

2010 ACTS #12 CHAPTER 11 “RAISED TO A HIGHER STANDARD”

CORNELIUS Acts 10:1-11:18

What would it take to move you out
of your normal lifestyle AND
out of your comfort zone to
a higher standard of living?

Author Max Lucado tells the story of a man who had been a closet slob
most of his life. He couldn't comprehend neatness.
Why make up a bed if you're going to sleep in it again tonight?
Why put the lid on the toothpaste tube if you're going to take it off again in the morning?
He admitted to being compulsive about being messy.
Then he got married.
His new wife was patient.
And very diplomatic,
She said she didn't mind his habits . . .
if he didn't mind sleeping on the couch.
Since he did mind, he began to change.
He even enrolled in a 12-step program for slobs.
And a therapist helped him rediscover the muscles used
for hanging up shirts and placing toilet paper on the holder.
Even his nose was reintroduced to smell of Pine Sol.
By the time his in-laws arrived for a visit, he was a new man.
But there came a moment of truth.
His wife went out of town for a week.
At first he reverted to the old man.
He would be a slob for six days and clean up on the seventh.
But something strange happened.
He could no longer relax with dirty dishes in the sink
He was uncomfortable with towels flung around the bathroom
And clothes on the floor.
His slob life was ruined.
What happened? Simple.
He had been exposed to a higher standard of living. Billy D. Strayhorn, Thunder in the Desert

That is exactly what God wants to do for each of us,
And today we find Cornelius a Roman commander a man of rules and regulations
Was exposed to

I. A HIGHER STAND OF LIVING

This Roman officer, Cornelius was a believer in God.

²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. Acts 10:2

Cornelius was not only a righteous man,
But he was a righteous family man.

²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing

For him it was not just enough to pray to God regularly,
Or worship in the duck boat.
Or at the game on Sunday morning.
He not only worshiped in church,
But he had his family with him in worship.

Any man that has been touched by God
 Will desire his family to be saved as well.
 If you are out of sync with your family,
 If they are not willing to worship with you,
 Then you have some work to do.
 God is calling you to go to them,
 confess your faults to them, pray for them
 And set an example before them.

It says he gave generously to those in need

Because of his generosity and care,
 We know that he was well respected in the community.
 Known as righteous and God fearing.

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. Acts 10:22

Wouldn't we all like this person in our church?
 Not really....because
 He was religious but he wasn't a Christian.
 He was a seeker but he wasn't spirit filled.
 We can be moral and generous and not be a Christian,
 But we cannot be a Christian without being moral and generous.

Some of the most difficult people to reach are those who think they are religious.
 They know enough to make them dangerous, or stubborn.
 Like the High Priest.
 Like the maniac Saul..

I love the way God does not giving up on any person.

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. Acts 10:3-4

And Cornelius was about to get a faith lift.

⁵The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now 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." Acts 10:5-6

In our world today we can't deal with God,
 Until we are ready to deal with Jesus.

That there is no other name under heaven whereby men must be saved,
 Cornelius,
 Hadn't heard that yet.
 And believing in God was not enough,
 He must deal with the savior.
 The real thing of salvation.

A young man attending the University of Minnesota for an art degree, asked his teacher if he could paint his brother's portrait for a class assignment. "Ok", so he painted and submitted the portrait, only to receive a C minus. The professor said that the grade was poor because the proportions in the painting were incorrect. "The head is too

big, The shoulders are too wide, and the feet are enormous." The next day, the art student brought his brother in to see the professor. He took one look at the brother and said: "Okay, A minus." Seeing is believing and Cornelius had to see the real thing to believe.

But before Peter could come: he had to be exposed to a

II. A HIGHER STANDARD OF MINISTRY

Peter was hungry and waiting for dinner when he
Went up to the roof and had a vision.

¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." Acts 10:11-13

Peter had lived his whole life by rules and laws,
Food regulations.

The ceremonial food laws of the Jews were designed *solely*
to make a separation between Jews and Gentiles,
between Israel and all the other nations.

God had to pick this wart off his soul,
To see that people were no longer to be looked at in categories
of Jew or Gentile, Male or Female.

So God prepared a Non-Kosher picnic.
Picnic usually are outdoors and under a tree,
We spread a blanket and spread the food.

By the way I found another meaning for the word PICNIC.
You call a computer Technician and he tells you your computer
Problem is a picnic.
That's not complimentary.
Picnic means.
PROBLEM IN CHAIR, NOT IN COMPUTER.

