

10:30AM Notes (5:00PM Notes Below)

**“Peter’s Mind-Bending Encounter”
Acts 10:9-16 7/22/18**

All encounters with God leave us changed on some level. Perhaps in our day of post-Enlightenment Christianity, the hardest thing to change about us is our minds. Whoever got to you first as a Christian likely laid the foundation for much of what you believe and practice today. That is wonderful...if they taught you in Spirit and Truth. What is difficult is when you were not taught properly, and God must later encounter you so that you can *un-learn* some things that are currently out of alignment with Kingdom truth. Such was the case of Peter in Acts 10 when God moved supernaturally upon Peter in order to impart to him some truth that he had never known regarding God’s mission to the Gentiles. This message reveals how God still reserves the right to reform our personal convictions, enlighten our incomplete beliefs, reshape our ministries and reorient our former patterns of conduct. Mark it down: if you are encountering God, He is intentionally removing you from your comfort zone. God will change your mind about many things if you walk with Him long enough and deeply enough. Peter can stand up and earnestly testify to this.

I. The Uncomfortable Leadership of God (9-16)

A. God intrudes upon Peter’s normal pattern of life (9-10) – “The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance...”

In the midst of Peter’s normal patterns of worshiping and serving God, both his lunch time and prayer time were interrupted by God’s divine appointment. This is a deeply supernatural encounter initiated by God that resulted in Peter falling into a trance.

B. God challenged Peter’s deep convictions (11-13) – “...and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

Peter is not only being encountered by God in a manner that impacts his body by putting him in a trance, this encounter is also going to touch Peter's beliefs about how to live in faith before his God. Peter was commanded by God to eat things which he believed his whole life to be religiously unclean. As an orthodox Hebrew, Peter knew that certain foods were forbidden by Jewish Law (Lev. 20:25-26). Yet, in the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, the ceremonial law had been fulfilled. Dietary restrictions were no longer to be enforced on the chosen of God. In his natural state, Peter would have been shaken to the core as he recognized that God was leading him into a liberty and freedom that Peter was reluctant to experience. Amazingly, God was not only freeing Peter to eat previously restricted food, He was enlightening Peter to the Gospel reality that previously unclean Gentiles would be welcomed through Jesus into God's Kingdom. This was an enormous shift in Peter's belief system. This occurs when your personal Kingdom policy does not advance His present Kingdom purpose. Next, we note Peter's immediate response to the Lord's command that was presently stretching him far beyond his spiritual comfort zone.

C. God did not conform to Peter's wishes (14-16) - "But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven."

This is a contradictory statement from Peter which acknowledges God's authority (Lord) but refuses to submit to it (By no means). So strong were Peter's personal convictions on the issue of kosher dietary regulations that he actually responded with a refusal to obey the very clear command from God. This will likely happen at some point in our own journeys as God intentionally leads us out of our religious tendencies and into deeper oneness with Himself. We must humbly acknowledge that there are things in our Kingdom beliefs that may not be as clear in the Word as they are in our own minds. These things can become sacred cows, false altars or even idols to us. So strong was Peter's personal convictions that God had to repeat the command three separate times. He also had to insert a rebuke to Peter that basically said to him, "Peter, this is not up for debate. I command you to eat the food." This is intense! God reserves the right to overturn any belief, tradition or practice that are not sourced in His authoritative Word.

II. The Supernatural Activity of God (17-33)

A. God’s pinpoint timing (17-22) – “Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate 18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” 21 And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?” 22 And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.”

