

Life! *Training*

Name:

Date:

Second Conversion

*Getting God's Mindset
after Your Heart
Changes*

Welcome to this journey through the experiences and teachings of the apostolic church as recorded in the book of Acts and the Letters written by the apostles. As a member of His body, you will discover His treasures for those who take His Name and receive His Spirit.

Come to the Scriptures with a prayer-filled heart and open mind as you uncover truths for your life. Record these in the blanks provide to help keep yourself accountable in your daily growth. Talk to the Lord when you find yourself coming short in an area. Share with others the riches you find in His living Word.

Day 1: embellished Bible story.

Day 2-6: interactive journal devotions.

Day 7: contemporary stories of faith.

Eat Your Reservations

Jesus Christ is ____ of ____ with all power.¹

The Lord is not bound by ____ or ____.²

A ____ sinner's ____ trumps holy perfection.³

____ do not pick and choose.⁴

New believers must grow ____.⁵

We should not mistake the ____ for the ____.⁶

Legalists ____ those who are ____.

 Liberals ____ them without ____.

 Leaders ____ others to be like Christ.⁷

The message of Jesus Christ is ____ and ____.⁸

____ is for everyone.⁹

¹ Acts 9:32-35; 10:36; 3:6, 12, 16; 4:10; 16:18; Matthew 8:3; 9:6, 28-30; 28:18

² 9:36-42; 10:21-33; Mat. 12:1-13; Mark 2:18-22; 5:40-42; 7:1-35; John 11:44

³ Acts 10:1-4; 11:13; Leviticus 2:2; Ps. 141; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15-16

⁴ 10:5-20; 11:5-12; Psalm 42:1-2; 63:1-2; 84:2; 107:9; Mat. 7:6; Luke 6:21, 25

⁵ 10:21-24; Isaiah 55:7; Luke 7:4-5; 19:1-10; 23:50-53; Romans 1:17; II Co. 7:1

⁶ 10:25-26; 14:11-13; Daniel 2:30, 46; Mat. 8:2; 14:33; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9

⁷ 10:27-35; 8:35; 11:20; 18:28; 28:23; Lu. 24:27, 44-47; Mat. 5:2; Eph. 6:19-20

⁸ 10:36-43; Deuteronomy 21:22; Psalm 107:20; Isaiah 52:7; 61:1; I Co. 15:1-4

⁹ 10:44-48; Deut. 10:12; Psalm 2:11; Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 33:24; 55:7; Jeremiah 31:34; Amos 9:7; Jonah; Malachi 4:2; Matthew 3:8-9; Acts 2:38-39

Inside Scoop

See Acts 10

When Simon Peter came to our town, he raised our friend Dorcas from the dead by the power of Jesus. I was shocked. I knew we needed someone full of faith in our town for a while. Even though we had a small group of Christians in Joppa, we needed teaching and preaching to help us grow.

We invited Peter and his wife to come stay with us. I felt bad having him come to our home since my business is less than likeable to most people. But he could not stay with Dorcas' family because she lived upstairs from her son-in-law and the house was already crowded as it was. Plus, with her miracle resurrection, everyone would be coming and going for a while. I figured a preacher would need peace and quiet to pray and study.

Simon Peter and his wife accepted our invitation with such a grateful spirit. I guess sharing a home with a leather tanner did not faze him too much, since he once worked with fish. I think being on the seacoast was a nice retreat for him as well. When he was not teaching or preaching, he was praying and studying—or having a great feast with my wife's wonderful cooking.

He took some time off from our hospitality, however, and said he needed to pray and fast. A few days into this, he came into my work area and asked if we could get a meal going. I kind of laughed to myself, thinking, *either this guy is half-starved and cannot wait till dinner or God has let him off a fast*. I agreed and told my wife to make a meal.

"No one eats at noon!" she said. "Honey, we just ate the morning meal a couple hours ago. Supper is six hours away."

"I know, dear," I told her, "but he is our guest of honor and if he asks us to make a meal, we will make a meal."

Just then, Peter's wife walked in, "He's hungry and says to make a good meal. I do not know what he is up to, but I am willing to help anyway I can."

My wife seemed glad to have help.

When I asked where Peter was, his wife said, "I think he went back up on the roof-top deck to pray."

