

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Good morning Life Fellowship. Never before in the history of mankind do I believe it is more important for the church to understand our task than in this generation. We are a generation that has lost its way. We are a generation that is facing opportunities, obstacles, difficulties, tragedies and privileges that no other generation has ever known like ours.

And yet if we are to be honest, in our context, in this country, in this day, the American church is not at its best. Whether we are talking about the failures of leadership, or the apathy of those who call themselves Christians, or the lackadaisical attitude that many have toward God and holiness and truth and things that matter for eternity, our generation stands at the precipice of amazing opportunities while the church in many cases seems to have lost its way.

In many contexts the church has become a social club. In other contexts it has become a political movement. In some cases it has been merely a social agency. And it seems that in many cases the church in America today has lost its roots, it has lost its foundation, it has lost its navigational trail toward that for which it was founded in the book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost, upon the accession of Jesus, to occupy until the return of Christ.

That is why Pastor Ben and I believe that during 2019 it was important that we take a deep dive and a deep look into the book of Acts. And so that is what we have done. And today we start the third part of a three part year long series that we put together on the book of Acts. Now we will not get through the entire book of Acts throughout 2019, and no, we are not going to spend 2020 and even 2021 completing the book of Acts. We are going to take it this far, and then at some point in the future we will come back to Acts and finish it. But we wanted to take the year of 2019 to study what it looks like to have a church as it was meant to be.

In fact that was the title of the first third of the series, 'Church As It Should Be.' And we began looking at when the apostles became the pillars of the early church fulfilling the Great Commission in a real and practical way. Then we looked at the fact that the gospel went viral. And when something goes viral it spreads almost out of control. It spreads faster than we could have envisioned or imagined. And we looked at what happened when 3,000 people were saved on the Day of Pentecost, we saw people going to prison because of their faith, we saw people that were getting up and going back to their home countries and taking the gospel across civilization when they had never before even considered that there was a God and that He mattered, or that He would have sent His Son to die for them.

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Today we begin this third part of the series and we have entitled it, 'It Is Not About Us,' because there is a transition that occurs in Chapters 10 and 11 that radicalized the gospel in the views of many. And it revolutionized the Jews perspective on who they were. And it impacts us today.

So I hope you have your Bibles with you this morning, and we are going to look at Acts Chapter 10. It is a long passage and we are going to go through it bit by bit. But remember that initially whenever the charge was being given to the church that it said it was going to start in Jerusalem, then spread to Judea, then to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth. And what the Scripture was saying was it was to start with the Jews who were to be the gateway for the gospel. They were the people through whom the Messiah would come.

This was the benefit of the divine promise, that covenant that God made first to Adam, then to Abraham, and was fulfilled in Moses, David and the kings and so on and so forth. Step by step the path was that there would be a Messiah. He would come from Abraham's seed, He would be a Jew, He would be born in the promised land in the nation of Israel. But it wasn't just for the Jews.

And what was just about to happen were the Jews were going to realize it was not about them. It was not just about them. It was not about being Jewish. It was not about keeping the Law. It was not about Father Abraham. It was not about the kings. It was not about the prophets. It was not about the judges. It was not about them. And today I think the American church, I think Life Fellowship Church, and I think Christians alive in 2019 need to remember this - the gospel is not just about us. It is not just for us. We are called to something greater, something bigger that God designed in His creation. And it truly is not about us.

So we are going to look at this passage of Acts Chapter 10. We are going to begin in verse 1, and because this passage is lengthy, I want to read a section and then talk about it, and then go to the next one. So we will break it up into three or four passages. We are not going to go all the way through the chapter. Maybe you saw on Facebook or Twitter where I put a little video together on Friday urging you to read Chapter 10. If you didn't see that, or had an opportunity to read it, may I urge you when you go home today to read it.

Or if you are going to be in your Life Community tonight, or sometime this week, would you maybe talk about this a little bit, because time is limited, the Scripture is deep, and there is no way we can get through it all. But I hope as we read through it that you start seeing this narrative that is taking this twist, this new turn that ought to be a challenge to us today.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

We are going to read passages about two visions, two stories, two supernatural acts on God's part which was the way He often spoke before the Scriptures were completed. He more frequently spoke in this way. So we are going to see there were two men, two different cities, two different backgrounds, two different nationalities, and two different visions. And we will look at both beginning with Cornelius' vision in verse 1.

