



Good News for the Whole World! (Acts 9:32-10:48)

Notes: Week Eighteen

Acts 9:32 – 10:48 (NIV)

Aeneas and Dorcas

³² As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. ³³ There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴ "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. ³⁵ All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

³⁶ In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Cornelius Calls for Peter

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ 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!"

⁴ 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. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷ 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. ⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision

⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three^[a] men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

²² 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 ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." ²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Peter at Cornelius's House

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.' ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues^[b] and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

Acts 9:32 – 10:48

9:32 The saints at **Lydda** may have been there since Pentecost and the time of persecution that had scattered believers throughout Judea ([8:1](#)). It is also possible that they traced their origins to Philip's ministry ([8:40](#)).

9:33-35 Again we see that the apostles never hesitated to give all credit for healing miracles to **Jesus Christ** ([3:6](#)). Indirect evidence for this is found in the fact that the people in **Lydda and Sharon** turned in faith **to the Lord** rather than His apostolic messengers when they witnessed the healing of **Aeneas**.

9:36 **Tabitha** (Gk **Dorcas**, lit *gazelle*) is called a disciple. She was not one of the twelve apostles, but she was clearly an active follower of Jesus.

9:37-38 So powerfully had God worked wonders through Peter and the other apostles that even when Dorcas **died** and had been ceremonially washed and **placed... in a room upstairs** for viewing, Christians in **Joppa** did not give up hope but instead sent for **Peter**.

9:43 Tanners were often considered impure because of their contact with dead animals. This indicates that either Jewish law on this practice had relaxed by this era, or else that Peter was already enjoying freedom from the Jewish law because of his liberty in Christ ([10:6,32](#)).

10:1 Philip had preached in **Caesarea** ([8:40](#)), so there would have been knowledge of Christianity there before this incident with Cornelius. Centurions were essential parts of the Roman army who were distinguished by their abilities to lead men. The **Italian Regiment** was probably an auxiliary force of local soldiers (not Italians or Romans), although the original group may have consisted of Italian soldiers. Roman soldiers did not have a great reputation since they were often involved in extortion and brutalization of the local population.

ekstasis

Greek Pronunciation	[EHK stah sihss]
HCSB Translation	visionary state
Uses in Acts	4
Uses in the NT	7
Focus passage	Acts 10:10

The English words *ecstasy* and *ecstatic* come from the Greek noun *ekstasis*, which literally means *to stand out from*. The term refers to a situation in which a person experiences a kind of displacement from reality. Such feelings of displacement are of two kinds in the NT. The term is used four times to describe the astonishment of a crowd that witnessed a miracle: Jesus forgiving and healing a paralytic ([Lk 5:26](#)); Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead ([Mk 5:42](#)); Jesus' resurrection ([Mk 16:8](#)); and Peter healing a lame man ([Ac 3:10](#)). The other three uses of *ekstasis* refer to a *revelatory trance*. Through a *trance*, God showed Peter that there is to be no distinction between the clean and the unclean, between Jew and Gentile ([Ac 10:10](#); [11:5](#)). In this same way, Jesus showed Paul that he should leave Jerusalem because of the Jews' unbelief ([Ac 22:17-18](#)).

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 9 & 10".

[10:2](#) God-fearers respected Jewish beliefs and customs (including food laws and special days). They often associated with the Jews, but they were unwilling to become full-fledged proselytes since this required that they be circumcised and observe other Jewish rituals.

[10:4](#) Fear and bewilderment are common reactions to God's voice or appearance in biblical accounts ([9:4](#)). Cornelius's **prayers** and **acts of charity** prompted God's further revelation to him through Peter ([vv. 5-6](#)).

[10:9-10](#) Meanwhile, Peter was still in Joppa. It was common to **pray** on the **housetop**. By going at **about noon** (lit "the sixth hour"), Peter was in the heat of the day. But the series of interconnected events in both Peter and Cornelius's lives show that Peter's **visionary state** was far more than a hunger-induced, natural experience. It was a message from God.

[10:11-16](#) Peter's lifelong adherence to the Jewish food laws collided with the Lord's command to **kill and eat** unclean animals. Peter had this vision three times; the repetition served to confirm the shocking message and emphasize its significance.

[10:19-20](#) Whereas an angel had communicated with Cornelius, it was the Holy **Spirit** who spoke to Peter after the Lord had granted him the vision. Alternation between the Spirit and an angel as communicative agents occurs elsewhere ([8:26,29](#)).

