

STUDY GUIDE:

Foundations - Acts 10:9-22

Plans, Gentiles, and Cornelius

Welcome back to our journey through Acts. To catch up from last week, read Acts 8-10 to get the most out of this study on Cornelius.

For Starters:

Here is a one sentence summary of what happens in Acts 8, 9, and 10. What stands out to you? What is happening to the church in these chapters? What does this mean to us?

Acts 8: Through Philip, the kingdom of God is opened to 'the other' - it spreads to the racially, religiously, and physically other in the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip continues to share about Jesus all over, and history reports that the Ethiopian brings the message of Jesus as Lord and savior to Ethiopia.

Acts 9: Saul, an angry agent of violent religion, is converted to Jesus and his way of joy, peace, and love. His name is changed to Paul, and he becomes a major carrier of the Gospel of Jesus.

Acts 10: Peter discovers that the old "clean/unclean" dualism of his inherited religion is passé in Christ. He eats and stays with Gentiles ... and they are added as full-fledged members of this growing global movement.

Acts 10:9-22 Dreams and Gentiles

Luke tells us a story about a Gentile by the name of Cornelius who was seeking God. Those who are not Jewish are Gentiles, and Jewish purity laws kept faithful Jews from sharing food and life with Gentiles. Pastor Mofid explained that to share a meal together in Middle Eastern culture is to truly share life together and to become like family. He explained that the Rabbis went further than what God commended to make sure they were pure, and they forbid faithful followers of God from going into Gentiles homes and even talking with them because they were considered unclean. Well, here in Acts 10, God challenges their practices. Read Acts 10:9-22

1. Does God communicate through dreams today? Have you or someone close to you ever had a dream that was clearly from God?
2. In Peter's mind, this dream seemed to counteract God's law. How would you deal with feeling that God was calling you to go against what you thought was religiously right?

First Lesson: This was According to Plan

Read Genesis 9:27. What does this mean?

Faithful well-educated Jews would be familiar with the meaning of this passage. Salvation and inclusion of Gentiles was not by chance, but it was God's plan all along that Jesus fulfills.

"It's all about Japheth and Shem" (I know you say that often). Japheth was the father of the gentiles, and Shem was the father of the Jews. This verse proclaims that God will open for Japheth to dwell in the tent of Shem. Read now Acts 14:27.

Now in Acts 10, God fulfilled the plan as he opened the door of faith to us, the gentiles, to be one family of God. In Christ we are one family with the Jews.

1. Have you seen 'Christendom' fractured into multiple families?
2. Have you experienced unity with 'others' because of Christ? How?

Second Lesson: Fulfillment of an Old Command

Going back to our story in Acts 10, what Peter did was exactly a fulfillment of the old command in Genesis 9, "be fruitful and multiply." (Wait... what went on in Cornelius house? We're not talking babies here.) Peter went to the house of Cornelius the gentile to spread the good news about Jesus. This was multiplication of the family of faith in Christ, the Son of God.

1. Notice, God prompted Peter to be in Cornelius' home, to share life with him. Is there anyone that you wouldn't enter their house or life and share time with?
2. Notice, the introduction of faith to the Ethiopian eunuch and to Paul occurred out on roads, public space. This story happens in the home of Cornelius... what message does this convey to us?

Third Lesson: This Old Command is for Us Today

God commanded Adam to bring people in the image of God, but Adam sinned and failed. The commandment was renewed to Noah after the flood for a whole new beginning, but the commandment was finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God, Jews and Gentiles, all of humanity, become one family through faith in Christ. Now, as children of God, we are called to share the Gospel with others, to be fruitful and multiply, to be witnesses.

1. What is your reaction to this calling to share about Jesus? Fear? Inadequacy?
2. If someone asked you, "Simply, what is the good news of Jesus? the Gospel?" How would you answer?
3. Is there a natural non-offensive way to share about Jesus in ordinary life?

Challenge from Pastor Mofid

The most important thing we can do is to be Christ-like, to reflect His image.

If we want to bring people into God's family, we should be like Jesus.

What is the best way for us to become familiar with Jesus to be like him?

We can be like Jesus in our workplace or in our neighborhood. Even if we can't share the Gospel, we can show it in our lives. How?

People of God: the family of God is huge from every nation, people, tribe and language; we are part of it. The question I have for us is this: Are you willing to bring more people into the family of God? Does God place someone specific on your heart to go share a meal and the good news of Jesus with?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

