

Restore Small Group Questions - Acts (Week 17) — “Widen Your Nets” — 5/25/2025**Scripture (NIV) -**

Acts 10:1-8 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. 2 He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. 3 One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!” 4 Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.” 7 When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. 8 He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13 Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” 14 “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. 17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three[a] men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” 21 Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?” 22 The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Mark 4:26-29 - He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 - I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Mark 7:14-19 - Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. 15 Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” [16] 17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. 18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside

can defile them? **19** For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

Exodus 34:26 - "Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

John 10:14-16 - "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

KEY POINTS

From our youth, we are unfortunately taught that 'social separation' is the expected norm - our natural tendency is to connect with people who are like us or in the same stage in life like us. To 'mix and mingle' goes against this tendency and requires intentionality. In real life, we deal with the question "Who's in and Who's out? All through the bible, people dealt with this question — Jews or not Jews (Gentiles) - Believers in Christ or non-believers. Sometimes it takes God's intervention to "Widen Our Nets" to achieve what He expects of us and what He desires. In today's sermon, God is preparing Cornelius and Peter for a divine appointment that will lead to an entirely new group of people entering into Jesus' church. The divine appointment is designed to prepare both parties to accept God's will.

CORNELIUS UNDERSTANDING - Cornelius was a Roman Centurion who was devout and God-fearing but he desired to understand God and understand what God expected of him. One day, he had a vision of an angel who told him to have men bring Simon (Peter) from Joppa to meet with him. Cornelius had tired of pagan myths and empty religious rituals and had turned to Judaism in hopes of finding salvation.

- It is interesting to see how religious a person can be and still not be saved - more to life than just doing. Obedience, prayer and giving are all preparations of the soul that are necessary but are not life giving (Mark 4:26-29) because GOD is the one who makes things grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).
- Cornelius had 'desire' to know what he lacked to be saved....he knew salvation wasn't complete. God's grace gave him the opportunity to learn what he was lacking through the divine appointment with Peter. God is going to use Peter to introduce Jesus Christ to Cornelius, his family and his friends in a supernatural way.
- **PETER'S UNDERSTANDING** - His understanding had more to do with a redefinition of 'who is IN and who is OUT of God's church....the inclusion of Gentiles into the Jewish centric early church. Peter dealt with deep prejudice barriers regarding food and fellowship.
 - FOOD - So, God got Peter's attention showing him that 'nothing was impure that God has made clean'. (Exodus 34:26 and Mark 7:14-19)
 - FELLOWSHIP - When it came to God, Peter learned that both Gentiles and Jews were IN....no segregation in God's church. (John 10:14-16)
 - To change his mind, Peter needed an unexpected experience that included (1) humility, (2) an alignment with God's truth, (3) see people as God sees them and (4) praying that God's kingdom to come on earth (uniting not dividing).

CONCLUSION - God almost always involves people in his plan for making disciples - person to person. Both Peter and Cornelius benefitted from the divine encounter — Peter's nets were widened and Cornelius learned that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

- Angels cannot preach the gospel....that is our privilege and responsibility.
- We need to be led by humility and Jesus
- Understand that our salvation comes from a person - Jesus Christ and it does not come from our preparation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Yet again, Peter emphasized his legalism against eating anything that was unclean despite Jesus statement in Mark 7:19 where He declared all foods clean. Discuss our nature to stick with deeply held beliefs that "are wrong". What would change your mind?
2. What prejudice barriers do we as Christians have today that impact our faith and trust in God? Do you think Christians today need to 'widen our nets' and if so, in what areas?
3. Why do you think God uses people in His plans rather than deal one on one with each of us? Have you had experiences where God has used others to answer a prayer or reveal something to you?
4. Why is it so difficult for us to accept that only through Jesus are we saved? When did you realize that you need to be led by Jesus Christ instead of trying to do it on your own?
5. Both Peter and Cornelius needed preparation for an enlarged understanding of God's mission for them and for the church. What role does obedience, prayer, bible reading and giving have in our preparation for salvation or for God's plan for our life in Him?
6. Scripture talks about God being responsible for growing the seed....what are our responsibilities?
7. Where does "desire" to know the truth come from? Many Christians become complacent and content in their walk with the Lord. How can we help generate 'desire'?
8. Cornelius (a Roman Gentile) was visited by an angel and set up to hear the gospel by Peter (one of the 12). Why was this special treatment important in God's plan?