

Main Idea: In Acts 10:1-23 God did three things to prepare His people to leave their comfort zone and accomplish His mission.

- I. God prepares ministries (1-8).
    - A. Cornelius was an unlikely candidate (1-2).
      1. He was a military man.
      2. He was a family man.
      3. He was a God-fearing man.
      4. He was a generous man.
      5. He was a praying man.
      6. He was a Gentile.
    - B. Cornelius had a vision (3-6).
      1. God commended him (3-4).
      2. God commanded him (5-6).
    - C. Cornelius obeyed God (7-8).
  - II. God prepares messengers (9-16).
    - A. Peter had a vision (9-12).
    - B. Peter received a message (13-16).
      1. The Lord told him to do something he had never done before.
      2. The Lord told him to change his thinking.
    - C. Peter learned a vital lesson.
      1. God never lowers His standard.
      2. God can bring anyone up to His standard through Christ.
  - III. God prepares meetings (17-23).
    - A. The men arrived (17-18).
    - B. The Spirit told Peter to go with them (19-20).
    - C. Peter obeyed God (21-23).
      1. He broke down barriers.
      2. He took advantage of the God-given opportunity.
- Make It Personal: Three things to think about...
1. It's vital that we reach out to people like us.
  2. It's just as vital to reach out to people *not* like us.
  3. When we do that we're doing what Jesus did.

*Scripture Reading: Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 67*

Every major religion today has at least 80% of its followers concentrated on one continent, observes J. D. Greear. Except one. Christianity has roughly 20% of its followers in Africa, 20% in Asia, 20% in Europe, 20% in North America, and 20% in South America. “Christianity, statistically speaking, has no dominant culture,” says Greear. “It is the most diverse movement in history.”<sup>2</sup>

That's not by coincidence and it says so much about the Living God. In His Word, God has made it clear that it is His plan to save a people from all the people groups of the world. The peoples are on are His heart.

Unfortunately, they are not always on ours. In his classic novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* Mark Twain included the following dialogue between Tom and his friend Huck Finn. It's a rather revealing conversation into the prejudice that lurks in the heart of mankind.<sup>3</sup>

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For an earlier development of this text, see the Acts series preached at WBC in 2001.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gaining By Losing*, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> Story taken from John MacArthur, *Acts*, p. 289.

“Tom has just informed Huck that he is not welcome in Tom’s gang. Huck protests, ‘Now Tom, hain’t you always been friendly to me? You wouldn’t shet me out, would you, Tom?’ Tom replies, ‘Huck, I wouldn’t want to, and I don’t want to—but what would people say? Why they’d say, ‘Mph! Tom Sawyer’s Gang! pretty low characters in it!’ They’d mean you, Huck. You wouldn’t like that, and I wouldn’t.’”

Exclusivism. It only happens in children’s story books, right? You know the answer. It’s a heart attitude that causes silent treatment between neighbors, on the one hand, to wars between nations on the other hand. It’s all around us in the world. Even worse, it’s often in the church. It’s tragic, yet true (as John MacArthur observes; p. 290), “Those of another culture, skin color, social status, educational group, or income level often find themselves as unwelcome in the church as Huck Finn was in Tom Sawyer’s gang.”

It makes for a good Facebook post to talk about how bad prejudice is and how we’re against it. Yet the Bible doesn’t merely bemoan how bad prejudice is. It shows God’s beautiful alternative, and how to experience it, as we’ll discover by turning our focus to something God accomplished in Acts 10.

Luke, of course, wrote the book of Acts. It’s called Acts for in it he records the *acts of the apostles*, the activity of the early church during its first thirty years of existence. Before returning to heaven Jesus gave this charge to his followers, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

With those words Jesus made it clear what He wanted the disciples to do. Once they received the Holy Spirit (which occurred in Acts 2) they were to embark on a mission to take the good news of salvation through Christ to the world. They were to go to Jerusalem, then Judea, and then Samaria. They did that, as the first nine chapters of Acts verify. But to fulfill the final leg of this mission they’d have to jump a huge hurdle, for going to the “ends of the earth” meant going to the *Gentiles*.

