

Crossway Life Group, Week of February 17

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Acts 10:1-8. "When God Works"

Reading & Discussing Scripture

- "Moving a mountain" is a metaphor for a seemingly impossible task or purpose.
 - When you encounter a situation that seems like 'a mountain that needs to be moved', how do you tend to respond?
- The story of Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10:1-11:18 is about moving mountains, especially how God works through people to experience His grace and goodness. It is about groups of people with VERY different cultural backgrounds and decades of hatred toward each other coming together in unity in the church! The story reveals a dramatic transformation in the church! In order to appreciate God's significant work, it is necessary to understand the religious & cultural setting:
 - Jews: In the Old Testament, God called and commanded His people, the *Jews*, to be distinct from other nations to highlight God's holiness, His distinctiveness. See Genesis 17:7, Exodus 19:6, Deuteronomy 7:7-8
 - Gentiles: Over many years Jewish people created additional religious rules and cultural regulations in order to ensure their distinction from all other nations (often called *Gentiles*); the Jewish emphasis on distinction tended toward forgetting God's loving kindness to all nations. See Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 2:3
 - Romans: the ruling government during the first century; not liked and untrusted by Jews
- The first part of this dramatic story introduces Cornelius. **Read Acts 10:1-8**
 - What characteristics of Cornelius are highlighted? Why are these important in the story? Why might these be surprising characteristics to be highlighted in a man like Cornelius?
 - How does the story show that God is pleased with his prayer and action of worship?
 - God engineers these events through people over several days, instead of just revealing His grace and goodness immediately through the angel who appeared to Cornelius. What is significant about God's choice to use people over time, rather than just revealing His words and ways immediately through the angel?
- Read **Matthew 17:20**. What does this look like in daily life?
- Do you have any other questions about the sermon or the passage?

The Big Idea

God rewards people who seek Him
in every nation, people, and language
in prayer and action
by giving His grace and goodness in the Gospel

Application & Reflection Questions

1. Acts 10 presents Cornelius as an example to follow:
 - What does it mean to live righteously and to give generously **as an act of worship**? It is certainly easy (and perhaps common) to do these things as an obligation or out of fear or pressure or guilt. What makes it worship?

- Re-read the big idea. Do you ever ‘forget’ to expect God’s reward and experiencing His grace? Why do you think this happens? How can your group help you?
2. Pastor John illustrated ideas from Acts 10 with stories from his ministry trip to Taiwan, Myanmar, and Thailand. Ancient Scripture and current stories remind us that God is directly at work in the lives of people around the world.
- Have you ever ‘discovered’ God at work in a situation, person, or group where you didn’t expect? What did you learn from the experience?
 - What does it mean to minister WITH people rather than merely ministering TO them? Why does it matter?

Growing in Cultural Understandings

Simon Peter, as a Jewish Christian, was raised in a setting where he was taught to keep the Gentiles (the other nations) at a distance from him. It was assumed that the Gentiles would be a bad influence upon him and would actually lead him away from God. Have you experienced something similar? Was this true when you were growing up? How do you see or experience it in politics or media or social interactions today?

This story in Acts presents Cornelius as a wonderful role model for people to follow, even though he was from a group that was normally looked down on. Do you have examples of people who are role models for you even though they are from a group that you might otherwise be inclined to look down on? What helps you look for role models in groups that you might normally treat as less valuable or less honorable?

Serving beyond ourselves

What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves? One specific strategy may be to pray for another group of people. And perhaps you could reach out to people in that group and ask them how you might pray.

Acts 10:1-8 - New International Version

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

⁴Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Matthew 17:20 - New International Version

²⁰He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”