

Acts Chapter 10

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study: with your small group or on your own

Complete with your small group if you are in one; or complete on your own, spending time with God.

Song for the week: Son of David Ryan Ellis

https://youtu.be/VPbgXjRmlSE?si=_B4b6yAShv8uLepd

Read Acts 10 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

Personal Reflection

Peter had been staying with Simon the tanner. Tanners would treat animal hides - including ones deemed unclean by Jewish law - to make leather. The trade was considered unclean by Jews. Simon lived by the sea perhaps to allow the smells to dissipate and not bother others. *Optional, read Leviticus 11:26-28*

Peter would not have been predisposed to stay with Simon because of his being a tanner. "God was breaking down barriers and preparing Peter as a vessel to pour out His blessing onto the Gentiles (bibleversestudy.com)."

Jesus also broke down barriers when He walked this earth - He chose to associate with children, women, prostitutes, beggars, demon possessed, Samaritans...

How might Peter have been influenced by living with Jesus?

How did Peter's choosing to stay with Simon mirror living the Way of Jesus?

In the list of those who were present in Jerusalem for Pentecost were Jewish converts (proselytes). The Greek word used for converts is prosēlytoi which means "an arriver from a foreign region, a newcomer."

The proselytes were not Jewish but they believed in the one God (mono-theism) of the Jews, held to their moral and ethical teachings and followed all the Jewish customs like circumcision. They also participated in Jewish festivals, which is how they came to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost and heard the disciples speaking in tongues - hearing the gospel message in their own native language. "The accepted ideal in Judaism has always been that there should be no uncircumcised aliens in the Holy Land (Bible Gateway)." *Optional, read Acts 2:6-12*

Another group of people who believed in the Jewish God were God-fearers who were not fully converted. The Greek words used to describe them are phoboumenos and sebomenos meaning “fearing one” and “worshiping one.” Like the proselytes, they held to the Jewish teachings but they were not practicing Jews. They did not follow the Jewish customs such as circumcision nor participate in the Jewish festivals. Because of not embracing the law and circumcision, Jews considered them Gentiles.

The Jewish people considered the God-fearers as Gentiles and treated them differently. With those who you consider different from you, what is challenging in relating to them?

Cornelius was God-fearing, gave generously and prayed constantly yet the Jews would have viewed him as a Gentile. Generosity and prayer were fundamental in living “the Way” of Jesus.

Paul wrote a letter to the church at Corinth and included an analogy using agriculture as a word picture for understanding generosity. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Summarize Paul’s lesson on generosity in these verses.

Paul encouraged people to give based on decision and cheerfulness, knowing God had supplied everything. Based on what Paul wrote, what is the outcome of giving this way?

Go back and read 2 Corinthians 9:12 again. Notice the word “overflow” - a word we use often at One Hope. Generosity can lead to people overflowing in what way? Who is the recipient of this overflow?

Like Ananias in Acts 9:10-19, Cornelius recognized God had a message for him when the angel appeared to him. Ananias said, “Here I am Lord” and Cornelius said “What is it Lord?” Just as Jesus told Ananias exactly where to find Saul, He told Cornelius exactly where to find Peter.

Based on what you know about Ananias and Cornelius, why do you think they were able to recognize the voice of God?

God used a vision to communicate with Peter. While Ananias and Cornelius responded with obedience, Peter had a different response - he said “Surely not, Lord!” While Peter was still wondering about what God meant in the vision, God gave him a directive to “Go” and understanding it clearly, he obeyed.

What reason did Peter have for initially saying no to God? (Acts 10:9-23)

When do you find it easy and when do you find it hard to say yes to God?

Initially, Peter did not understand the message in the vision. Once he was with Cornelius and his people, the vision made sense: Peter was a Jew, Cornelius was a God-fearer.

If you had to explain Peter’s vision to someone, how would you do that so it would make sense to them?

Read Acts 10:27-28. How did both being with Simon the tanner and the vision God gave Peter prepare him for being with Cornelius and the others?

How did the vision help Peter with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)?

Both Cornelius and Peter share with the large group their stories. Peter begins with “you know” then switches to what he knows from first hand knowledge. In that time, it was “customary to begin speeches by praising the hearers (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible).”

When giving praise to people, it is to “applaud, commend, accredit, approve and support” them (Merriam Webster’s Thesaurus).”

By beginning with “you know” how did Peter show the people praise? How might this make the listeners more eager to hear what he had to say?

In the Old Testament the Spirit normally came on people to empower them for God’s work. *Optional, read Numbers 11:17, Numbers 11:25-26, Judges 6:34*

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit rested on Jewish believers in Jesus. They testified to Jesus in tongues to the other Jews and proselytes. *Optional, read Acts 2:1-8*

In Acts 10:44-48 Peter was with God-fearers and other Gentiles sharing the good news of Jesus and the Holy Spirit came on them. There were proselytes with Peter (circumcised believers) who were amazed. Then Peter said, “They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

How do you see God at work in Peter in regards to the law, proselytes, God-fearers and Gentiles?

How does this challenge you as you share God’s love and His message with others who are different from you?

Gentiles converted to Judaism were circumcised (if a male) and baptized. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and Jews. To many Jews, it was what set them apart from other people.

All who were converted to the Way were baptized but not circumcised.

Read 1 Peter 1:15-16. What sets Christians apart from other people?

Putting it into practice:

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What three things did Paul say to do?

Which of the things Paul wrote about would you like to focus on increasing in your life this week and how might you do this?

In your time with God this week, ask Him to help you recognize His voice. Remember, His voice will always align with scripture.

Further Study - with your small group or on your own

Generosity and prayer were fundamental in living “the Way” of Jesus as was accepting all people.

GENEROSITY:

Consider how you might give generously as a small group this week. Suggestions:

- volunteer together at Scoopie night
- Provide snacks for after church - coordinate with Pat Gilissen or look for the signup sheet at the snack table
- As a small group, meet at the traveling lemonade stand to help raise money for backpacks - or invite your friends to join you and introduce them to your small group!

PRAYER:

This week share what God is doing in your lives and pray for each other.

ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

Being part of the Way meant acceptance of others, no matter the differences. We have all felt left out or like we did not fit in at some point in our lives.

What would have made you feel accepted or loved?

How can we do a good job of living the Way of Jesus, breaking down barriers, and showing others acceptance and love?

Is there anything from this week’s personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more with your small group?