

“Where Is God?”

Acts 10:1-48

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It is the best answer I’ve read to the age-old question, **“Where is God?”** Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and theologian, replied when asked this question, **“God is between people.** He is found in relationships. God fills the space between us so that we are connected, not separated.”

Buber was right and there is no better biblical example of this than the story of Peter and Cornelius found in Acts 10:1-48. Peter was a Jewish disciple of Jesus and Cornelius was a Gentile soldier in the Roman military. To say these two men were disconnected would be an understatement. They had little in common and as far as Peter was concerned, there was no need to bridge the gap. The Gospel was for the Jews and if a Gentile wanted to become a follower of Jesus, he must first embrace Judaism and be circumcised.

God neither condoned nor tolerated Peter’s attitude and to prove it He came between these two men for the purpose of connecting them. It worked and as a result the focus and direction of Christianity completely changed.

What strikes me about this story is the emphasis Luke places upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. He is careful to point out that this historic meeting between Peter and Cornelius occurred because God filled the space between them and brought them together.

Who told Cornelius to send messengers to Joppa for the purpose of bringing Peter to his home in Caesarea? An angel of the Lord.

Who gave Peter a vision of the need to break his dietary habits along with his exclusive and unwholesome attitude toward the Gentiles? An angel of the Lord.

Who told Peter to waste no time in greeting his guests from Cornelius’ home and following them to Caesarea? The spirit of God.

Who told Cornelius to invite his relatives and friends into his home to prepare for the arrival of this Jewish disciple of Jesus? The spirit if God.

Who revealed to Peter that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation that fear Him and do what is right? God did.

Who revealed to Peter that the Gentiles in Cornelius’ home received God’s forgiving grace and abiding Spirit and needed to be baptized the same as Jewish believers? God did.

The golden thread that connects this four-act drama is the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The God who is between people is responsible for the improbable if not the impossible occurring. And it is not the first or last time that He has been found in relationships connecting people.

To whom is He trying to connect you this morning? Why is He trying to bring you together? How difficult has it been for Him?

There is no doubt in my mind that everyone here is connected to several others. Quite frankly, I doubt you would be here if you were not connected to someone else here. Church growth experts tell us that people go where they are invited and that includes

church. Most of us are here because someone invited us and to some degree we are connected to that person.

Usually, we are connected to two groups of people, those who are like us and those who like us. What is that vintage saying, “Birds of a feather flock together?” It’s true, isn’t it?

I wonder, though, who you need to be connected to that you are not? Perhaps God is trying to **reconnect you to someone from whom you have been disconnected.** Maybe you said or did something to hurt the relationship and you paid the ultimate price, exclusion from their life. On the other hand, they may have hurt you and you punished them by pulling away.

What will it take to reconnect you to a family member, friend or colleague? An apology? A clearing of the air? Open and honest dialogue? A desire to bury the hatchet and let bygones be bygones? Forgiveness. Grace.

Where do you find the desire and ability to do these things? Ask Peter and Cornelius. They will tell you in a heartbeat.

Maybe you need to be connected to someone you have never had a relationship with because it appeared you had nothing in common except your humanity. I wonder why God would want to connect you with them? Could it be because you need to see the world through someone else’s eyes and from their perspective? Would you discover that you have far more in common than you realized and that they have a story you need to hear? Would you discover that your life would be incomplete without them in it?

Saturday, I spent the afternoon at the King Center on Auburn Avenue. I heard a couple of choirs sing at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church and went to the adjacent museum. I went because I wanted to look at pictures and watch newsreels of the events that took place during the Civil Rights Movement. I needed to be reminded of what life was like for African Americans during segregation. I wanted to witness again the beatings of the Freedom Riders, the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham and the spraying of protesters with firemen’s water hoses also in that city.

I needed to hear the powerful voice of Martin Luther King, Jr., and hear his words, “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” His message is as relevant today as it was forty-five years ago and God knows it.

So, what would it take to connect you with someone different from you? What would it take for you to see life from their perspective? Courage. Boldness. Understanding? Patience?

Where do you get these? Ask Peter and Cornelius.

Perhaps God is trying to connect you with someone that can help you with a problem. Many problems we face are bigger than we are and overwhelm us. Without help, we’ll sink. We need someone that can help us sort through confusion, see consequences clearly, warn us of dangers ahead and pull us away from evil people and harmful influences.

What would it take for you to reach out to a friend, counselor, support group or church and get the help you need? An admission that you need help. Putting a stop to all your excuses? Accepting responsibility for your actions? A desire to get better? A big dose of humility?

Where do you find these? From the God who is standing between you and a lot of people capable of helping you, that's where.

Maybe you need to be connected to someone that has no one. They are alone and lonely and God wants to use you to fill the vacuum in their life.

What would it take to connect with them? Time? Unselfishness? Sensitivity? Love?

Where do you get these? Guess who you need to ask?

That's right. The God who is between people is the God who provides everything people need to bridge the gaps and connect their lives. As a matter of fact, this is so important to Him that it is where you will find Him. And when you turn to connect with others, you will also connect with Him and this will become the most important relationship in your life.