

Session 2

IGNORANCE /

IN THIS PHASE, we tend to have **generalized presuppositions** about others based on myths and stereotypes. This is often the result of living lives **culturally isolated** from certain people groups with an **indifference** to their experiences and an **unwillingness to adapt** to unfamiliar settings.

WHEN WE CHOOSE TO IGNORE OR DIMINISH THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T SHARE OUR CULTURE OR ETHNICITY, WE PERPETUATE DIVISIVENESS.

It is our prayer that we will take advantage of the opportunities God has given us to disciple people in our communities because people—*all people*—are the mission.

✚ SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 10:1-18

¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.” ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.” ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” ¹⁴But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹⁷Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate ¹⁸and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

PETER'S IGNORANCE

This first phase in the Gospel Community Spectrum is generally the toughest to acknowledge. Ignorance, generally, is not self-revelatory. We need godly people in our lives who can see our blind spots, and we need to allow God to speak to our minds and hearts.

In this passage, God used Peter's physical hunger to awaken him to God's hunger for the Gentiles to be saved. God was attempting to change Peter's heart toward the Gentiles, while simultaneously using him as missionary. However, Peter's ignorance left him perplexed at the vision which symbolized God making unclean people clean.

The reconciliatory nature of the gospel wasn't new to Peter—he simply ignored its application beyond his ethnicity. But Jesus modeled His passion to reconcile the Gentiles during His earthly ministry. One of Jesus' most passionate accounts in Scripture demonstrates His plan to reconcile Gentiles and Jews.

Read the account of Jesus cleansing the Temple (Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19 and John 2:13-21).

The location of this episode is extremely significant. It was the Court of the Gentiles. Because of the marketplace, the Gentiles weren't able to witness God's power. Outraged, Jesus made a whip, turned over tables and drove away everyone who bought, sold and exchanged in this court. He reminded them, quoting Isaiah 56:7: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer of all nations."

Isaiah 56:1-8 is about the salvation of foreigners. The people in the Temple, familiar with the Old Testament, would have been able to see the connection with that entire passage.

After Jesus' resurrection, **He commissioned His disciples to go into all nations and make disciples.** We call this the Great Commission. Peter made a great omission of nationalities other than Jews.

For Peter, disciple-making had limitations that were not found in Jesus' teaching. Many Bible-believing Christians serving faithfully in the local church have fallen short just like Peter.

Ignorance is the first obstacle we all face in pursuing discipleship—especially across ethnic lines.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ **Ignorance often catches us by surprise. Discuss a situation when someone made you aware of something you ignored? How did you react? How did you feel?**
- ▶ **Describe a time when you had to inform someone of their ignorance. How did you treat them? How did they respond?**
- ▶ **How are you currently allowing others to speak to your blind spots?**

DIG DEEPER

- ▶ **Pray. God used Peter's hunger to reveal to him His hunger for the nations. Pray for humility, and give the Holy Spirit permission to reveal areas of your heart that you have ignored. Ask God to open the door to begin building lasting relationships with other ethnicities.**
- ▶ **Read the following passages to further your biblical perspective as the gospel engages the barriers of reconciliation. Expect God's Spirit to illuminate the passages you read.**

GENESIS 1:27 / ISAIAH 56:1-8 / MICAH 6:8 / PSALM 67:1-5 / JOHN 13:34-35

JOHN 17:20-25 / ACTS 17:26 / GALATIANS 3:23-29 / EPHESIANS 2:11-12

COLOSSIANS 3:5-11 / PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4 / REVELATION 7:9-12