

# **Seeking & Stretching**

“Living Large”, part 13, Insights from Acts 10:1-48  
Pastor Bob Johnson, September 17th, 2023

## **A Major Ministry Shift:**

(Acts 9:43, Hebrews 8:13, Acts 8:39-40, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Romans 5:1)

## **Three Truth Handles To Take Home:**

### **1. Seeking God ...**

(Hebrew 11:6, Acts 10:30, Acts 10:9-11)

### **2. Maturing involves ...**

(Galatians 5:25, Romans 12:2)

### **3. Prompting means ...**

(John 5:16-17)

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## **This Week's Discussion Guide**

Welcome to our second week of our ten week study and discussion based on our current Sunday series at GPC called, "Living Large". In this series, we are slowly unpacking the Book of Acts. Each week we will read and reflect on a passage and discuss ways we can apply what we reflect on to our daily lives. Our last week in this small group season will be the week of Sunday November 12th.

It is our prayer at GPC for our Sundays and small groups to provide the encouragement we all need to support each other as we desire to grow closer to God and build friendships as part of our vision at GPC to raise up committed Christ followers in a healthy church community.

### **Getting Started:**

Each week, we typically start out with a few lighter questions to get us warmed up :).

In Acts 10, Peter is getting stretched in who he is called to minister to. Speaking of getting stretched, when have you felt stretched lately?

One of the ways we are stretched is trying something new. When have you tried something new lately? Are you glad you did? Are you planning on doing it again ... or is it a one and done?

Often times, God is working in our lives and the lives of others, but what is happening (ultimately for our growth and our good) is not visible to others. Speaking of growing in ways others might not be noticing (yet) ... How is God possibly growing you that others might not be aware of?

In Acts 10, when Cornelius was praying and God was speaking to him, God was also speaking to Peter while he was still in Joppa. When Peter finally met Cornelius, he realized that God was already at work in his heart long before Peter showed up for a visit.

Can you think of a time where you stepped into a situation or conversation, and only until you engaged the situation or conversation, were you aware that God was already working in ways that you were not yet aware of?

Also in Acts 10, instead of prompting Cornelius to find Philip who was already in Caesarea, God encouraged him to send for Peter who was a two day journey away down in Joppa. When have you felt God prompting you to serve or minister somehow, and you were very aware that there had to be other people that would have been better suited for the serving opportunity? Why do you think God prompted you and not them?

### **Reviewing and Reflecting on last Sunday's Passage:**

Let's read the passage from last Sunday. (Acts 10:1-48)

After reading this chapter and looking back on our notes from Sunday, was there a particular thought, verse or comment that caught your attention, encouraged you, challenged you or raised a question for you?

## Digging Deeper:

1. Our calling from the Lord to be 'light and salt' in our world includes being open to share the Gospel with others as God gives us the opportunity. This step of faith can sometimes be difficult. It would be a lot easier when someone we don't know that well comes to us and asks us to share with them about Jesus, similar to the conversion of Cornelius and his family. But what about the people in our lives who we don't have a healthy relationship with? How can we be more open to share God's love with them too ... as God prompts and provides an opportunity?

In Acts 10, we read how God prompted Peter, while he was in Joppa, to go share with a man who was part of the oppressive Roman military. Years earlier, in the same town, God spoke to Jonah to go share with the Assyrians living in Ninevah who were known for oppressing people just as the Romans were.

When we think of Jonah's story, it is more common to focus on 'Jonah and the whale'. Let's review another part of the story of Jonah that isn't the part that most might remember. Let's read Jonah 4:1-11 which describes what took place after he was swallowed up and spit out by the big fish, and after God showed compassion on Ninevah, just as Jonah feared He might.

From this passage, what insights or comments do you see that you can share with us? What made Jonah so angry? Is there an area in our lives where we are tempted to be angry or disappointed with God because He hasn't responded as we had wanted?

The story of the plant in Jonah 4, teaches us that God reserves the right to be compassionate to all people, even those we might think are less deserving of His compassion.

Has there ever been a person or group who falls into this category for you? What did they do to make you feel that way? Do you still feel that way about them? What makes it so hard for us to get past our negative emotions? Is there somebody you know who has been mistreated by an oppressor and eventually chose to forgive their oppressor?

2. One person who grew to have compassion and forgiveness for someone who could have been thought to be beyond God's compassion was Corrie Ten Boom.

Here is part of her story: *Corrie and her sister Betsie were confined in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II because they were caught concealing Jews. Corrie survived 10 months of inhuman and humiliating treatment at the hands of the Nazi guards, but her sister died because of the brutal conditions. After the end of the war, Corrie traveled the world telling the story of God's faithfulness during her imprisonment. After one of her messages, a man approached her who she immediately recognized as one of the more brutal guards at the concentration camp. He identified himself as a former guard and then told her he had become a Christian since that time. He went on to share how he had experienced God's forgiveness for all the cruel things he had done there. Now he was standing in front of her, his hand extended, asking for her forgiveness as well.*

If you were Corrie, how do you think you would have felt, or what would have been your thoughts as that moment?

The following is the rest of her story (as told by Corrie in her book “The Hiding Place”)

*“And I stood there – I whose sins had every day to be forgiven and yet, I could not [forgive him]. Betsie had died in that place – could he erase her slow, terrible death simply by asking? I had to do it – I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were also able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that. And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion – I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. ‘Jesus, help me!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.’ And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. As I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. ‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart.’ For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.”*

What stands out to you about this story?

How do you think it was possible for Corrie to extend forgiveness to someone who represented so much oppression and hatred?

What do you think took place in Corrie’s life prior to this encounter that allowed her to extend forgiveness and compassion to the guard at that moment?

Is there someone in your life who you need for God to give you His power to pray for and begin to have compassion for?

The following is a link to a short video of Corrie telling her story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGFSGpBeoVc>

## **Wrapping Up:**

What is an application from what we read or discussed together that you would like to practice in the coming days? Is there anything that came up from this week’s sermon or discussion that you would like prayer for? Is there anything else that you would like to express prayer for?