

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Gathering Courage to Change
Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

For the youth application session, provide note cards and pens for the youth to use in writing notes of appreciation.

For the youth and adult study sessions this week, you will need to bring the following (Please see the **Bible Study Plan** to know why and when to use these materials.) :

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1. A roll of masking tape (light green painters' tape) that is made to be used on delicate or easily damaged walls. This tape is less likely to pull off paint or damage objects. A 15 cm. (6") strip of tape connected to itself in a circle and attached to the back of the notebook paper makes a good "sticking point" for the signs.
2. Tablets of paper in stiff folders or binders for each participant. (Include your small children even though they may be too young to participate in the specific activity). Bring pencils or pens.
3. You may need to bring a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper on which you will have made the list as requested in the **Bible Study Plan**. Read the list in the plan. Also read the "box" included as an instruction for the **Bible Study Leader**.

Worship Time Leader:

Copy the words to "I Surrender All," (from the final page of this session) if you are going to use these as a reading rather than singing them; or copy them to sing as a reminder for the group throughout the week.

Music Sources:

"I Bow Down", CCLI #2892359.

"I'll Live for Him" (*The Baptist Hymnal*, 298), CCLI # 23165, Public Domain.

"Altogether Lovely", CCLI #154890.

"I Surrender All", CCLI #23189, Public Domain.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Gathering Courage to Change*****Focal Text**

Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

Background Text

Acts 11

Main Idea

The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch moved to accept and act on their responsibility to witness to all people, not simply to Jews.

Question to Explore

How can a church change to accept and act on its responsibility to the Lord?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants in identifying how churches can change to be more responsive to God's mission.

Gathering together:

Sing a praise song to Jesus that all the children know. Let them choose, if appropriate. Then ask everyone to think of one person that they know who they think is courageous or brave. (They do not need to share that name with the group).

First thoughts:

Bertha Shehan was a courageous woman. She was a single woman for many years during which she was a homesteader. Later she was a wife, mother, and grandmother; each role displayed her many talents and skills. She never thought of herself as extraordinary, but to her grandchildren she was a friend, confidante, and role model. Her life left an indelible impression on them.

She left her parents' home as a young single woman and travelled to New Mexico (in the USA), in 1912, where she and her brother planned to homestead. A homesteader received 160 acres (about 73 hectares) of land from the government and was required

to live there for five years and add some building improvements on the land—a small house, or shelters for animals. Shortly after their arrival, her brother left to work in the steel mills in Colorado, but Bertha was determined to “prove up” her claim.

She built a small tarpaper-covered, one-room house, planted a garden, and was eventually able to buy a few head of cattle. The climate was harsh—sometimes hot in the summer with brutal blizzards in the winter—and the grassland was poor. Not everyone who started to homestead was successful.

There were few women in the area. Bertha bought a pistol, and from time to time she and the other women would get together for target practice. For their own protection the women made it known that they knew how to use a pistol.

One evening Bertha arrived home after dark, opened the door of her one-room home, but slammed it shut quickly when she heard the familiar rattle of a rattlesnake. She listened carefully and was sure that the rattler was on the other side of the closed door, inside the house. She went to the window and was able to open it from the outside. She listened for the rattler—now greatly disturbed—and pinpointed where he was located. Then, in the darkness, through the window, she shot him dead. After waiting a while and hearing nothing further, Bertha entered the house, lit her lamp, promptly disposed of the dead snake, and went to bed.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Today we will talk about another kind of courage—one that is even more important—the courage to change the way we view our world, or practice our values, when we are challenged by the Holy Spirit. For many years, the Jewish people had lived and prospered by faithfully obeying the dietary laws of the Old Testament. They kept their religious heritage strong when they avoided interaction with people of other cultures and with whom they inevitably got into trouble with they intermarried and often joined with them in worshipping other gods. Now, those Jews who had chosen to follow Jesus were being asked to set these commandments and common practices aside. It took courage for Peter to obey the Lord’s command to witness to the Gentiles, and it took courage for him to explain his actions to his fellow Jewish Christians.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible study time.

