

ENCOUNTERS: IN PRAYER

I. CHECK-IN

- Check in. How is everyone doing? Did you practice fasting last week?

II. SCRIPTURE: ACTS 10:1-16

In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. 2 He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. 3 One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." 4 He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; 6 he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, 8 and after telling them everything he sent them to Joppa. 9 About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while it was being prepared he fell into a trance. 11 He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15 The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

V. PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time sharing prayer requests with each other. As the small group leader, we ask that you do two things:

1. write them down
2. ask someone to pray

IV. PRACTICE

Practice the types of prayer on the back of this page this week, and notice what stands out to you. Which type of prayer do you prefer?

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What stands out to you in the scripture?
- Where is God encountered in this story?

See the next page to learn about the types of prayer.

BONUS QUOTES

- "Prayer is the grand means of drawing near to God." - John Wesley
- "Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God Himself." -Mother Teresa

ENCOUNTERS: IN PRAYER

At its core, prayer is communication with God — an encounter that deepens our relationship and trust. Whether structured or spontaneous, full of words or silent, prayer draws us closer to God's presence.

KATAPHATIC PRAYER

Kataphatic prayer uses words, images, and concepts to connect with God. It engages our mind and imagination, often drawing from Scripture, tradition, or personal experience.

- **Extemporaneous Prayer:** Spontaneous prayer from the heart. Example: "Lord, thank You for today. Guide me in my decisions and help me trust in Your wisdom."
- **Historical & Liturgical Prayers:** Reciting prayers from Christian tradition, such as the Serenity Prayer—"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change..."
- **Biblical Prayers:** Using Scripture for prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer or praying through the Psalms: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want..." (Psalm 23).

APOPHATIC PRAYER

Apophatic prayer focuses on silence and stillness, seeking God beyond words and concepts, acknowledging that God is a mystery beyond comprehension.

- **Centering Prayer:** Sitting in silence, repeating a sacred word like "peace" or "Jesus" to focus on God's presence.
- **Breath Prayer:** Pairing your breath with a short prayer, such as "Come, Lord Jesus" (inhale) and "Have mercy" (exhale).
- **Silent Meditation:** Resting in God's presence without words, letting go of distractions.

TIPS FOR PRAYER

- Start small, increasing time gradually.
- Find a quiet space, free of distractions.
- Be patient— prayer takes practice.
- Journaling may help deepen your reflections after prayer.