



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

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The week of January 31, 2016

Breaking Barriers

Acts 10:1-11:18

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

God Space - Disciples of Jesus Christ constantly seek to increase the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) devoted his entire life to the subject of conversion. In 1908, Jones began his missionary work among high-caste Hindus and Muslims in India. He is best known for the establishment of the Ashram, a Hindu word that means 'retreat.' The Ashram is a week-long structured Christian retreat that focuses on solitude and community building. Jones had a keen understanding of the spiritual life, the means of spiritual renewal, and the delicate balance between the activity of God and the response of his children in the establishment and cultivation of conversion. The following is an excerpt from E. Stanley Jones' book simply entitled *Conversion*.

"To know Him; to help others know Him." These are the alternate beats of the Christian heart – to know Him, to help others to know Him. You cannot continue to know Him unless you are helping others to know Him. These attitudes are necessary if you are to help others know Him:

1. **Anyone who really desires to win others to conversion can do so.** . . . The first thing then to fix in your mind is: "Anyone can do it! Then I will do it!"
2. **Everyone is made for conversion.** . . . This is not something imposed on the soul – it is ingrained in the very structure. The watermark in paper is not stamped on it – it is part of its very structure. So we are made by Christ, for Christ, and when we find Him we find ourselves.
3. **It's three against one, really.** The Holy Spirit is dealing with every person alive. . . . He was there before you. . . . The Holy Spirit is your faithful ally. It's three against one – you, the Holy Spirit and the innate longings of the man!
4. **Go to the person with a positive expectation of winning the person.** Don't go with apologies, any hesitations – be affirmative without being rude.
5. **Don't be inhibited by a feeling of your own unworthiness.** Of course you are unworthy, who isn't? You are not asking people to follow you, but to follow Christ. We are imperfect witnesses to a perfect Savior. As C. T. Niles says: "Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."
6. **Don't be surprised if there seems to be some initial resistance.** . . . We don't easily open our lives to others. There is a tendency to close up. The fact is that there are two instincts within us. One is to close up against any intruder, and the second is to disclose ourselves if we can find someone sympathetic and understanding. . . . Stay around until the second instinct begins to operate.
7. **Don't be misled by a marginal need.** . . . The real need is conversion. Often the person will try to put you off with reformation instead of going on to transformation.
8. **Aim at the surrender of the self, not the surrender of this thing, that thing, the other thing.** . . . The real crux is the surrender of the self. Until that is done, nothing is done.
9. **In lieu of surrendering the self the person may raise this, that, or the other religious question.** . . . Don't bite that bait, for you'll get hooked on marginal issues. The end in view is not discussion, but decision. The only real decision is a decision to surrender the self.

It is my prayer that the people of LCC would continually know Jesus better because they are continually helping others to know Jesus! May we be beggars who are known for sharing the Bread of Life with our fellow beggars!

began to see that the Holy Spirit never intends that people who had gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth, but rather, he commanded and stirred up such people to the exercise of their gift and sent out to work those who were able and ready.

This Week's Complementary Passage

Colossians 2:6-15 (ESV)

⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Marking Guide for Acts (not all words occur in the passage)

- appointed
- baptized
- Caesar
- enemy/demons/Satan
- eternal life
- fathers & children [in one color different from Moses]
- Gentiles
- gospel
- grace
- Holy Spirit
- in the name of Jesus Christ
- Jesus
- Jews
- Law (of Moses)
- men of the council
- Moses [in different color from fathers & children]
- prayer
- repent (repentance)
- resurrection (raised up)
- salvation
- suffering
- the Way
- the promise of the Father
- witnesses
- word of God

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(Read it at least three times)
Acts 10:1-11:18 (ESV)

¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹⁷Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate ¹⁸and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. ¹⁹And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." ²¹And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" ²²And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." ²³So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

