

Spiritual Growth Resources: From Discipleship to Apostleship

Acts of the Church

Early Church Faith for Today



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Brief overview of chapter 9:32-11:18

A brief introduction to Acts 9:32-11:18

In this section of our study, **Simon Peter** expands his outreach to other towns throughout the region beyond Jerusalem.

- **Jerusalem to Lydda** - Here, he intercedes in the healing of a man called Aeneas. As a result, "all the residents of Lydda and Sharon... turned to the Lord." (Acts 9:35).
- **Lydda to Joppa** - Peter goes to Joppa. The people of Joppa heard what happened in Lydda. There we are introduced to a disciple called Tabitha, who is better known as Dorcas.
- **Joppa to Caesarea** - Peter ends up in Caesarea at the house of a Roman centurion called Cornelius. The circumstances were not like Philip's, where the Spirit told him to walk up to a chariot along the road. Instead, God gives Peter a vision in which he reveals that God is not a respecter of persons because of their nationality or race. Almost simultaneously, God gives Cornelius a visit through an angel telling him to send for Peter, who's in Joppa. The story ends with Cornelius and his household hearing the Gospel, receiving the Holy Spirit, and getting baptized.

- **Caesarea back to Jerusalem** - Peter is criticized back home for going into an “uncircumcised person’s home and ate with them.” Peter defends why he went into Cornelius’ house and how God brought salvation to that home.

In these verses, we see the Holy Spirit directing his apostles through visions and promptings to go to certain places to make the Gospel known to those who would otherwise not hear it. The Holy Spirit is also working in the lives of “gentiles,” and God’s apostles are ready to go to unexpected places and minister to unexpected people, which breaks down social and religious barriers. **Knowing** the Word of God, **Growing** in our Faith, **Going** to share the good news.

K N O W | G R O W | G O

Unlikely Missionary

K N O W

Read Acts 9:31-11:18

1. How would you describe Peter's first lone missionary experience?
 - A. Unexpected.
 - B. He was open to the Spirit's leading.
 - C. It changed his view of Jew/Gentile relationships and how God works across ethnic lines.
 - D. Excited to be "making disciples."
 - E. Other.

2. What was Tabitha known for? Acts 9:36-43
 - A. Her other name - Dorcas.
 - B. Her good works and charity.
 - C. She died and was brought back to life by Peter.
 - D. She made tunics and other clothing items and would give them away.
 - E. She was dearly loved.
 - F. Other.

3. How did God show his love towards an outsider like a gentile Roman centurion? Acts 10
 - A. God gave a vision to Peter that would lead him to Cornelius.
 - B. An angel appeared to Cornelius, telling him to get Peter.
 - C. God loved Peter enough to help him overcome his prejudice towards gentiles.
 - D. God loved Cornelius enough to show him that the message of salvation came from the nation he was occupying.
 - E. Other.

4. What was Cornelius known for? Acts 10:2
 - A. A devout man who gave alms and prayed.
 - B. An officer who leads 100 soldiers (centurion).

- C. He risked his reputation by admitting to his attending soldier that an angel spoke to him.
- D. He was a family man (vs. 25)
- E. Other.

5. How do you explain the vision of the sheet with the unclean animals and the voice urging him to "Rise...kill and eat"? Acts 10:13

- A. Literally, God told Peter to eat whatever he put before him since he was so hungry.
- B. Symbolic. The "unclean" animals represented the Jews' way of describing gentiles as "unclean."
- C. The vision came in a set of 3's, maybe for each of the men that would come to get Peter.
- D. It was a vision to describe Peter's mission, not a vision changing dietary laws.
- E. Other.

6. At what point do social norms and customs become a hindrance to the preaching of the gospel? Acts 10:28.

- A. Knowing social norms and customs could give you access to hard-to-reach people.
- B. Social norms and customs must submit to truth.
- C. Compromising principles for the sake of fitting in.
- D. When social norms and customs become what we "seek first" (Matthew 6:33).
- E. Other.

7. Consider some similarities between Peter and Jonah.

- A. In Joppa, God called Peter to go to the gentiles.
- B. Jonah was trying to flee from going gentiles and ended up in Joppa.
- C. Peter probably remembered Jonah's story and didn't want to repeat Jonah's refusal to preach to Nineveh.
- D. Peter and Jonah both found people ready to receive the message and repentance.
- E. Other.

