

## **INTRODUCTION**

The story of Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10 is a pivotal story in the early church that opened Christianity to the Gentiles (without them having to convert to Judaism first). In order to accomplish this, Peter put aside Old Testament laws that separated food and people into categories of 'clean' and 'unclean'. He displayed outrageous obedience, went to the house of a Gentile, and shared the Good News of Jesus with the 'unclean' Gentiles. It was so outrageous that when Peter went to Jerusalem, he was criticized by other believers and called to account for his actions. When God calls you to do something outrageous, outside of your regular routine, how will you respond?

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Has God ever worked in your life in a way that shocked or surprised you? If so, share it with your group.
2. Read Acts 10:9-23. According to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the list of unclean animals is long, and included land animals that either do not chew the cud or do not have a split hoof (pigs, dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, rats); seafood without either fins or scales (shellfish, lobster, oysters, catfish); some birds (owls, hawks, vultures); and reptiles and amphibians. List below the categories of animals Peter sees in his vision. Are they clean or unclean?
3. How did Peter respond to God's message? How would you feel if God asked you to do something that was contrary to your beliefs?
4. Read Mark 7:14-19 and Matthew 23:19-20. Jesus Himself had already told the disciples that all food was clean, and that the gospel was for all. Why do you think Peter needed to be reminded of this?
5. Though Peter was confused by God's message, he obeyed God and went with Cornelius' men. Read Acts 10:24-35. When do you think Peter finally understood the meaning of his vision?
6. In the midst of Peter sharing the Good News of Christ (Acts 10:36-43), the Holy Spirit 'came on' all who heard the message (Acts 10:44). What was the reaction from Peter and the circumcised believers who came with him to Cornelius' house (Acts 10:45-46)? Why do you think they felt this way?
7. The chapter ends with the Gentiles being baptized and Peter staying with them for a few days (Acts 10:47-48). Why are both of these actions significant?
8. Peter was called to step out of his religious routine and do something outrageous for God, and he obeyed. We know it was God calling Peter because it's written in Scripture for us. How do you discern/know that it is God's voice when you sense a call to step out of your regular routine to do something outrageous for Him?

## SCRIPTURE

<sup>9</sup>About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup>He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup>He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup>It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup>Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." <sup>14</sup>"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." <sup>15</sup>The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. <sup>19</sup>While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup>So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." <sup>21</sup>Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" <sup>22</sup>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." <sup>23</sup>Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup>The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup>But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." <sup>27</sup>While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" <sup>30</sup>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 <sup>31</sup>and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. <sup>32</sup>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.' <sup>33</sup>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." <sup>34</sup>Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup>but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. <sup>36</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup>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. <sup>39</sup>"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, <sup>40</sup>but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup>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. <sup>42</sup>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. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." <sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. <sup>46</sup>For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>"Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." <sup>48</sup>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.

Acts 10:9-48

## APPLICATION

"So often we're ready and available to serve God in the situations and environments that we expect Him to be in – church, Bible study, at work, or at school – but I've noticed that He loves to use unexpected situations, too. He might also use something totally ridiculous, unexpected, and even outrageous...."<sup>1</sup> Pray that God would open your eyes to ways He wants to use you, even if it means setting aside a religious routine.

<sup>1</sup>Outrageous, Aaron Tredway, page 111