

## Acts 10: Two Men, One Plan

Leaving off in Acts 9, the church at this point is experiencing a time of peace. Found in the first nine chapters of Acts, a cycle of "quality" and "quantity" begins to emerge in the church's growth pattern. To put it simply, God doesn't supply times of quantity, numeric growth, without first supplying times of quality, spiritual growth. This is a very consistent pattern found in the early church. What we've seen in Chapter 9 was a time of quality, but now in Chapter 10 we're about to see another thrust of quantity.

### Expansion Plan Given Through Prayer

It's important to note that God, not man at this point, is the one directing the expansion of the church, and with the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman (Gentile) officer, God is about to reveal His next plan of expansion. I'm very interested in a lot of things here in Chapter 10, but the one that sticks out the most is how God communicated the plan for expansion, through prayer. Look at the examples, we'll start first with Cornelius:

**Acts 10:3-6 (NLT)** <sup>3</sup> *One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.*

<sup>4</sup> *Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel.*

*And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!"* <sup>5</sup> *Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter.*

<sup>6</sup> *He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore."*

We learn through Luke's detailed account that Cornelius was praying at around three o'clock. Since this was a common time of prayer in the Temple, it's safe to assume that Cornelius prayed daily at this time of day. We also learn, from the angel and not Cornelius, that Cornelius regularly prayed for, and gave gifts, to the poor.

What's really impressive about Cornelius' prayer time is not just the detail God gives about his next steps, but that Cornelius actually does it! I can't help but be challenged by the idea of how often God's given me instructions that I didn't execute. Around 40 miles away Peter is on the rooftop *praying* in the seaside village of Joppa.

**Acts 10:9-16 (NLT)** <sup>9</sup> *The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon,* <sup>10</sup> *and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.* <sup>11</sup> *He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners.* <sup>12</sup> *In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds.* <sup>13</sup> *Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and*

eat them.”

**14** “No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.”

**15** But the voice spoke again: “**Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.**”**16** The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

*“Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon,…”* Again, we find a servant of the Lord making time to pray daily. Where before many Jews would pray legalistically, and to fulfill their religious duty, we find Peter here using what he learned from Jesus, that prayer was a moment-by-moment necessity in the life of a Christian.

### **Two Men, One Plan**

As mentioned before, we know it was God's plan for the church to expand to the Gentiles. But there's something to be said that God used two *very* different devout men of God who regularly met with God in prayer. It's no coincidence that Peter and Cornelius were both found praying when God revealed more of himself to them.

Through prayer, Cornelius was challenged to send for Peter. Through prayer, Peter was challenged to change his thinking and go to the home of a Gentile. The result of their obedience in prayer was the expansion of God's Kingdom and Glory!

What does God want to say to you today in your daily time of prayer? You may never know unless you pray.