

# GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 7, 2015

"Awaken: Peter"



## REFLECTION AND STUDY

### MONDAY | Read Acts 10:1-23

Today's scripture teaches us, the church of today, that there are issues we are still dealing with. Many people who don't fit the "mold" of the church, like Cornelius, are seen as unworthy or blemished, are stereotyped, and are treated as if they are unwelcome. There is often discrimination in the minds of church people, in the same way that Peter viewed the Gentiles. Peter believed it was right to hold onto the strict Jewish teachings and laws which wrongly believed God had no use for the Gentiles. Just like Peter, it is often church people who need to learn a lesson. We often have to unlearn prejudices to welcome those outside the church.

- Do you recognize any prejudices in your heart that you need to unlearn?

**Pray and ask God to reveal any prejudices you may have and ask Him to help you unlearn them.**

### TUESDAY | Read Acts 10:28-35

Getting over the rigidity of religion was difficult for Peter and for many of the Jews. This process began in Peter's life when he started living at the home of Simon the Tanner. A tanner was the taxidermist of the ancient world, which meant they worked with the dead bodies of animals, a lifestyle that was taboo in Judaism and labeled permanently unclean. A person of religion would never have accepted the hospitality of a tanner and it was this perception of uncleanness that made Simon reside on the coastline outside of the populated city. God used this man, a tanner, to demonstrate to Peter that there is more to God than honoring a rigid law code and there is more to God's plan than believing God's grace is to be discriminately bestowed upon a select few.

- Do you find it difficult to let go of your prejudices, especially when it comes to welcoming people into the church fold who don't fit your mold?

**Pray and ask God to soften your heart and help you overcome your prejudices.**

### TUESDAY | Read John 8:1-11 and Luke 19:1-10

We can see time and again in the New Testament how Jesus reached beyond the rigidity of the religious code and condemned those who stayed within the lines. He was determined to break tradition so as to bring all of us God's forgiveness and love. The stories in today's scriptures are perfect examples of how Jesus broke from tradition. When he breaks from tradition he reaches the Gentiles for the Kingdom.

- Who are the Gentiles of today? What are the groups or people we the church label as "unclean"?

**Pray over those you or the church can sometimes label as "unclean." Ask God to help you to love others like Jesus does.**

## THURSDAY | Read Acts 10:47-48

- What must we learn from Peter?
- Sometimes we are guilty of hindering the movement of the Holy Spirit. How?

Through the Holy Spirit, God reveals His perfect will. Peter's encounter shows how the Lord is constantly revealing Himself to His church. Oftentimes our stubborn hearts can close our minds and we refuse to listen to God's promptings toward change.

**Pray and ask God to show you where change needs to occur in your heart.**

## FRIDAY | Read Galatians 3:28

Sometimes what we believe to be true can turn out to be the very thing that, instead of building the Kingdom, is working to tear it down. One of the great tactics of the Devil is to convince good Christians that people who may seem different than mainstream religion don't matter.

- Have you ever been guilty of thinking and acting this way? If so, why?
- What does today's scripture make clear?

Peter's demonstration of hospitality with Cornelius, in Acts 10:1-23, shows us the importance of a church without walls and with unlocked doors. Reaching the greater community may cause criticism and strife within the church community. For Peter this was seen in his own prejudice toward those who were not Jews. The Holy Spirit's vision leads him to see God's greater plan—that Jesus died for ALL to be saved, not just a select few.

**Pray that God will help you to reach the greater community.**

## SATURDAY | Read Acts 10:44-45 and Acts 15:1-21

- How were the believers in Jerusalem hindering the Holy Spirit?
- What steps are you taking to move past your prejudices and allow the Holy Spirit to work through you?
- What has God shown you this week?
- In what areas of your life do you feel the need to change, from the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

**Pray about what God has shown you this week and ask Him to continue to change you into His image.**

## SUNDAY

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.