

# STUDY NOTES

## *The Acts of the Apostles*

### A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

[WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS](http://www.newcityphx.com/sermons) - CHRIS TOWNLEY

The following content is based on the message “The Privilege of Repenting” spoken on 05/01/16 by Chris Townley at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

## THE SCRIPTURE: ACTS 11:1-18

*<sup>1</sup>Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup>But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. <sup>3</sup>“You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said.*

*<sup>4</sup>Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. <sup>5</sup>“I was in the town of Joppa,” he said, “and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. <sup>6</sup>When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. <sup>7</sup>And I heard a voice say, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.’*

*<sup>8</sup>No, Lord,’ I replied. ‘I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.’*

*<sup>9</sup>But the voice from heaven spoke again: ‘Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.’ <sup>10</sup>This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.*

*<sup>11</sup>Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. <sup>12</sup>The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent*

*for us. <sup>13</sup>He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, ‘Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. <sup>14</sup>He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!’*

*<sup>15</sup>“As I began to speak,” Peter continued, “the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup>Then I thought of the Lord’s words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>17</sup>And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?” <sup>18</sup>When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, “We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”*

## BREAKING BOUNDARIES, BREAKING BREAD

*<sup>1</sup>Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup>But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. <sup>3</sup>“You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said. (Acts 11:1-3)*

Notice what the Jewish believers are up in arms about: Not that Peter preached to them (that’s how they “received the word of God”), but that he entered this unclean home and ate their unclean food. Let’s think for a moment...

**Does this remind you of anyone?** Who ate with sinners, the rejected, the marginalized, the oppressed, the outsiders?

Jesus!

The piece about entering the home of a Gentile is powerful because Peter is crossing a boundary. They criticize, first, because he “entered the home” and crossed that boundary, then crossed another when he ate with them. Gasp!

You see, to eat with another is to call them worthy of your time and intimacy, to instill value... this is what it means to be brothers and sisters. And Peter, following in the footsteps of Jesus, goes to those who are not like him. He is making a claim about the Gospel: **it is a Gospel for all people.**

When we take the good news of Jesus to those on the supposed “outside”, we will face criticism... like Jesus, and now like Peter.

- What does it mean for you to be criticized for breaking boundaries and bread?
- What does it look like to be known for breaking boundaries and bread?

## WILL YOU TAKE THE GOSPEL THERE?

*<sup>4</sup>Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. <sup>5</sup>"I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. <sup>6</sup>When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. <sup>7</sup>And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.'*

*<sup>8</sup>"No, Lord," I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.'*

*<sup>9</sup>But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.'<sup>10</sup>This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven. (Acts 11:4-10)*

I'm assuming, we believe the Gospel is for everyone. I mean, to say it's not for everyone is pretty anti-gospel. But here's the thing that's playing out with Peter, these criticizing Jewish believers, and the Gentile believers...

**While they may believe it's for everyone, they do not seem to believe it should be *taken* to everyone.**

- *How does this play out in our world today?*
- *Do you see the divisiveness of racism at play?*

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- *How well do you remember what the Lord said?*
- *What do you need to remember that you've been forgetting?*

## THE SAME GIFT + GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

*<sup>17</sup>And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?" <sup>18</sup>When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life." (Acts 11:17-18)*

### Same gift

- *What is the "same gift" ?*
- *And what does Luke intend to communicate that the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers receive the same gift?*

### Getting out of the way

- *Are you in God's way? In your life? In the lives of others? How do you get out of the ways?*

## THE PRIVILEGE OF REPENTING

***...the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.***

We do not speak of repentance like this, do we? Do you find the opportunity for repentance as a privilege granted to you by God? To call forth our life that is in opposition to God, and let Him heal us? Imagine how viewing repentance as a privilege might change why and when and how we repent...

## RACISM

If racism is an divisive sin issue that is intentionally being addressed in Acts 10 and 11, we must ask ourselves, what does this mean for us?

Now what? Reflect on these suggestions:

We listen.  
We don't micromanage or minimize the stories of others.  
We give our power away.  
We embrace the privilege of repenting.

- *How does this play out in your life?*