*“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion.”* A centurion was a Roman guard, an elite member of the Roman military. *“A centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, ‘Cornelius.’”*

*And he stared at him in terror and said, ‘What is it, Lord?’ And he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.’ When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.”*

Now we are going to unpack this a little bit so I want to pause here for a moment. I want you to notice something about Cornelius that I hope will apply to some of you here today, and that you will consider this at least. Cornelius was a non-Jew. He was an outsider. He was an invader. He was a prestigious guy, he obviously had servants, he had a large house, he had much authority as a Centurion of the Italian Cohort, and he was known in his community. But more than that, he was a man who cared about God. He was a man who, though he was not a believer, he was not on his way to Heaven, and he didn't know who Jesus was, but he was a man who cared about God.

And in spite of the fact that he did these spiritual acts, in spite of the fact that he prayed, and he gave alms, he was not saved. Giving alms would mean he gave to the poor. He was a generous guy. But in spite of all these things, he was still separated from God by his sin, and he was in need of redemption, he was in need of reconciliation, and he was in need of a relationship with this God that he knew was there, knew that He mattered, but he was still distant from.

And I want to say this to you today. There are people all over this community who are good people. They may even be devout people. They may be people who in their hearts know that there is more to life themselves, more to life than getting stuff and having fun, going places, living in a big house and driving a nice car. They have this

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

emptiness in them and they are searching for God. They may even be searching for God in the best way they can.

They pray. *'God, are you out there? Can you hear me? I know I am a mess. I know it should be better than this.'* And they are called, they are called to generosity. They are called to making a difference. They are called to acts of compassion. They are the type of people that if they see someone on the street corner with their hand out holding a sign, that even though there is a cynical side that thinks they might be scamming people, they are the type of people who roll their window down and give them something.

Do you know why? It is because they want to matter, they want to make a difference, they know it is not just about them, but they are still lost. They are still lost. And you know what? God cares about those people. Their efforts are not unnoticed by God. The Scripture says that Cornelius' prayers and his actions ascended to Heaven as a memorial, as a cry out to God. Don't lose sight of that.

And this morning if that is you, if you realize that is you and you want God, you want to know that this matters, you want to know that life is not an illusion, that this is important and what you do is significant, but you know that you don't have it all figured out yet. Maybe you just need to have it clarified for you. If that is you this morning, or if that is your neighbor, or if that is someone you work with, I want you to understand that God has a plan for their redemption and He has a heart for their soul. He is not teasing them. He is not willing to give His heart in pieces, but instead His whole purpose in our existence is that we might be redeemed with Him.

Now let's continue reading beginning in verse 9 for vision number two. The first vision was with Cornelius. And the second vision is with Peter. ***"The next day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance."*** We don't know if it was like a daydream or a supernatural trance but whatever it was it was unusual.

***"He fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice came to him again the second time, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven."***

## **WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell**

---

Now that had to be a weird dream. Here is Peter up on the roof praying and he feels hungry. So maybe he calls downstairs and asks them to fix something to eat. And it would have taken them a little while because they couldn't run out to McDonald's in Joppa. And while waiting Peter falls into a trance.

I don't know if any of you are like me, but I have hypoglycemia sometimes and when my sugar drops it can be kind of scary. Everything seems to fade and be at a distance. Maybe Peter thought he was having a sugar drop or something, but he fell into a trance and all of a sudden he is seeing things. And what he sees is something that looks like a giant sheet dropping out of heaven and on it are all kinds of animals, birds and crawling things.

Now many people who read this passage misinterpret it. Many people read this passage and think that God is reminding them of his Law where some things were good to eat and some things that are not to be eaten. Beef would be good, but pigs would be bad. Fish with scales would be okay, but shrimp, catfish and lobster would not be okay. And they think that God was saying that the Law was gone and now they can forget about all that. And they believe that is what this vision was saying.

But that is not what God was saying. This was not permission for Peter to enjoy bacon. And by the way I do believe it is okay to accept bacon, and in fact if you want to share your bacon with me, you never have to ask whether or not that is okay with me. It is an automatic okay to share your bacon with Pastor Dan.