[10:24](#) When God moves powerfully in a person's life, one natural response is to call **relatives and close friends** together and share the experience with them. In this case, it helped to multiply the impact of Peter's radical message of hope.

[10:25-26](#) When Cornelius **fell at Peter's feet, and worshiped him**, Peter protested that he too was merely **a man**. The apostles always sought to glorify God, not themselves.

[10:28](#) The vision God gave Peter taught him that cleanliness standards barring Jews from associating with Gentiles had become obsolete. It is hard to overestimate the seismic change this represented for Peter's worldview.

[10:33](#) By saying they had all gathered **before God, to hear everything** God **commanded** Peter to say or do, Cornelius showed the childlike openness Jesus asked of His disciples ([Lk 18:15-17](#)).

[10:34-35](#) Due to the vision, Peter now understood that **God doesn't show favoritism**. This does not mean God accepts all people no matter their response to Him or that people who fear Him are **acceptable to Him** and do not need Christ. Rather, it means that God does not restrict any nation or ethnicity from the offer of salvation.

[10:37-41](#) **You know the events** indicates that the basic biography of Jesus was widely known by now. It was still necessary, however, that **witnesses** to Jesus' life come and fill in any knowledge gaps and call unbelievers to saving faith.

[10:42-43](#) Jesus Himself told the apostles that **He is the One appointed by God** to judge all humans. Backing this claim is the testimony of **all the prophets** ([Lk 24:44](#)).

[10:44-46](#) Faith, the coming of the **Holy Spirit**, and believer's baptism are again all components of conversion, although again in a different order. Since the Gentile converts spoke in **other languages** and declared **the greatness of God** just as the Jewish believers had done at Pentecost ([2:4-11](#)), the **circumcised believers** who were **with Peter** were **astounded**.

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

Acts 9:32 – 10:48

9:32-11:18 Peter Preaches in the Coastal Towns. Peter began to witness outside Jerusalem in the coastal plain of Judea, healing the lame Aeneas ([9:32-35](#)) and restoring life to Dorcas ([9:36-43](#)). God then led him to witness to a group of Gentiles at Caesarea ([10:1-11:18](#)).

9:32-43 Healing of Aeneas and Dorcas. Peter was last mentioned in his witness to the Samaritans ([8:25](#)). Now he turned to the fertile coastal plain of Sharon, where the next two recorded miracles took place.

Peter's Early Ministry

c. A.D. 39?

The apostle Peter traveled to the crossroads town of Lydda and healed a paralyzed man, leading many in that region to turn to the Lord. Later Peter traveled to Joppa and raised a woman from the dead. While Peter was staying at the house of Simon, a tanner in Joppa, the Roman centurion Cornelius sent for him to come to Caesarea.

9:32 Saints refers to Christians. **Lydda** is the OT Lod, 23 miles (37 km) northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Joppa. Lydda served as a regional administrative town (toparchy) for Judea, and was on an important trade route.

9:33 Eight years points to the severity of his paralysis.

9:34 Jesus Christ heals you. See note on [3:6](#). Peter understands that Jesus is invisibly working to build his church. **Make your bed** probably refers to folding the mat on which he was lying.

9:35 they turned to the Lord. As is often the case in Acts, miracles such as this healing (cf. [ch. 3](#)) led to the advancement of the gospel. The news spread beyond the town of **Lydda** to the whole coastal plain of **Sharon**.

9:36 Joppa was on the coast, 11 miles (18 km) northwest of Lydda. The port city of Joppa (modern Jaffa/Yafa, just south of Tel Aviv) was captured by the Jewish Hasmoneans (2nd century B.C.) and contained a substantial Jewish population prior to the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-73). Excavations under portions of the modern city have revealed evidence of first-century residences and an early fortress.

9:38 Hearing that Peter was there reflects an understanding that an unusual level of the Holy Spirit's power was present in the apostles.

9:40 Tabitha, arise. See note on [3:6](#). Peter had no supernatural power in his own words, but the Lord had showed him what he was going to do in response to Peter's prayer, and he imparted to Peter's heart the knowledge and faith that he was going to restore Tabitha to life as Peter spoke.



2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 9 & 10".

9:41 The Greek verb for **raised her up** is the same word used throughout the NT for Jesus' resurrection (Gk. *anistēmi*). Though her restoration to life was not permanent, it served to remind Christians of their promised resurrection in Christ.

9:42 many believed in the Lord. Once again there is the pattern that remarkable miracles lead to many more genuine conversions as the gospel spreads.