Distribute youth and adult Bible study outlines or paper for note taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the Teacher Preparation for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the Bible Study Plan for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Gathering Courage to Change

Focal Text

Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

Background Text

Acts 11

Main Idea

The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch moved to accept and act on their responsibility to witness to all people, not simply to Jews.

Question to Explore

How can a church change to accept and act on its responsibility to the Lord?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants in identifying how churches can change to be more responsive to God's mission.

Introduction to your personal study:

Several months ago, a friend at church, Mrs. "D," asked my wife and me to visit her friend, Sue, in the hospital. Mrs. D, along with several of her friends, had been trying to share with Sue the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, but Sue seemed very cold and hardened to the need of having a Saviour. Sue was sure that Frank Sinatra had got it right when he said something like "I did it my way and I have no regrets."

As things unfolded my wife visited Sue many times; but, while she saw a softening in Sue, she could not get through that hard shell. At times I visited Sue with my wife, but it always was a "surface" visit and we never saw any hope of change.

The ladies continued to pray and visit regularly and, while she was friendly, Sue maintained that she never wanted anything to do with Christianity.

A few days ago, as I was delivering cookies to the staff at the hospital and visiting some other people, the Holy Spirit directed me to Sue's room. Sue was awake and alert. When I sat down to talk with her, she seemed friendlier than she had ever been. Even though the TV was on, Sue gave the conversation her full attention. We spoke of many things, but near the end of our time together I asked if I could share a Bible passage with her and pray. She responded, "Yes."

After the prayer, I simply asked if she had ever been given the opportunity to ask Jesus to be her Saviour. Sue replied in the negative.

I then asked if she would like to, and her reply, this time, was "Yes."

That afternoon Sue asked Jesus to be her Lord and the Saviour and Master of her life. Since that time Sue has joined us at the hospital church service and has rejoiced in being there. This woman, once rock hard, had been transformed to a person whose life was now directed by Jesus—due—in part to a small church that felt led of the Spirit to view that hospital as a mission field.

When hearing about Sue's profession of faith in Jesus, Mrs. D wanted to know all the details. This is not unlike the brothers in Judea who heard about Peter taking the "word of God" to the Gentiles. I am sure the desire for details is twofold:

1. People want to hear of the change in the life of those who have not responded earlier. In the case of Mrs. D, it was so she could rejoice and thank Jesus for answering her prayers.
2. Other people are skeptical and they want to evaluate someone's profession of faith. They want to take on God's role in determining if the profession of faith is indeed valid.

As Peter will make clear, it is not our job to evaluate or to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. It is our job to follow the leadership of Jesus and the direction of the Holy Spirit. But, like the Jewish Christians, we must be careful how we, as Christians, relate to other people—especially when it comes to crossing a preconceived boundary.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the "**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**", found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

The Confrontation (Acts 11:1-4)

11:1 Good news travels fast and it was not long until the strong legalistic men of Jerusalem heard that the Gentiles had received the word of God. These men were faced with a new experience. All their lives they had seen the Gentiles as pagans and outsiders and now they were brothers in Christ. The past traditions had called for the Gentiles to become a Jew in order to be accepted into the fellowship, but now Peter was saying they were brothers because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

11:2 On Peter's arrival in Jerusalem the brothers who were zealous about tradition, law and cultural habits had difficulty understanding why Peter would even associate with the Gentile, besides preach the "Word." Grace was not a concept they understood. Even today some Christians have not felt His grace, or they cannot share His grace with others. To Peter's contemporaries, circumcision was necessary to have a true belief in the Lord Jesus. I wonder what demands we place upon a new believer. Is there some test we give—some course we demand—before we accept them? Or do we welcome them, thanking Jesus for His grace in forgiving this previously lost person.

