

**Title:** Nations: Cornelius and the Open Gates // **Scripture:** Acts 9:32–10:48

**ARRIVAL / SOCIAL TIME** *15-20 minutes*

Spend the first 15 minutes or so of your time together catching up and socializing with one another. Also find time to catch up together on how the assignments from last week turned out.

**SERMON REVIEW** *5-10 minutes*

In Acts 10, food was a dividing barrier between Peter's Jewish ethnicity and that of the Gentiles around him. In fact, when an Italian soldier named Cornelius needed to hear about Jesus, God had to give Peter the same out-of-body vision three times before Peter understood how much bigger God's heart was than his own. In the same way, we often let our preferences drift toward prejudices that divide, although "the very diversity of Christian humanity makes it complete." In this passage, Peter learns, "God plays no favorites!" Peter's journey toward understanding God's heart for the nations transformed his own heart, broke down barriers to diversity, and brought life-changing redemption to Cornelius and his family. Will you enter the rooftops and doorways that can lead you on the same journey of discovery into the diverse depths of the heart of Jesus?

**THE MAIN THOUGHT** *keep this in mind as you facilitate discussion*

The transformational Good News of Jesus brings deep unity to divided community.

**SEE IT – Questions** *10-15 minutes*

**Picture** (What is the story saying?): What is the significance of the geographic location of the stories from this passage? Why were the unique Jewish laws so important for God's people? What was the response of Peter and Cornelius to their particular visions? What was the result?

**Mirror** (Where am I in the story?): How does my own prejudice or religiosity prevent me from seeing God at work in the diverse community around me? How have I allowed my identity in Christ to develop into a sense of personal superiority? What does the rooftop look like in my life?

**Window** (How does the story change how I see those around me?): Who are the steadfast, faithful people around me who need to be introduced to Jesus? Where are the doorways in my own life that God is inviting me into? How can I experience the richness in the diversity in my community?

**BE IT – Practice**

**Change UP // A Unified Exercise of Confident Praise** *5 minutes*

What are you most thankful for this week? Speak out your thankfulness in phrases of confident praise. Include specific praise for the impartiality that God has demonstrated in your own life!

**Change IN // Group Activity of Contemplative Prayer** *5 minutes*

Now move together from the joy of confident praise to the silence of contemplative prayer. Ask God to reveal self-centered patterns of thinking and to give you new perspective on the diversity around you. Commit now to take some time this week to be silent on a rooftop to hear from God!

**Change OUT // Life Application Assignment - Find some "Cornelius" People!** *5 minutes*

Step through one new doorway that God is asking you to enter to intentionally cross barriers. Identify one person or family of diverse background and invite them to come into your doorway!

**CLOSING PRAYER** *5 minutes*

Take a few minutes to gather any prayer requests and pray for each other to SEE IT and BE IT this week.