9:43 As a **tanner**, **Simon** worked with animal hides, which would explain his location close to the ocean breezes (**10:6**). This meant he was often left in an unclean state, but this was less significant since he is not in Jerusalem.

10:1-48 Conversion of Cornelius. The conversion of a Gentile soldier and his relatives and close friends is the longest narrative in Acts. The importance of the story is highlighted through repetition. The visions of Cornelius and Peter are repeated several times, and **11:1-18** is a detailed retelling of the events of **ch. 10**. The incident put Peter at the center of the mission to the Gentiles.

10:1 Cornelius resided at **Caesarea**, a city on the coast 31 miles (50 km) north of Joppa; Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government of Judea (see note on **8:40**). Cornelius was a **centurion**, a commander of 100 men, and a member of the **Italian Cohort**. (A "cohort" consisted of 600 men under the command of six centurions, but with auxiliary forces in remote areas such as Judea a "cohort" might have as many as 1,000 men.) Ten cohorts formed a "legion." Centurions were paid very well (as much as five times the pay of an ordinary soldier), so Cornelius would have been socially prominent and wealthy.

10:2 Devout man who feared God identifies Cornelius as a "God-fearer" (cf. **v. 22**; **13:16**, **26**), a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God and was in some way attached to a synagogue but who had not submitted to Jewish conversion rites (esp. circumcision). He followed two of the primary expressions of Jewish piety—prayer and almsgiving. **Alms** are gifts to the poor.

10:3-4 The **ninth hour** is 3:00 P.M. This was a set hour of prayer for Jews, not according to the OT but according to later tradition.

10:4 The designation of Cornelius's piety as a **memorial** is sacrificial language (cf. **Lev. 2:2**, **9**, **16**), indicating that something has been "remembered" by God (see **Phil. 4:18**).

10:5 Joppa was about 31 miles (50 km) south of Caesarea, along the coast.

10:7 Cornelius sent two of his most trusted **servants** and a **soldier**, whose description as being **devout** likely indicates he was a God-fearer himself.

10:9 housetop. Houses in Judea typically had flat roofs accessible by ladders or stairs.

10:12 All kinds of animals and reptiles and birds would include both clean and unclean animals. Jewish law forbade the consumption of unclean animals (see **Lev. 11:2-47**).

10:13 The command from Jesus to **kill and eat** made no sense to Peter, since it would have violated Jewish food laws. **Verse 15** is the key: God was overturning the old clean/unclean distinctions and dietary laws in general, along with all other "ceremonial" laws in the Mosaic covenant (including laws about sacrifices, festivals and special days, and circumcision). Nothing like this was to get in the way of fellowship with Gentiles, as **Galatians 2** also shows.

10:26 I too am a man. Compare Herod's opposite response in **12:20-23**; cf. **Rev. 19:10**; **22:8-9**.

10:28 unlawful. Not in terms of violating OT commands but in the sense of not following the later customs of strict Jewish traditions about uncleanness. The Jewish traditions of purity made it virtually impossible for them to associate with Gentiles without becoming ritually unclean. **God has shown me** refers to the vision of [vv. 10-16](#). This shows how Peter understood his vision.

10:34-43 This message to the Gentiles is unique among the sermons of Acts in providing a summary of Jesus' ministry. It contains no scriptural proofs and was cut short before Peter could give an invitation to trust in Christ. It is quite likely, of course, that the speech was an extended one, of which Luke gives an abbreviated account.

10:35 in every nation. Not just among Jews. **acceptable to him.** The word used here (Gk. *dektos*, "acceptable, welcome") does not refer to legal justification before God (for which the NT uses Gk. *dikaioō* and related terms), nor is Peter talking about the basis for justification. Rather, the question here is whether God's favor is made available to Jews only ("partiality," [v. 34](#)) or is now available to Gentiles also (those "in every nation"). **fears him and does what is right.** This expression summarizes the behavior of someone whose life is pleasing to God. Although Peter does not explicitly mention saving faith (as he will in [v. 43](#)), it would likely be included or implied in the meaning of these two terms in this context (see note on [v. 2](#)). After all, faith is trusting God and responding to him.

10:36 The references to the **good news of peace** and to Christ being **Lord of all** echo [Isa. 52:7](#) and [57:19](#): the gospel is for all people, including Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles.

10:38 The simple statement **he went about doing good and healing** is a profound summary of Jesus' life, and an ideal to which all Christians would do well to aspire.