I don’t think we appreciate fully the gigantic rift that existed between Jew and Gentile in the first century. It was every bit as severe as the racial tensions we know in our country, actually far worse. The typical first century Jew and Gentile would have nothing to do with each other, absolutely *nothing*. The Jews despised the Gentiles. They didn’t think a Gentile could ever be right with God, at least not without becoming a proselyte to Judaism. “Become one of us and maybe we’ll open the door for you” was the mentality.

And remember, the first disciples were Jews. The early church was basically Jewish for its first ten years. If it was going to fulfill its God given mission to reach the world, the church would have to move out of its comfort zone.

You say, “From how you described their attitude it sounds like you’d need a stick of dynamite to make that happen.”

And that’s basically what it took. Not a stick of dynamite, but something far more powerful. *God Himself*.

In Acts 10 God took action. In Acts 10 God said, “It’s time to move to leg #4 of the mission. It’s time to reach the Gentiles.”

How did He do it? How did the Lord move His people out of their comfort zone, and furthermore, how does He do it today? In Acts 10:1-23 we learn that God does three things to prepare His people to leave their comfort zones and accomplish His mission.

## I. God prepares ministries (1-8).

Notice how He did it in Acts 10, verses 1-2, “At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup> He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.”

The Lord prepares ministries, and this one began with Cornelius. Why Cornelius? Three things were true of Cornelius.

**A. Cornelius was an unlikely candidate (1-2).** In what sense? Luke gives us six details involving this man.

1. *He was a military man.* He was a “centurion” in the city of Caesarea, located on the Mediterranean Sea, about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Herod the Great built a large harbor and city there in tribute to Caesar Augustus, named Caesarea Augusta. As a government city, not surprisingly, the Roman army was well represented there. Luke refers to the “Italian Regiment,” which consisted of 1,000 soldiers divided into ten companies (or “centuries”). Cornelius was the centurion of one of these companies.

Centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. Polybius describes their qualifications, “Centurions are required not to be bold and adventurous so much as good leaders, of steady and prudent mind, not prone to take the offensive or start fighting wantonly, but able when overwhelmed and hard-pressed to stand fast and die at their post.”<sup>4</sup> Cornelius was such a man, a military man.

2. *He was a family man.* Some men are pious in a personal way, but Cornelius didn’t hide his religion. He shared it with his family. And they caught it. Luke says that he and “all his family” were devout. If your relationship with the Lord doesn’t affect your family life, it’s not much of a relationship, is it?

3. *He was a God-fearing man.* In the first century the term “God fearer” referred to Gentiles who, as Barclay describes them, “weary of the gods and the immoralities and the frustration of their ancestral faiths, had attached themselves to the Jewish religion. They did not accept circumcision and the Law; but they attended the synagogue and they believed in one God and in the pure ethic of Jewish religion.”<sup>5</sup>

Such was Cornelius. He was “God fearing.” That doesn’t necessarily mean he was a “saved” man. It does indicate God was at work in his heart, for apart from God’s gracious working sinners do not do things that please Him.

4. *He was a generous man.* He “gave generously to those in need,” or as the KJV puts it, he “gave much alms to the people.” That reminds me of Tabitha from our last study in chapter 9. She was “always doing good and helping the poor (36).” Again, by nature, sinners think of themselves. It takes divine grace to turn that focus outward.

5. *He was a praying man.* He didn’t pray sporadically either, but according to verse 2 “prayed to God regularly.” He had learned about the God of Abraham and made it his practice to talk with Him.

These are some commendable traits, a good catch for the kingdom, wouldn’t you say? No, you would *not* say that if you had been a member of the first church prior to Acts 10. Here’s why...

6. *He was a Gentile.* Strict Jews believed that God had no use for the Gentiles. Some actually said that it was wrong to help a Gentile woman in childbirth because that

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from F. F. Bruce, p. 215.

