Study of Acts – Discussion Notes Chapter 10

Introduction
Chapter 10 teaches us that God can be full of surprises. God can step in and turn our world upside down even when we think we have things well under control.

We often joke about how well or how poorly we multi-task. In Acts chapter 10, we observe multi-tasking at its best where God is speaking to two different men and preparing them to meet. What is God’s purpose in this planned meeting? You guessed it, to further the building of His kingdom. In fact, what God intends to do through these two very different men, will ultimately change the world.

The events of Acts 10 will challenge your way of thinking, your prejudices, and your traditions. There is much to learn about how God uses people, who he chooses to use and why.

Content
1. Faith and Obedience is rewarded by God (vs. 1-8).

Luke is careful to tell us about Cornelius before he writes about what takes place.

*Based on the text, what are some things we are told about Cornelius?*

Cornelius was a man with a lot of influence. He had servants and soldiers under him. He was part of an elite group of the Roman army. More importantly, Cornelius was a man who feared God along with his entire household. He gave generously to the needy and prayed regularly to God.

Cornelius is someone to be admired. He serves as a mentor to each of us in our commitment, faithfulness and service to the Lord. Though Cornelius was not a Jew, he was a faithful believer in Jehovah and exercised his faithfulness openly and generously.

God singled out Cornelius and chose to use him in this great work God was about to do. The backdrop of the faithfulness of Cornelius is important. God uses those who are faithful. God gives opportunity to those who are faithful to do his work in the opportunities He provides. The faithfulness of Cornelius brought him to this point where the text says, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for memorial before God.” In other words, God had observed your actions and your prayers and chosen to use you in a great way. God has observed your faithfulness.

We often ponder why God does not provide us opportunity to serve Him. More than likely, the answer can be found in what we have done with past opportunities. Have we been faithful to serve, faithful in our prayers and commitment? What have you done with the opportunities to serve God?

7 In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works. James 2:18 HCSB

Too often we have no works because we are not willing to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to do what God wills. Instead, we waste our life looking for God to meet our requirements. We have our list of what we will and will not do. God knows nothing of such an attitude; He expects surrender.

The Bible says, 9 For the eyes of Yahweh roam throughout the earth to show Himself strong for those whose hearts are completely His. 2 Chronicles 16:9 HCSB

God is looking for those who are willing to surrender to His will. For such believers, He has many opportunities to serve His kingdom.
2. God is always growing us in our relationship and understanding (vs. 9-15).

*How did this dream or vision strike Peter?*

Peter was a born and bred Jew through and through. He was now a follower of Christ but he was still a Jew. He was not about to defy his Jewish upbringing. He knew what was acceptable and what was not. Some things were considered unclean for a Jew to eat and that was the way it was to be.

If you look at the very end of chapter 9, Luke tells us Peter went to Joppa and stayed with a tanner by the name of Simon. This was not something a Jew would do. Anyone who worked with dead animals or animal hides was considered unclean and no Jew was to come within a certain number of feet of such people. But because Simon was a believer, Peter stayed in his home. Already, God was preparing and moving Peter to a new understanding.

Notice how God deals differently with Cornelius and Peter. To the soldier, he issues a command He knows will be followed. To the disciple He delicately births an idea to be contemplated and learned.

God persistently and carefully teaches Peter to listen to His instruction. Peter had to be taught and his heart had to be changed to understand what God wanted to do with His church. Peter was about to learn much more about the freedom that comes through Christ. He was about to learn that salvation was not just for the Jew.

*Considering the life of Peter, what can we learn from what God was doing with Peter?*

When we consider Peter (The Rock), we think about all he has done up to this point. He has walked with Jesus, prayed with Jesus and seen many miracles. After Pentecost, Peter himself had miracles performed at his command. He preached and thousands were saved. He had been arrested for spreading the gospel and God repeatedly had him freed so he could preach more. This was Peter – the Rock. And yet he was about to learn a major spiritual lesson; a major revelation.

Regardless of whom you are, God always has a next step in your Christian pilgrimage. There is always something new to be learned and experienced. There is always a new understanding of His will to be revealed. This usually happens in three steps:

1. He creates willingness in our heart to learn and receive His revelation.
2. He opens our eyes and understanding to the truth of the scripture.
3. He provides a sign or experience in our daily relationships or activity as confirmation.

Illus: We must understand that God is always willing to work in our lives if we are willing to surrender to Him. As a young preacher in college and immediately following college, I dedicated myself to being a pastor. One day a deacon hurt me very badly. I left the ministry for many years. The problem was I was too committed to serving the church and did not understand I was to be serving God. I let the pain inflicted by a person cause me to leave the pastorate. Many years later, I yearned to be back in the pulpit preaching the gospel. I had taught Sunday School and served in other capacities but my heart longed to be in the pulpit. I reasoned that no church would want a pastor in his late 40s who had not preached since his 20s. I cried and I prayed with little faith, longing for a solution. Then I realized if it was what God wanted it would happen. Meanwhile, God had a place for me to serve right here at BBC. There is never a day when I doubt if this is where God desires to use me. He had a plan and all it required on my part was a little faith and a surrendered willing heart.

3. The whosoevers of the gospel (vs. 33-43).

*What was the lesson God was teaching Peter?*
How did this lesson change the church?

God was teaching Peter about the depth of His inclusive love. Peter was to learn that anyone God declared clean was clean. Suddenly it all made sense. Salvation was not just for the Jew. For years the Jews had claimed exclusivity to Jehovah and yet they were hypocritical in their faith. Christ came to forgive and save the lost. Peter was learning that the blood of Christ was for all who would believe.

Jesus had said, 16 “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God. John 3:16-18 HCSB

When God teaches us a truth, He always follows up with an opportunity to put that truth into practice. He always gives us a way to exercise and live out what we have learned. When the Lord gives us a vision, He follows up with a challenge and a way to live out that vision.

For Peter, this new found truth was to be exercised immediately. There was no wiggling out of this circumstance. Cornelius and his family and friends were all there standing before him to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

They wasted no time believing. And God wasted no time putting His full stamp of approval on the moment by the presence of His Holy Spirit. They began to speak in tongues praising God. There was no way for Peter or anyone else to doubt what was happening. There was no question for anyone present that this was God’s intention; His will.

How did Peter respond in verse 47?

This was an earthquake in Peter’s heart, in Christianity and among the Jews. Gentiles were being saved and the Holy Spirit had come upon them just as He had at Pentecost. I love the fact that it was Peter who suggested they find water and be baptized.

In verse 34, Peter explains that he now really understands that God does not show favoritism or partiality in those He saves. The “whosoever wills” includes the worst among us; the unclean among us. God’s plan for the church is to save all who desire and are willing to receive.

Illus: Duck Dynasty guy Phil. God uses him to speak the gospel and speak about faith in Christ. As different as he is, his past is a powerful testimony to the power of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Peter speaks of what God has shown Him. We must ask the question, what has God shown me?

Are you growing in your relationship with God?

God has a next step for you in your Christian pilgrimage.

What prevents us from taking that next step?