



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts - Week Seven

Our passage from Acts is longer than normal, but it tells one cohesive story about God's persistence in pushing beyond the religious norms in order to expand the reach of the Gospel. Pay attention this week to the invitation God might be giving you to experience a more expansive freedom in Christ.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone you may know who is more focused on the rules of religion than the relationship that is offered to them through Jesus.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 10.1-8 (NIV)

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

⁴ *Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.*

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.”⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

- God sets the stage for the expansion of the Gospel by sending an angel to a Roman centurion. Centurions are leaders in the military, he would have been in charge of 100 soldiers. You might notice that centurions are often seen in a favorable light in the New Testament. Cornelius, while not a Jew, was extremely devoted to God. He was already tuned in to God. The fruit of his devotion was generosity and regular prayer. Is it possible that your own devotion to God and to the generous life could lead to you hearing directly from God? Have you ever had such a direct encounter with a messenger from God?
-
-
-
-

- **Prayer Prompt: When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”¹⁰ Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well. (Luke 7.9-10)**
- *God, I want to be known only for my faithfulness to you and for a generous spirit inspired by your Spirit. Amen.*

TUESDAY: EPHESIANS 3.2-6 (NIV)

Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you,³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

- Paul wrote about this mystery that now brings in those who were once outside the faith. Those who were on the outside now share in the promises of Jesus. Not only that, but those who felt cut-off and isolated are now considered to be one body with the rest of the believers. Are there people or groups who might feel that the gospel is not for them? What false barriers remain that might prevent them from joining the body of Christ? Is God inviting you to play a part in reaching them?
-
-
-

-
- **Prayer Prompt: I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. (Galatians 2.2)**
 - *God, May I faithfully share the gospel with those you call me to. I don't want to run this race in vain. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 10.9-15 (NIV)

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.¹⁰ He 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."*

- Notice what Peter was bringing into this vision: prayer and hunger. God met him in his devotion and in his hunger and gave him a vision of all kinds of animals that he would never consider eating because the Law prohibited it. Now, God announces that the unclean are considered clean. What are you hungering for? What are you desiring? As you pray to God, consider how God might meet you in your prayer and hunger.
-
-
-
-

- **Prayer Prompt: Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.**
²⁰ **This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.**
²¹ **I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation. (Psalm 118.19-21)**
- *God, you have opened the gates of salvation for me. I confess that I don't feel worthy, yet my hunger for you grows. Meet me in my hunger today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 10.23-28 (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.

- Peter discerns what the vision meant, and it allowed him to associate with Gentiles...a huge step in expanding the reach of the Gospel. Who are the people that our culture tells you not to associate with? Who are the outsiders? Who are considered impure and unclean? Pray that God would reveal His heart for them.
-
-
-
-

- **Prayer Prompt: “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) (Mark 7:18-19)**
- *God, I ask that you would give me eyes to see those labeled impure and unclean as you see them. Stir up a desire in me that others would come to know you as Father. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 10:34-36 (NIV)

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.

- For the full text, read verses 34-43. This contains Peter’s first hand account of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. It’s incredible, and with new eyes, Peter is seeing how this was done for the whole world—every nation. A person from any nation can profess Jesus and follow him. It’s a hopeful promise that was revealed to Peter and then revealed *through* Peter. What promises are being revealed through you?
-
-
-
-

- **Prayer Prompt: For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. (John 12:47)**
- *God, through your Son Jesus you have offered salvation to the whole world. May every knee bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 10.44-48 (NIV)

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.

- Do you ever get "possessive" of the Gospel? As if it were meant only for you? The very gift that reaches beyond the borders to bring you in extends even further than you could imagine. God means for all who are far off to believe and come to the waters of baptism! Is there something standing in the way of you or someone you know being baptized? Write it down in the space below and see how the barriers lose their power.

- **Prayer Prompt:** As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” (Acts 8.36)
- *Lord God, reveal your purpose for me today. Empower me with your Spirit and send me into the places that need to hear about Jesus. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

As a group, read aloud [Acts 11.1-18](#). Focus especially on these words from Peter:

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

- Peter is already recounting the events that had just taken place. This wouldn’t be the last time the story would be told of the vision of animals on a sheet and the instruction to eat. Are there any stories of God’s intervention in your life that you tend to repeat? You may find that you know these stories from other members of your group better than your own.
- Spend time as a group sharing stories of places God has revealed something new to you.