10:39 The cross is referred to as **a tree**, making a clear connection with the use of the same word (Gk. *xylon*) in the Septuagint translation of [Deut. 21:23](#), "cursed by God is everyone who is hanged on a tree." Jesus was put in a position that the OT says is "cursed by God," thus taking on himself the penalty for sin. See [Gal. 3:13](#).

10:41 Who ate and drank with him shows that Jesus was not a ghost or a spirit but had a real physical body after his resurrection. Eating and drinking are signs of sharing close personal fellowship.

10:43 all the prophets. See note on [3:18](#). **everyone who believes.** See note on [2:38](#).

10:44 The **Holy Spirit fell** in a way that was visible and audible from the response of the people on whom he fell (see [v. 46](#)). These Gentiles had come to genuine saving faith in Christ and had received the new covenant power and fullness of the Holy Spirit, which was a sign that they had been accepted by God as full and equal members of his people. The fact that they had not followed any Mosaic ceremonial laws (such as those concerning circumcision, sacrifice, and dietary restrictions) before receiving the gift of the Spirit is an important point, as soon becomes evident (see [11:15-17](#)).

10:46 Speaking in tongues and praise of God outwardly demonstrated the Spirit's presence and God's acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision (which had been required for conversion to Judaism).

10:47 Baptizing these people would be an outward sign of an inward work of God in their hearts and of their personal commitment to Christ. **Just as we have** is a reference to the reception of the Spirit at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues also occurred at Pentecost ([2:4](#)), later with the Ephesian 12 ([19:6](#)), and perhaps also among the Samaritans ([8:18](#)). In every case speaking in tongues validates that those in view belong to the people of God and have received the Holy Spirit in new covenant fullness.

[10:48](#) To be **baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** (see also [2:38](#); [8:16](#)) is not different from being baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” ([Matt. 28:19](#)). Even though different words are used here in Acts, the meaning is the same because in biblical usage a person’s “name” represents the person’s character, everything that is true about the person. The “name” (character and attributes) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same as the “name” (character and attributes) of Jesus Christ. In fact, in [Matt. 28:19](#), the word “name” (Gk. *onoma*) is singular, indicating that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share one “name” (i.e., one character). To be baptized into that name is a sign of identifying with that name and taking on Christ’s character, as well as committing to live one’s life from that point on as a representative of that name. **remain for some days.** Peter’s willingness to stay with them likely involved his sharing meals with the Gentiles, a bold step for one who formerly was so concerned about clean and unclean foods (see also notes on [Gal. 2:11-21](#)).

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Acts 9:32 – 10:48

[9:36](#) The important harbor city of Joppa sits 125 feet above sea level overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Joppa was the town into which the cedars of Lebanon had been floated to be shipped to Jerusalem for use in the Temple construction ([2 Chronicles 2:16](#); [Ezra 3:7](#)). The prophet Jonah had left the port of Joppa on his ill-fated trip ([Jonah 1:3](#)).

[9:36-42](#) Tabitha made an enormous impact on her community by "always doing kind things for others and helping the poor," by making coats and other garments ([9:39](#)). When she died, the room was filled with mourners, very likely many of the people she had helped. And when she was brought back to life, the news raced through the town. God uses great preachers like Peter and Paul, but he also uses those who have gifts of kindness like Tabitha. Rather than wishing you had other gifts, make good use of the gifts God has given you.

[9:43](#) In Joppa, Peter stayed at the home of Simon, a tanner of hides—a leatherworker. Leatherworkers made animal hides into leather. It is significant that Peter was at Simon's house because leatherworking involved contact with dead animals, and Jewish law considered it an "unclean" occupation. Peter was already beginning to break down his prejudice against people who were not of his kind and who had customs that did not adhere to Jewish religious traditions.

Chapter 10

[10:1](#) This Caesarea, sometimes called Palestinian Caesarea, was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, 32 miles north of Joppa. The largest and most important port city on the Mediterranean in Palestine, Caesarea served as the capital of the Roman province of Judea. This was the first city to have Gentile Christians and a non-Jewish church.

[10:1](#) This Roman officer was a centurion—a commander of 100 soldiers. Although stationed in Caesarea, Cornelius would probably return soon to Rome. Thus, his conversion was a major stepping-stone for spreading the Good News to the empire's capital city.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1838-1842.