I grew concerned about Peter being up on that roof, hungry and light-headed on such a windy day. But I got caught up in stretching out some sheepskins and forgot to check on him. Soon, I heard him shout out, “No way, Lord!”

I listened for a moment and heard him saying something else I could not make out. A little while later, I heard him say this again. When he shouted out the third time, I headed out the door to check on him. Just then I was distracted by a group of Gentile guys standing at the gate—they knew better than to just walk into the yard of a Jew.

“Can I help you?” I asked.

“Yes,” they said, “we were sent to find Simon, also called Peter. Is he around?”

I looked up on my roof. I saw him get up and start walking down the stairway. I said, “Here he comes now.” Then I hesitated, not knowing whether to invite these unclean people into my house or not.

Peter met them at the gate, saying, “Hey there, I’m the one you are looking for. To what do we owe this visit?”

I thought he was being awful chummy with people who were not of our breed.

The soldier spoke up, “My friend Cornelius is a centurion who lives righteously in the fear of God and has a good reputation with the Jews. God warned him through a holy angel to send for you and have you speak to us.”

“Well!” Peter said in surprise, “It seems the Lord also prepared me for this moment, if I understand Him. Come in, come in—they are just putting on a feast right now.”

I began to wonder who was host here. Peter seemed so overjoyed to let Gentiles into my house that he did not even ask me if it was okay. I heard him say, “You can stay here for the night and eat with us. Then we will set off first thing in the morning for your friend’s house.”

I began to question what was going on with our religion. Old standards were being thrown out the window. These things just were not done among Jews. Now, Peter was going to void our traditions by going and staying in a Gentile home and eating their food. Yet I knew God was at work, and I, too, wanted to see what would happen at Cornelius’ home.

God Works the Impossible

What have you seen God do that could not be explained by science or natural occurrences?

While we do not live to get a “wow” from our faith, we should also not focus on the here and now so hard that we fail to notice when God wants to help us overcome our circumstances. In Acts 9:33, who did Peter find in Lydda?

What spontaneous command did this man of God give the disabled man, in 9:34? What happened?

God likes to shock us, but He did not do this for a shock effect. He did it because there was no other way Aeneas would walk again. He did it because He likes to mend, not tear apart. God is not the author of disorder or disaster; He is in the restoration business.

In Acts 10:38, Peter describes Jesus as being a man empowered by the Spirit of God to heal whom?

God does not give disease. Even in the case of Job, Satan gave the man his boils and pain (Job 2:7). God allowed it, and when His purposes were finished, He removed them. Sickness and disease are oppression from the devil. What did the Lord accomplish through Aeneas, in Acts 9:35?

Under the hood. You usually only look there when you have a problem. Even then, with modern cars, you probably cannot figure out how to fix anything when you do. Spiritually, we usually do not get a glimpse under the hood. All we see is a vehicle (your body) that is working well or not running right. Doctors may explain everything to you in fifteen-syllable words but never truly get to the point of your suffering. God allows the timing of sickness and death for His own purposes. None of us can fully diagnose why—let alone even pop the hood.

Jesus lifted the hood for us a couple times. Once, people were trying to diagnose “why” God allowed a man to be born blind. When people tried to blame someone for his problem, how did Jesus answer their “why,” in John 9:3?

And then He healed him.

When Lazarus was dying, Jesus said this was not a dead end, but an opportunity to show God’s glory (John 11:4). Why was Jesus glad about this, in John 11:14-15?

What happened after Jesus raised him up, in 11:45?

God used Peter to raise Dorcas from death. First, he got away from the doubters and those asking, “Why?” Peter spoke with the Lord before speaking to the corpse. How was she a meaningful member of Christian society, in Acts 9:39?

Some people are more valuable to God here, than with Him. Others He takes early. Stephen and James were the first to die. Peter and Paul escaped death many times possibly because God still had much work for them to do.

In Acts 9:42, how did Dorcas’s return from the dead impact those in her town?

Walking in the Light

Nobody wants anyone to be lost. Humans can be overly sympathetic and soft to the point that we cannot see how a loving God could send anyone to hell. To help authenticate feelings, some preach that those who “walk in the light of the truth they know” will be saved.