But that is not what it was saying. This was not a getting rid of the Law. It was not about legalism. Many people read this and think it is about Peter and the Jews' legalism. No, it was not about that. We are going to look at this image in depth and we will understand that this vision was a statement, not of God dismantling the Law, but an announcement. Not an announcement that it was okay to eat bacon and shrimp cocktails; it was an announcement that said the gospel was for everybody. The gospel is for the Jews, and it is for the Gentiles. The gospel is for those who have dietary laws and it is for those who don't. The gospel is for those who are orthodox and it is for those who are pagans. The gospel is for those who grew up on the right side of the tracks and it is for those who grew up in darkness.

We are going to look at these two visions a bit more. Cornelius' vision was for him to send some guys down to Joppa and find this man named Peter. They were to bring him to Cornelius because he had something to tell him. Peter's vision was of bunnies, squirrels, cows, pigs, snails, fish, birds, and crawling things all being carried on this big sheet. Now we have a mission unfolding. Look in verse 17.

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?  
ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US  
Dan Burrell**

---

*“Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.’ And Peter went down to the men and said, ‘I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?’ And they said, ‘Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.’ So he invited them in to be his guests.”*

So Peter invited the Centurion’s servants to come in. *“The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I too am a man.*

*And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any* (and notice what he says here) *any person common or unclean.* Peter finally figured out what God was saying to him on that sheet. He was not going to call Cornelius unclean just because he was a Gentile. He was not going to call him unclean just because he was a radical soldier that is over their land. He was not going to call him unclean just because he didn’t know him and he was from another nation.

Verse 29: *“So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.’ And Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said,’ Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”*

There is so much here to unpack, but I want to call attention to one thing that Pastor Ben and I were talking about concerning this passage. Ben said, ‘Hey, by the way did you notice this?’ And I was like, ‘Wow, I hadn’t noticed that before, and it is so cool.’ Where was Peter staying? He was staying in Joppa. Does anyone here remember

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

from Sunday school another guy who went to Joppa? A guy who had been given a command to go to another race of people and preach the gospel - a guy by the name of Jonah? And when he got the call he fled instead to Tarshish because he didn't want to go to Nineveh. So there was a place of decision for two men generations apart. When God called those men to go to people that didn't look like them, what are they going to do? And what are we going to do when God calls us to get outside our comfort zone and take the gospel message to someone who needs to hear it? What are we going to do when God says, *'Here is your mission?'*

We know that Jonah got the call to go to Nineveh, which was one of the major cities of the Assyrian empire. And by the way, lest you think that this was just a Jonah being obstinate you need to understand that the call to Nineveh was a huge thing because the Ninevites, the Assyrians, were not nice people. They were horrible people if you have ever read about them in history.

You will find that when the Assyrians would go in and conquer another city or nation, they would take all the leaders of the city out into the desert and bury them in the sand up to their necks. And then wait for the sun to cook them so much their heads would explode. Or if that didn't work they would just take their chariots and run back and forth over their conquered enemies that they had buried up to their necks in the sand until they were dead. These were not real nice people and that is why God was judging them.

So when Jonah knew that God wanted him to go there, he decided right away to go in the other direction. Of course we know Jonah ended up being swallowed into the belly of a whale, or a great fish because I know people love to debate this on whether it was a great fish or a whale. Jonah ended up being vomited up on the shore and then he went on to bring about a great revival in Nineveh.

So we know the story of Jonah as it relates to Joppa, but today's passage is in the New Testament. And now Joppa is the same old city, but it is about a new guy named Peter. And he had a choice of whether he would go to Cornelius' house as a Jew or not. But as a Christ follower we know Peter did go and he sat in the house of the filthy Gentile. Not only was Cornelius a filthy Gentile, but he was a Roman who was a soldier with the conquerors, the invaders, the oppressors, the enemy.

So Peter had a decision to make, and he said, *'God has explained to me that no one is common, and no one is unclean; no one is outside of the love of God. If God wants me there, that is where I am going.'* And in Peter's Joppa call he makes the right choice where Jonah didn't. So I thought that was kind of interesting. That was the mission right here.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

Now we have the conclusion which is a proclamation. We are not going to read the rest of the chapter, but this is the point where Peter arrived at Cornelius' house and he says this in verse 34: *“So Peter opened his mouth and said, ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.’”*

And then for the rest of the chapter Peter launches into an explanation of who Jesus was. He told them that Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Redeemer who came, lived, and was crucified. And then Peter made sure to emphasize this because it was hugely important - Jesus rose again. And the testimony of the apostles across civilization at this time was that they served a resurrected Savior. So the gospel was preached and taught by Peter there in the house of Cornelius, a military leader, a Gentile, in the presence of all of Cornelius' relatives and other influential people. And there we have this important proclamation, and at the end of the chapter we see they were converted and they were baptized.

