

Small Group Study Guide

From Other to Brother | From Sunday Feb 9, 2020

Appetizer:

Question: Can you think of a time when someone didn't accept you for who you are, either because of your background, or some kind of disability, the clothing you wore, or just the way you looked? Share it with the group.

Read out Acts 10. Have someone read it a second time, to allow the Scriptures to sink in by using a second voice.

A couple questions from the passage:

Share some observations from the passage. What words stuck out to you when you heard this passage read? Were there any details that you thought were unique or different that sets this story apart?

Not only is the passage about an important subject, but it is written in a unique way, where the author, Luke, plays off of the tensions between the Roman culture and the Jewish culture. Do you notice any particular Jewish or Roman words? Why do you think, for instance, Peter was mentioned by the angel as being named "Simon Peter"?

Main Course:

Acts 10 is often called "The Gentile Pentecost" as it carries many of the same characteristics as the story of the Spirit coming to the disciples in Acts 2.

The idea of the Spirit coming on Gentiles would have been rattling to devout Jews. It was common for Jews to believe that, although Gentiles could be followers of God, true conversion included exterior markers like eating pure food, being circumcised, and keeping Jerusalem and the Temple at the forefront of your life.

God-fearing Gentiles (those who desired to devote themselves to the Jewish God) did not typically practice these exterior markers. Therefore, they could be respected, but they couldn't really be friends for they would be considered unclean. And Jews needed to be set apart to maintain their identity. Any alternative would be a compromise.

Question for discussion: When Peter saw the vision of the blanket coming from heaven filled with clean and unclean animals to eat, he declined God's offer to have a meal. Have you ever felt the Spirit has told you to participate in something that you didn't feel comfortable in doing?

Question for discussion: The point of the vision was not that Peter should stop practicing being a good Jew. Most likely, he continued to practice eating "clean" animals. The point was that Peter treated people like he treated food. God had done something radical through Jesus: he united people together, not because of their race, but because his grace.

Question: If while praying, you received a vision of a blanket coming down from heaven full of people that you have shunned or frowned upon, who would be in that blanket?

Question: What "exterior markers" do Christians place on other believers or on seekers (those thinking about following Jesus) that Jesus does not?

Question: How have your painful experiences helped you conform into the likeness of Christ? Take some time to share with the group.

Dessert:

Challenge:

Peter took a big step in inviting the Gentile messengers into the house that he was staying at. But it was even more difficult to receive hospitality by going into a Gentile house. Receiving hospitality is often harder than giving hospitality, because we lose the power of being on "our turf".

1. Identify individuals or people groups who may be open to the gospel or have a faith in Jesus that you are uncomfortable with (perhaps those that you already identified in your blanket). Write these names in groups down.
2. Present these names to God and make yourself available to connecting with them when the moment arises. Or perhaps, commit to taking first steps towards extending hospitality towards some of them. Be ready to say yes to their invitation!