

Very popular story, and in fact what a lot of scholars refer to as the hinge story of Acts, because this is the moment that changes everything for Peter.

Ever felt sold on something, all in, but still feel like you are missing something

My story-parenting

Peter-sold out on Jesus and this mission, but had this massive blind spot for whether or not the Gentiles could be a part of this new movement.

Introduced to Cornelius, in a town not too far away from Joppa. He was a centurion, so a military man and was basically there to squash Jewish rebellions against the Roman empire, which is ironic because he is described as someone who was devout and feared God. He had some level of respect and worship toward God. He wasn't a full-fledged convert but had his spiritual eyes open to God and His ways, so much so that we see he prayed to God, and did "charitable deeds" for the Jewish people.

Scripture tells us he was praying one day, and an angel shows up and calls him by name. The angel tells him that God has noticed him, and all that he has been up to. He tells him to send some people to Joppa and ask for Peter. He gives him all the details and then takes off. After hearing from the angel Cornelius gets right to it and sends a few of his servants and a soldier to find Peter.

Cut scene to Joppa and we catch up with Peter:

Brought Tabitha back to life

Staying at Simon the tanners house- odd, but just getting started

Up on the roof praying, and gets hungry, while the food is getting ready, he falls into a trance.

I did some digging on that word, "trance", and it's as weird as it sounds—inherently mystical and not the norm. Definitely not normal for Peter, which means we should probably pay attention.

If you think that's weird, just wait, Peter looks up and sees the heavens open and a sheet being lowered down; on it, all the animals, four-footed ones, reptiles, birds, all of it. A voice says to him to get up, kill them, and eat them.

And Peter freaks

"No, Lord!" Peter said. "For I have never eaten anything impure and ritually unclean." (Acts 10:14)
What is he talking about here?

Dietary restrictions

Mosaic covenant—reasons why (set apart, practical, worship)

In any case this was fairly established by the time we get to where Peter is. This was just not something Jewish people did, and he would never, he is insulted at even the idea.

Again, a second time, the voice said to him, "What God has made clean, do not call impure." This happened three times, and suddenly the object was taken up into Heaven. (Acts 10:15-16)

Peter snaps out of his trance and is stressed (Scripture says perplexed—he was anxious about what this could mean.) As he is sitting up there contemplating this, the men Cornelius sent show up and ask if Peter was staying at this house. Perfect timing, right? Almost like someone knew what they were doing.

Peter is still sitting up on the roof and still thinking about this vision and what it could mean and the Spirit—not Simon, or anyone else—but the Spirit tells him, "three men are here looking for you, go down there, and go right away. Don't have any doubts about it, I have sent them."

Interesting the comparison between the voice of the Spirit and this vision

So he goes down, introduces himself, and gets the whole story from these guys. They get a good night's sleep and then head to Caesarea.

When they arrive there, Cornelius has everyone ready. Family, close friends, they cannot wait to hear what Peter has to say. In fact when Peter walks in the door Cornelius was so jazzed he falls at his feet and starts to worship him. Peter puts a stop to that pretty quickly and says, "No, no, I'm just a man just like you, That's not why I'm here."

As they are talking and walking they come into this room packed full of people, and this is how Peter greets them, in what I find to be an incredibly tactless approach. I really find it very awkward.

Peter said to them, "You know it's forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner, but God has shown me that I must not call any person impure or unclean. That's why I came without any objection when I was sent for. So may I ask why you sent for me?" (Acts 10:28-29)

Cornelius tells him the whole story again, the prayer and angel and Joppa and all of it, and after hearing it from his mouth, this is Peter's response:

Peter began to speak: "Now I truly understand that God doesn't show favoritism," (Acts 10:34)

He admits he was wrong. That this wasn't just for a certain type of person, but that God's grace and family is available to anyone who would turn toward Him.

And he starts to tell them about Jesus.

“You have heard about this man healed the sick, raised the dead, drove out demons and stood in opposition to evil. I saw it myself, but they took Him away and killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead, and we saw Him, ate with Him, and He told us to preach to the people we encountered, that through Jesus you can have relationship with God, and by believing Him you can receive forgiveness from sins.

