

**“Family of God”**  
**(Acts 10:1-4)**  
**Pastor Peter Yi**  
**May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Introduction:**

Today is a rare day that doesn't happen often enough in our church, and that's a day where we celebrate families. Today, we have the infant baptism ceremony where we will baptize 20 infants. And our children are sitting with us and worshipping with us. And as we focus on families today I'd like to introduce you to one particular family that the bible talks about. This family, led by a man named Cornelius, was truly remarkable and I'd like for us to learn from his example.

Acts 10:1-4 NIV <sup>1</sup> At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup> He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. <sup>3</sup> One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup> Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.

So let's look at his family, and in particular, the man Cornelius, for often times back in that time and culture, the family was whatever the head of the family was. So if the man of the house was a Christian or Jewish or whatever religion, it trickled down to the family members too. You were, almost automatically, what your father or husband was. Now this wasn't always the case but often the case.

Cornelius was a working man. He was a soldier. A centurion in a town named Caesarea. He was a leader. He was in charge of 100 soldiers

**Devout**, meaning this was a religious family.

The particular time when Cornelius lived was a very non-religious time. There were many competing views about religion, about what is right and wrong and about who God was. It was a time that was very sinful and people did what they wanted to do. And with this background, Cornelius is shown to be devout, very religious.

He was a soldier, a centurion who was in charge of over 100 other soldiers, which could easily imply that he was a bad person. Soldiers didn't get paid much. And so soldiers often took advantage of others by bullying and stealing, because they were in a position of power. And so soldiers were often times very corrupt. But you don't see that with Cornelius. The author describes him as a devout man, meaning, he was a religious man.

To be religious means that you had a religion and you tried your best to live by that religion. We've all seen people that had a religion, but were hardly be religious. We see people like that all the time. They say they are Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or even Christian, but when we look at their lives, we can't see anything religious about them. They don't go to their religious services. They don't give to their religion. They don't allow their religion to become too inconvenient to their plans and pleasures. But back then, to be religious meant something.

As an example, Cornelius is not only described as devout, but also as **God fearing**. Now this description tells us a lot about his religion.

God fearers in the bible were non-Jewish people who adopted the Jewish religion. They weren't born Jewish, but they wanted to worship the Jewish God.

So what did he believe about God?

1. There is only one God, not multiple Gods, like the Greeks believed.
2. He believed this one God was the creator of heaven and earth—everything in the universe was made by him.
3. He knew that this God had rules. And that this God was just. He would reward for doing good and he would punish for doing bad.

It's unfortunate that many people and especially Christians have lost a sense of the fear of God, a reverence and respect for God. For some reason we don't talk about God's punishment and we don't talk about hell. We just talk about forgiveness and grace. But we have to remember that forgiveness and grace are meaningless apart from the knowledge that God is holy and that he detests sin and punishes the disobedient. But Cornelius knew about the holiness of God.

4. This God cared about the problems in society like the poor.

So this is the religion of this man Cornelius. It was so impressive that even all the Jews respected him. (v22)

But there was more to him.

#### **He was a family man.**

For Cornelius, religion was not just a private matter that he kept to himself. It was a matter that affected his whole family, and it affected all his friends too. Sometimes, parents, trying to mean well, will say something like this, "I don't want to force my religion upon my children. I want them to discover it for themselves." That's a very dangerous way of parenting. We don't do that with crossing the road or the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. But some people do that when it comes to religion. Cornelius was not like that.

Cornelius' religion was such that it permeated throughout his family. So that's one thing we as parents, and future parents must remember. The passing down of our faith to our children is our highest priority as parents. There is nothing that is as important than this.

But there's more to Cornelius.

#### **He gave generously to those in need.**

He was generous and kind to the poor. Every family of God must be like Cornelius' family in this way. It needs to be something that's part of the fiber of our families.

*When I look at my parents I saw religion. I saw devotion to church. I saw devotion to God. I saw devotion to prayer and the bible. I saw devotion to missions. But I never saw devotion to generosity to those in need. If they did it, it wasn't at all obvious.*

But for us, as Christians today, it must be obvious that we care for the poor. Friends, let me encourage you as a family to serve the poor and needy. To give generously and to make that something your whole family knows about.

When you men go to Mexico, when we go to the Habitat build, when the kids are looking over our shoulders as we put our offerings in the BLUE envelope, we should be telling them about what we're doing and why we're doing it.

When we go to Mexico, we should say to our kids, "Daddy's going to Mexico to help the poor."  
"Because God loves all people, mommy's volunteering at Habitat, at TCM to help the poor."  
"We're giving this offering because God wants us to help the poor receive a home."

That was Cornelius and that should be us too.

There's more!

### **He prayed to God regularly**

He was a praying man. Now how did Luke, the writer know that? How do people know if a convert to the Jewish religion was a praying man? I think the only way you would know is not by spying into his home, but because he was always at the synagogue praying. That's where Jewish people gathered to pray. So he took his family with him to the synagogue and prayed. He sought God, he gave offerings to God, and he worshipped God. And he made sure his family was doing these things too.

What an incredible family. I wish we were all like that. I wish every family at our church was like Cornelius' family. Devout. God-fearing. A family man. A family with a heart for the poor. A family that prayed and went to religious services together. Wouldn't that be awesome!? It's something we should all aspire to.

### **But something was missing.**

All that religion was good, but not good enough. He was on the right track, but not completely. There was something missing. You might be wondering. What could possibly be missing with Cornelius and his family? He had everything going the right way. He did, but there was just one piece missing.

God saw the devotion and sincerity of the person. And so God gives him a vision. And this vision was to go to such and such a house to look for such and such a person, the disciple Peter, and to invite him back to his house. So he sends two of his servants and one soldier on this journey to find the disciple Peter and relay this important message.

So the servants arrive at the house of Peter and the story picks up at verse 22.

22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."

The next day Peter and the servants of Cornelius head back to Cornelius' house. Look with me at verse 24.

Acts 10:24 <sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

He had a burden to see all that were close to him, his relative and friends, come to know God. And then Peter begins to do speak.

Acts 10:34-44 34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. <sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. <sup>39</sup> "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen-- by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

As good as Cornelius was, there was a missing piece and that was Jesus.

Acts 10:45-48 <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

I know many of us a very moral and religion people. We have high standards and we are very ethical, but even for you, there is a piece that's missing. And that's Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can make us whole. Only Jesus can give us a real relationship with God. Only Jesus can save us and our families.

### **Conclusion:**

As we baptize infants today, this is our way of publicly declaring the words of Joshua. "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." We are committing our children to God. We are devoting our families to love, serve and obey God. Parents, children, we all have a part to play in this. And by doing so God will be glorified.