8. How did Peter "tailor" the gospel message to a foreigner? Acts 10:34-43

- A. From the looks of it, he didn't do much tailoring.
- B. He begins acknowledging his own "misunderstanding."

- C. Peter uses the general knowledge of events surrounding Jesus in Judea. Acts 10:37
- D. Peter refers to Jesus as the One who will judge between the living and the dead. Acts 10:42 and 1 Peter 4:5-6.
- E. Other.

9. What did the outpouring of the Holy Spirit prove? Acts 10:44-48

- A. Those who came with Peter were amazed.
- B. The same Spirit that fell on them on the day of Pentecost was given to gentiles too.
- C. Salvation, Forgiveness, and repentance are not exclusive to the Jews.
- D. Peter doesn't hesitate to baptize them immediately.
- E. Other.

10. What do we learn from Peter's testimony to the church? Acts 11:1-18.

- A. Some only objected to Peter entering and eating with the "uncircumcised."
- B. The Holy Spirit "interrupted" Peter's preaching. Cornelius didn't need much convincing. Peter's presence and few words were enough.
- C. God gave the vision; God provided the angel; God poured his Spirit, and God sent the messenger, all for Cornelius and his family.
- D. There's nothing like a testimony to dismantle unbelief.
- E. Other.

G R O W

Peter is visiting the saints in the areas close to Jerusalem. He ends up in **Lydda**. The map in the overview (above) gives you a place on the map for reference. Lydda is west of Jerusalem. Peter's visit seems to indicate that **Peter had a pastoral role too**. His visits result in the healing of a man who was bedridden for eight years. What would have happened if Peter didn't take the time to visit the "saints"?

Peter's view of ministry had grown. Remember Peter telling Jesus to send the people away after a long day of ministry. Peter's early discipleship days show us a Peter more about the **glamour of ministry**. Peter had tasted and seen the importance of a more holistic ministry. Ministry is not about doing God's work for all to see. Peter was ministering among the saints, and that led to miracles, as we see with Aeneas. What happened in Lydda led to what happened in Joppa. Suppose Peter had just stayed in Jerusalem. Communication back then was either by letter or personal visits. Peter did eventually begin writing letters, but that didn't take the place of visiting.

Cornelius was NOT one of those "saints" that Peter set out to visit. But Cornelius was praying, and God had to respond. Cornelius was also a generous man. He was known for being "an upright... God-fearing man." Acts 10:22. Cornelius was headed in the right direction. There was more God wanted for Cornelius and his family. Complete knowledge of his need for Jesus Christ was vital for his spiritual growth. Cornelius was a humble and unselfish person. Yet, he needed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Some people are just content with prayers and alms. God has more, and Cornelius wanted that for himself and his family. God has more for us.

Peter's companions from Joppa were amazed at what they saw in Caesarea. First, they had to go into a Roman soldier's house. These six companions most likely heard Peter telling them about his experience with Jesus and his latest vision. Peter is asking questions of Cornelius's two servants and the one soldier. By the time they arrived in Caesarea, they had a good idea of why they were there. Cornelius confirms the story when Peter and his companions arrive. These companions were amazed because God spoke to a gentile through a vision. They realized that God's plan goes beyond Israel. These men couldn't refute, deny or ignore God's love for the nations. Once these men return to Joppa, they have another testimony, and indeed they become bearers of good news.

"The Circumcised" back in Jerusalem. Whoever these men were, they were not happy with Peter for entering Cornelius' home and staying in his home. To them, Peter was not

upholding long-held traditions. To them, Peter is not keeping the standards. Peter is compromising. Ethnic and national identity is still very much part of their idea of religion, faith, and spirituality. God will surprise us when he asks us to do something that we deem contrary to set teachings. These "circumcised" men had to hear from Peter what had happened and how God brought salvation, forgiveness, and repentance to a gentile. They had to hear how God treated a gentile the same way he treated the Jews. Ultimately demonstrating that there is no difference when it comes to salvation. Their response is encouraging. They weren't closed-minded. "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Acts 11:18.

