

In Acts Chapters 10 through 11 we read how Peter spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles – those who the Jews thought were “unclean” and “unworthy” of the saving grace of God since they were out of the circle of God’s chosen people. Following the Lord’s command through a vision (but against the current Jewish Law) Peter traveled to Cornelius’ house and preached the good news of Jesus and baptized them into the body of Christ and into the life of the early church. This news got back to Jerusalem and while Peter was beyond excited for the advancement of the Gospel, others were appalled. By studying Peter’s story verse by verse in Chapter 11, we can observe how a Christ-follower initiates change and responds to critics.

Big Picture Questions: What opposition did Jesus face during His ministry? Consider the pushback from His family, hometown, best friends and followers (disciples), religious leaders (Pharisees), and government leaders. How did Jesus respond to these critics? How did He stay on course for the calling and mission-driven purpose that God placed inside of Him? As image bearers of Jesus, how are we to follow Jesus’ example when we face opposition to what God has called us to?

Not everyone will be excited about your good news

Acts 11:2 *But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him.*

1. When was the last time you were truly excited for something? When did you believe you had a good idea or a new strategy for improving something? Has God ever given you a specific calling or mission-driven purpose?
2. Did you face opposition or pushback when you shared this with others? How did this conversation or exchange go? What emotions did you feel during this pushback?
3. What are some examples of how others were not as “on fire for Christ” as you were or are? How do you respond to these people? Do you “tone down” your excitement, or stay on course?
4. Have those that are closest to you ever demonstrated lack of support for your ambitions or desires in life? How do you respond when those closest to you, who are called to love, support, and lift you up, essentially shut the door on your dreams or mission?

Be patient with your critics; they haven’t seen what you see

Acts 10:11-16 *He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat. “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.*

Acts 11:3 *“You entered the home of the Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said.*

1. Has God ever spoken to you concerning a plan that He has for your life? Like Peter’s situation, did God’s vision not make sense to you? Similarly, has God been forced to “repeat Himself” or continue to shape and mold your life until you were willing to respond to and obey His calling?
2. Have you ever had to explain to someone how God has spoken to you or given you direction? How did those people respond? Were they supporters or critics?
3. When others show lack of support, how do you typically respond? Do you internalize your emotions by taking it personally and letting it eat away at you or do you let it out externally by “shooting the messenger”? Why do you think you respond this way?

Telling your story

Acts 11:4 *Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story.*

Acts 11:5-18 *[The story]*

1. Is your vision or God's calling in your life enough to keep you moving despite what others think?
2. How can we distinguish the difference between something that we want us to do versus something that God wants us to do – a specific calling He's placed inside of us?
3. Is there anything in your life that you are 100% sure and confident of, no matter what the world around you may say, including those closest to you and farthest from you? What seems important and "worth it" despite any pushback that you may receive during the process? Where does Jesus fit into this?

Even the worst critics will become cheerleaders when they see how God is working

Acts 11:8 *When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life"*

1. When faced against opposition to the calling God has given you, how have you seen Him move despite what others around you thought or said would happen?
2. Have you experienced good fruit from the holy root that has been placed inside of you by God's anointing? Have others noticed God's movement in your life yet?
3. Have your doubters and critics ever become your biggest cheerleaders after they've seen God's works through your life? How did you respond to these people when they "came around"?
4. If you still have people around you who doubt and criticize you, what keeps you going? Do you desire their praise and acceptance, or the approval of Jesus?

Prayer Focus

- That we would be open to God's calling in our lives, even if it's countercultural to what those around us believe is "best"
- That we would mimic Jesus' heart towards the mission-driven purpose that God places inside each and every one of us
- That our desire to please Jesus would become the top priority in the life that God has blessed us with