

Note: this is a very long narrative passage. It might make sense, flow wise, for each group member to read the passage on their own, and then as a group summarize and point out what jumped out to each person.

There are WAY too many questions in this guide. As always, it can help guide conversation, but you as the leader need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, not follow this guide rigidly.

Cornelius Calls for Peter

1 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.

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."

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." **There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time.** This guides rely heavily on a few other study guides; including: Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A), "Acts: Seeing God's Power in Action" by Phyllis LePeau (ISBN 9780830830077), "Acts: Seeing the Spirit Work" by John Stott (ISBN 0851113907), "Acts" by N.T. Wright (ISBN 9780830821853), "Acts" by NavPress (ISBN 0891091122), "Acts" by Blackaby (ISBN 9781418526429), "Acts: The Spread of the Gospel" by John MacArthur (ISBN 9781418508746), "Book of Acts" by Max Lucado (ISBN 0849953006).

The Gentiles Hear the Good News

34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 36 This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. 38 And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 "And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, 41 not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. 43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

44 Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45 The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46 For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, 47 "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" 48 So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.

Peter Explains His Actions

11:1 Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. 2 But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. 3 "You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!" they said.

4 Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. 5 "I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. 6 When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. 7 And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.'

8 "'No, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.'"

9 "But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' 10 This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.

11 "Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. 12 The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. 13 He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. 14 He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!'

15 "As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. 16 Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?"

18 When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

Acts 10:1-11:18 (NLT)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- When/where was the most “out of place” you ever felt? Why? How did you respond?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

Ch 10, v.1-33

- O: How did God prepare Cornelius for Peter (10:1-8)?
- O: In what ways did God prepare Peter for Cornelius (v.9-33)
Follow-up: What do these two “preparations” mean for us as we share the gospel with others?
- O: What evidence is there that Cornelius expected God to work (was ripe for the Gospel)? (v.24-26)
- I: What was the immediate lesson of Peter’s trance vision in 10:9-16?
Follow-up: After the messengers from Cornelius came and reported the angelic appearance, what further application of the vision was apparent to Peter (v.23-29)?
- I: Are you shocked by Peter’s apparent reluctance (potentially even racism) towards the Gentiles?
- A: Honestly, do we have boundaries between us and other groups of people that need to be torn down?
Follow-up: In what ways do you/we need to grow in relating to people of other cultures and races?

v.34-48

- O: When Peter observed Cornelius’ manner and heard his account of the angel’s message, what did Peter realize (v.34-35)?
- O: How did Cornelius show that he feared God and did what was right (v.35, see also v.1-8,30-33)?
Follow-up: Some folks try to use this event to suggest that “all religions lead to God” or that they are basically the same. What evidence in this episode shows that neither Cornelius nor Peter would agree with such a viewpoint?
- I: In what sense does God “not show favoritism” (v.34)? From this account, what kind of things don’t influence God to love a person?
Follow-up: Do we sometimes find ourselves still trying to earn God’s love?
Follow-up: Do you/we ever act in ways that favors certain ethnic, economic, social, or political groups?
- I: Peter said God was willing to accept all those “who fear him and do what is right (v.35).” Does that mean that Cornelius’ good deeds had earned him salvation? Why or why not, in light of the entire context of the story (especially v.22,33,43-48).
Another way to ask: If Cornelius already feared God and did right, then why did he need Jesus?
- I: How is v.34-43 a model for how we can explain the gospel to people we encounter?
- O: What unprecedented thing happened in the middle of Peter’s speech (v.44-46)?
Follow-up: What did this signify?
Follow-up: Why were Peter’s fellow Jewish believers astonished (v.45)?
- A: In what ways is Cornelius a model for us? How can you/we specifically apply that model to our priorities & actions in life?

Ch 11, v.1-18

- O: What shocked the Jerusalem church most about the rumors from Casarea was not that Peter baptized Gentiles. What shocked them the most, and why (11:1-3)?
- I: Considering Peter’s account of the events (v.4-17,) what was the significance of this whole episode (11:18).
also see Ephesians 2:11-22
- A: In what ways is Peter a model for us? How can you/we specifically apply that model to our priorities & actions in life?
Follow-up: What can we learn from the way Peter responded to his critics?

Recommended Follow-up:

- Read: Next week’s sermon will be a review of Acts from beginning through chapter 11. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the first 11 chapters, reflect and pray on them, etc.