³⁰ And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

¹ Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ ¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in this passage that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in this passage.
- Highlight Acts 10:2.
- In Acts 10:3, highlight the phrase “he saw clearly in a vision.”
- In Acts 10:9, highlight the phrase “Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.”
- In Acts 10:10, highlight the phrase “he fell into a trance.”
- In Acts 10:15, underline the phrase “What God has made clean, do not call common.”
- In Acts 10:17 and 19, underline the word “vision.”
- In Acts 10:19, underline the phrase “the Spirit said to him.”
- Highlight Acts 10:22.
- In Acts 10:28, underline the phrase: “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.”
- Highlight Acts 10:33.
- Underline Acts 10:34-43.
- In Acts 10:44, highlight the phrase “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.”
- Highlight Acts 10:45.
- Underline Acts 10:48.
- In Acts 11:2, highlight the phrase “the circumcision party criticized him.”
- In Acts 11:12, highlight the phrase “the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction.”
- In Acts 11:15 highlight the phrase “the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.”
- Highlight Acts 11:17-18.

STEP THREE . . .

Ask the five “W” questions and the one “H” question:

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

Commentary on Acts 10:1-11:18 (ESV)

10:1 - “At Caesarea there was a man.” The conversion of Cornelius was a major event. However, it must be remembered that he was not the first social barrier the gospel had overcome. The first was the Samaritans; then there was the Ethiopian eunuch who also was possibly a God-fearer; and then Cornelius, who was not only a Gentile, but a Roman army officer who was part of the military occupation of the Promised Land. The emphasis of this account is not so much on Cornelius’ conversion because he was already a God-fearer, like the Ethiopian eunuch, but the large number of relatives and friends, mentioned in this passage, who were also saved. This event sets stage for the Gentile mission of the Church.

“A centurion.” Centurions are mentioned several times in the NT and always in a favorable light. They were leaders of a hundred men.

“The Italian Cohort.” Usually a Roman cohort is made up of 600 men. This particular one was made up of a thousand

Roman volunteers who were stationed in Syria. We know from historical evidence that they were called an auxiliary cohort. Possibly they were archers. Roman troops had to be stationed in Palestine because of the rebelliousness of the Jews.

10:2 - “All his household.” This is the first mention of a family as a religious unit which we find often in the Book of Acts. It shows the cultural context that the faith of the father was always the faith of the household and even of the extended family which would include servants.

“Gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” This man’s devotion was daily and personal. He was doing the two things which devout Jews honored most—almsgiving and prayer.

10:3 - “He saw clearly in a vision an angel of God.” In some ways this conversion is like Saul’s. This person was a devoutly religious man. God sends a supernatural agent to

direct him to faith. Who could say “No”? These people are responding to overwhelming evidence and experience of the reality of the gospel.

10:8 - Cornelius involved his family and friends in his faith. This man lived out what he believed. A whole community would come to faith in Christ through him. These three men must have walked through the night and wondered and discussed the angel’s message and their master and friend’s faith.

10:10 - “**He fell into a trance.**” This is literally “out of himself” or “beside himself,” often used of astonishment. We get the English term “ecstasy” from this Greek word. This is a different word from the one used in verse 3 to describe Cornelius’ vision.

10:13 - “**And there came a voice to him.**” From the time of the closing of Malachi to the coming of the NT period there was no authoritative voice from God among the Jews.

10:14 - “**By no means, Lord.**” By no means” is a strong Greek phrase that indicates Peter was still struggling with his Jewish orthodoxy. He was basing his actions on Leviticus 11.

10:17 - “**Peter was inwardly perplexed.**” The term is used several times by Luke to show mental confusion. Peter did not immediately understand the purpose of the vision.

“**The vision.**” The word used here to describe Peter’s experience is the same word that is used of Cornelius’ vision in verse 3.

10:20 - This verse is very emphatic. There was no option for Peter but to go! This was a divine appointment. The Spirit was responsible for Cornelius’ vision, Cornelius’ sending the men, Peter’s vision, and now Peter’s responding to their request.

10:22 - “**Upright.**” This term must be used in the OT sense of “blameless.” It does not refer to sinlessness. This man lived up to all he understood about the will of God.

“**God-fearing man.**” This phrase (or one like it) is used often to describe Cornelius. It is used for those who are not racial Jews and not full proselytes, but those who regularly attended synagogues. They were called “God-fearers.”

