

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 1



Doubting Peter

Scripture reading Acts 10:17

“Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean...”

Thomas doubts. The apostle is most remembered for and scrutinized not because of his belief in Christ, but his doubts. However, Peter is the one who repeatedly doubted God’s work. Everything he did was big and bold. Perhaps, for this reason God opened his understanding with a bold and preposterous vision. Unclean animals falling from the sky in a sheet would get anyone’s attention. Our Scripture records Peter’s doubts. Notice a few things: He did not doubt that God had spoken to him. The commands of God and His Word leave very little to interpretation. God instructed him to not call God’s creation common or unclean. Culturally, Peter balked at many Gentile traditions and behaviors. The things they ate, the way they dressed, and I imagine many other facets of their existence did not sit well with the preacher. God had just blown up Peter’s cultural expectations concerning His will. Secondly, Peter understood what God meant by the vision. God’s Word always has an explicit and deliberate meaning. It is not open to interpretation. Finally, the struggle of Peter is one we all must face. We understand when God talks. We know the meaning of His Words and realize interpretation is not open. Our greatest struggle is learning where and how God wants us to personally live out the revelation of His Word. The young person seeks to know God’s will concerning a potential mate. A professional seeks to determine God’s leading concerning a business venture or new career opportunity. Life is full of choices. Peter’s concern about the meaning of the vision consumed him, but God orchestrated the circumstances perfectly. The timing of the visions to both Peter and Cornelius aligned in Divine fashion. The principle is clear. God understands everything. *“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite”* (Psalm 147:5). We trust the infinite understanding of our Lord.

The circumstances revealed exactly what God wanted Peter to do. What is right in front of your face today revealing the direction of God for your life? The carnal Christian manipulates circumstances or interpretation for their convenience. Avoid the manipulation trap, but seek the open opportunity God is presenting you today. It worked for doubting Peter and devout Cornelius, and it will work for you too.

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 2



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Scripture reading Acts 10:19 &23

"While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them..."

The most important thing to the heart of God is people. Wealth and popularity are of no concern to the Creator/Inventor of everything, who also just happens to be the most famous individual in the universe. God cares for people. His resources, relationships, and revelation consume themselves with the intent of reaching and caring for people. God became a person, not an object. God shared himself, not a creation of His hands. God orchestrates our lives to reach people. The men coming to meet Peter were not part of a strategic directive manufactured for the opportunity of expanding this new found faith. These were men whose souls would spend eternity in heaven or hell. Their lives meant so much more than the here and now. Peter was directed to meet and greet them. He lodged them with hospitality. He cared for their needs. An open hand of hospitality defines the commands of Christian charity. Our place is not reservation, but rather reception. Peter faced three guests after experiencing one of the most unusual moments of his life with heavenly sheets and unclean animals, and immediately encountered three strangers. These guests were opening the work of God to the Gentile nations as God demonstrated His care for people.

We never know the impact of our small acts of kindness. We never know who an act of kindness may touch. Names in history resonate with us. Washington, King, Lincoln, and Graham are names that are easily recognizable. These names mean much to us, but when they were children, their parents probably did not realize the impact they would make. Their childhood classmates failed to see their enormous worth. Many of their contemporaries neglected to recognize the enormity of their lives. At one point they were just people, people who became legends. Peter was called upon to interact with some of the most unlikely individuals: three strangers. This interaction led to incredible ministry and hope for billions of people. Hospitality initiated their interlude. Kindness is always fashionable. It is one of the admonitions of Ephesians 4:32, *"Be ye kind."* Where is God opening opportunities of kindness? How can you reflect the love of God today? You never know who you may be helping.

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 3



No Lone Rangers

Scripture reading Acts 10:23-24

“And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends.”

As a kid, my dad introduced us to many heroes from black and white TV. Nick at Nite aided him in the introductions. We celebrated the adventures of George Reeve’s *Superman*. We mourned every time Timmy fell down a well and needed *Lassie’s* assistance to notify his parents. *Mr. Ed* was a horse of course, and Dennis was always being a menace to Mr. Wilson. My favorite stories came from the retelling of Clayton Moore’s *The Lone Ranger*. As William Tell’s overture blared the music of justice throughout the house, my dad and I eagerly awaited the thrilling stories from yesteryear. What a guy! He rode a white stallion, fired silver bullets, and wore a black mask to conceal his heroic endeavors. The Lone Ranger apprehended all the evil doers of his day with a punch, lasso, or (only if necessary) shot of the gun. He never killed his foes but shot their guns from their hands to preserve life. It was all fake! From the bullets to the stories to the title, all of it was a facade. The Lone Ranger was never alone. He always had Tonto. Tonto went with him everywhere, did reconnaissance, and fought side by side with his “kemosabe”. No man lives a life as an island.

