

# WE TAKE THE BEST NEWS EVER TO THE LEAST-REACHED PEOPLE

CCC DNA Statements

*It is our privilege to take the gospel around the world. We focus on the hardest places in the world where all the odds are stacked against us.*

Scripture Passage: Acts 10:1–48

## OVERVIEW

The story of Cornelius and Peter (and subsequent “conversion” of each of them!) is the second time we notice a non-Jewish person coming to faith. The first experience was the Ethiopian eunuch who met Philip on the desert road. Cornelius and Peter independently have visions from God that explain their next steps (see also Acts 9:10ff when both Ananias and Paul have specific visions). The entire chapter is a fascinating story of two strangers, brought together by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of bringing the gospel message to the Gentiles. While we often think of Paul as the missionary to the Gentiles, God orchestrates at least these two instances of “outsiders” being presented with, and subsequently accepting, the gospel.

Such “double visions” were not common in ancient literature, and its use calls attention to the reality of God’s hand calling them into community. They meet, Peter shares the good news, and Cornelius is baptized, along with his household. While Peter’s gospel message is the focus of the assigned text, it should not be considered outside its broader context of how the Holy Spirit moved in the early church (in this case, specifically through Peter and Cornelius) to spread the gospel “through Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

## GROUP OBJECTIVES

- Acknowledge and engage with the presence of God. Respond to Holy Spirit promptings.
- Read through Acts 10 as a group.
- Discuss aspects of the text that stand out to you.
- Reflect on how we can learn from the experiences of Cornelius and Peter.
- Encourage one another and build each other up to live biblical, Spirit-empowered lives.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share about a time you felt left out or rejected. How did you feel? How did you respond?
- Share about an international mission trip experience you had. How did it change/affect you in regard to your understanding of “all nations” needing the gospel?

## OPENING PRAYER

- Pray for the Holy Spirit’s presence in the group; acknowledge our need for the Holy Spirit’s guidance; ask God to give you a supernatural filling of the Spirit and awareness of your own need, so that you respond when the Spirit prompts you to do so.

## BIBLE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

### Read through Acts 10:1–8

- What do you notice/observe about Cornelius?

### Read through Acts 10:9–16.

- What do you notice/observe about Peter?
- Note a similar vision in Ezekiel 4:13–15.

<sup>1</sup> Most notes on the text come from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary (New Testament)* by Craig Keener (IVP, 1999, 2014)

- With whom do you identify more, Peter or Cornelius? Why do you think that is?
- What connections might you make between this story and the one about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch?
- Background on verses 17–23:
  - » Simon was a tanner (worked with animal skins) and strict Jews would have considered him unclean.
  - » Pious Jews would not have entered a Gentile’s home or invited a Gentile into theirs.
  - » Impure table fellowship was a significant concern among the Pharisees
    - All these facts set Peter up for significant inner turmoil in navigating a relationship for which he had no precedent, and the impact it could potentially have on stricter Jewish Christians.
- Background on verses 24–33:
  - » The journey likely included an overnight stay, so Cornelius was patiently waiting (which shows his eagerness to hear Peter’s message).
  - » Unclear if “friends and relatives” includes immediate family, or all in the household (including slaves).
  - » Because he “called them together,” it is unlikely that it refers to infants or young children.
  - » Peter’s statement to Cornelius (v 28) would have been notable to Cornelius, who had likely been snubbed by Jews before. Hospitality rules in that time expected that Peter would be fed and subsequently called the “table fellowship” question into view.

**Read through Acts 10:34–48.**

- What words or phrases in Peter’s gospel presentation stand out to you? Why?
- Do you see any connections between Peter’s assumptions about Gentiles to our own assumptions about other people’s race or economic status?
  - » Where might our prejudice or worldview cause us to leave someone out?
- Before this experience, Gentiles (that’s us) were left out of God’s good news.
  - » Do you recognize your own need for this good news? All of us are broken and need God.
  - » What can you thank God for in this good news?
  - » If you believe this gospel is true, what’s your next step? How should we respond?
    - Reconciliation
    - Confession
    - Forgiveness
    - Lordship/surrender
- What questions does the passage raise for you?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

- Pray for CCC-supported missionaries.
- Pray for our own awareness of our need for God so that we would sense the urgency of reaching others with the gospel.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to prompt you with those people and situations that need the gospel and for your response.