10:23 - “**So he invited them in to be his guests.**” This is another example of Peter’s continuing separation from his Jewish legalism. It is certain that the accompanying soldier was a Roman and yet Peter invited him in for dinner and fellowship.

“**Some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.**” Peter knew that this incident would cause problems among some of the Jewish followers of Jesus. Therefore, he took several witnesses with him.

10:24 - “**Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.**” Cornelius, expecting a speaker from God, had called all his close family, friends, servants, and possibly other soldiers. They may have all been waiting for hours and hours. What a spirit of anticipation and expectation must have filled this house! All of these

would have been discussing the vision and its message. This is what shocked the leaders of the Jewish segment of the church, that a large number of Gentiles, many of them not God-fearers, had been included in the filling of the Spirit and baptism.

10:28 - Peter got the message! The animals in the sheet represented all human beings made in the image of God. God’s love for Cornelius and his family and friends showed Peter the worldwide scope of the gospel! This would confirm the witness of Philip and Stephen.

10:31 - This is the third time in this chapter that Cornelius’ piety has been affirmed. Cornelius is not the surprise; it is his friends, servants, and family who also trust Christ. This is one of several examples in Acts of “household salvations.” We emphasize individual volitional responses to the gospel and we are surprised by these kinds of corporate responses. However, most of the world has a tribal family group orientation. God is able to work through many models to reach humans made in His image. There is no one model of evangelism!

10:34 - “**God shows no partiality.**” This is the beginning of Peter’s sermon to Cornelius. It is a good example of the preaching of the early church to non-Jews. In the Old Testament this judicial phrase characterized God and is required of His people. It is also a common characterization of God in the New Testament. In the Old Testament this phrase literally meant “to lift the face.” In Hebrew courts the defendants kept their heads bowed so that the judge would not recognize the person and thereby be biased. God has *no* favorites (nations, races, or individuals)!

10:35 - “**In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.**” This description does not refer to the concept of spiritual salvation, but apparently to the idea of almsgiving, prayer, and piety. This phrase must be theologically balanced with the mandate to receive the gospel. The major truth is that God accepts Gentiles without their becoming proselyte Jews. This set the theological stage for Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council.

10:36 - “**Preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ.**” The term “peace” is used in three ways in the NT: peace between God and humanity, the subjective peace of the individual believer and peace between human groups who respond to Christ. All human barriers are down in Christ!

“(He is Lord of all)” Here is the universal element of the message and invitation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that still sounded so radical in the mouth of an orthodox Jew. He is Lord of all races and all things (i.e.- cosmic Lordship)!

10:37 - “**After the baptism that John proclaimed.**” Why Jesus was baptized has always been a concern for believers because John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need repentance or forgiveness, for He was sinless. The theories have been: it was an example for believers to follow; it was His identification with believers’ need; it was His ordination and equipping for ministry; it was a symbol of His redemptive task; it was His approval of the ministry and message of John the Baptist; or it was a prophetic foreshadowing of His death, burial, and resurrection. The baptism by John was seen as the beginning of Jesus’ Spirit-

filled ministry. All three Synoptic Gospels record this event. This was seen by the early church as the special start of the new age of the Spirit as it relates to the public ministry of Jesus.

10:39 - "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree." "They" refers to the Jewish leadership, the mob, and the Roman authorities. This concept of hanging upon a tree is mentioned in Acts 5:30 and reflects Deuteronomy 21:23 (which originally referred to impaling on a stake after death to humiliate someone, but the rabbis of Jesus' day interpreted it as Roman crucifixion), whereby Jesus bore the curse of the Old Testament law.

10:40 - "God raised him on the third day." The New Testament affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection. This was confirmation of the truth of Jesus' life, death, and teachings about God.

10:41 - "Who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." Although Jesus' resurrection body did not need physical nourishment, He ate and drank to show His special witnesses He was real and to express His fellowship with them.