11:3 Isn't it interesting that they chose an obvious point with which to attack Peter? I am sure they felt that, because he was guilty of a terrible activity—eating with Gentiles—that he must therefore be a terrible person. Eating with a Gentile would not be the preference of a Jewish person, but it was not an insurmountable problem.

11:4 Peter may have rehearsed what he would say. He knew that when he got to Jerusalem there would be questions from those who held tightly to the old ways while trying to embrace their newfound belief in Jesus Christ. The paradigm was shifting and what they thought was "right" seemed to be slipping away. Peter was very understanding; for if it had not been for the intervention of the Lord, Peter himself would never have gone to the Gentiles. Just as with Mrs. D (**Background**) an explanation was given, detailing the complete event, so that a clear understanding could be gained.

The Explanation (Acts 11:15-18)

11:15-17 Once again there is shift in what people have seen before, and in what they have believed. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit when they believed, in the same way that we receive the Holy Spirit today—but this was new to the Jews. Peter gives evidence in his explanation:

1. He tells of his vision (Acts 11:5-11).
2. He quotes Jesus, giving an explanation for the action and his direction for doing what he did (Acts 11:16).
3. He points out that the Gentiles were given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 provides us with an understanding that you and I should always have when we hear about, or are part of, the excitement of a person coming to Jesus. We should not be looking for some sign of "great conversion," because I am sure if people wanted to examine our lives that there may have been times when they

would simply have said “And they call themselves Christians!” Paul is clear that if God is doing it, we must ask ourselves this: “Who are we [Who am I?] to stand in the way?”

11:18 The Judaizers (one who conforms to the teaching of the Jews) were satisfied with Peter’s explanation that the Gospel was spreading to the Gentiles. The Judaizers were quieted for now, but Paul would have problems with them later (in Acts 14-15). This was a great time of celebration. As I sit here, Canada is in a position to win two gold medals for ice hockey (both women’s and men’s) at the Winter Olympics.

Our country is celebrating. Even men and women who have never watched a hockey game are pleased. If we get excited over a hockey game, how much more excited should we be about a new believer? If God grants salvation, why should we question it? Our assignment is to go and teach, to preach the good news, and baptize.

Sin City (Acts 11:19-21)

11:19-20 The oppressed believers during Saul’s persecution had fled from Jerusalem to all parts of the Roman kingdom and beyond. Some went to Antioch. There are at least sixteen Antioch’s mentioned in the ancient world, and this one was about three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. Antioch was the capital city of this region. Its main street was paved with marble and was about four miles long. It was the only city in the ancient world with lit streets. Due to its busy seaport, the population quickly rose to about half-a-million people. Antioch was the third largest city, second only to the cities of Rome and Alexandria in the Roman Empire. Antioch attracted many different people and was possibly only behind Corinth in its wickedness. The good news was first shared only with the Jews. This, most likely, was because believers did not yet understand that the Gospel is for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. Later, other believers, who passed through Cyprus and Cyrene, began to preach to the Gentiles, and the number of new believers grew rapidly.

11:21 The work quickly grew because the word of God was on the followers’ lips. When you share or even pray for a person, because the Holy Spirit called you to do that, there is bound to be a reaction.

When there is a person performing some service in your home, what should you do? What would Jesus do? The believers in Antioch did not need to think through all the possible actions. They just did what they knew to do! They shared Jesus, and so should we. Tell the service person about Jesus, if there is an opportunity, and pray for the service man or woman.

Growth (Acts 11:22-26)

11:22-24 Once again we can see the Holy Spirit working. The church in Jerusalem felt a need to learn what was going on in Antioch, so they sent Barnabas. A Christian needs a role model, and Barnabas is a model worth following; verse 24 serves as an

example. Besides being a good man, Barnabas was under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. On his arrival he looked for the evidence of God at work, and got involved there. Under his leadership, the church grew and the saints became grounded in the Word. They balanced evangelism with worship and teaching.