I loved the picnics we had as children
Mom would bring lunch down to us working in the bottom land.
She would spread a blanket
Under the trees beside the river,
Get out the coolaid,
Sandwiches, dill pickles,
Cold fried chicken.
Maybe pie or brownie.
In the fall we always had watermelon.
What a meal we had in the beauty of God's outdoors.

The voice said:

Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.

Now what is interesting on this picnic blanket
is that the food was still alive.

¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Acts 10:12

Peter was astonished.

¹⁴"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." Acts 10:14

Peter claimed refuge under a well know kosher food law.

God said "Peter this is your lucky day."

Your going to get to eat

camel hump steak

rabbit stew.

And bacon and ham.

With lizard soup.

God was saying that the non kosher animals formerly forbidden to Jews,

Along with crickets and flying insects,

Birds of prey and

Finless fish.

Were now open game.

Food on the shelves to be taken.

Non-Kosher food was abhorrent to any good Jew.

But their law went even farther than that.

If your kosher meat touched any non-kosher food

It all became contaminated.

And even the utensils used in the preparation were unclean.

And must be disposed of.

Maybe this was created by the Jewish wives.

So they could get all new kitchen appliances.

Hoooney-- a fly went through the old food processor.

Peter said: No way.

Gods said: "There is a new way."

Don't call unclean what I call clean.

About that time the doorbell rang

¹⁹ the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." Acts 10:19-20

It wasn't about kosher food at all,

But about kosher people.

Who can and cannot become a Christian.

²⁴The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. 10:25

Cornelius was the first Gentile Evangelist.

Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. Acts 10:24

He has put on a tea pot

Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. Acts 10:25

God moved Peter up to a higher standard of ministry.

A higher standard of love.

A higher standard of mission

That the world was his parish.

²⁸He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. Acts 10:28-29

Peter explains the Good News of God's plan of Salvation in Jesus.

How the Jews had killed Jesus by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. Acts 10:39-40

And as he was speaking,
The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Acts 10:44

And God forever establishes that his love is for the whole world.

And Peter had them baptized.

⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. Acts 10:48

Peter was forever a changed man.
But God didn't stop there
He wanted the change to go all the way to the top.
And the Jerusalem church was about to experience.

III. A HIGHER STANDARD OF CHURCH

Remember God had called Israel to be set apart.

They were a Chosen nation.

A royal people .

Called to come out from them and be separated from them.

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said,"You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."Acts 11:2-3

You have defiled yourself.

More grievous, you have defiled us and our religion.

You have besmirched the prophets.

You have scoffed at the scriptures.

They reacted before they had time to hear Peter's action.

That reminded me of a wife who could knit exotic patterns.

One day she had lunch in a real Chinese restaurant
(only one person spoke partial English, all menus were in Chinese).

When she saw the handwritten menu she was so impressed with the calligraphy she tucked it in her purse. Some months later the results were a stunning white sweater with the Chinese symbols hand-stitched down the front.

She received compliments galore

It was beautiful, until at one party when she met a distinguished Chinese physician who asked her where she got the symbols, and if she knew what they meant?

"I'm afraid to ask," she said, "but tell me anyway."

He said: "This is a cheap dish - but good."

Peter did not act on some unknown script.
He was led by the Spirit of the living God.

⁴Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened

The blanket

The unclean animals, reptiles, and all foul.

Then how he went with the Gentiles and spoke the message of salvation to them.

¹⁵"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ' ¹⁷So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" Acts 11:15,16

This was a new level of ministry.

(1.) The barrier, between the Jews and Gentiles was broken down.

(2.) No one could claim privilege because of their race or religion.

(3.) *All* were sinners, [Romans 1](#); [2](#); [3](#) and none had a claim on God.

(4.) God's mercy was on all mankind. And any could be saved if they asked.

Peter had them baptized.

⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 10:48

Peter was very diplomatic here because

It is interesting to note that Peter didn't baptize them himself.

But he probably had the six witnesses,
the Jewish brethren who went with him,

So that when they went to Jerusalem,

They were more prone to side with Peter

Than with the Jerusalem brethren.

Because it says:

¹⁸When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

What walls does God want to tear down in your life?

What rituals and habits, maybe even traditions, or prejudices does

He need to take away so that he might be able to use you

And reach a world in need?

Are you willing to talk to a freshman if you're a senior?

Are you willing to visit with a janitor, or waitress, or

The young pierced and colored haired car wash attendant?

Are you willing to say:

Here am I use me Lord?

593 "Here I Am, Lord