

Series: Peter: The Transformed Life  
Text: Acts 10:1-48; 15:7-11  
Title: Letting Go of Prejudice

#### Barriers - men

- Homeless – disgusting!
- 30-year reunion
  - jerk in high school – grew up – saved!
- Dad’s wife Myrna – Civil War = “War of northern aggression”
- Men / women
- Jew, Gentile
- Blacks, Whites -- CRT
- Illegal immigrants – help don’t help to what degree and how many?
- Native American relations (indigenous people’s day)
- 1940s and 50s -- Japanese, Germans,
- 1960s – Russians
- 2001 -- Arabs
- Democrat and Republican
- Mask or no mask / mandate or no mandate / Vaccine or no Vaccine

You are right where the enemy wants you to be!

## HOW MANY ENEMIES CAN YOU HAVE?

Acts 10:1-48

### 10:1-8 – Cornelius’ visit by an angel

- Centurion (over 100) within an Italian Cohort – (1000) an archer unit, all Roman citizens, all from Italy, all given a grant of three hundred coins by Augustus (only matched by the esteemed legionnaires).
- A devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.
- A God-fearing Italian --A devout man who prayed to God, was generous, feared God, gave alms to the poor.
  - ...who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation. (Verse 22)
- Sees an angel and is terrified and asks, “what is it Lord?”
  - The Angel - “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

- Go seek out Simon staying with a tanner in Joppa
  - Joppa to Caesarea – 13-hour walk, two hours by horse

### **10:9-16 – Peter’s Vision**

- Noon on the rooftop, asks for some food and has a vision.
- A sheet from the heavens with all kinds of ‘unclean / non-kosher reptiles, fowl and animals.
  - A Voice says: “Kill it and eat it”
  - I have never eaten that which is ‘common or unclean’
  - Mary Douglas offered probably the most cogent interpretation of these laws in her book Purity and Danger (1966). She suggested that these **notions of defilement are rules of separation that symbolize and help maintain the biblical notion of the distinctness of the Hebrews from other societies.** A central element in her interpretation is that each of the injunctions is prefaced by the command to be holy. **This distinction between holiness and “abomination,”** Douglas wrote, enables these restrictions to make sense: “Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination, and order.”

### **“What God has made clean, do not call common.”**

- This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.
- Peter is perplexed and pondering what he had just seen.
- The Spirit tells him what to do.

### **10:16-23 – Servants invite to Peter**

- The servants arrive
- The Spirit tells Peter to go with them, without hesitation.

### **10:23-33 – Peter visits with Cornelius**

- They leave the next day with some of the brothers going with them
- Take a full day to get there so likely walked and did it in two stints
- Cornelius has gathered a crowd
  - When he sees Peter, he falls down and worships him
    - Still had some Italian in him – though a God-fearing Man – still had some roman mythology of worshipping men – His theology was in error. Yet God spoke to him.
  - Peter says that he is also just a man.

## Acts 10:34-36

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

- He knew the vision was about people
- God had shown him
- Cornelius tells Peter about the Angelic visit
  - Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

## 10:34-43- Peter gives the Gospel

- Man’s condition
  - Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,
  - but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
- As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)
  - The life, death, resurrection of Jesus
  - Their witness and calling

<sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

God’s offering

- **everyone who believes in him** receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

## 10:44-48 – Gentiles filled with Spirit and Baptized

- The Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles.
- Tongues and praising God

## Acts 10:45,48

*And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.*

*“Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”*

- They were baptized in the name of Jesus

### **11:1-3 – The Jews criticized Peter**

### **11:4-15 – Peter tells them what happened**

- The story in detail
- His decision on the matter
  - And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

### **11:17-18**

*<sup>17</sup> If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" <sup>18</sup> When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."*

### **11:16- They shut up about it and glorified God**

Later, the debate takes place in Jerusalem as Paul has been ministering and gentiles are being saved.

They must become like us – convert to Judaism before they can be saved!

### **15: 7-11 – Peter declares God’s truth**

*<sup>7</sup> And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, <sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.*

*<sup>11</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."*

## **Breaking the Barriers of Prejudice**

Here is implicit bias by the numbers: 11,000,000, 40 and 150.

- According to University of Virginia psychology professor Timothy Wilson:
  - 11,000,000 is how many pieces of information we are confronted with at any given moment.
  - Forty is how many pieces of information he says our brains can actually process at one time.

If we tried to process it all equally, well, the tiger will eat us long before our brains absorb that there's a threat.

- To compensate for this discrepancy, our brains compress the process.
- Rather than solely rely on the data in front of us, our brains depend on our experiences, history and perceptions to make decisions.
- In other words, our brains rely on similar data, assuming it's as valid as the actual data.
- But it isn't.

We make snap decisions based on imperfect information and, the result, over time, is implicit bias, or the tendency to unknowingly rely on information that reinforces stereotypes.

- Here's where the 150 comes in: that's how many forms of implicit bias experts have identified.
- These different forms of bias range from perception bias (stereotyping people based on a group they belong to) to bandwagon bias (believing something because others believe it).

### **Marginal People are in need**

- Cornelius - Gentile Centurion
- Angelic vision = call for Simon Peter at the home of Simon the tanner.
- Sent three men to Joppa (33 miles) from Caesarea.

### **See Them with God's Eyes**

(How God sees things) (10:9-23)

- What is clean?
- All that God has made.

### **Increase contact with people who are different from you.**

- Heighten your awareness of the opportunities to care and to love and to be kind.

### **Obey God and Minister to Them**

(10:23-48)

- Act upon the understanding.
- Peter obeyed maybe fear, maybe doubt – but he obeyed.
- Be specific in your intent to Minister. – Not just I will do better... But I will meet with someone...I will take time to meet someone.

### **You may have to face Opposition**

You may need to do some explaining. (11:1-18)

- Let people know the stories of God moving in lives.

- Let people know the beauty of the variety of God's Creation.
- You will have to answer to those who have issues with your actions.
  - In your church
  - In your family
  - In your school
  - In your job
  - In your government
- But if we do not... we will have some explaining to do to God.

God sees you and he sees others. No one can hide from God.

He will speak to each and prepare each for the work that HE wants to accomplish. If we will break down our biases and prejudices, we may find ourselves being the blessing and receiving the blessing.