

Session 3

AWARENESS /

IN THIS PHASE, we begin to form an awareness and **appreciation** of other ethnicities and cultures. We start to express **genuine concern** for and interest in cultures other than our own. We become **teachable**, and we **listen** more as we learn about the experiences and perspectives of others. As our appreciation for people of different ethnic backgrounds continues to grow, we no longer see the world through a culturally exclusive lens. Rather, we start to see the beauty in “those from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.” We may become more aware of our own past ignorance and persistent blind spots.

MOST OF ALL, WE BEGIN TO GRASP THAT ALL OF US, NO MATTER OUR CULTURE OR ETHNICITY, WERE CREATED BY THE SAME GOD, IN HIS IMAGE.

+ SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 10:19-29

¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” ²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?” ²² And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” ²³ So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸ And he said to them, “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. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

PETER'S AWARENESS

“God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean,” Peter said. He was made aware through his vision that his thinking regarding the ethnicity of the Gentiles was incorrect. The gospel began to change his worldview on ethnicity.

SCRIPTURE SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE LENS THROUGH WHICH WE NAVIGATE OUR WORLDVIEWS, ESPECIALLY WITH GOD'S IMAGE BEARERS.

For the first time, with the Spirit's prompting, Peter invited people who did not look like him into his household (v. 23). While we don't know the exact dialogue, we do know Peter treated them as guests. He was learning to appreciate their culture and their genuine desire to hear more about the gospel.

The awareness phase, just like the ignorance phase, is cognitive in nature. As enlightening as the awareness phase can be, it is critical to intentionally move beyond it and interact with people in order to build healthy relationships.

? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ **When God made Peter aware of his sin, Peter immediately demonstrated his repentance by welcoming other ethnicities into his home (v. 23). When it comes to our racial divide, what should the evidence of our repentance be?**
- ▶ **What books by minority authors have shaped your theological or practical understanding of the gospel? How about podcasts or sermons?**
- ▶ **What are some of the potential challenges you may face as you begin to learn about nationalities other than your own?**
- ▶ **Listening in this phase is absolutely critical. However, you might hear things with which you disagree. What are ways you can show honor while disagreeing?**

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- ▶ **Historically, minority authors, theologians and preachers have been overlooked or ignored. This week, make a list of at least three books to read within the next year by minority authors. Here are a few recommendations:**

Oneness Embraced by Tony Evans / *Removing the Stain of Racism from the SBC* by Jarvis Williams & Kevin M. Jones / *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* by George Yancey / *United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity* by Trillia Newbell / *The Faithful Preacher: Recapturing the Vision of Three Pioneering African-American Pastors* by Thabiti Anyabwile

- ▶ **Watch “The Most Segregated Hour in America: Overcoming Divisions to Pursue MLK’s Vision of Racial Harmony” with Charlie Dates from the MLK50 Conference, on undivided.net.**