This theory says that the man in the jungle, who cries out to God and tries to live a good life, will be saved even if no one ever tells him about Jesus. It espouses that those who do not know the truth of Jesus’ Name Baptism will be saved if all they know is the triune formula. It allows for salvation among those who never received the Holy Ghost because no one ever told them God wanted to put His Spirit in them.

Let’s examine this doctrine in the story of a God-fearing army commander in Caesarea. How does Acts 10:2 describe him?

If the “progressive light” doctrine is right, then this Italian was heaven-bound and had to do nothing more. A new character interrupts the story. Who is he, in 10:3?

What does he tell Cornelius, in 10:4?

If the theory were correct, the man must be okay since God notices his generosity and prayers. However, what does the angel tell this devout man to do and why, in 10:5-6?

Do you think Acts 10:34-35 helps the doctrine in question, or argues against it? Why?

The same page. God does not favor one person or group of people over another. He notices everyone who reaches out to Him and calls each one to come to repentance. He wants us all on the same page. He does not let some in the kingdom through one door and others in the window.

If God saved people who did not have all the truth, then why would He tell the church to go into all the world? If Cornelius was already slated for heaven, why did the Lord send an angel to get his attention and hear from an apostolic preacher the truth of the gospel and plan of salvation? If the jungle man's good heart saves him, why should anyone risk their lives trying to reach him with the gospel?

Rather than say, "He's a good man, he's okay," Peter went down to preach the risky message of the gospel to Cornelius and his household. What great surprise did the apostle experience, in Acts 10:44?

How do you think Cornelius felt after finding out his faith was incomplete? And after receiving the Spirit?

Good thing this "progressive light" idea had not gotten to Peter or the non-Jews would never have entered the Kingdom of God. Whom have you avoided talking to perhaps because you thought God would deal with them personally instead of through you?

Why did God send an angel to tell this man to get a preacher? Why did the angel not preach the gospel?

Catch the Vision

Having a heavenly vision does not make you holy or special. It might mean you are hard-headed. Saul was a stubborn man. The Lord had prodded him in a couple situations but not got his attention. The divine drama near Damascus was not because of Saul's saintliness.

The angel did not appear to Cornelius because he had reached perfection, but because he had missed it. He had the opportunity to believe on Jesus during His earthly ministry. At least one centurion did (Matthew 8:13), and Cornelius knew about the events of Jesus life (Acts 10:37). Once again, a miracle does not prove the goodness of man but of God.

Simon Peter gives an example of stubbornness as well. He challenged Jesus on occasion and had a hard time taking orders or accepting a new plan when he was happy with his old mindset. Now, as a minister of the gospel, the man with the keys to the Kingdom, he is facing another major upset. He has to be converted from how he views the world.

What vision did the Lord give him, in Acts 10:10-15?

Notice Peter's unwillingness? He says, "No way, God!" Perhaps he thought this was a test of his loyalty, and he did not want to fail. Instead, God had news for him. In 10:16, how many times did God have to get his attention?

Sometimes we hope fireworks from glory land will help us understand everything better by and by. However, what effect did the vision have on Peter, in 10:17?

How has God dramatically gotten your attention?

Beyond goose bumps. You can have a wild dream and think you have heard from God. Perhaps if you went without eating for a while and sat on top of your roof you might think you saw or heard something from the other world. We should not trust our feelings or hallucinations just because they seem like something divine. Our flesh or even the enemy can trick us. Peter did not disorient his world because of this vision alone. He lived according to God's written Word which will never be eclipsed by a personal experience—no matter how convincing.

Peter also allowed God to confirm the vision in other ways. What did the Spirit tell him next, in 10:19-20?

How did Peter finally interpret the vision, in 10:28?

How were these people going to fulfill the vision Peter had just had?

How did God prove this new understanding to the Jewish Christians, in 10:45-46?

Why was it so important that Peter got this message, in 10:47-48? What would the non-Jews (Gentiles) have missed if he had ignored or resisted God's vision?

Occasionally, God uses the dramatic to catch our attention when we would hear from Him no other way. Tradition had blinded Peter to what the Lord really wanted to do with other ethnic groups. Fortunately, a stubborn man softened and agreed to preach the gospel to us.

Unclean or Unhealthy?

What came down on that sheet? Did Peter see snakes, pigs, and vultures? Some artists have depicted the scene as a lot of gross animals. What does Acts 10:12 say was on it?

