

Series: **The Original**
Today's Title: **"Seeking God"**

September 5, 2021 – Acts 10:1-8

Objective: To help Christians share the Gospel and seekers to be serious about their spiritual search for truth.

Opening prayer

Hide and seek is a classic children's game.

Growing up we had a variation of this game that we played outside - called 'Kick-the-can'. I spent countless summer nights playing this with the other kids in my neighborhood. When I was growing up in youth group, we played another variation of 'Hide and seek' - called 'Sardines'.

We would play Sardines at night - when we had the church all to ourselves. In Sardines, 1 person would hide somewhere - and after a countdown the other members of the youth group begin looking for the 1 person who was hiding. When you found the hiding person, you would hide with them. The game is over when there is only 1 person left looking.

Then, that person is the one who gets to hide in the next game - and so on.

When you're trying to find God, it can feel like a game of 'Hide-and-seek'.

You may get frustrated when you don't find God right away. When the answers you're seeking are elusive.

You may even ask the same question about God to 2 different people - and instead of clarity - you are confused because they give you 2 contradictory answers.

In our passage today - we are introduced to a man who was seeking God - and over time, He found God.

Turn to Acts 10:1-8 (p. 918)

The good news is that if you really want to know the truth about God - if you're sincere in your desire to know the truth - then God will make Himself known to you and draw you to Himself.

Read vs. 1-2

Are you genuinely seeking after God? vs. 1-2

Are you genuine in your search for spiritual truth?

Caesarea was a major city in the 1st century.

Herod the Great built Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus - around 22-10 B.C.

Both men were despised by the Jews - and therefore many Jews had a negative view of Caesarea.

It was a major seaport - and from Rome's perspective it was the capital city of Israel.

It was the center for Roman administration for all of Palestine.

(Pics)

It was the location of the Roman Governor's palace.

It was where large contingents of the Roman military were stationed.

There was an amphitheater.

All the military parades were held here - all the celebrations honoring Roman power and accomplishments were in Caesarea.

It was the location of the Roman legal structure in Israel.

In Caesarea there was a hippodrome where gladiators fought, and chariot races were held.

There was a large and upscale market - with inlaid mosaic tile floors.

Cornelius was a military leader - a centurion - which meant he was the leader over at least 100 soldiers.

The modern-day equivalent would be a captain in the army.

His group was “known as the Italian Cohort” - which tells us they were an elite group that was especially loyal to Caesar.

But Cornelius is not what you might expect.

He’s a committed soldier - a strong leader who was loyal to his country.

He was a man of influence, power, and accomplishment.

But he was also a Gentile - who was “a devout man who feared God with all his household”.

“devout” is explained at the end of the verse - where it says he “gave alms generously...and prayed continually to God...”

If you looked at him you probably wouldn't know that he was a serious seeker of the one, true God.

His appearance would not give away his spiritual posture.

In fact, you would probably assume the exact opposite.

But here is a man - a Gentile - most likely uncircumcised - who was a 'God-fearer' - and his spiritual interest was not just his personal thing - he influenced his entire family and servants.

He was the spiritual leader in his home.

His spiritual sincerity is evidenced by 3 things:

1. He feared God *with all his household*
2. His charity to people in need
3. His constant praying

He wasn't casually talking about spiritual things or pursuing some sort of individualized 'spirituality'.

He was seeking the God of Israel.

This alone separated him from his fellow Romans who worshiped many gods.

He was monotheistic - they were polytheistic.

His seeking impacted his family - his wallet - and his daily schedule as he prayed “continually” at specific times of the day (vs. 3).

So, we see that this Cornelius is a unique man - who is genuinely seeking God.

Some non-believers want to know spiritual truth. vs. 1-2

This is a short point - but an important one for us to know.

It's easy for Christians to adopt the view that nobody in the culture is interested in spiritual truth.

It's easy for us to become cynical toward those who don't darken a church door - who live much differently than we do.

It's easy to lump all non-believers into the same category and think the last thing they want to talk about is what the Bible says about Jesus.

But we would be mistaken if this is what we think.

It is true that some people don't care about spiritual things - they don't care about the Bible - about Jesus - about the Church.

But some do.

Some people are eager to know - curious - fearful of what they don't know.

- Fearful that they will miss out.
- Fearful that they don't know God.
- Fearful that they aren't good enough for heaven.

That's why we're here.

That's why the Church exists - to share the Gospel with these spiritual seekers.

The Church exists to share the truth of sin - and the truth of God's love, grace, and forgiveness with those who don't yet believe.

For so many centuries - generation after generation - the Jewish people thought they had a monopoly on God.

They believed God was only interested in them.

They believed God didn't want anything to do with the Gentiles - the non-Jews.

But they were wrong.

Jesus told them they were wrong.

In **Luke 4** - when Jesus announces His ministry to His hometown - they wanted to throw Him off a cliff

because He dared mention that at certain points in their history God chose Gentiles over Jews.

Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of God was not an exclusive kingdom for Jews only.

Matthew 8:11

"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven..."

It's vitally important that we understand this principle:

All people have a sense within themselves - that there is a God.

