

This material in this document is to be used as a guide to lead through the **second session** of the 'Kindly help' study, produced by the Methodist Church in Ireland. Methodist Centenary Church put together a revised Bible Study, taking the material from MCI and making it into a small study. It is our hope that churches and small groups looking to use the MCI material but were having difficulty creating a Bible Study format from it that this resource will give them a helping hand in guiding it. The study material was put together for a small group context of 8 people.



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Bible Study Session 2- Leader's guide

Open in prayer.

Read quote from Revd. Andrew Kingston:

“Christian discipleship, in regard to society, is not primarily about giving money to charity – its about the giving of ourselves to Christ and that usually means being willing to uncomfortably let others who are different from us meet with our own lives. Yes, we need our safe spaces, but we have become too complacent.

- *When families don't have a place to call home, it's the concern of the church.*
- *When children don't get proper meals, it's our concern.*
- *When people are denied justice, it's our concern.*
- *When our environment is being misused, it's our concern.*
- *When women have no support around them for their pregnancy it's our concern.*
- *When people face prejudice because of their racial identity or sexual orientation or cultural background, it's our concern.*
- *If people are trafficked around our land, it's our concern.*

Jesus repeatedly went to the margins, the very uncomfortable places, in the pursuit of his ministry. “

Scripture Reading: Acts 10, Acts 11:1-18.

- Found on page 4-7 of the Bible study material.
 - Ask participants if there is anything that stood out for them in the readings.

- **Read**

1. Who was Cornelius? (10:1-2)
 - a. A centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.
 - b. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people (v.22).

2. What is a 'memorial offering'? (10:4) See Lev. 2:1-3.
 - a. 2 "When anyone brings a grain offering to the Lord, their offering is to be of the finest flour. They are to pour olive oil on it, put incense on it and take it to Aaron's sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial[a] portion on the altar, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. 3 The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the food offerings presented to the Lord.
 - b. The memorial offering was the part of the grain offering brought to God voluntarily to show devotion or reverence to Him. Most of the grain offering was for the priest to eat. The memorial offering was burned on the altar as a pleasing aroma to God. (Leviticus 2). It was not an offering to pay for sin, it as an offering of gratitude, devotion, and praise.

3. How many days passed between Cornelius' vision and Peter arriving at his house?
 - a. The angel appeared to Cornelius at about 3 PM on the first day, and Cornelius told Peter, "I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour..." (Acts 10:30), it was before 3 PM ("the ninth hour") on the third day, so less than 72 hours had elapsed between the angel's appearance and Peter's arrival.
 - b. But Cornelius says four days.
 - i. Jewish rules of evening and morning.
 - ii. Compare to Jesus being in the tomb, we all say 3 days but really it was a day and a half max.
 - c. Used to his own customs of doing things – Roman version of days vs Jewish version of days.

- **Explore**

1. What is significant to you about Acts 10:3?
 - a. 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!"
 - i. Cornelius followed certain Jewish customs. One was their commitment to prayer.
 - ii. The Jewish people prayed three times during the day:
 - iii. 3 hours after sunrise, noon, and three hours after noon.
2. Why was Peter staying with Simon the tanner noteworthy for Luke to mention it? (10:6) See Lev. 11:26-28 for context.
 - a. 26 "Every animal that does not have a divided hoof or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. 27 Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. 28 Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash their clothes, and they will be unclean till evening. These animals are unclean for you.
 - b. Simon most likely lived on the outskirts of town to avoid coming into contact with people in case they become unclean.
 - c. Although Peter coming to Cornelius was the 'main story', this is a significant inclusion, because Peter chose to go there, without any indication in the text as to why or how he decided to stay there.
3. What do you think of Cornelius' words/actions towards Peter? (10:25-34)
 - a. Possibly intimidated by Peter. Although Cornelius followed certain customs, he was aware of his acceptance into the Jewish faith, or even the Christian faith was not allowed. Could he have thought he was wasting Peter's time?

- b. He knelt in front of him – when are we meant to kneel in front of people as followers of Jesus?

- **Respond**

1. We've read about how God breaks down barriers to welcome others in. What barriers has the church put up in the name of God?
2. How do you respond to people who believe different things or have different attitudes to matters of faith? (10:14)
 - a. Surely not, Lord!
3. How can we as a church (both locally and as part of the MCI) be a more accepting of others despite our differences?

Disagreement: Disagreement: Acts 11:1-18

Context:

The brothers and sisters in Jerusalem were waiting for Peter. During a lull in the persecution of the church, Peter had travelled the country encouraging the new communities of believers.

- A report of Peter's sacrilegious behaviour in Caesarea gave cause for serious concern and Peter had to face up to these accusations.
- The Jerusalem church had little difficulty in welcoming Samaritans as heirs of the coming kingdom, but Peter had baptised a household of Gentiles who had no link with Judaism.
- Jews were forbidden from sharing fellowship with them.
- Peter had crossed 'a red line'.

Questions arising:

1. What do you think the apostles thought of Peter's actions?
2. Which group encounter was Peter most fearful of: Joppa, Caesarea, or Jerusalem?
 - a. Galatians 2:11-14
 - i. 11 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because **he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group**. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.
 - b. Even after the encounter with the Jerusalem church and the matter seemed to be settled, Peter still had fear of the circumcision group. SO much so that Paul had to call him out on it.
 - c. Even when we appear to have resolution, there is always going to be naysayers who disagree no matter what you say/do.
3. Are there areas of our lives where we 'stand in God's way'?

Close in prayer.