

10 Acts - The Gospel is for all (*handout*)

Acts 10.1-33

Type [bit/ly.nlncmu](https://bit.ly/nlncmu) into the address bar of any browser for a series overview and session notes.

A. Getting started – Tim

- What are some foods that you consider yukky?
- What factors would cause you to move them to “tasty?”
- What marked (and marks) people of the Jewish faith?
- Where we’ve been; where we’re going:

9/29 - 11/24: 9 sessions on Acts 1-9: Ascension, Pentecost, church startup and persecution in Jerusalem, gospel extends to Samaria (Philip)... Ethiopian treasurer, Saul’s conversion...

12/1-1/22: 4 Advent sessions from the prophets Malachi, Zephaniah, Micah, and Isaiah.

Today: the first of 4 remaining sessions from Acts, which will take us through Acts 15.

Then, 2/2, we’ll do one session on “The Theology in *The Magician’s Nephew*.” So you have one month to read it or listen to it as an audiobook or listen to a radio theater CD.

B. Acts 10.1-16 (NLT) – Tim

Cornelius Calls for Peter

In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. 2 He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. 3 One afternoon about three o’clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. “Cornelius!” the angel said.

4 Cornelius stared at him in terror. “What is it, sir?” he asked the angel.

And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! 5 Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. 6 He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.”

7 As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants. 8 He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

Peter Visits Cornelius

9 The next day as Cornelius’s messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, 10 and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. 12 In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. 13 Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.”

14 “No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.”

15 But the voice spoke again: “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” 16 The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

Questions on the text

- Already in this passage, Peter is violating a purity law. Which one?
- How many soldiers do you think were under Cornelius' command?
- How do you think Cornelius became a God-follower?
- Rome had emperor worship by this time. Worshipping Caesar must have been in his job description. How do you suppose Cornelius got away with worshipping the God of Abraham?
- So far, what do you find attractive about Cornelius?
- In this passage, what do you find attractive about Peter?

C. Acts 10.17-33 – Ryan

17 Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, 18 they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

19 Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you. 20 Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them."

21 So Peter went down and said, "I'm the man you are looking for. Why have you come?"

22 They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message." 23 So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

24 They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!" 27 So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.

28 Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. 29 So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me."

30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. 31 He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God! 32 Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.' 33 So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you."

Questions on the text

- What thoughts do you think ran through the minds of those who heard the centurion's two servants and a soldier when they asked for Peter?
- How did Peter's response show both courage and faith?
- What did the men ask Peter to do?
- How did the men describe Cornelius? Why do you think Cornelius was a good choice for Peter's ministry to Gentiles?
- What did Peter say that he learned from his vision?

D. Connecting the text to contemporary life – Tim

- Remember those Jewish markers? Which ones did Peter break in today's passage?
- In the New Community, did any more of these laws change?
- The gospel of Jesus is based on a combination of 1) observation, 2) reason, and 3) God's revelation of himself in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets... and Jesus. So, if we haven't heard about the gospel of Jesus, or we reject it, where can we find direction and hope for the future?

E. Benediction & closing prayer – Ryan

God's Promise concerning His Servant (Isaiah 42:1-9)

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.

I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.

He will not be disheartened or crushed
Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.

I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,

As a light to the nations, to open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness.

I am the Lord, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.

Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things.

10 Acts - The Gospel is for all (Teaching notes)

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same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