Romans 1:19-20

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

20 For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.”

So, the question for each of us this morning is:

Who has God placed in your life that is not yet a believer - but has a desire to know about Jesus?

When you seek after God, He will respond. vs. 3-4

When you genuinely seek after God, He will make Himself known to you.

You will find Him.

This is a truth we see throughout the Bible.

Proverbs 8:17

“I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me diligently find Me.”

Isaiah 55:6

“Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near...”

Jeremiah 29:12-14

“Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD...”

Matthew 7:7-8

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Hebrews 11:6

“Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”

We must remember that God wants to be found.

He wants to redeem sinners.

He wants to forgive your sins.

Be encouraged and know that when you seek Him - He will respond!

Read vs. 3-4

Cornelius has been seeking God - worshipping God - praying - giving to help the poor.

He wasn't circumcised - He wasn't a proselyte to Judaism - but he was following the O.T. directives to care for the poor and he followed the prayer times practiced in Judaism.

The “ninth hour” was 3:00 p.m. (Jewish time started around 6:00 a.m.).

He was following the Jewish prayer disciplines when the angel appears to him in a vision.

He has the normal reaction we see in Scripture when an angel appears - he was terrified.

vs. 4 - “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”

The alms he gave would have been through a local synagogue and would have gone to help the poor in that area.

What was he praying? Reverse-engineer his prayer.

His prayers were likely prayers that were seeking God - asking to know Him more - to know how he could be forgiven.

We know this because the answer to his prayers was to send for the Apostle Peter who will bring the Gospel.

The angel says his prayers and almsgiving “have ascended as a memorial before God.”

If you are seeking God - if you are sincere in your desire to know God - you can be encouraged to know your prayers are heard by Him.

He hears them - the language here is similar to the language of sacrifices offered to God and the aroma - the smoke rises, and the imagery and metaphor is that it is a sweet aroma to God.

The good works you do as you seek the truth about God and Christ - as you seek the truth about forgiveness of sins - they do make a difference.

However, we see another important principle for those who are seeking God - and for those who are believers:

When seeking God, seek out those who know Him. vs.5-8

For those seeking God: Make sure you look for answers to your spiritual questions from those who are followers of Christ.

For those who are followers of Christ: Be ready to respond - to give answers to those who have questions!!

Read vs. 5-8

The angel doesn't tell Cornelius to talk to some guy who claims to be spiritual.

He doesn't send him to the local pagan temple priest to get the answers he's seeking.

He sends Cornelius 55 miles to the south - to Joppa - to one of the Apostles - to someone who knew Jesus - who was a follower of Jesus - who could answer questions about the risen Jesus and how Jesus died to pay the price for his sins.

When you are seeking answers about Jesus - go to those who know Jesus!

- Talk with Christians who are actively growing in their faith - who live their faith.

- Listen to sermons and podcasts that have a high view of Jesus - a high view of the Bible - a high view of the Church.

I'm currently creating videos that we post to the church's YouTube channel - 10-15 minutes long - 1 each week - that cover basic Christian doctrines.

If you want to know what Christians believe - just start watching those videos.

Read a good book on theology - by a trusted Christian author.

There are countless ways and places to get the information you're seeking.

WARNING: There are many dangers - misleading and false information available at your fingertips.

Be very careful to choose good sources that will share the truth about God / about Christ with you.

Cornelius was told to go to a good source - possibly the best source available in his day - 1 of the Apostles!

And we see Cornelius acting quickly - and he took this very seriously.

He didn't put it off until the weekend - or '*some day when I have the time*'.

"...he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa."

He sent people he trusted.

People who would do as they were told.

And he sent them right away - no delay.

Apply it...

We see a few important truths and principles in these verses.

Truths and principles that are helpful for those seeking the truth about Jesus...

Truths and principles that are helpful for Christians - so we are ready to help those seeking the truth.

Be serious and sincere when seeking spiritual truth.

There are some who view spiritual things as a casual interest - a leisurely pursuit - something to discuss over a drink - as you put your feet up.

But the example we have in these verses is a man who was serious about his search for the truth.

Cornelius was not casually seeking the truth - he was fully engaged in the pursuit.

He was active in the pursuit - praying - giving money to help the poor and disadvantaged.

He was serious about spiritual things.

He understood the importance of spiritual truth - which led him to be serious in his seeking.

If you're seeking the truth - how serious are you?

- Are you serious enough to join a small group?
- Are you serious enough to read some books and articles?
- Are you serious enough to listen to sermons or podcasts on the topic?
- Are you willing to invest *yourself* to find the answers?

You can be confident when you are serious and sincere in your desire to find God - He will respond.
He will find you.
He will make Himself known.
You will find Him.

When you're seeking after God - seek out those who already know Him.

Make sure you seek answers about Jesus from people who follow Jesus.

If you want answers and information about Christianity - ask Christians!

For those of you who are Christians: Be prepared to give of your time to have these discussions.

Be prepared to explain your faith - to give reasons for what you believe - and as Peter would write years later - "be prepared... to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15)

- Christian...are you ready and willing to help someone who is seeking the truth about Jesus?

- Are you living in a way that makes it clear to them that you are someone they should talk with?

Closing prayer