A simultaneous encounter had also been happening at a Gentile man’s house named Cornelius. As God was about to fold the Gentiles into His plan of salvation, He sent an angel to speak to Cornelius with instructions to go and locate Peter in order to hear a presentation of God’s truth. You can read of that encounter at the beginning of Acts 10 and also in Acts 11. As Peter was finishing up his mind-boggling encounter on the roof, the representatives of Cornelius were knocking at his door. How good of God to not allow Peter even a moment to talk himself out of the encounter he had just experienced. God would supply the revelation to Peter that these Gentiles were represented by the unclean animals seen in the encounter. As Peter was commanded to begin to eat the non-kosher food, he was also being commanded to welcome these non-kosher Gentiles. This would have been such a stretch of Peter’s beliefs that we have almost no parallel for it today. What we should embrace is that God did not quit stretching people’s belief system when He encountered Peter that day. The further we wish to walk with King Jesus, the more we must anticipate that He will require us to drop of some of the baggage that we tend to clutch. If we are to ascend the mountain, He will require us to travel more lightly than we ever have before. This DOES NOT mean that we ignore Scripture or disregard clear biblical truths. It does mean, however, that we remain constantly open to the activity of Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth.

B. Peter’s prolonged discomfort (23-29) - “So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.””

Do you sense in Peter’s words how utterly uncomfortable he is with the way God is now leading him? He declares to the Gentiles that, in his gut, he finds them unclean and doesn’t feel comfortable being there with them. At the same time, Peter is processing out-loud that he is fully aware that God has commanded him to go into this Gentile home, challenging everything he has ever believed to be true about how God feels concerning the Gentiles. Interestingly, he mentions that he obeyed God without any objection- *hah!* That is totally untrue. Peter fought God hard through the encounter and was broken by God’s non-negotiable stand. Peter now says to the Gentiles, “Please tell me why you have asked me to come here.” We should all acknowledge and appreciate the extreme inner-struggle that many people have when God is stretching them beyond what their formerly held convictions allowed for. It is no easy task to yield when God is touching some of your most deeply held personal beliefs. Yet, change them He will when they need to be changed. Nobody has arrived yet, therefore God is within His full rights to touch anything in our belief-structure that we assumed He would never change in us. Again, we are not applying this to clear bible truths. We are talking about the conclusions we draw, the personal standards we embrace and the methods that we employ in living out our faith. If the Father places His authoritative finger on your own belief system, how will you respond? Peter struggled, but he obeyed.

C. Cornelius' stunning testimony (30-33) – “And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing 31 and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ 33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

Cornelius recounts for Peter the leadership of God on Cornelius's side. Peter would now sense that God was clearly at work in an unprecedented manner through his own encounter and the encounter which Cornelius had experienced. While it will still require a measure of faith in our lives, God will often invest prolonged time in order to get His message of “things are changing” across to us. Peter was now able to further connect the dots in recognizing that formerly unclean Gentiles were now being revealed to have been a part of God's plan for redemption all along. Peter saw the light and began to say yes. It is noteworthy, however, that many years later, Peter was still struggling with Jewish prejudice against Gentiles as evidenced in Galatians 2:11-15. It takes time for some views that we hold to be fully shifted by God. He cooperates with us at the level of our yieldedness.

III. The Paradigm Shift From God (34-48)

A. Jesus Christ was proclaimed (34-43) – “So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he

commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Look at Peter begin to walk in the new understanding that was imparted to him through the encounter. Again, this would have been far more difficult for Peter to do than you and I can recognize today. For the first time, the Jewish Messiah was being fully and freely presented to non-Jews. This had never been on Peter's radar before the encounter. The Gentiles were being presented the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

B. Holy Spirit affirmed the Gentiles faith in Christ (44-46) – “44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God...”

The Holy Spirit did His part in awakening these Gentiles, spiritually baptizing them and confirming their salvation with the miraculous evidence of speaking in tongues. Peter would later testify that his conclusion was that God had made no difference between Jewish believers and Gentile believers (Acts 11:17-18). Notice also that the other Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter were also amazed that God was giving revelation of a new and unanticipated work that included the Gentiles. When we obediently steward the encounters we have with God, and when we faithfully yield to Him when He leads us beyond our personal comfort zones and into new territory, other people begin to benefit from what God is doing in our own lives. What Peter experienced in his mind-boggling encounter with God eventually became contagious and the trajectory of the Gospel expanded and lengthened.

