Peter Visits Cornelius

Acts 10:1-44

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Meet Cornelius

This passage begins at the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea, the headquarters for the Roman occupation of that area. As a centurion, Cornelius would have been in charge of a unit of about 100 men, and he was considered a man of noble character.

For a non-Jew to have been considered God-fearing meant that Cornelius followed the Jewish religion to some degree, possibly to the greatest extent he could as a non-Jew. His vision of the angel at about three in the afternoon likely means that he was following Jewish religious practices since that was a regular time of prayer for the Jews. And it is to Cornelius' credit that when an angel of God spoke to him, he didn't hesitate to do what he was told.

God Speaks: A Tale of Two Visions

Peter was following normal Jewish religious practices, among which was the strict adherence to the dietary restrictions spelled out in Leviticus 11. Many of the forbidden animals described there were included in the sheet suspended before Peter in his vision. Being told to kill and eat "unclean" animals shocked Peter.

The challenge to Peter's beliefs didn't end when the sheet disappeared. It was obviously no coincidence that Cornelius' servants appeared just as Peter's vision ended. Peter was thinking through the meaning of his vision when he was summoned to go to the house of a non-Jew. The servants said that an angel had told Cornelius to send for Peter to hear what he had to say.

And God made it clear to Peter that the servants' arrival was connected to what God was trying to teach him. God told him that the men were there, that he had sent them, and that Peter was to go with them. Peter knew that the vision concerned much more than food.

The Jesus Connection

Peter took a huge risk in following God's leading to reach out to Cornelius and his family. Peter followed God's leading without hesitation because Jesus was the cornerstone of his life.

Peter set an example for us by taking advantage of an opportunity to tell someone unexpected about his faith. We dare not ignore that example; rather, we must be willing to tell anyone who is interested about what God has done for us through Jesus. Pray and ask God to show you how you can share your faith and God's love. You can write your prayer here.