

# WELCOMED BY THE GOSPEL



**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God confirmed that salvation had come to the Gentiles through the giving of the Holy Spirit, who unites all who believe.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 10–11

**+** **SETTING:**

God initiated a series of events in the lives of Peter (a Jewish Christian) and Cornelius (a Gentile, soon-to-be Christian) that would result in a colossal paradigm shift for the early church's mindset and conduct. Ten years after Christ's commission, the gospel spread throughout Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. But now it was time for the truth about Christ to reach the nations. The mystery of the gospel, as Paul liked to call it, needed uncovering. Namely, God's heart is for every tribe, tongue, and nation to hear the gospel message. The good news of Jesus is for all people.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Acts 10:34-35**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 10:34-35**

## NOTES



## KEY DOCTRINE #67:

### REPENTANCE

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Psalm 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

The Greek word for partiality used in Acts 10:34 is a unique one. It is a combination of two words, one for face, the other for receive. Together, they make a noun that connotes the receiver of a face—an acceptor of an individual.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, in Acts 10:35, Luke states what is acceptable to God. The basis for God's admission to His presence and provision is not within the person. It's not what he looks like, what she does or doesn't do, or the composition of his genetics. Reception into the kingdom of God is based on what God graciously does to the individual.

In any and every nation, the soul who repents and accepts the forgiveness, grace, and righteousness of Christ is welcomed into God's family. Through His blood, Christ makes that person acceptable. It is this individual who repents and fears God and does what is right, in response to the salvation of God. When we truly grasp these truths, the right response is worship.

Not one of us is worthy of the gift given to us. Not one of us earned it. Nor should any of us begrudge when God gives that same gift of grace to others—even to those whom we struggle to see as worthy.

**How ought the truth that God does not show favoritism shape the life of a Christian?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Acts 10:44-48

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 10:44-45

## NOTES

The waiting seasons of life can be some of the hardest to endure. From our limited and finite perspective, it is impossible to see what's around the bend. Through the rearview mirror, we often see why God did what He did when He did it. The early church discovered many truths through hindsight as well.

As far back as Genesis 3:15, God made mention of the One who would later be known as the Messiah. Multiple millennia later, Christ arrived when the time came to completion (Galatians 4:4). God knew the exact moment He would send His Son. He also set aside that dark and lonely afternoon for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Father also planned the perfect time in history to make His plan for the nations clear to the church. Though the Old Testament presented this truth, His people couldn't discern it.

After the ascension of Jesus, ten long years passed before God removed the scales from the eyes of the early church, but it happened at the right time (Ephesians 1:9-10a). They now understand that God meant to redeem all peoples and all nations.

We may not always understand God's timing, but there is ample evidence throughout Scripture that His purpose and plan will arrive right on time.

**God knows all, sees all, and His timing is perfect. How does this help you in your waiting seasons?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Nothing that we are and nothing that we can do enters in the slightest measure into the ground of our acceptance with God. Jesus did it all."<sup>2</sup>

—B. B. Warfield (1851–1921)

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Acts 10:44-48**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 10:46**

## NOTES

There is much discussion and debate surrounding the different gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned and demonstrated in the New Testament. Some are more controversial than others, but they each have the potential for misuse—whether intentional or unintentional. Whenever we see these spiritual gifts demonstrated in the biblical accounts, it is clear they were meant to bring glory to God. Worship was rightly directed to the creator, bestower, and sustainer of those gifts, not the person demonstrating the gift.

All that we have and all that we are is all grace. God has given us capacities and talents for the building up of the church and the bringing out of the gospel message. Both of these lead to the praise of God. Just as the early church's display of the Spirit's powerful presence led to God's exaltation, so ought today's usage of our spiritual gifts. It is all too easy to allow our gifts and talents to point people to our greatness, instead of toward the glory of the One who endowed those abilities to us.

**How are you using your spiritual gifts to point others to God's greatness?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

**Acts 11:1-3,15-18**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 11:1-3**

## NOTES

Have you ever missed a train, flight, or even a big opportunity? It's a horrible feeling when something important passes you by. There is a great sense of loss, and sometimes panic because you weren't where you needed to be. Some refer to this as "missing the boat." Though one can certainly apply this to a physical situation, many often use the phrase in a way that demonstrates a loss of opportunity.