The gospel was brought to full fruition to this religious but broken man who realized that he was a sinner in need of a Savior. And he knelt before the Jewish Messiah and said, *‘Yes Lord, I believe.’* This was the great transition of the gospel in the first generation, from the Jews to the Samaritans to the Gentiles. Ten years had passed since Pentecost. The gospel was taking root; it was spreading like wildfire, first in Jerusalem, then to Judea, then to Samaria, and now to the uttermost parts of the world. First to the Jews, then to the Samaritans who were half breeds - half Jews and half Gentiles - and they were hated. The Jews didn't even walk through Samaria but rather walked around it. They didn't even talk to Samaritans before that, but now the gospel was for them too. And now finally, the full message of the gospel was available to the entire world, the Gentiles.

Now I want us to look at some principles here. The first one is this - when God is at work in us He is also at work around us. When God is at work IN us, make no mistake He is at work AROUND us. Cornelius was religious and upright, but lost. And God was drawing him to salvation. Scripture tells us that no man seeks God of himself, but the Holy Spirit used Cornelius's inquiries, used his curiosity, and used his wonderment. *‘Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? Should I be good? Is there someone to whom I am accountable?’* And God knew that this man belonged in His family. And the Holy Spirit filled in the details, *‘This is what you need to do.’*

And in a supernatural way as God was revealing His plan to this generation, God told Cornelius to send his servants down to a man named Peter who is staying in the house of a man named Simon in Joppa. Go to the house of Simon the leather maker and

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

there you will find Simon Peter the apostle. Ask him to come to you. By the way Cornelius could have thought, *'That man is not going to come to me. He is a Jew and he is not going to talk to me. I am a Roman centurion and I am a Gentile.'* But Cornelius was desperate for the gospel so he told his servants what to do.

I have been to the Holy Land and in Caesarea and it sits right on the sea. It is beautiful and there are a lot of ancient ruins there. If you ever get a chance to go there you will find that it is beautiful there. And remember that at the same time that God was working at one place with Cornelius, He was also working two days journey away in Joppa. Cornelius was known to pray and give; he had his spiritual disciplines down. Notice the comparison with Peter. What was Peter doing over here on the rooftop? He was praying. When you are praying, understand that God is listening and He is speaking.

So while God was doing a work over here with Cornelius, He was also doing a work in Joppa with Peter. He was letting Peter know that what was getting ready to happen in the next few hours would be very, very crucial to His story, to His creation. And He gave Peter a big object lesson with a sheet.

Now I want you to understand this - God is speaking to you and He is also speaking to someone else He has in mind for you to talk to about Christ. God is calling you, not just for you but for someone else. Years ago I was talking to a friend of mine who had gone on a mission trip in Asia. And he said the weirdest thing happened after he got into a village way up in the mountains. He was talking to a man telling him he was a pastor from the United States, that he believed in Jesus and he would like to talk to him about God and what happens to us when we die.

And he said he talked to this man for two or three hours, and at the end of that conversation he invited this man to give his heart to Christ, but the man told him before he did that he wanted to do something. My friend told me that this man got up and he walked into another room and brought out a Bible. He opened it up and through the interpreter he showed where he had written in the front of the Bible these words: *'Are you real? Are you there? Please tell me that you exist.'* And that had been written years and years before this. And this pastor who had been in the United States received an invitation to go to another country where it wasn't going to be comfortable and to share the gospel. And he went and he made it to that village in the mountains and to that particular house. He presented the gospel to this man who was waiting to hear about God.

You see what was going on was that while God was at work years before in the heart of some man living in Asia who didn't know for sure there was a God, He was also working in the heart of an American pastor, working out an invitation for him to go to

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Asia on a mission trip. And God brought them together for His glory and the good of those who seek Him.

Just a couple of weeks ago we had a team of people up in Mooresville where we are getting ready to plant a church there. But it is not going to be the kind of church where you take a group of Christians and move them to another community. This is a different kind of church where we are wanting to go in and find people who don't know Jesus, introduce them to Him, begin discipling them in His Word, and then we will come around them and get the church going. That is the kind of church that we want to do. We want to see the lostness of the community change. We do not want to shift people from one church to another church; it isn't to be that kind of church. It is to be a church for people who don't know Jesus today. And we need to be praying for the people in Mooresville who don't know Christ and who may be the future of Life Fellowship Church Mooresville.