Questions on the text

- Already in this passage, Peter is violating a purity law. Which one? – *Being around and touching dead things makes him impure for worship. A tanner's business tanning animal hides! It is a bit of a strange place for Peter to stay.*
- How many soldiers do you think were under Cornelius' command? – 100. (Some translations call Cornelius a "centurion".)
- How do you think Cornelius became a God-follower? – *Holy Spirit must have been preveniently involved. And Cornelius must have seen some things in the lives of Jews that intrigued him enough to frequent a synagogue to learn about the God of the Jews.*
- Rome had emperor worship by this time. Worshiping Caesar must have been in his job description. How do you suppose Cornelius got away with worshipping the God of Abraham? – *My short answer is, I don't know. Perhaps Caesar was not as jealous as the God of Abram. Perhaps was not yet aware that that worshippers of the God of Abram were forbidden to worship any god above him. The text doesn't label Cornelius a proselyte, he is at the lesser God-fearer stage.*
- So far, what do you find attractive about Cornelius? – 1) *His spiritual inquiry and commitment to spiritual formation, including openness to a vision from God. I think of him as a guy who was a participant in a pretty rough part of the pagan Roman culture. And yet, he somehow has sized up the pagan culture in his world and sensed there must be something more somewhere. 2) Also, he seemed to have the respect of his family and the other people around him. 3) Finally, was a man of decisive action.*
- In this passage, what do you find attractive about Peter? - 1) *Even though he was a good Jew, I like that he was staying in a tanner's house! That suggests he may not be a slave to the Law. 2) Like Cornelius, he invested in spiritual formation and was open to a vision from God. 3) And, we know from his history that he's a man of action - he dropped his nets and followed Jesus, for instance. And we'll soon see another example of his orientation toward action. 4) He's teachable. Despite a lifetime of living a certain way, when the Spirit points him in a completely new direction, he accepts that change.*

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Questions on the text

- What thoughts do you think ran through the minds of those who heard the centurion's two servants and a soldier when they asked for Peter?
- How did Peter's response show both courage and faith? — *Without knowing why they came, Peter did not hide, but obeyed and went down to see the men.*
- What did the men ask Peter to do? — (v. 22) *Cornelius was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for Peter to come to his house and hear a message.*
- How did the men describe Cornelius? Why do you think Cornelius was a good choice for Peter's ministry to Gentiles? — *1. He was a centurion, a leader in the Roman army. 2. He was a righteous and God-fearing man. 3. He was respected by the Jewish people. 4. Cornelius was directed in a vision to send for Peter and to learn from him.*
- What did Peter say that he learned from his vision? — (v.28-29) *"I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean" Peter's vision dramatically expanded this vision of the people of God. However, he was already on the way. Peter was staying at the house of Simon the Tanner. Tanners turned animal skins into leather. That meant that Simon had contact with*

dead animals. To make matters worse, tanners used urine to cure the skins and make leather. Peter was staying in the home of a man who would have been ceremonially unclean. The vision helped him take the next step: God's acceptance is offered to all.

D. Connecting the text to contemporary life – Tim

- Remember those Jewish markers: *circumcision, Sabbath, diet, purity rules?* What changed in the New Community?
 - *Male circumcision replaced with baptism (gender neutral)*
 - *Sabbath-keeping still expected but rules relaxed*
 - *dietary laws mostly eliminated,*
 - *purity laws less rigid.*
- Let's compile a summary of what was at stake for Jews and Gentiles for life in the Christian New Community.
 - Jews: They shifted their allegiance from Moses and the Law to The Way of Jesus.
 - Gentiles shifted their allegiance from Rome/Caesar and the constellation of local gods and religious philosophies exclusively to Jesus.
 - Both established everyday life, together, in integrated communities.
- [\(Did not use in 10 Acts, may use in later session\)](#) The gospel of Jesus is based on a combination of 1) observation, 2) reason, and 3) God's revelation of himself in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets... and Jesus. So, if we haven't heard about the gospel of Jesus, or we reject it, where can we find direction and hope for the future?
 - *I think Jews put their hope in all the above except for Jesus and Muslims in the Prophet Mohammad.*
 - *Or we could put our hope in a pagan belief of some sort, which is likely to include the revelation of someone in the past. These may be idols made of wood/stone. Or, I suppose we could find direction and hope in our own isolated revelation.*
 - *Or, If we reject revelation, we can look for direction and hope in our leaders/rulers, science, education...*
 - *Or, I suppose, we can give up on direction and hope and settle for whatever pleasure we can find for ourselves.*

E. Benediction & closing prayer – Ryan

Isaiah 42:1-9

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I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
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