

The Choreography of God

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Slide2 Wed Night:** Conversations in times of Crisis... can be difficult, so AP will be looking in scripture on **how** our shepherd *Jesus* handled those situations.
- B. **Slide3 Fresh Hope for Mental Health** starts back up this Thurs, 7pm Agape Room.
- C. **Slide4 Welcome:** officially 1 day into summer. *Happy Fathers Day.* (online)
1. **Fathers: about to be** dads. **brand new** dads. **80 year old** dads. **step-dads.** dads who **foster.** dads who **adopt.** **safe family** dads. **grandpa's** who are parenting your grandkids. **We appreciate each of you.**
- D. What do you think of when you hear me say *God is like a Father to you?*
All metaphors have their limitations: Imagine if you were telling your **child** about a **cheetah** that they have **never seen** nor **heard of** before.
1. Now you take your child to the zoo to see a cheetah for the first time. As you approach the enclosure the cheetahs lying in the sun and then lazily walking back-and-forth and flopping down again. And when your child turns back to **run** to you you say, *wow you're as fast as a cheetah.* Your child might think that you are *insulting them.* Because their entire **experience** of that animal is lazy, and kind of slow.
- E. **Metaphors rely on our experience** for their power.
1. If your experience of your father has been *difficult and less than ideal* and somebody comes to you and says, *God is like a father to you.* **Then** your **image of God** is going to be **affected** deeply by your **experience** of your father. [**or fathers** if you grew up in **different foster homes**]
 2. **But what if we** look at this metaphor differently. **What if instead of God being like a father to us we said,** *when our earthly fathers get it right, they give us a glimpse into the character of God!*
 - a) So when a father is **loving or kind.** When a father **teaches or corrects,** **disciplines or encourages.** When a father is **generous or sacrificial** of his time. **When a father is running down the road with tears running down his face**

as he welcomes home his prodigal son. It's in those moments, it's in those times that the earthly father shows us what God is like.

3. So on this Father's Day I want to say thank you to all the fathers who time and time again **show us the character of God**.
 - a) May you continue to have the **courage** and **strength** to demonstrate the character of God to your children. **And** may we thank God for revealing His character to us **through our fathers**. Happy Father's Day.

II. **Slide5 Intro: The Choreography of God** "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." Soren Kirkegaard

- A. I carry 3 keys on my key chain (house, church, church gates. & fob for car).
- B. Jesus gave Peter **the keys to the kingdom**. He's already used his keys effectively, using 1 key to open **Jewish hearts on the day of Pentecost**, and w/another key the **Samaritans soon afterwards**. Now he's about to use his 3rd key to open **the kingdom to Gentiles**.
 1. Last week we left Saul's conversion story & him heading back home to Tarsus for 10 yrs. Back on the scene is Peter, who sets up Saul's ministry.

III. **Slide6a PETER AND AENEAS & TABITHA (9:32-43)**

- A. **Slide6b PETER AND AENEAS (9:32-35)** [*I-nay-os*]
- B. Peter evangelizing the coastal cities, stops at Lydda to visit believers there.
 1. **Slide6b Lydda = Lod** in OT, **Tel Aviv airport. MAP** (Joppa/Jaffa – main port city of Judea. Tel Aviv-Yaffo today).
- C. Jesus Christ heals you - **All eyes are on the musician at a wedding till the bride enters. Then most even turn their back completely on the musician.** *peter = musician*
- D. **Slide6c PETER AND TABITHA (9:36-43)**
- E. The Jews would know her by **Tabitha**. Luke provides his Greek readers with her name in Greek, **Dorcas**. Lit. **Gazelle** in both Gk & Aramaic.

1. **Full of good works** - She didn't just talk about doing.

Slide6d *A lovely soul, gathered love by giving love.* Griffith Thomas

F. **Note:** she became ill & died *in the midst of usefulness & influence*...often so.

G. (39) **Widows** – another instance of *care of widows* by the Christian Church.

H. Luke seems to share these **2 incidents** as a **complementary pair**.

1. **Both miracles follow the example of Jesus.**

a) When Jesus healed another paralytic in Capernaum He said, *Get up, take up your bed, and walk.* Peter here says similarly, *rise and take up your bed.*

2. **Both miracles were performed by the power of Jesus.**

a) Peter knew he couldn't do this on his own, so He says, *Jesus Christ heals you.*
And before raising Tabatha *he got down on his knees and prayed.*

3. **Both miracles resulted in the glory of Jesus.**

a) *Many turned to the Lord* (35); *many believed in the Lord* (42).

I. (43) **Why does Luke tell us about Peters beach house stay?**

1. **Joppa** - This city reminds us at once of **the prophet Jonah**, who went down to **Joppa** to flee to Tarshish, **instead of** minister to the **Gentiles**.

2. As God called **Jonah** to carry His message to the **Gentiles**, God was about to call **Peter** to **do the same thing** (Acts 10).

3. **So** this is an important **segue**, the Gospel now **breaking over the walls** of **Jewish exclusiveness** and was preached for the 1st time to **pure blooded Gentiles**.

