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## A Prayer of Peter

*Discussion with God*

*Acts 10:1–33*

In my early twenties, I was in a Bible study group with three other women. One of them often talked about hearing God speak to her. She liked to take walks to pray, and she often heard God's voice in the midst of those prayer walks. I can remember asking her countless questions about how she knew it was God's voice, how she had learned to hear it and how the voice came to her. I desperately wanted to hear God speak to me. There were so many areas in my life where I longed to hear his voice.

In the years since then, I have heard God speak many times, most often to ask me to show care for someone in need. God's voice usually comes in unexpected ways at unexpected times, urging me to do something I wasn't thinking about at all. Often his voice comes while I'm praying; sometimes it also comes when I'm reading the Bible or talking with a friend. It can be an inner nudging or clear words. There are still so many areas in my life where I long to hear God's voice, but I am more confident now that I will hear what I need to hear.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** On a piece of paper, write down those areas of your life where you would love to hear God speak. Then complete this sentence, "If I could hear one thing from God, I wish it would be ...". Describe to the group one of the things you wrote on your paper.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** Have you experienced God's voice speaking to you? Does his voice come to you most often in prayer? when you read the Scriptures? in conversations with others? in expected or unexpected ways? Write out a prayer asking God to open the ears of your heart to hear his voice more readily. In the prayer, express your willingness to obey God when he does speak to you.

Peter learns an important truth as he dialogues with God in prayer, revealing how much can be learned when we speak *and* listen in our own times of prayer. *Read Acts 10:1–33.*

2. What do you learn about Cornelius in verses 1 to 8?
3. What adjectives would you use to describe Cornelius's response to the angel (vv. 4, 7, 8)?

4. If an angel appeared to you and asked you to do something totally unexpected, what do you imagine your response would be?

5. Describe Peter's reactions during his vision and immediately after it.

6. Why do you think Peter reacts the ways he does?

7. The dialogue between God and Peter is repeated three times (vv. 13–16). What does God's dialogue with Peter reveal about God?

8. Over the course of the actions in verses 19 to 29, Peter comes to understand that the vision from God that he received was not really about food at all. What key truth does Peter eventually realize about God and humans?

9. Go back over the whole story, looking for the role of prayer in this sequence of events. Can you picture this event happening without Cornelius's and Peter's prayers? Why or why not?

10. Identify the places in this passage where Cornelius and Peter choose to be obedient. How much do they know about each situation when they choose to obey?

What is still unknown to them when they choose to obey?

11. In your life or in other people's lives, how have you seen a regular practice of prayer make someone ready to hear God's voice and more likely to obey?

12. Have you experienced, or seen someone else experience, an argument with God? In what ways is an argument with God the sign of a healthy relationship with him?

*Spend some time praying for openness to hear God's voice and courage to obey what you hear.*

### **Now or Later**

Is there something in your life right now that you feel God nudging you to do, but you're having trouble obeying? If so, commit to dialoguing with God about it each day this week, speaking and listening for his voice. Ask your small group or a friend to pray for you as well—that you'd be faithful to obey.