Acts 10:1- 48: Week 22

Pull Up a Chair

SUMMARY

Acts 10 is a pivotal moment in the story of the early church. God makes it unmistakably clear that the gospel is not only for one group of people. The gospel is for everyone.

Cornelius is a Gentile who is earnestly seeking God, while Peter is a Jewish follower of Jesus who has deeply ingrained assumptions about who is clean, unclean, near and far. God works on both ends of the encounter. He seeks Cornelius, sends Peter, prepares Peter through a vision, opens the door for Peter to enter Cornelius' home and confirms that the Holy Spirit is for everyone who believes in Jesus.

What begins with distance ends with fellowship, baptism and a new understanding of who belongs at God's table. The challenge for us is just as personal. **Who needs a chair?**

God may not be asking us to change what we believe. He may be asking us to change how we love, how we see people and who we are willing to make room for.

INTRO PRAYER

God, thank You that Your grace reaches people we might never expect. Open our eyes to the ways we have allowed distance, assumptions or judgment to keep us from loving people well. Help us see people the way You see them. Give us courage to make room, extend invitations and follow You when You interrupt our plans. Show us who needs a chair at our table. Amen.

ICE BREAKER

Have you ever had something not go according to plan, but ended up being a really meaningful experience?

KEY VERSES

Acts 10:34-35

> “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.”

Acts 10:43

> “Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 10:47

> “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

DISCUSSION

1. The message began with the statement, “Often what feels like an interruption is actually the assignment.” What does that mean to you?

Think about your normal routines. Where might you be so focused on your plans that you miss the people God has put in front of you?

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2. Cornelius was generous, prayerful and seeking God, but he still needed Jesus.

What does Cornelius' story teach us about the difference between being a good person and knowing Jesus? Where can we be tempted to substitute religious activity or morality for a relationship with Christ?

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3. God was working on both ends of this encounter. He was speaking to Cornelius while preparing Peter.

Why is that significant? Have you ever looked back on a situation and realized God had been preparing both you and another person before you ever knew what He was doing?

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4. God gave Peter a vision that challenged the way he had always viewed people.

The message says, **“God changes WHAT Peter sees to change HOW Peter sees.”** What assumptions or categories can influence the way we see other people? Where do you think God might be challenging you to see someone differently?

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5. Peter initially responds, “Surely not, Lord.”

Why do you think Peter struggled to accept what God was showing him? What are some areas where we can unintentionally say, “Surely not, Lord,” when God challenges our assumptions?

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6. Peter welcomed Cornelius' friends into his home before he ever entered Cornelius' home.

The message says, **“You don’t have to affirm everything about somebody to welcome them into your home.”** Why is it sometimes difficult to distinguish between hospitality and agreement? How can we disagree with someone while still treating them with dignity, kindness and love?

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7. Peter thought he was going to minister to one person, but Cornelius had gathered a whole room full of people.

What does this teach us about the way God can expand an assignment beyond what we originally expected? Where might God be asking you to take a step of obedience without knowing the full outcome?

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8. Peter and Cornelius were both praying when God began directing them.

The message says, **“They made time for prayer. People say I don’t have time to pray. Did you know on average we spend 4 hours on this device EVERY DAY?”** What competes for your attention and makes prayer difficult? What would it look like to intentionally create more space to sit in God's presence?

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9. Acts 10 repeatedly emphasizes that the gospel is for “everyone.”

Who are the kinds of people we naturally find easiest to welcome? Who are the people we may be tempted to keep at a distance? Why?

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10. The message says, “If our theology doesn’t make us more loving then it’s not good theology.”

How does that challenge you? What would change if we measured the maturity of our faith not only by what we know, but by how we love?

LIFE APPLICATION

WHO NEEDS A CHAIR?

Take a few moments to think about the people currently sitting outside your “table.”
Not necessarily people you hate. Maybe people you avoid.
Maybe someone you disagree with.
Maybe someone whose lifestyle makes you uncomfortable.
Maybe someone you have already decided won't understand you.
Maybe someone who is simply different from you.

Ask God:

- Who am I keeping at a distance?
- How might You want me to see this person differently?
- What would it look like to love them well?
- What invitation could I extend?

This week, identify **one person who needs a chair** and take one tangible step toward them.

That could mean starting a conversation, sending a text, inviting them to coffee, listening to their story or simply choosing to see them with greater compassion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. GOD SEEKS THE SEEKER

Cornelius was seeking God, but God was already seeking Cornelius. Grace always makes the first move.

2. GOD SENDS THE MESSENGER

When God wants to reach someone, He often sends someone. Sometimes **we are the person He sends.**

3. GOD PREPARES THE MESSENGER

God had to change Peter's perspective before Peter could fully participate in what God was doing.

4. GOD OPENS THE DOOR

Peter thought he was going to one person. God had prepared an entire room.

5. GOD CONFIRMS THE WELCOME

The Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles, showing that God's grace is not limited.

The chapter begins with distance and ends with fellowship. God's table was always bigger. Acts 10 is when Peter and the early church finally saw it.

ENDING PRAYER

God, thank You that nobody is too far gone, nobody is beyond the reach of redemption and nobody is disqualified from Your grace.

Forgive us for the ways we have looked down on people, kept people at a distance or decided who belongs and who doesn't.

Change the way we see people so that we can love people the way You do.

Show us who needs a chair. Give us courage to make room. Help us recognize the divine appointments You put in front of us and give us the faith to say yes.

Thank You that Jesus is Lord of all and that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness through His name.

Amen.