

Seeing Others Through God's Eyes: Breaking Down Barriers to Share the Gospel

In our increasingly divided world, where politics, culture, and hot-button issues create deep rifts between people, Christians face a crucial question: How do we see others the way God sees them? Acts chapter 10 provides a powerful answer through the story of Peter and Cornelius, showing us how God breaks down barriers to bring salvation to all people.

The Challenge of Division in Our World

We live in an incredibly diverse land, yet we also witness incredible division. People aren't just disagreeing anymore - they're actively trying to tear each other down. In this climate, God calls His church to return to His Word as the standard of truth and to carry Jesus' heart into the world. We hold the greatest message ever - the Gospel that affects, changes, and saves all of humanity.

Who Was Cornelius?

A Good Man Who Still Needed Salvation

Cornelius was a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea, about 30 miles up the coast from Joppa. The Bible describes him with three key characteristics:

Piety: He was devout, feared God, and prayed consistently. This was a man who understood the importance of good character and maintained a healthy respect for God.

Family Leadership: His entire household feared God. As a Roman looking at the pagan world around him, Cornelius chose to follow the God of Israel for his family.

Generosity: He gave alms generously to the people, showing genuine concern for others' well-being.

This man was everything you'd want in a neighbor or coworker - moral, churchgoing, God-fearing, generous, and family-oriented. Yet God saw that he still needed to be saved.

Why Good People Still Need Jesus

Sometimes people think that having some spirituality, being kind to neighbors, or doing religious duties is enough. But Cornelius shows us a different reality. The Bible tells us we all fall short of the glory of God - every single one of us. Both the moral person and the immoral person need Jesus Christ. The conservative and the liberal need Jesus Christ. We all need Him.

How Should We See Others?

Lesson 1: See Others as Loved by God and Needing Salvation

If we're learning to see as God sees, we must view others around us - even those we don't particularly like - as loved by God and needing salvation. They're not our enemies; they're captives of our enemy. They're like drowning people who might fight against rescue attempts, but they still need a life preserver, not a weight.

This doesn't mean we can't speak truth or call out wickedness. We must stand on God's Word, but it has to be done in love. No one rescues prisoners by shooting at them. If you're constantly attacking and berating someone, then turning to say "Jesus loves you," what kind of witness is that?

The Power of Prayer in Seeing Clearly

Cornelius received his vision during a time of prayer at 3 PM, which was a designated hour of prayer. Through prayer, we often get clearer revelation of who God is, His purposes for our lives, and His perspective on situations around us.

Don't let prayer be something you only turn to in emergencies. As Corrie Ten Boom asked: "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" Make it a daily part of your life, directing your path rather than just helping in crises.

Peter's Vision: Breaking Down Barriers

The Vision of Clean and Unclean Animals

While waiting for lunch on a rooftop, Peter fell into a trance and saw a great sheet containing all kinds of animals - both clean and unclean according to Jewish law. A voice told him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat."

For a Jew, this was shocking. Leviticus 11 gave specific dietary laws about what could and couldn't be eaten. Peter's immediate response was, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The Danger of "I Have Never"

Peter's response reveals a dangerous attitude: "I have never." Be careful of this phrase when it comes to what God is telling you to do. Churches can kill off life by saying, "We've never done that before, so we're not doing it."

While discernment is necessary, we should have hearts that say, "Yes, Lord, here I am. Use me," rather than "Not so, Lord." God's ways are higher than ours, and He's not stuck in a box. He wants to work fresh things while remaining biblically based and Spirit-led.

Lesson 2: See People with Grace and Love, Not Through Rules and Traditions

God was preparing Peter to see people with grace and love rather than through rules and traditions. We live in a world where people push others aside for not lining up with their opinions or preferences. Even churchgoers sometimes shun people who don't conform to their traditions.

Grace and love say, "I may not understand everything about you, but I know God loves you. Let's figure this out together."

God's Timing and Confirmation

When Puzzle Pieces Come Together

While Peter wondered about his vision's meaning, Cornelius's messengers arrived at the door. God was putting the puzzle pieces together. When you don't understand what God is doing in your life, the best thing you can do is trust Him - He's not done working yet.

When you don't understand what the future holds, fall back on what you do understand about God's nature and character. Look at His testimony in your life. Has He carried you before? Has He provided and sustained you? Remind yourself of these truths when facing uncertain doors.

The Spirit's Confirmation

The Spirit told Peter, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise, therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." As the men moved toward Peter, the Spirit moved upon Peter. This is often how God works - He operates on both sides, connecting things together.

Taking Risks to Connect with Others

Lesson 3: Be Willing to Take Risks to Build Bridges

If we're seeing people as God sees them, we must be willing to take risks to connect with them. We should look to build bridges, not walls. Some may question our actions, and we might even get rebuked because it's out of the ordinary, but God accepts it when we're following Him.

Ministry is risky business. When God gives you a vision through prayer, speaks to your heart, and confirms it circumstantially, you still need to move forward in obedience. There will always be people who question why you need to reach certain groups or go to certain places, but if it's the burden of the Lord on your heart and He's confirmed it, move forward.

Welcoming Others as Guests

Peter didn't just tolerate Cornelius's messengers - he invited them in and lodged them as guests. God was breaking things down. Love was ruling over law, and the Spirit was leading. The walls were falling down.

We're not called to be like unbelievers, following idols and immoral behavior. But we are called to be a light to them, leading them to Jesus Christ. Often, evangelism isn't found in them coming to our cleaned areas, but in us going to them in their muddy situations.

Life Application

This week, challenge yourself to see at least one person you struggle with through God's eyes. Instead of viewing them as your enemy, recognize them as someone God loves who needs salvation. Ask yourself:

- How is my vision of the people around me, especially those I don't like?
- If someone I struggle with got saved tomorrow, would I embrace it with joy or struggle with it?
- Am I building bridges or walls with the people God has placed in my life?
- What is God showing me about new directions He wants me to take in reaching others?

Remember, when you follow God's lead in loving others and sharing the Gospel, you begin to see what God has in store - not just for them, but for you as well. Don't be afraid of new directions. Embrace them in faith, trusting that God is faithful and will use you to reach people who desperately need His love.