



“Expanding Your Vision”

Acts 10

Small Group Plan

The vision of Prestoncrest is:

“Passion For God ... Compassion For People”

It came from the heart of Jesus when he was asked to give the “greatest commandment” (Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-31). The question of the greatest command had often been a matter of debate among rabbis who were trying to find the essence of the law or who were trying to prioritize the 613 commandments. Several statements in the Old Testament had been offered as the essence — Psalm 15:1-5, Isaiah 33:15, Habakkuk 2:4, Isaiah 66:2 and Micah 6:8, to name a few. But Jesus settled the question by choosing two commandments from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How would you explain the Prestoncrest Vision to a visitor?
- How does it help an individual believer to have these two clear guiding principles?
- How does it help a church like Prestoncrest to have such a vision to follow?
- What is the difference between intellectually accepting this vision and actively following this vision?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— LEARNING TO OPEN YOUR HEART —

Acts 10:1-8

¹ At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One 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!” ⁴ Cornelius 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. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose

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

- What do we know about Cornelius’ character (v. 2)?
- How can prayer and generosity open a person’s heart (v. 4)?
- Why doesn’t Cornelius say, “I have already changed so very much. Please don’t ask me to change any more”?
- Do “good people” still need Jesus? Explain.

— STRUGGLING TO HEAR GOD’S CALL —

Acts 10:9-23

⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³ Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” ¹⁴ “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” ¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” ¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. ¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” ²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?” ²² 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. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” ²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

- Why does God need to change Peter before he meets Cornelius?
- Why does Peter respond as he does to God’s vision (v. 14)?
- God once said that these animals (v. 12) were unclean (Leviticus 11:1-47). Is God changing His heart and character, His goals and mission by now declaring them to be clean? Explain.
- How and why does God change Peter’s view of people?

— DECIDING TO EXPAND YOUR VISION —

Acts 11:1-18

¹ The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴ Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ⁸ “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. ¹¹ “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’ ¹⁵ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ So 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?” ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”

- Why did the “circumcised believers” criticize Peter (vs. 2-3)?
- Why was it so difficult for this initial Jewish Christian movement to expand and become a Jewish/Gentile Christian movement?
- Why does Peter’s testimony carry such weight (vs. 4, 18)?
- Why does God Himself step into the story (Holy Spirit), and how did it help everyone involved to take a step forward?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What does it mean to listen for God’s call?
- Are you more likely to find it exciting or threatening if God opened a brand-new door or ministry? Explain.
- How do you respond to this quote by Glaphre Gilliland:

We seek to be useful ... and want God to bless our busy activities. We seek to be helpful to others ... and want God to tag along. We seek to be spiritual ... and want God to applaud. We tend to use God instead of seek Him. We want God to do our bidding more than we want Him ... I wonder how this all-wise God of ours feels about being brought in at the conclusion and asked to bless the plan.

- Close by praising God for His power, His mercy and His leadership. Commit to Him your willingness to follow his plans regardless of the change it will require of you. Express your Passion for God.