

3. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Acts 10:44-47 NLT - 44 Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45 The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46 For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, 47 "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?"

Cornelius had been prepared and Peter had been prepared. Now the Good News was preached to the Gentiles. And as they listened, Cornelius and his household believed. They surrendered to Jesus in their hearts and at that moment they were saved.

What was the evidence that the Gentiles were saved? When had the Jews seen this happen before? What did the Gentiles do as a proclamation of their new-found faith?

It was not baptism, nor was it praying the sinner's prayer or walking down an aisle that saved these people but their faith in Christ alone saved them. The moment we surrender our heart to Jesus as our Lord, we are saved regardless of who we are or where we come from because Jesus is Lord of All.

WRAP-UP

It was a revelation to Peter that God loved those who weren't Jews equally as much as He did His chosen people. And Peter had to set aside his old beliefs to embrace what God was doing, because the Good News is Good News for all who fear God and do what's right.

Memory Verse

34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. - Acts 10:34-35 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge – If you find yourself unsuccessfully struggling to keep things they way they were, pause and ask God if you need to let go to receive something new He is trying to do.

“Creating Space for Something Greater”

Book of Acts – Week #12

INTRODUCTION

The early church probably had their hands full taking the Good News of Jesus the Messiah to their Jewish brothers. But as Jesus foretold, the Apostles were sent from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and now we find them challenged to carry the news of salvation to the Gentiles. We may take for granted that salvation was intended for all people, but to the Jews, their Messiah was God's promise to them alone. In fact, there was significant prejudice and mistrust between the Jews and Gentiles. Entering the home of the Gentile or sitting at their table was forbidden by Jewish law. And so, in order for Peter to follow God's instruction and go to Cornelius' home he had to set aside all the cultural and religious norms he had so diligently observed and make room for something new that God was doing.

Key Passage

ACTS 10

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Preparing Cornelius and Peter

Acts 10:1-6 NLT - 1 In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. 2 He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. 3 One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said. 4 Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! 5 Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. 6 He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore."

It was time for God to open wide the door to the Gentiles, and He had determined to use Peter to lead the way. But before Peter could preach, God had to prepare both Peter and his audience.

How is Cornelius described? What good things had he done? Why was he unlikely to be accepted by the Jews?

Despite the fact that he was not Jewish, Cornelius heard from an angel while he was in prayer. He was specifically told who was going to bring him a message and where to find him. Cornelius responded immediately. God could have told Cornelius the Good News directly, but He chooses to use people to share the message. Normally a Gentile wouldn't expect a Jew to respond to his request. In fact, in New Testament times Jews took an oath promising never to help a Gentile under any circumstance. But Cornelius trusted that he was being direct to Peter by God.

Have you ever been drawn to someone that God used to deliver a message to you? Perhaps you've sat in a sermon and it seemed the pastor was speaking directly to you? What are some things Cornelius did that helped prepare him to hear God's message that we can also do to prepare ourselves?

At the same time God prepared Cornelius, He was speaking to Peter. In his vision, Peter saw all kinds of animals and was given simple instructions; rise, kill and eat. (Acts 10:13) But to do that he would have to break Jewish dietary laws.

What was Peter's response?

Acts 10:14 NLT - 14 "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean."

This wasn't the first time Peter had declared, "No Lord!" Apparently, he hadn't learned the lesson Jesus tried to teach him when Jesus told Peter he was going to be killed and raised to life.

Matthew 16:22-23 NIV - 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

As our "Lord", Jesus should rightly be the master of our lives. However, like Peter, our minds are so focused on human concerns like following the rules and doing what was right, that we fail to give up control when the Lord Jesus directs us to do something different that requires us to change.

We find ourselves facing great change in the midst of the pandemic. But what if God is more interested in doing a new thing that getting us back

to the way we were? How have you seen the following change and what are the old ways you have had to set aside to embrace those changes?

- *Going to church*
- *Views on injustice and inequality*
- *Meeting the needs of others*
- *Worship*

When the three Gentiles showed up at Peter's door, he understood that what God had said to him in the vision was about more than food. This time Peter "got it" and invited the Gentiles in to stay the night with them. Peter had set aside his customs and traditions and beliefs about Gentiles and at that moment had a change of heart. And that is when God prepared Peter to open the door to the Gentiles.

2. God Shows No Partiality

Up to this time, a Gentile believer was first required to become a convert to Judaism and follow its ritual and spiritual observances if he wanted to follow the Jewish Messiah.

Acts 10: 34-36, 43 NLT - 34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 36 This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel--that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ... 43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

It took a voice from heaven and a vision, repeated three times before Peter saw clearly that God shows no partiality. Somehow Peter and all the other Jews, even those who followed Jesus, had missed this fact. The Jews were God's chosen people. But they were not the only people God cared about. They were chosen to bless the nations and through them salvation would come to everyone.

Have you ever been judged by your appearance and felt excluded? Who do you think has the hardest time being accepted into a typical church congregation? What can we do to welcome in those who feel alienated from God's people because of their race, culture or nationality?

1 Samuel 16:7 NLT - 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."