When the voice said, “Get up, kill, and eat,” Peter’s response lets us know that, whatever he saw, he knew he could not eat it as a Jew. Moses had given orders on food and sanitation habits to serve the health interests of Israel. Once the covenant ended, so did these rules. Peter was just coming to understand that. What did the Lord tell him, in 10:15?

How did he “cleanse” the Gentiles at Cornelius’s?

Of course, the point of this vision was to get Peter to accept people of other cultures and traditions. However, Peter had to overcome his that’s-a-no-no mentality to accept their hospitality. Filled with the same Spirit and baptized in the same Name, they invited their brother to eat with them. Peter accepted their non-kosher foods and customs.

A tension arises between those who believe we should eat only healthful food and those who use this passage to justify eating anything. Moses gave directives on how to eat not just to enslave people, but to give them a healthful diet.

The list of clean foods in Leviticus 11:1-17 and Deuteronomy 14:1-29 are not especially divine in and of themselves. However, science verifies that these foraging animals are better for human consumption than creatures that eat other animals. Humans do much better eating pasture animals than say a pig, a dog, a skunk, or a cat.

Some cultures eat foods others would never touch just because of their traditions. While eating any animal will not make us unclean spiritually, it will impact our physical health for good or bad.

Food in perspective. When dealing with the Jews on food, it was not a matter of health motivations. They were hung up on being perfect and more holy than their non-Jewish inferiors. Some people today think that by eating a vegetarian diet, they are closer to God. They may look down on pork eaters and think themselves more righteous. While they may be healthier than those eating a lot of fat and grease, they are not holier.

Why do you wash your dishes and your hands?

Pharisees and rabbis gave orders about washing hands and dishes. If they did not, they would be religiously disqualified. These people would scrub their hands up to the elbow before eating, to stay pure in their religion. What did Jesus say about these good health practices in Mark 7:7-8?

Something so important to our culture became a stumbling block for people in the first century because they made a religion out of it. What did Jesus say about the religious value of food, in Mark 7:15?

So the argument is not what is good for your body alone, but what is going on in your heart. One person can go on a diet and the self-discipline will help him or her grow in the Lord. If that person, however, condemns others with it, he or she has turned a good thing into sin.

Jesus and Peter certainly were not preaching that what you put in your body does not matter—otherwise, you could take drugs, alcohol, and poison. While good diet and personal hygiene are important for the health of the body, what did Jesus matter most, in Mark 7:20-21?

Free from Tradition

Humans quickly become enslaved to their religious and ethnic customs. Peter was such a person. The Jews had invented a tradition saying they could not eat with Gentiles or even enter their dwelling places and spend the night. Jews would not even share the same dinnerware used by Samaritans. Peter's vision was not so much undoing his God-given view of non-Jews, but his socially adopted perspective.

No matter how devoted to God, we humans let law-keeping and manmade traditions creep back into our conduct, generation by generation. One person makes a vow out of love for the Lord to only read the Bible and never a newspaper. The next generation picks this up as a rule to live by and judge others. Soon, a whole denomination of non-newspaper-readers separates from the newspaper-readers although they share the same essential doctrines.

Jesus dropped a nuclear bomb on Peter's religious prejudice. He told him, "Do not call anything unclean that I have cleansed." Although Peter did not know what the vision meant at the time, the Gentiles at his door soon led him to a fuller understanding. God never intended for Israel to reject the rest of the world. They were to be a beacon for the nations of earth to follow, as did Cornelius. Jews turned their favor from God into a weapon to cut others down. They thought everyone must live by their rules. However, God never prescribed the Law of Moses for the world—only the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Peter began overcoming religious prejudice just by staying at Simon the Tanner's house. With animal carcasses and skins everywhere, Peter also could have turned up his nose at his host's "unclean" trade. However, Jesus had taught him to accept any lodging and meals offered.

What prejudices and religious traditions have you overcome in your walk with the Lord?

Free from law. People still make Peter's mistake with the New Covenant. Jesus invites us by His grace into the family of faith. Some, however, want to enslave disciples to their understanding. The apostles could have made a law, at this point, that they had to be present to distribute the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on people. Instead, God interrupted even His tradition of preaching to pour out His Spirit. He does not need an altar call, a pulpit, or an invitation. They could have made a rule that a person first had to be baptized before receiving the Spirit. The Lord upset this apple cart, too, by filling them before immersion.

