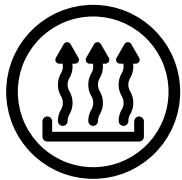




ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES



WARM-UP

When's the last time you felt like your world got turned upside down?

Pray for your time together as a group.

INTRO TO ACTS 10

The book of Acts shows how the Holy Spirit – working through early Christians – helped spread the Gospel and build the global church. However, in those early years, those first followers were predominantly Jews who interpreted Jesus' teachings through a Jewish lens. In fact, in the world's eyes, Christianity was seen as a sect of Judaism, not too different from the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. But, as we'll see, Acts 10 is where Jewish Christians began to understand that Christianity was accessible to all. The first part of Acts 10 introduces us to Cornelius, a powerful military leader of Rome with a strong faith and a rich desire to know more about Christ. He receives a vision from God telling him to send the men of his household to Joppa, where they will find one of Jesus' disciples, a man named Simon Peter. However, around the same time, Peter is receiving his own special vision...

ACTS 10:10-23A (NIV)

10 He (Peter) 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 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.



Read Leviticus 20:22-26. With the physical representing the spiritual, how does the physical separation between clean and unclean food translate to spiritual truth?



vs 15 reminds us that God has called things clean in Christ. What are things that you are struggling to believe are clean today? What are things that the wider Church might be tempted to call unclean?



Peter didn't seem to fully understand his dream at first and still he followed the Lord and invited a Gentile into his home. This shows us that obedience often leads to a better understanding. Has there ever been a time when just choosing to be obedient helped things make more sense later on?

ACTS 10:23B-48 (NIV)

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. 24 The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. 26 But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

27 While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. 28 He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

30 Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me 31 and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32 Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' 33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, 47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.



Former Old Testament “separation” of gentiles is a big picture image of how all have been separated from God because of sin. Are there areas in your life that have remained separate from God? Are there separations you’ve created with people or things that aren’t biblical?



We don’t always instantly understand God when He speaks to us, so how should we go about seeking His truths and interpreting Him correctly?



Peter has learned that his dream wasn’t simply about food. Although it was a radical shift in how Peter viewed the path to salvation, he acknowledges in verse 34 that even those outside Jewish law have access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How does seeing Peter grow in theology at this point in his faith journey encourage you? How can we continue to encourage others?

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- How might the Gospel be challenging you to change your behavior towards certain members or groups of society?
- Reflect on how God has continued to reveal Himself to you over time. Be encouraged! How can you continue to pursue a richer understanding of His desires?
- How can we help each other as a small group to remember not to call things unclean that God has called clean?