While Peter is saying this something wild happens. The Gentiles get a touch of the Spirit up in there. They started to do the same kind of things we saw in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Gentiles, speaking in tongues and singing the greatness of God. Peter is floored and says, “Let’s get these people some water, who are we to hold back the waters of baptism?” Let’s do this. They were baptized and it became official. The Gospel is obviously for all people, no more guessing or questions about that.

This is an inspiring story, and one when we look back in hindsight makes all kinds of sense. But let’s not forget that even though Peter seems game for this, what happened here was absolutely obliterating some things he had believed and known to be true most of his life. Peter was being confronted with maybe the biggest blind spot of his life, and he had more than a few.

I feel this in my own life, maybe you do too.

I’ve never been more in on Jesus, my love for Him grows literally every day. I’m so grateful, and I’m not sure I could have always said that. I am more in on what God wants His Church to do and be, to be a group of people living out their calling to go and make disciples. I’ve never been so sure that this is what I need to do with my life, but oftentimes I find myself struggling to move forward in it. Maybe you feel that too. I just wonder, if some of the reason is because we might have some unaddressed blind spots in our lives.

What we see here is that, thank God, He is willing to address them. How will we respond? So if that’s you, you can identify with Peter a bit, then what might addressing your blind spots look like? Is there anything here that might be true for you? I think there are a few I want to point out.

Move of the Holy Spirit

- right tools for the job-scooter, vice grips, takes longer, more painful and frustrating, and causes some damage
- A supernatural problem needs a supernatural solution.
- I think some of our struggle as the Church in this part of the world and in this time in which we live, is we have settled for physical solutions to supernatural problems.
- I feel so gutted about this, so burdened by this.

Humbled himself

- Jonah and Peter comparison

- Difference was the humbling of themselves
- Both humbled by God-the vision (three times) and the fish
- But only Peter humbled himself
- Nothing keeps our blind spots blind quite like pride, and nothing that we do from our end helps us see them quite like humility
- When is the last time I purposefully humbled myself, especially in front of someone who doesn't know Jesus?
- More often than not, we double down, we dig in.
- What if God wants us to more often, just humble ourselves?

Internal risk

- Peter didn't seem too concerned with external risk.
- Peter had to be willing to let go of a deeply held condition.
- Some of us I think really mean it when we say we would be willing to die for Jesus.
- We accept the external risk.
- But are we willing to accept the internal risk, maybe even on something no one knows about?

THE END

Ends with, "he stayed there."

Don't know this but most of the time when they gathered, they took Communion.

I like to picture what that might have been like.

Peter looking around amazed that these people could be at the table.

I'm reminded of that too-across oceans and continents and ethnicities and situations and all of it, through history, we are bound together by Jesus.

What an absolutely beautiful picture.

And one that Peter would have at the very least missed out on, if he had chosen to maintain his blind spot. And maybe so will we. I don't want that,

Take the bread-Jesus' broken body-humiliated

Take the cup-Jesus' blood poured out-all the way out, every last bit. The physical agony He endured, but more so the spiritual cost that was paid; again, a spiritual solution to the spiritual problem of sin and death.

HOME GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

CONNECTION

How are you doing?
What did obedience look like this week?

PASSAGE | ACTS 10: 1-48

Peter and Cornelius

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, **2** a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. **3** About the ninth hour of the day^[a] he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." **4** And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." **5** And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. **6** He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." **7** When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, **8** and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision

9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour^[b] to pray. **10** And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance **11** and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. **12** In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. **13** And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." **14** But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." **15** And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." **16** This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate **18** and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. **19** And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. **20** Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation,^[c] for I have sent them." **21** And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" **22** And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." **23** So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸ And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

³⁰ And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, ^[d] and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Gentiles Hear the Good News

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

CONVERSATION

What stuck out to you in the passage?

What do you think the Holy Spirit is saying to you?

What do you need to do this week to be obedient?

Is there anyone that you could impact or share with this week?