

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY, *NOW GO WITHOUT HESITATION*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Can you think of a formative experience in your life that has meant different things to you at various later times in your life? A good prompt for this is to ask when you have considered that when God closed a door, God also opened a window; or whenever you have said that God had a plan for your life but you didn't realize it until later. What kinds of life experiences transformed a closed door into an open window?

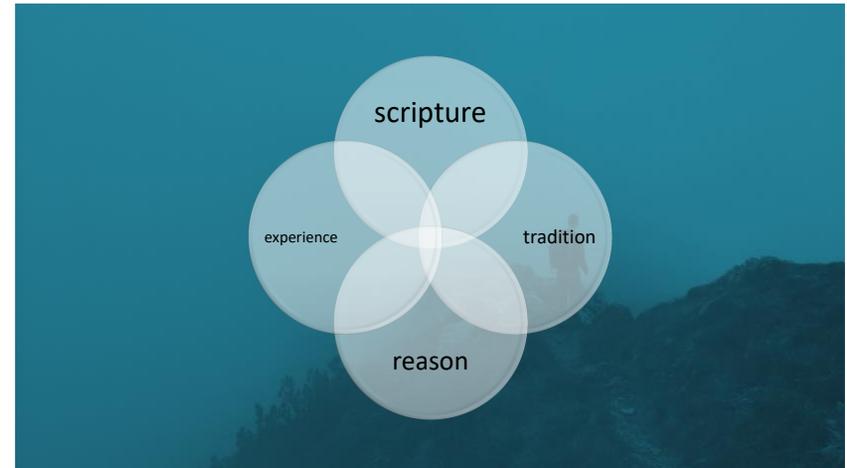
Where are you finding yourself, as an individual, in some tension because scripture, tradition, reason, and experience aren't synching up for you?

Where are we finding ourselves, as a community, in the tension between our understanding of scripture, our reason, our tradition, and our experience? Do you see/hear/or feel it in our discussions about our homeless ministry? in our discussions about the RIC process? other circumstances and conversations? Try to be specific in identifying what scriptures or what traditions or what experiences are not synching up.

Reflect on your own process of discerning God's will. What do you do? Do you read scripture? Do you pray? How do you know when it's time to make a move or decision?

Is there a Bible verse, passage, or story that you reach for as a touchstone in challenging circumstances? One that always seems to speak truth to you?

SESSION FOUR: "PETER IS CALLED TO ACCOUNT"



¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance.¹¹He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.¹³Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'¹⁴But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.'¹⁵The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.'¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

¹⁷Now **while Peter was greatly puzzled** about what to make of the vision that he had seen, **suddenly** the men sent by Cornelius appeared.¹⁸They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, **the Spirit said to him**, 'Look, three men are searching for you.²⁰**Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.'**

³⁰Cornelius replied, 'Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me.³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now **all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.'**

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles,⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, **⁴⁷'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'**⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

⁵'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me.⁶As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air.⁷I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat."⁸But I replied, "By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth."⁹But a second time the voice answered from heaven, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."¹⁰This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.

¹¹At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, **arrived** at the house where we were. **¹²The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.** These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.

¹³He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; **¹⁴he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.**"

¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. **¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** **¹⁷If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?'**