Apply

1. Reach out to some "saints" this week and be open to God taking you further than you expected.
2. Be ready for God to break down some prejudices and barriers preventing us from a fulfilled Christian experience.
3. If you're not ready to be a Peter, consider being a companion. You will be equally amazed.
4. Think about how "exclusive" you may be in your social and religious life. Prayerfully consider what God is showing you.

G O

This week, the **GO** part is similar to the **GROW** part. Peter would not have grown if he had not gone. The people GO to Lydda to find Peter. Cornelius' servants and soldiers go to Joppa to find Peter. The "going" was not only the apostle advancing. The "lost" who are drawing closer to God "go" to find healing, to find salvation. The people of Joppa didn't wait for Peter to show up or hope that he came by. The centurion didn't argue with the angel that if Peter knew about him, why would he have to send for him? **Moving towards God** is an act of faith. If you are praying, God is listening. If you live your life wanting to be a good person and do the right thing, God is noticing. But, prayers and almsgiving don't negate the "going" element.

In Lydda and Joppa, the healing of **Aeneas and Tabitha (Dorcas)** resulted in the people of those towns believing in Jesus Christ. Dorcas' ministry resulted in the city "turning to the Lord" in her death. Dorcas made tunics, coats, and garments. She was **"full of good works and acts of charity."** Unbeknownst to her, her good works and charity complemented Peter's ministry. There were people at her wake that would not have been there if it were not for her charity towards them. So indirectly, she brought those people there, where they could witness her resurrection in the name of Jesus.

The Caesarea experience, to me, is the most exciting one. It is tempting to seek out the **Caesarea-like events**. You know, like being God's instrumental in Cornelius's conversion Christ and in receiving the Holy Spirit. The lessons I learn from Peter remind me not be seeking Caesarea-like events.

Before Peter gets to Caesarea, he goes about visiting the saints, church members, if you will. Peter was present, nearby, in people's homes, involved in people's spiritual lives. He comes across a paralyzed person who finds healing because Peter was there in Lydda. Dorcas resurrects because Joppa was not too far away! Peter probably wasn't planning on going to Caesarea. But he probably wasn't planning on being in Joppa either.

If you are a disciple/apostle like Peter, there is more than Lydda and Joppa. If you are a seeker like Cornelius, you don't settle for status quo.

When Peter showed up, Cornelius had gathered his friends and family to hear the word of God. The one who was about to receive the gospel was himself already being a messenger. His friends respected him enough to accept his invitation. His family trusted him that this gathering was of utmost importance. You don't have to wait for baptism to be a witness.

Let's not overlook **Peter's companions**. Peter is making disciples. He is teaching them what Jesus taught him. Just like Jesus traveled with 12, Peter here travels with 6. They were to see a miracle. They were to be part of the miracle. Their presence there serves to show Cornelius that Peter is not a long preacher. They also serve as witnesses as to what happened. Peter refers to them in his testimony back in Jerusalem. You may not feel ready for a **Peter-like ministry**, but you can always be a partner in ministry. You can support the Peters in your church. While you do so, you will be learning and experiencing ministry first-hand.

Finally, there's something to say of **those who can't go to the mission field** like Peter. Even though you can't go for whatever reason, you must stay sensitive to the Spirit's leading. You must stay prayerful and vigilant. You must be mission-minded in your circle of influence. Too much distance from the mission field can create spiritual distance. When this happens, criticism becomes easier than listening. A group - most likely, the Jewish Christians - questioned Peter's methodology and orthodoxy. They seemed to be more concerned with forms and methods than with the lost. God had done a wonderful thing, and some were more concerned about appearances. Sometimes we can lose touch with what matters if we are too detached from the mission.

