



Week 13 | January 13 Sermon

Community:

This is a good season in which to start intentionally sharing stories together. No doubt you have at least picked up on bits and pieces of each other's stories as discussion and growth have taken place. Now it's time to be intentional, giving each individual significant time to share his/her story with the rest of the GROUP. This can include as much or as little as any given person is comfortable sharing. As leaders, model this by going first! Consider establishing a "schedule" so that each person knows when it will be his/her turn and can come prepared. This will take you several weeks and will be the focus of our community time together between now and Lent. Here are some key points to consider when sharing:

When people tell their faith stories, five things appear over and over again—five things God uses to grow our faith. They're ways of recognizing how God is already involved in each of our lives. It's a great way for you to think through your own story.

Practical Teaching Studying the Bible and listening to sermons make Scripture seem alive and relevant in our daily lives. They show us who God is, who we are, and who God wants us to be.

Providential Relationships God uses the people in our lives to influence us in extraordinary ways. He speaks to us through others—whether lifelong friends or short-term acquaintances. Even difficult relationships can be used by God for our good.

Private Disciplines Things like prayer, personal time reading the Bible, fasting, and solitude deepen our relationship with God. They get our hearts in synch with His.

Personal Ministry Jesus showed us that we find life by giving our lives away. When we serve others. We are privileged to partner with God in what he's doing in the lives of those we serve.

Pivotal Circumstances When big things happen, good or bad, they change the way we interact with God. Circumstances often cause us to pay attention to what He's doing in our lives.

As you think about your own story, consider how the five things have played a part in your journey with God. You don't have to talk about all five things, but chances are there are significant things to be shared within at least one or two of these categories to let your GROUPIES get to know the real you.

"Community" by Andy Stanley

Sermon Title: Paul Blazes a Trail for the Gentiles, Part 2 | Text: Acts 10:9-48

Auditorium Discussion Questions::

God asked Peter to change his heart and mind about some deeply held traditions and beliefs that had been ingrained in him since childhood. Has God asked or led you in a similar challenge to let go of long-held traditions or beliefs? Would you be willing to share about that experience?

Both Peter and Cornelius were disciplined in praying. Acts 10:2-3 and 10:9 would hint that they prayed "the hours" or stopped to pray at multiple fixed times each day (noon and 3 pm are traditionally common fixed hours for prayer). What relationship might there be between their discipline of prayer and the powerful way in which God moved through the events in this chapter?

Why do you think that God gave Peter the same vision three times in a row? (Acts 10:16)

Tom made the point that while Peter said "I now realize..." despite the fact that Jesus throughout the Gospels and the early events of Acts has been clearly leading in this direction. Can you think of specific events, teaching, miracles, or parables that should have been sign-posts for Peter that foreshadowed this tearing down of the wall between Jews and Gentiles?

Rate your own personal openness to God asking you to change your own long-held traditions in order to advance the Kingdom in and through you. On a scale of 1 to 10 in which 1 is "I am completely unwilling to change my long-held religious traditions. I hate change and would completely resist it!" and 10 is "Bring it on! God can ask me to change whatever He wants and I'll be first in line to lead the charge!"

Sanctuary Discussion Questions::

Please read Acts 10:9-48. What does the Holy Spirit lift for you as we continue to consider our ministry theme of Kingdom Sending?

Kevin suggested some characteristics of "Kingdom Sending" in Acts 9-11. They are:

- Being open to the ever surprising Holy Spirit
- Giving up our prejudices
- Becoming a regular "repenter"
- Learning, choosing and committing to prayer
- Embracing hospitality

Do these characteristics resonate with you? Are some easier than others to accept? Which ones? Why?

How do you respond to Kevin's idea that "one's past sacred history impacts the trajectory for one's future sacred history?" Has this been your experience? If so, how has this shaped your relationships (for Christ and His Kingdom)?

Do you affirm the idea that "Jesus is ever going ahead of us" and is "waiting for us to recognize and respond to Him?" (the Emmaus riddle) If so, can you share one example of this in your life in the past 18 months?

Will you pray with/for each other?

