my wife can't sing. We're not going to have singing in this class. We got to focus on God's word. This is a foundational age. Amen. This is the building blocks. We got to get God's word in your heart and in your life. And so I continued on.

I might've made it to my first point. I might've still been in the introduction. One little girl raised her hand. She said, brother Mike, we forgot the color. I said, oh sister, if we don't have time to sing, we definitely don't have time to color. Amen. I got to get God's word in your heart. Your parents are dependent on me to train you in the word of God. I got to get it in your heart. And so I kept on going. All of a sudden I was going, I might've still been in the introduction, might've moved to the first point. I don't know. But we had some windows over here in our Sunday school class. And about that time, a little bird came to that window and all my class got up and ran to that window. And I'm like, come back, come back. I'm not done yet. And they're all looking at that bird. I had to change my whole message. I had to say, yes, God made the bird. God made the trees. God made the sky. God made everything. Amen. Now people always ask, what's the difference between teaching adults and teaching two and three year olds? You know what it is? Adults will continue to look at you when they're not interested. Two and three year olds. They just say, I'm out of here. I'm gone. Amen. I'm leaving. I'm done. I say that, say this. I just wanted to serve God. I just wanted to be involved. God had done so much for me when he saved me. I just wanted to serve him. So if we're going to rise and go, we must be submissive to the will of God. We must be sensitive to the ways of God. God uses people.

God wants to use you. Let him use you. And then we must be surrendered to the work of God. Hey, there is nothing greater taking place today than what's taking place in this church and churches around the world. Hey, we are a part of God's work. We are a part of things that are affecting eternity. So let's arise and go. Be submissive to the will of God. Be sensitive to the ways of God.

Be surrendered to the work of God.