

Introduction

This week we encounter a pivotal text in Acts. Miracles, an angelic appearance to a Roman soldier, and an odd vision push Peter to initiate the spread of the gospel in full force to the Gentiles.

To get the most out of your group time, we invite you to look over the questions below and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. What is the most exotic or adventurous food you have eaten? Why did you decide to eat it?

2. Imagine God spoke to you in a dream and said He wanted to send you to be a missionary, but He wanted you to choose where you would go. Where would you go to proclaim the gospel? Why that place?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
 - 2) Invite someone to read the passage in the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What is one important lesson you learned from this week's sermon and one question you are left with?
- 2) Twice God used the port town of Joppa to launch his message to Gentiles. Once with the prophet Jonah and then with Peter (whose Hebrew name was Simon bar Jonah). **How would you characterize the responses of both God's messengers? (read *Jonah 1* to refresh your memory of Jonah's story)**

Which messenger are you most like when God leads you to proclaim His message? What keeps you from daring to be the Church and taking the gospel to those who need to hear it, even if they are different from you?

- 3) Sandwiched between Saul's conversion and Peter's vision Luke records two miracle stories (*Acts 9:32-42*). Read *Luke 5:17-26* and *8:40, 49-56* and note the similarities with *Acts 9*. **What is the purpose of the two miracle stories in Luke's Gospel? (Hint: read *Matthew 11:2-6*)**

What do you think is the purpose of the two similar miracle stories in *Acts 9*? What is the significance that they take place in a Gentile context?

- 4) *Acts 9:34* tells us that when Peter heals Aeneas, Peter says, "Jesus Christ heals you." **What does this communicate about Jesus?**

Where is the risen Jesus present in your life? How has He shown up in significant ways to do the extraordinary?

- 5) Notice in our passage the steps God uses to prepare Peter to announce the gospel to Gentiles—miracles in a Gentile region, Peter staying with a tanner (an "unclean" occupation), Peter's vision,

Cornelius's call for Peter. **How might God be working in subtle (and not so subtle) ways to prepare you to announce the gospel to others?**

How willing are you to follow God's leading even when it takes us to people and places we don't expect? What are some hindrances you face that make following God's leading difficult?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

Prayer opens us up to the leading of the Holy Spirit which makes it an important part of the Christian life. We realize that everyone has their own comfort level with group prayer, and we want this to be a time of safety and care. You may verbalize your prayer or pray silently to yourself; that way everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Some things to consider during prayer time:

- What do you think Jesus is asking of you after this message and group discussion?
- Ask God to help you become more aware of and responsive to His leading in your life.
- Thank God for the people He brought into your life who were willing to follow His leading to bring you His message of hope.

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Each week we're suggesting a couple of spiritual exercises. These are not required, but they may help us to actively live our faith and grow as followers of Jesus. Feel free to practice one or both. If a certain exercise is helpful for you, we encourage you to find a way to incorporate it into your daily life.

(Write a "Thank You") Write a letter or note of thanks to someone who was instrumental in your coming to faith in Jesus.

(Go to a different part of town) This week spend some time in a part of town you do not go to often; perhaps a part of town that makes you feel like an outsider. Do some shopping there. Eat there. Observe the people and pray for them. If you are more adventurous talk to some of them. After your visit, spend some time reflecting on the people you were around (in prayer, writing in a journal, or talking with a spouse or friend). Is there anything you sense God is teaching you about others who are not exactly like you?

Next week in your Life Group, take a few moments to share how either of these exercises may have changed your outlook on your daily life.