C. Father's full plan was being unveiled (47-48) - “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”

Pursued and Encountered – Jeff Lyle – 10:30AM and 5:00PM

TRUTH TO REMEMBER: In Kingdom seasons, there are undoubtedly God-ordained times of change. The followers of Christ must accept the reality that God will initiate and complete changes in individuals, churches, and regions as He operates within the parameters of His divine wisdom, fulfilling the plans He has held since before time began.

(5:00PM Message Notes Below)

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“Elijah’s Bounce-Back Encounter”

1 Kings 19:1-18 - 7/22/18

The life of faith can be a roller-coaster ride. Elijah had experienced incredible, supernatural victory on the top of the mountain when the fire of God fell against his wicked opponents. What came after that victory, however, was the darkest season that he had ever experienced. People turned against him as a bounty was placed upon his head by the king and queen. Physical exhaustion dominated his body as he ran for his life. Fear was owning his thought-life and, before long, self-pity began to master his mind. Elijah wanted to die so he could experience relief and go be with God. When depression finds Elijah, God moves toward him in loving firmness. God will not allow His royal seed to live like orphans and beggars. He will coax us out of our caves, speak truth into our lives and begin to reveal again to us that He is for us. We cannot become prisoners to our most melancholy thoughts. We have a part to play as we cooperate with God’s plan to lift us up when we are spiritually sagging. This message reveals how God brings the discouraged and depressed out from their caves of fear and self-pity. What Elijah needed was an encounter with the Almighty that offered him a bounce-back from his state of depression and defeat.

I. A Recipe For His Emotional Implosion (1-8)

A. When the bottom drops out (1-2) - “Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.””

Elijah was serving God faithfully when he defeated all of Jezebel’s false prophets on the top of Mount Carmel. When she learned that her personal ministers had been killed, she was filled with fury and vengeance. She placed a death warrant upon the head of Elijah. Sometimes serving God will cost you more than you anticipate. Elijah was learning this reality first-hand.

B. When emotions seize control (3-4) - “Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

Elijah had to get out of town, so he ran for his life unto the point of physical exhaustion. When he left his servant, he then began to enter into a time of exhaustion PLUS isolation. Ultimately, he finds himself tired and alone, sitting under a tree and begging God to bring him an early death. What a contrast to the man who had previously called down fire from Heaven just a short time before. Humans are comprised of body, soul and spirit. Our emotions and thoughts have a great sway on how we view our lives. Elijah’s spirit was being dominated by his thoughts and his feelings. He was in trouble for sure.

C. When the body needs rest (5-8) - “And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” 8 And he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.”

It is interesting that God first chose to minister to Elijah’s physical needs by allowing him some sleep and providing a Heaven-sent miracle meal. Many Christians think that physical needs are less spiritual than other needs. Not God. God allows Elijah’s mind and body to recuperate through sleep. When he is able to take in the provision of food, his body is strengthened, and he begins to travel again. May all believers be wise to remember the tie-in between the physical state we are in and the spiritual state we are in. Sometimes the godliest thing a believer can do is rest and refresh. It may n=make a significant difference within the season you are currently living.

II. A Revealing Of His Hopeless Outlook (9-14)

A. Elijah's self-imposed isolation (9) - "There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

While his body has been helped, his spirit is still being dominated by darkness. Elijah, the appointed representative of God to Israel, is all alone in a dark cave. So discouraged and fearful is Elijah that he actually chose this place to become his environment. This is the nature of a depressed spirit. Darkness breeds darkness until light intervenes.

B. Elijah's self-pitying perspective (10) - "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

Now God is getting down to the core issue. He had asked Elijah what he was doing in the cave. Elijah responds with words that reveal his self-pity. He feels that he has sacrificed more than anyone. He may be murmuring against God when he indicates that there is a death-warrant out for Elijah due to the fact that he had destroyed the false prophets. Elijah has entered that terrible place of mind and heart when we feel like nobody understands us, everyone is against us and God is not doing what needs to be done on our behalf. King David put it this way, "Nobody cares for my soul."