11:25-26 Barnabas did what all leaders should do. He found Saul, who had been set apart ten years earlier to go to the Gentiles, and brought him to Antioch. Barnabas then mentored Saul. They grew a strong church that would start other movements into the Gentile world. The word *Christian* (belonging to the party of Christ) is only mentioned three times in the Bible. Today the label has lost much of its original meaning—that of referring to one who has turned from sin and trusted in Jesus Christ.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The passage is most interesting because it starts with a clear indication by Peter that we are to be sharing the gospel as we go about our daily lives. We share not only because we want to, but also because the Holy Spirit leads us to, and because Jesus commands us to. We are to minister to the needs of the individuals we find. They may not realize what their own needs are, but we are to pray and fellowship with them where we find them.

Often we believe it is OK to share the Christian faith with them and then leave them. Barnabas' example was far from that. The *Great Commission* tells us to teach; therefore, we must equip the saints. The equipping must help them to do His work. They must be mentored. We must give them more and more responsibility. As Dwight L. Moody said, "It is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men."

As we become more aware of the people around us, we are called to pray for each individual whom the Lord brings to mind. As we pray, we must ask the Holy Spirit to guide our actions—and then we must act.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**
2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Gathering Courage to Change

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the **beginning of this Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the **Focal Text** in their Bibles. Also, share with them the **Main Idea** to be learned from the Scriptures, and the **Question to be Explored** by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 11:1-4, 15-26

Background Text

Acts 11

Main Idea

The churches at Jerusalem and Antioch moved to accept and act on their responsibility to witness to all people, not simply to Jews.

Question to Explore

How can a church change to accept and act on its responsibility to the Lord?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants in identifying how churches can change to be more responsive to God's mission

Connect with Life:

Begin your Bible Study Time by handing out folders with tablets of regular-sized paper along with pencils or pens.

Say: Today we will use our tablets several times to help us understand better how to apply the scriptural principles found in Acts 11.

List different ways of having a message passed between individuals. Which is the fastest? Which is the most reliable way? Which method is used the most?

Guide the Study:

Ask a member to read Acts 11:1-4.

Ask the group to take their paper and pencils and list the following people:

- 1) A successful doctor
- 2) A single mom with three children
- 3) A person who has spent five years in jail
- 4) A homeless person living on the streets
- 5) A person with an obvious mental disability

Ask: If these people, as new believers, joined our group this morning, which one would you find it easiest to accept? and hardest to accept?

Say: Next to each person on the list, place a number from 1–5, indicating which of these would, for you, be the easiest to accept (1 being the easier to accept, 5 being the hardest).

Ask several people to explain their choices.

Say: List three things you notice, or look for, in a person when first meeting them. Ask: What two things would you overlook? Ask: Do you major on the “minor” points, or the “major” ones, when finding faults?

Say: Several people are like Acts 11:3. The obvious problem is attacked. All people have flaws. Ask: List some flaws that others have? Say: “We must get the complete story before we question someone’s action.”

Ask someone to read Acts 11:13-16.

Ask: What three points were stated by Peter to support his action with the Gentiles? (Acts 11: 13-16)

Ask: What was Peter’s reason for sharing with the Gentiles? (Acts 11:17)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Ask: A Gentile can repent and have eternal life. Who are the people that some might consider “unwanted, or unacceptable, in our community—who can also repent, be given eternal life, and have fellowship with believers?

Have the group create signs on notebook paper that name these groups of people. Each sheet should agree on the name of one group. Ask the group to stand up and tape these signs around the room, using the Painters Tape you have provided.

Encourage the class to discuss how they might relate to these people? Ask them to “think outside the lines”, that is, think in creative ways.

Ask an individual to share their personal experience of coming to Jesus.

Request that person to share what barriers they think were overcome so that they were able to be witnessed to.

Ask: How can we, as a group, reach out into our community so others may have a testimony like that to share?