10:42 - "He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead." Christ is the Father's agent in judgment as He was the Father's agent in creation. Jesus did not come to judge, but to save. The phrase 'the living and the dead' refers to the end-time judgment at the Second Coming. Some believers will still be alive at this time.

10:43 - "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." This is the gospel message: It is Jesus-focused, not performance focused. All that needs to be done for everyone, anyone, to be saved has been done! God has chosen to work with fallen humanity through covenant. He initiates it and sets the agenda, but He has also demanded that humans respond by repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. Humans must receive God's gift in Christ.

10:44 - "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word." Notice that Peter had not yet finished his sermon when the Spirit fell. The real theological tension was not Cornelius. He had been fully accepted by the local synagogue. It was all the friends! They had no apparent previous contact, even with Judaism, and now God had fully accepted them. This acceptance was demonstrated and confirmed by the same manifestation of spiritual power and presence shown at Pentecost. Also notice that the order of events changes. The Spirit comes before water baptism, not in conjunction with it or after it. Luke records *what* happened, not *what should have happened*. Be careful of trying to turn one of these gospel encounters

recorded in Acts into *the* gospel encounter!

10:45 - The same supernatural manifestation of the Spirit that occurred at Pentecost, occurred again involving Romans! This special sign was *not* for Cornelius and his friends only, but primarily for the circumcised believers. It showed in a powerful, undisputable fashion that God had accepted Gentiles, even Romans! Luke is setting the literary stage for Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council. Both Peter and Paul had been convinced along with the Hellenistic believing Jews that God fully accepted Gentiles through Christ.

"the gift of the Holy Spirit." The ministry of the Spirit can be seen clearly throughout the New Testament. In one sense, conviction of sin is a gift from the Spirit. Salvation itself is a gift of the Spirit. The indwelling presence is a gift of the Spirit. This is the new age of the Spirit. Nothing permanent and effective happens without the presence and power of the Spirit.

10:48 - "He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Notice that baptism was immediate and that it was done in Jesus' name.

11:1 - This verse implies that the church's leadership was surprised at this turn of events. They were shocked and not fully supportive. They had not understood the Great Commission.

11:2 - Apparently the problem with the Gentile mission was a recurring problem for the Jewish leadership of the early church. Many of the converts to Christianity were still very nationalistic.

11:3 - "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." Obviously Peter is not the unchallenged leader. This issue of table fellowship was very important to Jewish people. This may be the very issue behind the food laws of Leviticus 11. Jews were not to share any social event with Canaanites. Eating in the ancient Near East was a kind of covenant of fellowship. Jesus had been accused of a similar breach of tradition in the gospels. Peter struggled with this issue in his ministry. This was such a sensitive issue for these first believers. It is so hard to rethink traditions, culture, and personal preferences, but the gospel demands that we do.

11:4-18 - Peter recounts his experience at Simon's and Cornelius' houses for the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. This repetition is Luke's way of showing how important this issue (world evangelization) was for the life of the church.

11:18 - "When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'" Peter's testimony not only stopped the negative atmosphere, but it engendered praise! Most of these early leaders and believers were teachable and flexible. They were willing to adjust their theology and follow God's lead.

SUMMARIZING the message

Acts 10 marks a significant movement in Luke's chronicle of the early church. It is the story of the gospel coming to a Gentile without first having to pass through the door of Judaism. This Gentile, named Cornelius, is an unusual man. He is a centurion in the Roman army, charged with leading a cohort of over a hundred men. Most Roman soldiers were tough and cruel. Cornelius is very different. He fears God. He is charitable. He is also a man of prayer. Those qualities point to a spiritual hunger and an openness to God, even though he has not yet received Christ. Qualities like morality and generosity are wonderful things but ultimately, they are of no eternal value until one comes to faith in Christ. The story of Cornelius is how God acts to meet his need for salvation.

God gives an angelic vision to Cornelius to tell him to send some men down to Joppa to meet Peter, a man who is living in the house of Simon, a tanner. While Cornelius is experiencing his vision in Caesarea, Peter is having a vision of his own 32 miles away in Joppa. God gives to Peter a vision of a sheet full of animals, the kind of creatures he had been told all of his life were unclean. God commands him to kill and eat the animals but he refuses. God then rebukes him and in effect says, don't call unclean what I have made clean.