What effect did all this have on the law-keeping Christians in Acts 10:45?

When news of this got to Jerusalem in Acts 11:2-3, how did the other law-keeping Christians react?

In 11:17, after telling the story, how did Peter defend his actions?

Seeing God's hand in it, what was the response of these hard-nosed believers, in 11:18?

This sparked new faith in God's people. Until now they had gone everywhere preaching to only Jews (11:19), but what did they do now, in 11:20?

Pentecost only maintains *His* traditions. He gave us the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues, not man. He gave us the tradition of Jesus' Name baptism—that is not manmade. He called us to separate from sin. He gave us the glorious truth of God in Christ, which we will not trade out.

Accepting all People

Born November 7, 1880, John Dearing had never become a church member. Following his repentance he joined the church where he had found the Lord. Here he first heard the Jesus Name message. A lady from Maine who was holding special services made the statement: “There is a Cornelius here and God has sent me to you with a message.” Then she told about Jesus Name baptism and the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

[He testified:] “I went back on the job the next day. That night I crawled under the wagon, where I had been sleeping on the ground, but not to sleep, for the stars were saying, ‘Glory to God! Hallelujah!’ Next morning I got up, put on my yellow pants, a khaki shirt, and my straw hat, then tucked my Bible under my arm and headed for the hills of Kentucky.”

This “Cornelius” became an outstanding leader in early Pentecost. A powerful Bible teacher, he left behind a legacy of tracts and Bible lessons still used throughout our ranks.¹

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Sometime later, a certain band received some teaching through tongues and interpretation, warning them that God would forsake all Christians who ate any pork whatsoever. While some of those present accepted the message, some rejected it.

Others, myself included, paid little attention to the message upon hearing of it. We had been taught according to the Scriptures in much the way we believe today. A short time later, however, some of these workers were in a town where my wife was preaching her first revival. The band was going through one of its frequent food shortages, and it just so happened that a gift of pork was brought to the worker’s home. My wife noticed that despite the lack of food, none of the workers seemed the least bit interested in the pork. So,

¹ Mary Wallace, *Old Time Preacher Men*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1992, 27-28

rather than let it go completely to waste, she ate what she could.

That night, she was informed by some of the workers that they fully expected to see God forsake her at any moment. But, when instead He came upon her mightily each night, empowering her to preach with great anointing, the workers felt the Lord was sending them absolute proof that the message regarding the abstinence from pork was unscriptural and not from God. While all this was going on, a mighty revival broke out in the town, and the meetings continued for four months. Hundreds were converted, baptized in water, and filled with the Spirit. The messenger who had spoken about the pork taboo had guided the message slightly. Perhaps he had semiconsciously fit it into his own philosophy regarding abstinence from pork—a belief held by quite a few in those days. Or, perhaps he had continued to speak after the Lord was through talking, but while the anointing still lingered. This practice has been the cause of many mistakes.

We all have made, and still make, mistakes with the gifts of the Spirit. The one who had misdirected us regarding the abstinence from pork was one of the best workers in that band. Such should not come as a surprise, however, as we were venturing into new and untried areas. Except for the Word of God, we had no precedents, written or spoken, to guide us in the proper operation of the gifts of the Spirit....

God will not be poured into a mold no matter how fascinating to us. Nor, will He be at our beck and call as our personal wishes might sometimes highhandedly dictate. He uses His gifts just as a man uses his garden tools when gardening, or leaves them unused when he chooses. His gifts were never meant to take the place of either the Spirit of God or the Word of God, but to be used only as the “Spirit gives utterance.” Thus, running ahead of the Spirit is most dangerous, because both speaker and hearer are without the protection of the blood of Christ.¹

¹ Howard Goss, *The Winds of God*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1958, 169-171.

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Life! *Journal*

Acts 10:44-47

**While Peter yet spake these words,
the Holy Ghost fell on all them
which heard the word.**

**And they of the circumcision which believed
were astonished,**

**as many as came with Peter,
because that on the Gentiles also
was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
For they heard them speak with tongues,
and magnify God.**

**Then answered Peter,
Can any man forbid water,
that these should not be baptized,
which have received the Holy Ghost
as well as we?**