

Session 4

INTENTIONALITY /

SPORTING EVENTS, AMUSEMENT PARKS, CONCERTS AND MORE OFTEN PLACE US IN MULTIETHNIC AND MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS—OUR COMMON INTERESTS PLACE US IN A COMMON CONTEXT. SIMILARLY, OUR SHARED FAITH SHOULD FURTHER OUR SHARED INTEREST TO COMMUNE AND FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER.

In this phase, we become intentional about growing in our knowledge of and relationships with people of other cultures. **Taking the initiative** to **spend time** together begins to break down false assumptions. Real relationships are nourished, and **mutual respect** fosters mutual growth. This creates engaging environments for all involved, regardless of race, gender or class.

SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 10:29-43

²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.” ³⁰ And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² 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. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

PETER'S INTENTIONALITY

Peter finally obeyed the Great Commission in its totality by intentionally interacting with Cornelius' household. Notice, Cornelius did not go to Peter; Peter was sent to Cornelius' house. **God has commissioned us to go to our neighborhoods and nations, not the other way around.**

And this account began in a house, not a church.

“DIVERSITY STARTS IN OUR LIVING ROOMS BEFORE IT BEGINS IN OUR CHURCHES.”

– Albert Tate

First, the Spirit of God brought Peter's ignorance to light. Second, He made Peter aware of Cornelius' hunger for the gospel, while simultaneously revealing to Peter his own partiality. Peter's words in verse 34, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is acceptable to him.”

Notice the first two stages in the Gospel Community Spectrum are highly cognitive, but the final two are extremely practical.

It is not enough to say the right things about race; it must be modeled through reconciling action. Peter's intentionality placed him in a position to share with others, not only how Jesus saved him, but how this good news has recently transformed his unhealthy mindset of other ethnicities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ **Being intentional can mean placing yourself in unfamiliar environments or uncomfortable situations. Why is comfort such an obstacle in racial reconciliation?**
- ▶ **God could have easily sent Cornelius to Peter. Instead, He had Cornelius send for Peter. Why is it so important to God for His people to go first?**
- ▶ **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. constantly built bridges toward his oppressors with love and nonviolence. How have you built bridges with those who don't see eye to eye with you? How have you demonstrated sacrificial love? How can we create safe places that foster these discussions?**
- ▶ **Notwithstanding a party or group event, when have you gone to the home of or invited someone of a different culture to your home?**

DIG DEEPER

- ▶ **Find another disciple of Christ within your community who doesn't look like you. Tell them you simply want to hear their story and experience. Make your best effort to meet somewhere on their terms. Be sure to thank them and end your time with prayer.**