



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 151 - Time for Change (Acts 10-11)

Long Overdue

Some people embrace change; others absolutely dread it.

- How do you feel about change?
- Describe a major change you, your family, work place, or church has had to face.
- What was the hardest part?
- What opportunities did God open up with that change?

It may have seemed like a major change when God led the apostles to reach out to the Gentiles. But God always wanted to reach out to the Gentiles, even in the Old Testament. He planted His nation Israel as a missionary nation on the crossroads between Africa, Europe and Asia so that they might share God's promises with all the nations.

Jesus Himself gave hints of this from time to time in His ministry. Though He was sent only to "the lost sheep of Israel" (see Matthew 15:24), He still spoke to foreigners, drove out their demons and healed them. He took their sins upon Himself too, dying in their place that they may have eternal life through His great salvation.

- Why do you think the Israelites turned in on themselves instead of spreading God's message to all the nations?
- In what areas do you see yourself, your family or your church turning inward instead of outward?

The Nudge of a Vision

In order to convince Peter to reach out to the Gentiles, God sent a special vision in which He commanded Peter to rise, kill and eat unclean animals. At first Peter refused, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."

- Name something you would find repulsive to eat or do.

Against Peter's objection God said, "What God has made clean, do not call common."

- Why would it be especially significant to Peter that this vision was repeated three times, before it went up to heaven?

While Peter was still trying to understand the vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrived. The pieces fell in place, and Peter was ready to enter a Gentile's house and share the message of Jesus' salvation. While Peter was still sharing the Good News the Holy Spirit reassured him he was doing God's will, by filling the Gentiles and prompting them to speak in tongues—just as the Jewish disciples had experienced on Pentecost.

Not Everyone Got It

When news got back to the Jerusalem church some of the Jewish believers weren't too happy that Peter had gone to Gentiles. Many of us, no doubt, have shared a similar narrow view.

- What people would you or members of your church find it difficult to welcome and embrace?

When Peter shared his vision and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, his critics stopped complaining and changed their tune.

- Why do we need to give these critics credit?
- How open is your church to thinking "outside the box"?
- Why is it valuable to carefully consider the ideas new members bring to the table in your church?