Cornelius leaned on his partners to find Peter. Peter took other believers with him to discover the meaning of his vision, and when he arrived the centurion hosted a venue full of friends and relatives to meet this former fisherman from Galilee. We all need friends. It is detrimental to isolate ourselves from the presence of others. God created the church for community. We live, laugh, and love together. We experience pain and joy. Life is intended to be shared. Technology that narrows the void between continents also widens the chasm of human interaction. We all have a need for other people. Even the Grinch needed Cindy Lou Who. Someone may be thinking that they are full of friends. No need for more in your life. You’re good! Then understand you’re like Christ. The title God carries the realization of self-dependence, but we needed Jesus. Someone needs you, and you need someone else in your life too (even if you don’t think so). Some of your greatest relationships have yet to be discovered. Determine to invest in someone today and allow someone to invest in you. There are no Lone Rangers.

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 4



Know Your Ride

Scripture reading Acts 10:25-26

“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”

Each person enjoys a unique place and ministry granted to them by the Creator. God refers to His church as a body. He commends every part and encourages each person to fulfill their God given purpose. Great value comes from knowing our role. We must seize the opportunities God presents and abandon the pits that mans’ devices lay in our path. God is God. No one rivals the place of His majesty. He alone deserves worship. He alone will have all knees bow before him according to Philippians 2. Kneeling in a prostrate manner is reserved for the Lord alone. Our role is to procure adoration for the King, not ourselves or any other carnal devise.

Peter and Cornelius enjoyed a common experience of uniquely interacting with God. Visions and angels coordinated the meeting, but they came from very different places. Cornelius was lost. Peter was saved. Cornelius, as was his pattern, sought to please God through effort and sincerity. This veteran of Caesar’s army bowed before a lowly Jewish fisherman. Culturally, this was unheard of. In his carnal state, Peter would have relished this bizarro world event, but not on this day. He was doing the Lord’s work. See his response? *“I myself am also a man”* (Acts 10:25). There is no hierarchy in the family of God. We are brothers and sisters. God gets the glory. Peter also demonstrated that we are to represent not replace God. Christians cannot replace God. Only God is God. We can love, show care, invest, and meet the needs of others, but only God can be God. We must never forget that we represent not replace God. Finally, Peter resisted the temptation to steal God’s glory, but rather shone in the glory of God. Christians must exhibit the best qualities of the Savior and reserve praise of good for the Giver of all good, Jesus. When in pride the believer steals the shine of God’s glory, it tarnishes the image we were created to reflect. Know your role. Enjoy your role. Grow in your role and take advantage of the opportunities He affords.

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 5



The Elephant in the Room

Scripture reading Acts 10:27-28

“And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”

Who enjoys addressing the elephant in the room? Small talk and chit-chat are not Peter’s style. Upon entering the home of Cornelius, Peter saw many folks who eagerly anticipated his arrival and started saying what everyone knew: This is awkward. The word he used “*Unlawful*” is only cited one other time in Scripture and it’s Peter that used it there, as well. “*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and **abominable** idolatries*” (1 Peter 4:3). The bolded word “*Abominable*” is the same word as “*Unlawful*” in the book of Acts. There was no Divine prohibition for the Jews to be with Gentiles. There was a prohibition for shared religious practices with idolaters. God made strong commands against such practices. God allowed people of other nationalities to participate in Hebrew worship. Uriah the Hittite and Rahab reminded us of this truth. Over time, the Jewish people hardened their pattern of segregation against occupying nations. Their angst and posture are understandable as their experience with other nations were challenging to say the least. Babylon, Persia, Greece, and now Rome did little to procure favor with the Israelites. In retaliation, the Israelites manufactured laws and ordinances to deepen a divide and maintain identity. These were not Divine impositions, but rather human constructions. When Peter enters the room, he addresses the elephant in the room immediately and explains his interaction from God. Good lesson here!

In potentially uncomfortable situations, address the elephant in the room. In places where an apology is necessary, start there. In times of uncomfortable race relations, start there. This is mature conversation. This is talking like adults. This is Peter’s pattern and it opens the door for the real essence of the visit that surpassed racial harmony or religious ceremonialism. The real elephant in the room is God. Get to Him as soon as possible.

SHINE Devotional

Week 34 – Lesson 6



Talk Less Smile More

Scripture reading Acts 10:30-33

“And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

The smartest guy in the room rarely lets it show. Often the most insecure and volatile people need to express all their mind, revealing their breadth of knowledge in every matter. Peter was notorious for doing just this. In this circumstance Peter refrains from barreling down the well-worn path of strident assertion. He yielded to the host’s needs and discovered what God was doing in the seeker’s life rather than blathering all he knew. The art of listening often eludes us. The Christian who wants to shine must grow in this discipline. Christians hold the answers. Jesus said, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:19). Christians have the answers, but we must listen to the felt needs of people, with open hearts to receive truth.

The people who influence my life the most are those who hold strong convictions, but whose ardent life views are balanced with a desire to speak with me, know my heart, feel my experiences, and understand me. The same is true of you, and appears to be a universal human characteristic. In an age of strong opinion, do you listen? Listening is not compromise. Attempting to understand another person’s perspective is not weakness, it demonstrates strength and confidence. Four verses of Scripture record the experiences of Cornelius as he recounted what God was doing in his life. Peter knew God in a much greater capacity, but he listened until it was time to speak. When he spoke, the world changed and the kingdom grew, but he started by doing something contrary to his nature. He talked less and smiled more.