<sup>5</sup> W. Barclay, p. 79.

would only bring another Gentile into the world. Granted, Cornelius was a “good” Gentile and apparently loyal to the Jewish cause. Yet he was still a Gentile, and to reach him with the gospel was to cross a bridge yet unbuilt by the early church.

Thankfully, God is in the bridge-building business! Here’s how He did it...

**B. Cornelius had a vision (3-6).** “One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”<sup>4</sup> Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.<sup>5</sup> Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.<sup>6</sup> He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

So the vision occurred at 3:00 in the afternoon. Why are we told that? For one reason to see God’s sovereignty in connection with another preparation taking place in Peter’s life which we’ll see momentarily. For a second reason to show this man followed Jewish practices, for 3 o’clock was a Jewish hour of prayer and the hour of the evening incense. A third reason is to verify this was no midnight misunderstanding. This vision took place in the brilliance of daylight.

Luke says Cornelius “distinctly saw” an angel of God. The term means “manifestly” or “openly.” This was not his imagination running wild. The first word he heard was his own name. “Cornelius,” the angel said. And how did Cornelius respond? He was afraid. He “stared in fear,” a far cry from the common notion in our day, “Well, if I could just see an angel like Cornelius I’d believe in God.” Maybe so. But first you’d be terrified.

Please notice that God did two things through the angel with Cornelius in the vision.

1. *God commended him (3-4).* “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God,” the angel said. The language of the angel’s message comes from the sacrificial system in Leviticus. Just like Jewish priests offered up sacrifices that pleased God, so the prayers and benevolence of this Gentile named Cornelius ascended to God’s throne as a memorial offering [a term which means “a memorial” or even a “remembrance”]. So God commended him. Next...

2. *God commanded him (5-6).* “Send men to Joppa to bring back Peter.” This was no suggestion, but an order—one filled with several particulars. And as a military man Cornelius knew what to do with orders.

Why didn’t the angel tell Cornelius to go himself to Peter? Why was he to bring Peter to his house? For that matter why didn’t the angel give Peter’s message to Cornelius directly? The answer is that this instruction was for Peter’s sake as much as for Cornelius’s. Cornelius was about to place his faith in Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. No Jew would believe it unless they saw it happen firsthand.

This is vital. The Lord didn’t want two churches—one Jewish and one Gentile. He didn’t want a divided church—a Jewish branch and a Gentile branch. Jesus died on the cross to redeem a people for Himself, one people, one church, made up of Jews and Gentiles alike.

Just think for a moment what it took for Peter to go to the house of Cornelius. Talk about crossing the tracks. He had to go against one of the strongest social taboos of his day. Here was a man who had spent three years with Jesus, who loved the Savior so much he had already done jail time for him, who in the past ten years had preached to crowds (sometimes hostile) and dealt with some pretty challenging church growth

problems. But he was about to face perhaps the biggest challenge of his life. He was about to go where he'd never been before.

I wouldn't say Peter was a prejudiced man, but he did have deep-seated ideas about how God works and with whom He works. Yes, Peter knew that Jesus could save anyone, for he'd seen people from all over the world receive the Spirit at Pentecost. But those were people who had become Jews first, then Christian.

Peter was like us in so many ways. He had put God in a little box, and he was about to see God break the box wide open.

My friends, God doesn't fit in our little boxes. That means there will be times when He will ask us to do things that simply will not make sense to us. We've never done it that way before. We've never reached out to that kind of person before. Thankfully, when God commands God enables. We'll see how He did it in Peter's case shortly.

How did Cornelius respond to God's bridge-building operation? Beautifully.

**C. Cornelius obeyed God (7-8).** "When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. <sup>8</sup> He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa."

Talk about obeying *by faith*! The angel didn't even tell Cornelius what Peter would say. "Just go get him; he's got something you need to hear," was the message. And Cornelius obeyed. He sent three men to find Peter in Joppa, a little more than 30 miles to the south of Caesarea.