C. God's deliberate intervention (11-12) - "And He said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper."

Elijah did not need a sermon or a lecture. Elijah needed an encounter. Depression and discouragement cannot be reasoned with. They have to be evicted from us. God did not offer Elijah a pill,

nor did He pat him on the head and apologize for allowing Elijah to experience trouble. God knew what Elijah needed. Elijah needed, more than anything else, to encounter the very presence of His God. Interestingly, it was not in the dramatic manifestations of the encounter where God communicated to Elijah. The bible is clear that He was not in the wind, earthquake or fire. When those things had gotten Elijah's attention, he was prepared to hear the gentle whisper of God to his troubled heart and mind.

D. God's demonstration of patience (13-14) - "And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

Same song from Elijah...and actually the same verse too. Elijah was so talked himself into his state of gloom that he could not express anything other than the sad refrain of self-pity. God had his attention, but he did not yet have Elijah's cooperation. This portion of the text teaches us that God will initiate encounter with us, but if we dismiss the significance of his powerful and intimate presence, we will likely not benefit from what He is doing. The relationship between a sovereign God and dependent believer is one of trust and cooperation. We have to respond to the work of God in our lives. Many people stay in their darkened caves longer than they need to, simply because they believe what they are experiencing holds more weight than what God is offering.

III. A Remedy For His Discouragement & Defeat (15-18)

A. Someplace to be (15a) - "And the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus..."

God assigns a new location to Elijah. A temporary change of scenery can often serve to remind us that the world is not as small and suffocating as we perceive it to be when we are depressed or discouraged. Elijah needed a fresh outlook and it was not going to

magically appear to him in the back of a dark cave. God called this struggling saint to get up and move.

B. Something to do (15b - 16a) - “And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel...”

Elijah was then given a new assignment from his God. There was much more in the Kingdom to be accomplished. Elijah may have forgotten who he was in the Kingdom, but God did not. The two assigned anointings would serve to remind Elijah that God had appointed him to be the prophet in Israel. This assignment also served to pry Elijah’s self-focused eyes from off of his problems and to place before those uplifted eyes some new opportunities that blessed others. One of the greatest ways to exit the cave of depression is to engage your will and begin serving others. God uniquely seems to meet our needs when we entrust them to His care and, instead of obsessing over ourselves, begin to move in ministry toward others.

C. Someone to help (16b-17) - “...and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.”

God also gave Elijah a new friend. Elisha would serve alongside of Elijah for the rest of Elijah’s days. He was devoted to Elijah. He looked to Elijah for wisdom and power. He served Elijah wholeheartedly. We may never have two-dozen people with whom we can share deep friendship. But all we really need is one. God supplied Elijah a remedy to his isolation and loneliness. At the end of Elijah’s life, the repeated refrain of Elisha was, “I will not leave your side. I will not leave your side. I will not leave your side.” Elijah’s last assignment would involve becoming a mentor to the next generation’s voice in Israel. What an honor for those who are finishing up their races.

D. Something to remember (18) - “Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

Pursued and Encountered – Jeff Lyle – 10:30AM and 5:00PM

Undeniably, God felt Elijah had been strengthened enough to handle one last thing in this encounter: a gentle rebuke of his attitude. Elijah had considered himself to be the only true believer in Israel. Frankly, that was arrogant, and he should have known better. God blew out the last of the clouds in Elijah's thinking when He informed Elijah that there were 7,000 more believers just like him. What an amazing recovery of God's perspective came to Elijah. It had never been as bad as Elijah had convinced himself. All during Elijah's depressed days, there were thousands of people who were hungering and thirsting after God. The Kingdom was not suffering a downturn just because Elijah was emotionally struggling. Let us also learn that we must never reduce God and His glorious Kingdom down to the dimensions of whatever we might be feeling or thinking in any given moment. He is good all the time.