

## The Early Church Established by an Impartial God

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1. According to verses 1-4, Cornelius displayed at least four characteristics that prompted God to use him. What were they and what does each mean? A “memorial” is a “fragrant offering,” a pleasant sacrifice of heart and soul. What kind of memorial consistently rises up from you to God? something pleasing, something that honors Him, or something less?
2. In verses 9-16, what nation do the “clean” animals of Peter’s vision represent? What about the “unclean”? And what was the instruction to Peter concerning the division between the two (v. 15)? Now look at Ephesians 2:11-14. What might the “middle wall of separation” refer to and what broke down that wall?
3. Cornelius was a non-Jew, called a “Gentile.” Another of his exemplary characteristics is mentioned in verse 22. What is it? How important is a good reputation among those outside our religious, ethnic, and cultural spheres, and why?
4. Let’s see how this applies to the church body here at Blair Ridge Baptist Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on this December day in 2007. What kind of people do you like to be around? (At least four people answer.) How do you sometimes show favoritism (to “favor” is to “prefer” certain people over other people)? (At least four other people answer.)
5. How does the media affect your propensity to be partial? (At least four people answer.) How does God want us to act toward others inside and outside this church body? (At least four other people answer.)
6. How will God be glorified and His kingdom advanced through us applying this lesson of spiritual integrity and impartiality to our daily lives? List some possible ways.

<sup>1</sup>There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, <sup>2</sup>a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. <sup>3</sup>About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”

<sup>4</sup>And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, “What is it, lord?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

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<sup>9</sup>The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. <sup>10</sup>Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup>and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. <sup>12</sup>In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup>And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

<sup>14</sup>But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

<sup>15</sup>And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”

<sup>16</sup>This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

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<sup>22</sup>And they said, “Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.”

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