The early church had an opportunity to embrace the Gentiles. It took time and explanation before the Jewish Christians could accept God's plan. Most of them missed the boat at first. In His grace, God gave them room to wrestle with the changes being made. Many quickly embraced God's good purpose and hopped on to His plan.

However, there is evidence in the books of Galatians and Romans that many chose to stay stuck in their spiritual sluggishness. Though they wanted to serve God and follow His will, there were so many opportunities missed by the members of these sects to be a part of God's aim. It is easy to be so cemented in our man-made ways that we miss the boat—the opportunity to worship God and rejoice in His good plan.

**How can we be more aware of God's will for the church today?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

Acts 11:13-18

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 11:18

NOTES

The particular way God worked in the lives of Peter and Cornelius was astonishing. This was a story they likely told to all who would listen! Though the details of our personal salvation story may not be as spectacular, the reality is: every testimony is extraordinary.

You may have heard (or stated yourself), “My testimony is pretty boring.” Perhaps there are not as many twists and turns as others, but every Christian has a marvelous tale to tell, one of repentance and of redemption.

Regardless of our upbringing, our choices, or the amount of external change that occurred after we met Christ, every life in Christ is a spiritual miracle. The lost are found. Those who were blind now see. The dead are alive. Those who repent are forgiven. And God has adopted many sons and daughters of disobedience, who now reign as coheirs with Christ.

Every testimony is a rags-to-riches story. All accounts of divine pardon are praiseworthy. Each salvation is a sensational rescue. If we have a redemption story, let us tell it often and boldly for God’s glory.

**What are some ways you can point to Jesus through your testimony?**

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Sent into the world to witness for our Master, may we ever be strangers there, ready to confess Him the true object of our soul’s devotion.”<sup>3</sup>

—James Hudson Taylor  
(1832–1905)

### **POINT 1: God accepts all people who believe the gospel** (Acts 10:34-43).

Peter shared to the Gentile crowd that God does not show favoritism but accepts all types of people who trust in Him.

**?** From Day 1: **How ought the truth that God does not show favoritism shape the life of a Christian?**

Peter pointed to the truth of Jesus—His life, ministry, and death—that He is the One the prophets testified would bring forgiveness and salvation.

**?** **What can we learn about sharing the gospel from Peter’s message?**

### **POINT 2: The Spirit’s presence unites people believe the gospel** (Acts 10:44-48).

The Holy Spirit descended on the Gentile converts, displaying that God’s gospel is for all people, from Jerusalem, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

**?** **What is evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit among God’s people today?**

Baptism is not a prerequisite needed to gain salvation. Rather, it is a symbolic step for the saved.

**?** **Why is baptism important for the believer?**

### **POINT 3: The church celebrates when people believe the gospel** (Acts 11:1-3,15-18).

If God allows the Spirit to come on anyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church must accept

them into the family of God with celebration and glorify God, despite any external differences they might have.



**How can I make an effort to share the gospel with those who are lost, even if they seem extremely different from my friends in the church?**

### KEY DOCTRINE #67: REPENTANCE

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Psalm 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.



**How have I seen God move in my own story of repentance?**

## MY RESPONSE

Because we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus, we are not to show favoritism as we share the gospel, but are to extend the call of salvation to all people with equal concern, urgency, and joy.

- **HEAD:** Why does God allow all people the opportunity to repent and come to faith in Him?
- **HEART:** Knowing God's heart is for all, how does that make you want to glorify God?
- **HANDS:** To whom can you share the impartial love of God through the gospel message?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Thousands there are . . . who neither know the gospel in truth, nor come to God by this mediator. They live not by the faith of the Son of God, nor have just reason, according to the gospel, to expect divine favour and forgiveness. Blessed God, enlighten the thousands of dark and wretched mankind, and lead them in thy appointed way to happiness."<sup>4</sup>

—Isaac Watts (1674–1748)