So there's phase one. God prepared a ministry, a wide open door for the gospel. Cornelius and his Gentile family and friends are ripe for the spiritual harvest. All Peter has to do is go to them.

Easier said than done. How do you think Peter would have responded if that very moment three Gentile men showed up at his door inviting him to come to the home of another Gentile? Probably not too well. I must underscore again the fact that Peter was a Jew. He was committed to being "holy," a word that by definition means "set apart," and in practical terms for Peter and others like him included being isolated from the *goyim*, the people not-like-us, the *Gentiles*.

To make the most of this ministry opportunity, Peter would need some convincing. And what he needed he would soon receive from the master convincer. That's scene two. First, God prepares ministries.

## II. God prepares messengers (9-16).

To prepare Peter for this ministry opportunity God took him to school and gave him three things.

**A. Peter had a vision (9-12).** Notice how it happened. "About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray." Peter is a praying man. How ironic! That's the same thing we just saw Cornelius do. While praying something happened to Peter.

Verse 10, "He became hungry and wanted something to eat [even an apostle got distracted in his prayer time!], and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance." The Greek word for "trance" is *ekstasis*. Peter fell into a state of *ecstasy*. He was about to see something that shook him to the core.

Verses 11-12—“He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.”

The first thing Peter saw was “heaven opened.” Heaven is God’s royal residence. Heaven is where God’s people go when they die. Who is in heaven? As Peter watched he saw a sheet coming down out of heaven. Interestingly, the Greek word for “sheet” is the same for a ship’s “sail.” It’s what the sheet contained that caught Peter’s eye.

There in the sheet he saw all kinds of creatures. Perhaps a buzzard, swine, an owl, maybe a lizard, some lobsters, and some four-footed winged insects. The picture would have turned Peter’s stomach (remember he’s hungry).

“What does all this mean?” he must have wondered. He didn’t wait long to find out.

**B. Peter received a message (13-16).** The message was twofold. First...

1. *The Lord told him to do something he had never done before.* Notice verses 13-14, “Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ <sup>14</sup> ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’”

Notice carefully that Peter heard “a voice.” But in responding Peter specifically addressed the “Lord.” He knew that voice. He’d heard it for three years. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” said Jesus in John 10:27.

The Lord’s command baffled Peter. It didn’t make sense to him. The Jews, of course, had strict dietary laws as detailed in Leviticus 11. To sum it up, a Jew could eat only animals which chewed the cud and whose hoofs were cloven. All other animals were unclean and off limits. It had been that way for fifteen centuries.

Moses never ate those creatures. David never ate them. Isaiah never ate them. Daniel never ate them. While on earth Jesus never ate them.

“Surely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure [the Greek term *koine* means “common”] or unclean.” And he hadn’t. Nor should he have. To have done so would have been a violation of God’s law given through Moses. If a Jew ate a pork-chop it was sin. It was a violation of God’s law. That is, until Jesus came.

But what did Jesus do? Did He nullify the Law? No. He *fulfilled* it (Matt 5:17). That’s the point Mark made in his gospel after quoting Jesus in Mark 7:18-19, “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared *all foods “clean.”*)”

Peter had heard those words. But it took more than ten years and this special message from the Lord to make them hit home. The Lord Jesus had changed something. Previously, certain foods were off limits, just like certain people had been off limits. But no longer. It was now time to do something he had never done before.

2. *The Lord told him to change his thinking.* “The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.”

I like how the *Living Bible* paraphrases the dialogue. “‘Never Lord,’ Peter declared, ‘I have never in all my life eaten such creatures, for they are forbidden by our Jewish laws.’ The voice spoke to him again, ‘Don’t contradict God! If He says something is *kosher*, then it is!’”