Ask a person to pray and ask God to help us, as individuals and as a group, to be more responsive to God’s mission call—both in our community and around the world.

Take a **five-minute break** to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Gathering Courage to Change **Acts 11:1-4, 15-26**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

On Being Mentored and Becoming a Mentor

Mentoring is a popular concept in today's world. It often refers to a semi-formal relationship between two people, one of whom is usually older than the other. The older one, with more life experience, shares that experience with the younger person. One may have a mentor on the job, at school, in parenting responsibilities, or in the Christian walk.

Think of someone—an adult, a parent, a grandparent, a fellow classmate, or even a friend who is somewhat older—who has served as a mentor to you. Perhaps they were even unaware of how you looked to them for guidance. Write them a note of thanks for something—large or small—which influenced you for good.

Think about those who may be looking to you to set a good example or to serve intentionally as a mentor.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Gathering Courage to Change***
Acts 11:1-4, 15-26**Beginning the Service:**

Sing the song that was used last week as a reading, "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" (*The Baptist Hymnal*, 586)

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

The Turkana people of Kenya are a colourful people. The women decorate themselves in colourful beads and have shaved heads, while men plaster red clay to their heads, allowing room to poke in a few ostrich feathers. They are some of the most mobile people in the world as they search for food and water for their cattle. Their nomadic lifestyle means that at least 90 percent of the people have little opportunity to hear the gospel.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

How could I possibly hinder God?
Hebrews 11:17**Introduction:**

Ethel and Carman were a couple participating in a new church plant in southwest Calgary. It was the third church they had helped start in their life together, and although they were in their seventies, they were as enthusiastic as the rest of the small group. They had, in fact, been initiators of the church start and had already seen some major setbacks occur.

The group had been meeting in a school but felt it best to move closer to the property upon which it hoped to someday build the church building. The best place to meet seemed to be a giant movie complex in a nearby shopping centre. The group could rent one of the ten theatres for the worship service, use the two children's party rooms as classrooms for the preschoolers and children, and use the hallways for youth and adult Bible study groups. As we discussed these possibilities, Ethel spoke up, saying, "Oh, I'm so excited! It will be so wonderful to see what God will do in that theatre."

How was it that one of the senior members of the group was one of the most enthusiastic about this—about a change that involved using a building in which the people of the church were often surrounded by enormous advertising displays—displays sometimes so sexually explicit that church workers turned them to the wall? Dozens of noisy game machines attracted the children, and the smell of popcorn wafted through the theatre just about the time the pastor would begin to preach. The room was dark and it was hard to hear. Ethel was one of the members in the group who struggled to hear well, even in ideal circumstances.

Floors and seats felt sticky from spilled drinks—not an ideal worship setting—certainly not for those who had enjoyed beautiful and worshipful sanctuaries in the past. But it was the place God had for the church at that point in time, and Ethel and Carman led the way in helping everyone to enjoy being there. Ethel had learned well the lesson that Peter poses in Acts 11 as he shares with fellow Jewish Christians about how God moved in the conversion of Gentiles. Like Peter, Ethel would have asked, ***"How could I possibly hinder God?"***

Unfortunately, Christians do hinder God. And, even though God's purposes will ultimately be achieved, we miss the blessing of seeing God at work when our lack of faith places us in the camp of those who hinder God.

1. We hinder God when we set limits on who can be included in the circle of believers of which we are a part.

Peter reported what had happened when the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit and were baptized. At first the loyal Jewish believers could only say, "You visited uncircumcised men and ate with them?"

These Jews knew the rules. To be an orthodox Jewish adult man, you had to be circumcised. Circumcision meant that as a male Jew you were acceptable to God. Mistake number one for Peter—he interacted with non-Jews. Mistake number two was that

interaction included eating unclean food—animals which, by Jewish Old Testament law, were unacceptable.

These Christian Jews were not trying to be difficult. They were just being faithful to the teaching of Jewish law.