IV. Slide7a CORNELIUS (10:1-8)

A. Jesus said, *I have other sheep that are not of this fold.* [speaking of Cornelius & fam, u & me]

B. **Slide7b** **GOD NEVER FORGETS A NAME.** **Cornelius** [ha photo: Channing Tatum]

- C. Angels usually bring *fear*. So they usually start with *fear not*, but here instead the angel just uses *his name, Cornelius*. Wait, you know me!
1. God never forgets a name, never loses an address, never makes a mistake, never has a moments hesitation in knowing where you are or what you were doing. That is extremely comforting.
 2. He who tracks the journeyings of 100 billion stars in each of 100 million galaxies, who knows the path, the history, and the destiny of every speck of dust in comic space, knows all about me! John Phillips
- D. (msg) *Cornelius was a thoroughly good man. He had led everyone in his house to live worshipfully before God, was always helping people in need, and had the habit of prayer.*
- E. Cornelius was a **devout man**, a **God-fearing man**, a **family man**, a **generous man**, and a **praying man**. [I wanted to preach on those 5 fathers day points. But he still didn't know Jesus, as *a good man*] (God doesn't want just good men, he also wants bad men (Saul the terrible/terrorist), to turn them into Jesus followers)
1. **A Centurion** - was a noncommissioned officer. Led 100 men (as part of 1/6th of an *Italian Cohort* [had 600. a 1/10th of a legion]. He was part of the military occupation of the Promised Land.
 2. **God-fearing** -a technical term of a gentile who attached himself to Judaism, but chose not to undergo formal conversion...*circumcision, public immersion*.
 - a) Remember the evangelistic message of the day was *Find God, become Jewish*. But what does a Roman soldier look like with a *yarmulka* on?
 - b) He had been exposed to the **Roman gods: Jupiter, Augustus, Mars, Venus, etc**. But he obviously found that they were not real and could do nothing for him.
 - c) Now being in the land is enlightened to the concepts of **Judaism**, has become devoutly monotheistic and helped out the needy amongst the Jewish people.
 3. **Praying & generosity** - I believe that God still today can hear *the prayers and alms of* some Muslims or Buddhists that *have ascended as a memorial before God* (10:4). [but like Cornelius, *they need Jesus!*]

4. **Family man** - shows the **cultural context** that **the faith of the father** was always the faith of the household, **and** even of **the extended family** which would include **servants**. [as for me & my house we will serve the Lord]
- a) Cornelius involved his **family and friends** in his **faith**. He lived out what he **believed**. **A whole community would come to faith in Christ through him**.
[2,24,27,44,47]

F. **Slide7c** GOD CHOREOGRAPHS EVERYTHING IN HIS OWN UNIQUE WAY.

1. **God's choreography of Cornelius' life**, in having his commander send him to the Promised Land. Instilling in his life **discipline** and **obedience** of a military man.
2. Cornelius was a man who **turned to God**, **but** did not have a full understanding of **the gospel of grace**. He was a **good man**, **but** again **good men** need **Jesus** just like **bad men**.
 - a) **The gospel of grace** is *far greater than all our culture*.
 - b) He becomes a believer later in this chapter, **& then** there's no difference between *Jew & Gentile*. **In Christ they become one**.
3. **God's choreography of an angel** who He doesn't allow to **share the gospel with Cornelius**, **but** sent for **Peter** to do so.
 - a) **God uses human instruments**. This man, though a devout, sincere religionist (like Saul), needed to **hear** and **respond** to *the gospel of Jesus Christ*.
4. **God's choreography in Peter's life** is requiring him to stay in a region where he has to **interact with**, and even **stay with**, Jews who were more influenced by **non-Jewish culture and traditions**.
 - a) **Simon Peter** staying at a namesakes house, *Simon, a tanner* (43) who worked with dead animal carcasses, a job inherently **unclean by Jewish standards**.
5. **God is leading Peter down the road to win Gentiles for Christ**. **But first** he had to deal with his **entrenched prejudice** against Gentiles.

- a) **Background:** the Jews had twisted the doctrine of **election** into one of **favoritism**, which led to **racial pride & hatred**, **culminating in** despising the Gentiles as **dogs**. **And** came up with **traditions** which kept them apart.
 - b) **So** this needed to be overcome so the **Gentiles** could be admitted into the *Christian community* on equal terms with **Jews**; **and** for **the Church** to become a truly **multi-racial**, **and** a **multi-cultural society**. **THEY-DON'T-HAVE-COOTIES!**
6. **The principal subject** of this whole chapter is **not so much** the conversion of **Cornelius** **as it is** the conversion of **Peter**.

G. **Slide7d ONLY GOD'S GRACE SAVED CORNELIUS.**

1. **Cornelius** is another trophy of **divine grace**. As **Saul** was the poster child for *bad boy/christian killing/terrorist*. Here **Cornelius** is the poster child for being a *really good moral, disciplined, prayerful, devout, influential, generous and religious person*, **yet still** not knowing His **grace** intellectually or **Jesus** personally.
2. **Slide7e** CS Lewis used to say, *you cannot go on being a good egg forever, you must either hatch or rot.*

H. **End:** I want to end w/a 2 min video from the 2006 Movie *Blood Diamond*, set during the **Sierra Leone Civil War**. [I'm not *recommending* the movie]

1. **In this scene** the 2 main characters are rescuing a young child who was kidnapped as a **child soldier**... in the middle of their rescue operation, the child **turns on them**. **Slide8a/b**
 - a) *I know they made you **do** bad things. But you are **not** a bad boy. I am your father, who loves you. And you will come home with me and be my son again.*
2. **Are you ready to come home to your Heavenly Father on this Father's Day?**
3. Whether you are as **bad** as **Saul** or as **good** as **Cornelius**.
As spiritually **paralyzed** as **Aeneas** or feel spiritually **dead** as **Tabitha**.

- a) Your prayers & your alms, your cries & your hurts *have ascended as a Memorial before God. Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*
- b) Then *you too* can live out the steps *the Lord has Choreographed* for your life.