And our folks were out in Mooresville going through the community knocking on doors and asking to pray with them. All they were asking was to pray with them. And not one, not two, not three, not four, but five people already who did not know Jesus had someone from Life Fellowship knock on their door, talk to them, and they gave their heart to Christ. It is the foundation of the future church there. (Applause.)

Do you remember what we asked you to do in January? We asked you to pray. We have 350 people who are praying for this. They are praying for people in another city who do not know Jesus. And there are people in another city who are looking for God. And I want you to understand that right there where you are sitting God has a mission for you, and that mission is to be His ambassador to someone else. Someone that may not look like you, they may not be from your city, they may not have the same color skin you have, they may not even speak your language, they may not even live on this continent, but God is also working in someone else's life, because when God is bringing people together He does so for His glory. So my question is this - are you even listening for Him?

Here is the second thing - spiritual disciplines give God the space in our lives He wants in order for transformation to occur. Spiritual disciplines give God the space in our lives He wants in order for transformation to occur. So many Christians struggle with the perspective of God and self that says, *'It's all about me.'* We need to listen to our own prayers. Many times it is like this: *'Lord, give me this. Help be to do that. Thank you for this nice day. I want this. Give me this. Help me feel better. Be with my cat. Help me to have a safe trip.'* It is all about us.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

And when we only think of ourselves, we miss what God is doing in other places. And if we are praying only for ourselves we miss hearing what God may want for us to do somewhere else. Often when we read Scripture it is about what is God saying just to me. Yes, God does use His Word and His Holy Spirit to comfort us in our pain and in our search and inquiries, but let me ask you this - are we also looking for the greater mission? What is it that God is saying to me that He wants me to do? What is it that He wants me to change? What transformation in my life ought to be occurring?

Cornelius was a devout man, but he was also a lost man. Peter was a devout man, but he was also a redeemed man. One was a Gentile the other was a Jew, but both were important to God, and both were proactively seeking God's leadership in their lives. They were just in different points in their journey. They were just in different locations. They just came from different backgrounds, but the common denominator was that they were seeking God and they were listening for Him.

What happens is that many of us have filled our lives with so much busyness that we don't even bother to ask God, to listen to Him, or to seek Him. And we can't listen to God until we are positioned to listen for Him. Let me say that again. We can't listen TO God until we are positioned to listen FOR Him. And this is why prayer, Bible reading, meditation, solitude, worship, Life community, discipleship, conversations and sometimes just being silent before God are so important.

We overfill our lives and our schedules and our thinking and our homes and our cars and our communities so that we cannot even hear God's voice in our lives over the cacophony of other sounds that we blast toward our soul. And sometimes we may just need to be still, go upon the roof, pray, and read the Word, because part of God's plan for us is that we hear from Him. And if we are going to hear from Him we have to be able to be listening.

The third thing is this - part of God's transformative work in us is to help us to see the barriers that exist between us and Him and what is important to Him. God spoke to Peter in a vision. A vision that involved a sheet, a sheet filled with all kinds of living sources of eatable protein. And Peter initially was revulsed. *'I'm not eating those. No sir, not me.'* He had never eaten pork, he had never eaten a lobster, he had never had a catfish, and he never tried escargot. That was not done by upright Jews.

And by the way the culture of the Jews was filled with these kinds of barriers and regulations. Their boys were circumcised, their clothing was not to be made of mixed fabrics. They could only walk a certain number of steps on the Sabbath. They couldn't eat foods that had been offered to idols. They only observed certain holidays. Men did not mingle with women. Pious people did not mingle with carnal people. Jews did not

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

visit the homes of non-Jews or people that were only part Jewish. The list went on and on and on.

And this wasn't just their religious practices, folks, this was their culture. There was pressure from the culture that they were to live this way. And there was shame for those who didn't. And then God said, *'Look at this sheet, Peter.'* And the message of the sheet was this for Peter: while the gospel came through the Jews, it wasn't just for the Jews. The Jews were the doorway, but that doorway led to the rest of the world.