Peter continues his explanation by telling that he had a vision in which God taught him that things formerly considered unclean were now acceptable. This was a major shift for him and for his listeners.

2. We hinder God when we are unable to change, when God has clearly indicated that change is necessary.

The vision of the sheet being lowered from heaven, filled with four-footed animals of the earth, with wild beasts, reptiles and birds of the sky, came to Peter three different times. Peter's initial reaction was a strong, "No, Lord. For I have never eaten anything common and unclean."

All of us can identify times when we were reluctant to follow a new direction in God's leading. Sometimes we, like Peter, are merely cautious because we have been following God all along and the change seems out of place and too drastic to accept.

A missionary family had served the Lord for fourteen years in Mexico, working with university students. The wife remembers walking home one day from a class she taught at the nursing school of the Baptist hospital. The purple jacaranda trees bloomed overhead, and bougainvillea blossoms spilled over every wall. "Lord," she said, "I don't ever want to live anywhere else. Thank you for letting me serve you in this beautiful place."

Only a few months later, her husband shared that he felt their work was completed in Mexico. For over a year, the wife resisted that change though prayerfully asking for God's guidance. One evening the husband slipped into a meeting and sat beside her after talking with their supervisor. "What about Canada?" he whispered. It was as if the Lord had placed his hands on her head and said, "Yes."

The missionary wife needed that assurance and she clung to it when they arrived in Alberta, in November of a very long, cold winter, when the winds whipped and the temperature often dropped to -20 or -30 degrees Celsius. Over twenty five years later, she is still sure it was the change that they needed to make.

3. We can hinder God when we forget the Word of the Lord.

Peter continued his story by telling his Jewish friends that, after seeing the vision, three Gentile men sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where he was staying. The Spirit told him to go with them, without any doubts at all. He did that and upon his arrival at the home of Cornelius he had the opportunity to speak to family and friends who had

gathered there. He began to tell of Jesus' life and death and about His resurrection; and, while he was still preaching, the Holy Spirit came down on them.

Peter might have said, "Wait a minute. I haven't finished. You don't know all you need to know yet." He might have said, "Wait, you'll have to be circumcised."

But he remembered the Word of the Lord and how He had said, ***"John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*** Therefore, if God gave them the same gift that He also gave to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?

What is the Word of the Lord that we need to remember, today?

We need to remember:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For...with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

"What God has made clean, you must not call common" (Acts 11:9).

"As for you, keep a clear head about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

"If you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Call to Commitment:

Like Peter, we must ask, ***"How could I possibly hinder God?"*** And we, like the doubting Jews, must glorify God and rejoice in his good work in the lives of others.

We need to remember not to set limits on the circle of believers of which we are a part. The love of God is for all; the message of salvation must reach to the last person on earth.

We can hinder God when we will not change when God's Spirit has clearly indicated that change is necessary. This may refer to the work we do, the place we live, the

ministry we are involved in, the kind of church we belong to, or the friends we have. We must have the courage to change when God speaks to us.

We can hinder God when we forget the Word of the Lord. Even in the midst of living out the Christian life, we can forget God's message to us. It may be a call to commitment, a call to purity, a call to evangelism, a call to give, or a call to go.

Sometimes we write ourselves notes that we tack to our refrigerator, our bathroom mirror, or the visor of our cars. Perhaps Peter's question needs to be one of those reminders we place where we see it every day: "How could I possibly hinder God?"

Concluding the Service:

Close the worship time by singing "**I Surrender All**" (*The Baptist Hymnal*, 275).

If your group is not able to sing this song, then read the words together. They are printed and ready to make copies on the following page:

Prepare copies for each person in the congregation if you plan to read the words together or not use hymnals to sing or read it.

I Surrender All

**All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give.
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.**

**All to Jesus I surrender.
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.**

**All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.**

Chorus:

**I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour,
I surrender all.**

Words, Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896. Tune Surrender, Winfield S. Weedon, 1896.