Apply

1. Who are you in this story? Peter, the companions, the Jewish back home, someone else?
2. According to what you've read here, where can we start in God's mission field?
3. You can gather friends and family in your home to hear the word of God.
4. Would you like to be part of a class to learn how to share your faith? (Contact Pastor Pedro at ptrinidad@carmsda.org)

Scripture Memorization for this Week

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. - Acts 9:31



SO PETER OPENED HIS MOUTH AND SAID: "TRULY I UNDERSTAND THAT

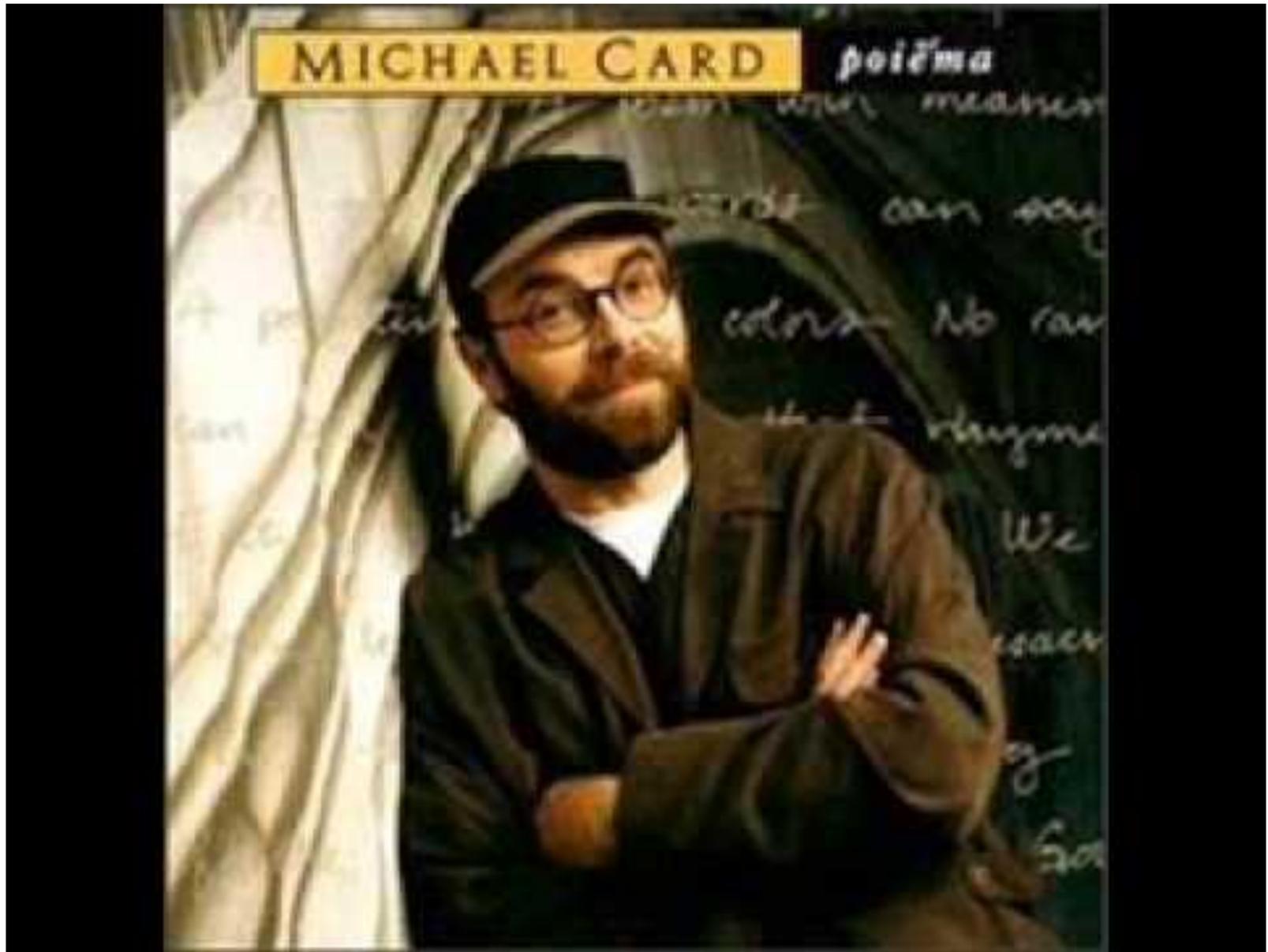
**GOD SHOWS
NO PARTIALITY,**

BUT IN EVERY NATION ANYONE WHO FEARS HIM & DOES WHAT IS RIGHT IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM."

ACTS 10:34-35

Praise & Worship in Song

The Things We Leave Behind



TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Joy in the Journey