*'So Peter get out of your system, get out of your rules, get out of your expectations. Peter, get out of your culture, get out of your bias, get out of your prejudices, get out of your way of thinking, your narrow mindedness, your sense of being special because you are Jewish. Get over your elitism, your holier than thou attitude, your myopic focus, and your stilted view of about whom God was really interested in. And see the gospel for what it is. It is the hope of all mankind. Empty your sheet, Peter. Quit inspecting foreskins, stop counting steps, and don't judge clothing styles. Enough looking at people's pedigrees; don't pay attention to their practices and piety. Tear down the wall, empty the sheet, reach the world and share the gospel.'*

That was the message of the sheet. And yet today we have refilled our sheets with new barriers, new rules, new expectations, new bias, and new prejudices. And it is not about snakes and snails and circumcision and the Sabbath. On our sheets we have new items there. We have new bricks for our wall that we are using to separate ourselves from those who still need to hear and respond to the gospel. We have our own sheets.

And yes, they are filled with things. They are filled with the things that we use to build walls between us and those who need Jesus. And sometimes it is about politics. *'God is a Republican, right?'* So we build our walls. *'And we want to fellowship with you, but only if you vote the right way, or you align yourself with the right person, or you identify with the right party.'* It is on our sheets and man that is important to us. We judge people based on this, make no mistake because it is part of our culture. And it is true in the American church, isn't it?

Sometimes it is this one - it's race. Because we are Americans, or we are white, or because we come from this part of the world, or have this ancestry, our DNA makes us special like we got to choose it. And let's be honest about it, and let's remove all the politics from it, because sometimes these two are really closely aligned and they shouldn't be. I come from South Florida and they talk about race completely differently there than we do up here. And by the way they talk about it differently in Africa than they do in the United States. But in every place I have ever been there is a type of racism.

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Now I grew up in a really racist part of the country which is the Midwest. I mean I could tell you things that would make you just cringe because it is so incredible. It was a different kind of racism than I experienced in South Florida. Some of the racism in South Florida was among the other races because I was the minority in South Florida. We had 57 nationalities in our church there, and the majority of the people were not white. And I can remember the Jamaicans refusing to sit next to the Haitians. In fact they wanted the Haitians to have their own separate worship service, and they were both black, but there was still racism between them.

And by the way the Hispanics didn't want to mingle with the whites or the blacks. So racism occurs and you can even go to Europe and find it. But here's the bottom line, the gospel, the sheet needs to be clear of all of that, because one of the messages of the gospel is there is neither Roman, Greek, Gentile or Jew. When we get to Heaven I think some of us are going to be really, really shocked when Jesus doesn't have blond hair. (Laughter.)

And yet let's be honest, many of us in our hearts think we are a little special because we are white, or American, or of European descent. And I see that here in our context because we live in a majority white culture. And until the day comes where we stop thinking like that we will have a sheet problem.

But there's more. What would most parents do if somebody came into church this morning wearing purple hair, chains, and had tattoos all over them? I know what we would do - many of us would freak out. But some of us would go, '*Oh I will be their friend.*' But in our hearts we would be judging hard. '*Thank God, my kid doesn't look like that. I wouldn't want to hire them.*' And we get all of these things between us and the gospel. All of this stuff on our sheets.

Sometimes it is about accents. Sometimes it is education. '*Where did you graduate from college? I have never heard of that college? Oh, you just have your bachelor's? Oh, just a GED, I'm so sorry.*' We make assessments of people's worth and value with the things that are on our sheets. '*We live in Lake Norman. We live on the right side of the interstate. We do service projects to the other side of the interstate.*' That's our sheet. That's our sheet.

Maybe this is making you feel a little uncomfortable. If that is true then my point is made. And by the way if you think that I didn't have a hard time preparing this sermon this week, just know that God showed me a sheet full of stuff as well. Stuff I didn't really want to admit was there. But you know we get really comfortable with our own kind. It is human nature by the way. And it is not unique to Americans or to our generation. Remember the issue in Scripture where they were letting the rich people sit

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET? ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US Dan Burrell

---

in the best seats. And they literally had to have a conversation about checking foreskins. I know that sounds really crude, but it was real, okay? In the Scripture it is there and they had to talk about it. And I am sure it made people a tad uncomfortable.

But maybe it's time we started having some of these uncomfortable conversations about the walls we are building in our lives that prevent us from being Jesus to the people who are on their own seeking Him. And they are waiting for someone in Joppa to say, *'I'm not running to Nineveh. Come on in. I will visit your house. I will break bread with you. I care. I care.'* It is time for us to empty our sheets.