When the Lord tells you to do something you don’t want to do, it’s time to change your thinking. Peter may have been polite, but he was still wrong. Dr. W. Graham

Scroggie wrote, “You can say ‘No,’ and you can say ‘Lord’; But you cannot say ‘No, Lord!’” If He is truly our Lord, then only “Yes, Lord!” will do, followed by complete obedience.<sup>6</sup>

Peter received something else that day, a vision, a message, and...a vital lesson.

**C. Peter learned a vital lesson.** The lesson is contained in the words the Lord spoke the second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” These words are critical and they teach us two things.

1. *God never lowers His standard.* The Lord didn’t tell Peter to eat unclean food. He just made it *clean*! This is vital to see. “Do not call anything impure that *God has made clean.*” What used to be unclean, Peter, and therefore unacceptable for you...*is now clean.* That’s why you can eat it.

God doesn’t lower His standards, for He is holy. Rather He brings people *up* to them. How does He do that? On the basis of the work His Son accomplished.

It’s called *imputation*. Jesus the Christ kept God’s law perfect. We didn’t do that. We couldn’t do that, for we all inherited a sin nature that’s intent on going against God’s law. So ever since God gave the law people violated it.

That’s why God sent His Son. Christ came to earth to do what we have failed to do. He came to meet the Law’s demands, to *fulfill* the Law’s demands. Then He died on the cross to pay the penalty for those who had violated the Law’s demands. He took the sinners’ place, and then three days later rose from the dead to prove He had finished the saving work He had come to do.

You say, “What is imputation?” It’s this. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, God *imputes* to that person the merit of Christ’s perfect obedience to the law. He also forgives that person of his or her sins since those sins were *imputed* to Christ (that is, placed upon Christ) when He died in the sinner’s place on the cross.

That’s why every person on planet earth needs Jesus Christ today. A holy God cannot tolerate their sin. Nor will He call something clean if it’s not. He must judge that sin. But He will accept those He has made clean through His Son.

This raises an important question. Just who is a candidate for this cleansing work? Only Jews? No.

2. *God can bring anyone up to His standard through Christ.* Yes, anyone. “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

Here’s where the rubber would meet the road for Peter—and for us. If God accepts someone (that is, makes them “clean”), then I have no right to hold that person at arm’s length. What’s more, if God wants to save someone and desires to use me to reach them, then I have no right to hold back His love from that person.

Unfortunately, like Peter, we tend to write off certain people because they’re not in “our sheet.” We tend to look down on people based on external things like race and economics and think, “I can’t associate with them, Lord. They’re just not my type!”

Kent Hughes suggests that the four corners of the sheet correspond to the four points of the compass—north, south, east, and west. He says that the sheet’s contents indicate the swarming millions that populate the earth. Hughes writes, “Cornelius, all his soldiers, all his servants, all the Roman people, all other nations on the face of the earth—all

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<sup>6</sup> As told by Wiersbe, p. 445.

mankind were bound up together in one loathsome bundle. And Peter was standing above them, surveying them all and spitting out revulsion and rejection.”<sup>7</sup>

Oh, Peter knew Christ but he still carried a mindset from his pre-Christian days. He tended to put human beings in one of two boxes. There was the clean box and the unclean box. The Jews were clean (or at least candidates to be clean). The Gentiles were unclean. Nice and neat little boxes, huh?

But God sees things differently. The Jew is not “clean” and the Gentile “unclean.” In His eyes both are “unclean,” as Paul spelled out in Romans 11:32. “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all (KJV).”

So no, a Gentile doesn’t have to become a Jew to become a Christian. For that matter, a person doesn’t have to become an American to become a Christian, either. He doesn’t have to become *like us* to become one *of us*. He just has to be made clean, by faith in the cleansing power of Christ.

In Acts 10 we learn that God does three things to prepare His people to leave their comfort zones and accomplish His mission. He prepares ministries, then ministers.

### III. God prepares meetings (17-23).

Watch how He did it here. The timing is perfect. His timing always is.

**A. The men arrived (17-18).** “While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.”

Now here is a God-ordained moment. While Peter is trying to figure out what the Lord meant by this statement regarding the unclean being made clean, the men arrived.