God doesn't show favoritism but welcomes anyone, from any background, race, or social class. He does not favor one race or ethnicity over another. Rather, anyone who comes to God with an honest heart will find an open door to the truth about Jesus

God was leading Peter to strike a fatal blow to the issues of religious bigotry and prejudice in his own life. Peter was raised amid such attitudes. In the Old Testament God had chosen the Israelites, not because they were superior to others, but because He wanted them to be a demonstration of the kind of relationship God wants to have with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth. But the Jews distorted their calling, believing that God had chosen them because they were special. They did not think God liked the Gentiles and so the Jewish people viewed them as unclean. Peter was taught that a good Jew had nothing to do with a Gentile. His bigotry ran deep.

This vision occurred to Peter three times until he finally got it! **Jesus has come to remove the barriers and walls that separate us.** While Peter was still baffled as to what the vision meant, the men sent by Cornelius were standing at the gate. The Spirit told him to go down and meet them and invite them in. **Peter invited these Gentiles in the home to be his guests.** He had never done anything like that before.

Another barrier is being crossed!

The next day Peter accompanied the men to Cornelius' home in Caesarea. When Peter entered his home, the Roman soldier began to worship him. Peter is embarrassed and stops him. In spite of his vision, Peter is still uneasy about entering the home of a Gentile and feels the need to explain himself. He indicated that God is changing his perception. Cornelius shared his side of the story and then Peter begins to speak. He states that **God doesn't show favoritism** but welcomes anyone, from any background, race, or social class. He does not favor one race or ethnicity over another. Rather, anyone who comes to God with an honest heart will find an open door to the truth about Jesus Christ. Peter declares that

Jesus is the Lord of all. He was born in human flesh and came to us as a man. When He arrived, everywhere He went He set people free. But eventually, Jesus was killed in the most shameful way – on a Roman cross. But the good news that needs to go to everybody everywhere, Jesus rose from the dead. For Jesus is also the One appointed by God to be the judge of all humanity. Peter ended his message by saying that the only way to ever find forgiveness of sins is by believing in Jesus.

Peter wanted to continue, but the Holy Spirit interrupted him. For as soon as they heard and believed what Peter had said about Jesus, the Holy Spirit fell upon them as He had done on the Day of Pentecost. **The Gentiles were being received on the same basis as the Jews had been indicating that Jews and Gentiles were on exactly the same footing.** And immediately, they were baptized. They were baptized with water because they had already been baptized with the Spirit.

In chapter 11 we read **what happens when God's actions meet entrenched tradition.** In verses 1-18 Peter simply describes what God had done. Luke concludes this history making event stating, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (vss. 17-18).

...the only way to ever find forgiveness of sins is by believing in Jesus.

STEP SIX . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. In some form, Peter's vision is recorded three times. Why does Luke give such emphasis to this story?
2. What qualities stand out about Cornelius? What kind of a man was he? How should we see people like Cornelius in light of Ephesians 2:1-3?
3. What was the nature of Peter's conflict? In the vision, was God making a point about food, people, or both? Please explain.
4. In what ways can Christians today convey a similar attitude towards unbelievers similar to what Peter felt towards the Gentiles? What barriers do we need to cross over to see people the way God does?
5. How did Jesus, in the gospels, model the behavior that Peter needed to show in this story?
6. How was Peter's conflict resolved?
7. What people has God brought unexpectedly into your life? How does He want you to respond?
8. Are there some groups of people we might be reluctant to accept into our fellowship? What causes this hesitancy among us? How can we avoid showing favoritism?

STEP SEVEN . . .

APPLYING the passage to my life

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

This Week's Memory Verse

¹⁸When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying,
"Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Acts 11:18 (ESV)

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

OT in 52
(52 weeks through the Old Testament)

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING IN A YEAR

Monday, February 1 thru Saturday, February 6
Exodus 16-18, 19-21, 22-24, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30

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