Great Escapes in the Bible				
<i>Who escaped</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>What happened</i>	<i>What the escape accomplished</i>	<i>Application</i>
Jacob	Genesis 31:1-55	Fled from his father-in-law, Laban, after almost 20 years of service	Allowed Jacob to return home for Isaac's death and for reconciliation with Esau, his brother	A time away from home often puts the really important things into perspective
Moses	Exodus 2:11-15	Fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian in defense of a fellow Israelite	Saved his own life and began another part of God's training	God fits even our mistakes into his plan
Israelites	Exodus 12:28-42	Escaped Egypt after 430 years, most of that time in slavery	God confirmed his choice of Abraham's descendants	God will not forget his promises
Spies	Joshua 2:1-24	Escaped searchers in Jericho by hiding in Rahab's house	Prepared the destruction of Jericho and preserved Rahab, who would become one of David's ancestors—as well as an ancestor of Jesus	God's plan weaves lives together in a pattern beyond our understanding
Ehud	Judges 3:15-30	Escaped undetected after assassinating the Moabite king Eglon	Broke the control of Moab over Israel and began 80 years of peace	Punishments by God are often swift and deadly
Samson	Judges 16:1-3	Escaped a locked city by ripping the gates from their hinges	Merely postponed Samson's self-destruction because of his lack of self-control	Without dependence on God and his guidance, even great ability is wasted
Elijah	1 Kings 19:1-18	Fled into the wilderness out of fear of Queen Jezebel	Preserved Elijah's life but also displayed his human weakness	Even at moments of real success, our personal weaknesses are our greatest challenges
Saul (Paul)	Acts 9:23-25	Lowered over the wall in a basket to get out of Damascus	Saved this new Christian for great service to God	God has a purpose for every life, which leads to a real adventure for those willing to cooperate
Peter	Acts 12:1-	Freed from prison by	Saved Peter for God's	God can use extraordinary means to

	11	an angel	further plans for his life	carry out his plan—often when we least expect it
Paul and Silas	Acts 16:22-40	Chains loosened and doors opened by an earthquake, but they chose not to leave the prison	Pointed out the powerlessness of humans before God	When our dependence and attention are focused on God rather than our problems, he is able to offer help in unexpected ways

10:2 What will happen to the heathen who have never heard about Christ? This question is often asked about God's justice. Cornelius wasn't a believer in Christ, but he was seeking God and was reverent and generous. Therefore, God sent Peter to tell Cornelius about Christ. This shows that God "rewards those who sincerely seek him" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). Cornelius's story demonstrates God's willingness to use extraordinary means to reach those who desire to know him. Those who sincerely seek God will find him! God made Cornelius's knowledge complete.

10:3 Cornelius had a vision featuring a heavenly messenger. God spoke to other Bible characters through a variety of means—the burning bush of Moses ([Exodus 3:1-4](#)); the talking donkey of Balaam ([Numbers 22:21-30](#)); the gentle whisper heard by Elijah ([1 Kings 19:11-14](#)); the strange object lessons of Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 13:1-11](#)). Simply put, God speaks to his people in remarkably different ways—through the written Scriptures, through the words of others, through circumstances and events. It is up to us to listen, to be perceptive, to be alert. What is God trying to say to you today?

10:12 According to Jewish law, certain foods were forbidden to be eaten (see [Leviticus 11](#)). The food laws made it difficult for Jews to eat with Gentiles without risking defilement. In fact, the Gentiles themselves were often seen as "unclean." Peter's vision meant that he should not look upon the Gentiles as inferior people whom God would not redeem. Before having the vision, Peter would have thought that a Gentile Roman officer could not become a follower of Christ. Afterward he understood that it was his responsibility to go with the messengers into a Gentile home and tell Cornelius the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

10:15, 16 Steeped in Jewish tradition and filled with certain biases, Peter was convinced his views on the Gentiles were correct. It took a three-part heavenly vision for God to change Peter's mind. One of the most basic and practical lessons from this encounter is that when God speaks, we must not challenge what he says. Doubting God is the rebellion of Eden. When God says something is so, we must not debate with him. The right response is humble submission to his revealed truth. Are you trying to argue with God over some point that he has already made clear?

10:21, 22 Cornelius was religious, devoted, generous, respected, and sincere ([10:1, 2](#)). However, he was still spiritually separated from God. Because he needed to understand the gospel, God sent Peter to present to him the truth about salvation. Be careful not to equate earnestness with righteousness before God. We are brought into right standing with God by faith in Christ alone. Have you trusted in Jesus? Are you sharing with others—even those who seem religious—the truth that Christ is the only way to God?