**B. The Spirit told Peter to go with them (19-20).** “While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.’”

The Spirit didn’t ask for Peter’s opinion. He simply gave the orders: Get up, go downstairs, and go with the men. In fact, the term “hesitate” comes from the Greek term *diakrinomenos* which means “to judge.” In other words, “Peter, don’t judge this book by its cover.” And he didn’t.

**C. Peter obeyed God (21-23).** “Peter went down and said to the men, ‘I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?’ <sup>22</sup> The men replied, ‘We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.’ <sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.”

This was a step of faith for Peter. Notice his twofold obedience.

1. *He broke down barriers.* Let these words sink in, “Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.” He didn’t say, “Wait outside. We’re not supposed to be together.” Rather, he treated them as *guests*, thus breaking down a barrier centuries old.

2. *He took advantage of the God-given opportunity.* How? Luke says that on the next day he went *with them*. It was a step of obedience that literally would change the world. If you are a Gentile, and most of us in this room are, you are here today because Peter left his comfort zone and took advantage of this God-given opportunity.

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<sup>7</sup> Kent Hughes, *Acts*, p. 145.

I read the following story told by Harry Ironside.<sup>8</sup> It concerns the death of his father. “As his father was dying, he kept muttering something, and the family couldn’t quite understand what it was. But finally they got it. Mr. Ironside was thinking about this vision, thinking about the sheet full of animals. He was saying, ‘A great sheet and wild beasts and, and, and ...’ He couldn’t quite finish it. A friend bent over and whispered, ‘John, it says, “creeping things”’ (KJV). ‘Oh, yes,’ he said. ‘That is how I got in. Just a poor good-for-nothing creeping-thing, but I got in—saved by grace.’”

And James Boice makes the point, “Whenever you see yourself, not as the clean animal but the unclean animal, not as the attractive beast but as the creeping thing, as one who by the grace of God got into that sheet and is pronounced clean by the sheer grace of God in Jesus Christ, then you are ready to open your heart and arms to other people.”<sup>9</sup>

Acts 10 is a call to action, a call to take our mission seriously. Peter had to leave his comfort zone to go to Cornelius, a person who wore different clothing styles, ate a different diet, spoke a different heart language, enjoyed different kinds of entertainment, and even had different political views.

To reach Cornelius Peter had to cross some barriers. One of the biggest would be criticism from some church members, as we’ll see in chapter 11. His decision resulted in some tense church business meetings, and if you think I’m overstating it, just wait until we get to Acts 15.

The reality is, it wasn’t easy for Peter to leave his comfort zone. Why then did he go? For one simple reason. God said to go. Go, Peter! And He is still saying to us, “Go!”

#### Make It Personal: Three things to think about...

1. *It’s vital that we reach out to people like us.* We all know people we like a lot who don’t know Christ. Family members. Neighbors. People we go to school with. People we work with. Without Christ they are heading for eternal judgment. So yes, we must reach out to them, to people *like us*.

But know this...

2. *It’s just as vital to reach out to people not like us.* There are people we currently *don’t know* for whom we have a responsibility. We don’t know them because they *aren’t like us*. Quite frankly, they’re probably people we would not care to know, from a fleshly perspective, because they don’t affect our lives.

But they matter to our Savior. He died for them, too.

Some of them live on the other side of the tracks. Some are on the other side of the world. That’s why we’re sending Jade to the Dominican Republic. That’s why we invest in ministries like CRADLE and Union Mission. That’s also why we need to think of new ways to reach unreached people throughout our community and our world.

Friends, what are we doing to reach people *not like us*? There are people all around us that the Sovereign Lord is preparing to be reached, just like He prepared Cornelius for Peter. Are we available?

3. *When we do that we’re doing what Jesus did.* Talk about leaving your comfort zone! He left heaven to reach us. What more incentive do we need?

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<sup>8</sup> As related by James Boice, *Acts*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Boice, p. 179.