

## Alabaré Sunday: Talk Outline

Text: Acts 8: 26-40

### Theme: the margins.

The lens of marginality shapes the talk. I define the meaning of the description 'the margins', I then move on to investigating the reading from Acts 8, and finally connect these with the work of Alabaré.

### Section One: Introducing the Concept

1. Ruling the margin on the page

Boundaries: belonging and not belonging in communities.

A person may be central at times and on the boundary at other times e.g. priest.

2. Marginality and understandings of the church:

Church as *community*-unusual as place where all can belong-but challenging to live this out

Church as *building*-can be one of the places where we experience both earthly and heavenly dimensions –Word, Sacraments, Beauty in artistic offering, one another

3. The margins as a place for growth:

A space to try things out

The time between endings and new beginnings

Working with feelings, seeing new perspectives and potential direction

4. Margins: understanding of this concept can be enriched by exploring the ideas connected with *borderlands* and *liminality*

### Section Two: The Reading Acts 8. 26-40

Applying the lens of marginality provides an interesting way of reading the text. The structure of the text is crucial and I identify five sections. The text is chiasmic and this places an emphasis on section three. Section one and five mirror one another as do two and four. In the central section the Ethiopian receives support from Philip in his exploration of the text from Isaiah.

#### ***Section One Acts 8. 26-28***

There is a journey from marginality, to being accompanied.

1. The Ethiopian was on the margins:
  - journeying-between and between
  - ethnicity
  - sexual status
  - lived a distance away from the 'center' (Jerusalem)
  - A Gentile who had converted to Judaism
- Expertise around the material i.e. financial

#### ***Stage Two Acts 8. 29-30a***

2. Philip, who reminds us of Elijah comes alongside

***Stage Three Acts 8. 30b-35***

3. The Ethiopian invites the prophet to explore the scriptures with him (cf Emmaus). He asks a key question, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'

***Stage four Acts 8. 32-38***

4. The text from Isaiah is about marginality. Philip (by implication) explores it as a framework to makes sense of Jesus' marginality and act of self-giving love.
5. This opportunity leads to a new life direction symbolized by baptism and entering into the community of Christ's followers. A powerful belonging as an equal.

***Stage Five Acts 8. 39-40***

6. Philip continues his proclamation elsewhere (Azotus and heading for Caesarea). The Ethiopian continues home.

**Section Three: Alabaré Christian Care and Support**

***1. Overview of the Charity***

For this information it is worthwhile going to the Alabaré website our <https://www.alabare.co.uk/about>. Here you will find crucial information about the charity and short *YouTube* clips that can be used.

***2. The vision for the process of working with clients in Alabaré: from marginality to abundant life***

- The client is moving from marginality and seeking support
- They connect with Alabaré. Staff come alongside.
- Alabaré key worker is invited in to actively support. Together there is exploration of the key questions being asked and issues being faced e.g. addiction, spirituality, financial challenges, reconciliation
- New decisions are made as the client moves towards independent living
- The client lives independently

***3. This vision has parallels with the structure of the reading from Acts 8. The reading is chiastic in structure.***

- We hear of the Ethiopian who is on the margins of society
- He is seeking understanding and support in this exploration of Jewish belief. Philip comes alongside.
- The central point is when the Ethiopian seeks support in his understanding scripture from Philip. They work together.
- The Ethiopian makes the decision to be baptized, giving his life new direction and belonging.
- Philip goes on to Azotus and Caesarea and the Ethiopian returns **home**.