Cornelius

The early days of Christianity were exciting as God's Spirit moved and people's lives were changed. Converts were pouring in from surprising backgrounds. Even the dreaded Saul (Paul) became a Christian, and non-Jews were responding to the Good News about Jesus. Among the first of these was the Roman captain Cornelius.

Because of frequent outbreaks of violence, Roman soldiers had to be stationed throughout Israel to keep the peace. But most Romans, hated as conquerors, did not get along well in the nation. As an army officer, Cornelius was in a difficult position. He represented Rome, but his home was in Caesarea. During his years in Israel, he himself had been conquered by the God of Israel. He had a reputation as a godly man who put his faith into action, and he was respected by the Jews.

Four significant aspects of Cornelius's character are noted in Acts: (1) He actively sought God, (2) he revered God, (3) he was generous in meeting other people's needs, and (4) he prayed. God told him to send for Peter, because Peter would give him more knowledge about the God he was already seeking to please.

When Peter entered Cornelius's home, Peter broke a whole list of Jewish rules. Peter confessed he wasn't comfortable, but here was an eager audience, and he couldn't hold back his message. He had no sooner started sharing the gospel when God gave overwhelming approval by filling that Roman family with his Holy Spirit. Peter saw he had no choice but to baptize them and welcome them as equals in the growing Christian church. Another step had been taken in carrying the gospel to the whole world.

Cornelius is a welcome example of God's willingness to use extraordinary means to reach those who desire to know him. He does not play favorites, and he does not hide from those who want to find him. God sent his Son because he loves the whole world—and that includes Peter, Cornelius, and you.

Strengths and accomplishments

- A godly and generous Roman
- Well-respected by the Jews even though he was an officer in the occupying army
- He responded to God and encouraged his family to do the same
- His conversion helped the young church realize that the Good News was for all people, both Jews and Gentiles

Lessons from his life

- God reaches those who want to know him
- The gospel is for all people
- There are people everywhere eager to believe
- When we are willing to seek the truth and be obedient to the light God gives us, God will reward us richly

Vital statistics

- Where: Caesarea
- Occupation: Roman army officer
- Contemporaries: Peter, Philip, the apostles

Key verse

"He was a devout, Godfearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God" ([Acts 10:2](#)).

Cornelius's story is told in [Acts 10:1-11:18](#).

[10:34, 35](#) Perhaps the greatest barrier to the spread of the Good News in the first century was the Jewish-Gentile conflict. Most of the early believers were Jewish, and they thought it scandalous even to think of associating with Gentiles. But God told Peter to take the Good News to a Roman, and Peter obeyed despite his background and personal feelings. (Later Peter struggled with this again—see [Galatians 2:11-14](#).) God was making it clear that the Good News of Christ is for everyone! We should not allow any barrier—language, culture, race, geography, economic level, or educational level—to keep us from telling others about Christ.

[10:35](#) Every nation has people who are restless for God, ready to receive the Good News—but someone must take it to them. Seeking God is not enough—people must find him. How then shall seekers find God without someone to point the way? Is God asking you to show someone the way to him? (See [Romans 10:14,15](#).)

[10:37-43](#) Peter's brief and powerful sermon contains a concise statement of the Good News: Jesus' perfect life of servanthood; his death on the cross; his resurrection, personally witnessed and experienced by Peter; Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures; the necessity of personal faith in him. A sermon or witness for Christ does not need to be long to be effective. It should be Spirit-led and should center on Christ, the way and the truth and the life.

[10:43](#) Two examples of prophets testifying about Jesus and his forgiveness of sins are [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#) and [Ezekiel 36:25, 26](#).

[10:45](#) Cornelius and Peter were very different people. Cornelius was wealthy, a Gentile, and a military man. Peter was a Jewish fisherman turned preacher. But God's plan included both of them. In Cornelius's house that day, a new chapter in Christian history was written as a Jewish Christian leader and a Gentile Christian convert each discovered something significant about the other. Cornelius needed Peter in order to hear the Good News and know the way of salvation. Peter needed Cornelius in order to know that Gentiles were included in God's plan. You and another believer may also need each other to understand how God works!

[10:47, 48](#) In this case, the people were baptized *after* they received the Holy Spirit, publicly declaring their allegiance to Christ and identification with the Christian community.

[10:48](#) Cornelius wanted Peter to stay with him for several days. He was a new believer and realized his need for teaching and fellowship. Are you as eager to learn more about Christ? Recognize your need to be with mature Christians, and strive to learn from them.