Here is the last one - when we realize that life is not about us we take risks and are willing to make sacrifices in order to obey the greater mission that God has designed. Let's be honest, it was risky for Peter to do what he did. It is risky for us to go outside of our comfort zone. Someone is going to criticize us and it might even be physically dangerous. I have friends in countries where if the authorities knew why they were there they would be in danger of their very lives.

But God didn't call us to comfort; He commissioned us to a life that makes a difference. Whether it is giving, or speaking up, or sharing, or simply walking across the yard to our neighbor and saying, *'Hey, how can I pray for you?'* we need to be looking for the reasons why we are not willing to leave our Joppa. We need to be looking at our sheet.

So here is what I ask you as we close. Number one - what is on your sheet that is a barrier between you and those that Christ wants to hear the gospel. Let's have a heart examination and ask Jesus to show us through His Holy Spirit what is on our sheet. I believe that every one of us has something on our sheet today. Would you join me in praying that God would show us what that is?

Number two - are you willing to move beyond the common barriers of our culture and generation and productively engage those with whom you may be unfamiliar, or even uncomfortable with and share the gospel? I dare you to go out to the guy who is cutting your lawn and give them a bottle of water and invite them to *Comunion de Vida*. And ask them what country they are from, and then to say to them, *'I am glad you are in America.'* Don't ask them their status unless you are going to ask them their status with God. I dare you to do that.

Maybe you are thinking, *'That's not very American.'* Well, first of all you don't know my politics, and I am not going to tell you. And my politics are not nearly as important to me as the gospel is. And I do know this, whether that person is in my yard legally or illegally, whether they come from a country that I am familiar with, or one that

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?**  
**ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

I am unfamiliar with, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, Jesus died for them. And the only hope for their eternity is whether or not they know Him. So let's get off that. (Applause.)

I had a conversation with one of my students at Liberty University last week who is studying to be a pastor. He is a DACA\* kid and we had a conversation about it. When I found out he was a DACA kid I actually let him turn in an assignment he wasn't supposed to turn in because this is what I wanted to say to him. I wanted to say to him, *'I want you to get your degree. What are you going to do if things fall apart?'* He said, *'I am going to go home and I am going to start a church in Mexico.'* And I said, *'Yes!'*

I don't know about all the politics of it, but I know this, while he is in my sphere I want to be Jesus to him and I want to equip and disciple him so that wherever he ends up in the future, whatever Joppa experience he may have, he will be equipped as well as he can be to take the gospel to his new spot. I will let the politicians fight it out, but right now I care about eternity.

Number three - do you invite God to speak to you through His Word and through His Holy Spirit through practicing spiritual disciplines? And let me say this, if you don't open your Bible again until this time next week, God does not have the voice in your life that you need to have. So let's pray, let's worship, let's be quiet, let's study, let's get into a Life community, and let's be here next Sunday.

Last thing - who do you know that is close to you and far from God who God wants you to share the gospel with this week? We say it all the time, who do you know that is close to you and far from God that something on your sheet has kept you from sharing the gospel?

Our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed. The invitation is this, in your mind look at your sheet and say, *'God, show me what is between me and my call to Joppa? What is it that stands between me and the unsaved? What barriers have I built?'* And then give it to Him. Nothing common, nothing unclean, Jesus loves them all.

If you want to pray the altar will be open. If you want to take communion you know where it is located. If you want to pray with me, I will be down by the cross. But whatever we do, let's respond to the vision, to the mission, and to the proclamation that God has for us.

*Lord we love you. Thank you, Father, that your Word will poke us in our hearts and in our heads. And I pray, Father, that you would use the vision of the sheet in our lives like you did with Peter. Father, help us to find a Cornelius this week who you have*

**WHAT'S ON YOUR SHEET?  
ORIGINS SERIES PART 3 - IT'S NOT ABOUT US  
Dan Burrell**

---

*already prepared to receive the word. Father, be with people in Mooresville this week who will someday be part of Life Fellowship Mooresville and help us to reach them with the gospel. Father, convict us when we go days of time without hearing from you, praying to you, opening your Word, or sitting still and listening for you. Father, forgive us when you put us in Joppa and we decide to take a ticket to Tarshish instead. Help us to be willing to get up and go to Caesarea and to go into the house of those who you have prepared to hear the gospel. And Father, help us to clean our sheets so that we will be willing to share the gospel with anyone. For it is in the name of Christ I pray. Amen.*

\* Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (**DACA**) is an American immigration policy that allows some individuals with unlawful presence in the United States after being brought to the country as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit in the United States.

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*