



PARTNERS IN CARE: UNITY IN DIVERSITY THROUGH CHRIST

A Five-Session Devotion for Christian Nurses and Midwives



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Partners in Care: Unity in Diversity through Christ was a 5-session devotion for attendees of the NCFI World Congress in Santiago, Chile 5-10, November 2012. Modifications have been made for publication.

Introduction

Welcome to “Partners in Care: Unity in Diversity” a Bible study reflection that guides nurses and midwives in partnering with the Lord in nursing. Over 5 sessions participants will explore Acts chapter 10 to discover how God partnered with Cornelius and Peter for a divine appointment.

Peter, a devout Jew and disciple of Christ, is sharing the gospel throughout the Jewish communities, thinking that salvation is only for the chosen Israelites. Until the Lord radically intervenes to change Peter and to change the world.

Cornelius, a roman centurion, is a righteous man and community leader. Even with all his righteous deeds, he is lacking the assured salvation through Jesus Christ. The Lord answers his prayer and sends Peter with the Good News. Cornelius, his household, and his regiment are entirely changed by the encounter. And, as they say, the rest is history.

After their encounter and partnership, Peter provides the following testimony to the church leaders in Jerusalem:

“If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 11:17-18)

As you complete the study, ask the Lord to guide you in embracing diversity in your nursing practice, in your community, nationally for your country, and internationally around the world. So, that you in turn can “glorify God.”

Facilitator Guide

This 5 session Bible study is centered on creating diverse partnerships in nursing. Each session builds on the previous session, so don't skip a session. This study is recommended for groups of nurses and midwives at a national or regional conference or as workshops with a main facilitator.

The following notes are helpful if you are facilitating the devotional series with a group. Suggestions for the facilitator are in brackets [].

The preparedness of the facilitator sets the heart, mind, and spirit of the session. Thus, it is important for facilitators to prepare ahead of the assigned day and time.

Suggestions for preparing for each session:

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your study and open your heart to hear His suggestions.
2. Read Acts 10
3. Complete each session as if you are a participant. This includes reading the prayers and text, answering the questions, and reviewing the timing. Write down your answers and include how others may answer the questions.

Each session includes the following format:

Prayer:

Each session begins with a prayer to consecrate our time under the Holy Spirit through the richness of scripture. And, then ends with prayer. The prayers are designed liturgically, meaning the group stands up and says them out loud together.

Read:

There are assigned scripture passages to read. It is great to bring scripture alive by reading it out loud by the participants. There are also paragraphs that the facilitator will read to the group.

Reflect:

These are questions and discussions that assist participants in discovering the passage and applying God's word to their personal life.

Session 1: Partnering with God

Our relationship with God is rooted in prayer. During this first session we will look at how the Lord can guide us to partner with him during times of prayer.

Prayer: [Facilitator to assign someone to read the following prayer out loud.]

*I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

*He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.*

He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

*He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.*

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.

*Holy and awesome is his name! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.*

His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111)

Read: Acts 10:1-23 [Facilitator assign multiple participants to read sections of the passage out loud]

Reflect: [Facilitator guide the discussion with all participants for the next two questions]. God spoke to both Peter and Cornelius during their designated times of prayer. Share details about each of Peter and Cornelius's prayer time.

1. Both men received a unique message from the Lord during their times of prayer. What message did Cornelius receive from the Lord and how did he respond? (Acts 10:1-8).
2. What message did Peter receive from the Lord and how did he respond? (Acts 10:9-16)

The Lord communicates his will and partners with us through prayer, “*your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:10). Thus, a thriving relationship with our Lord Jesus through prayer is important to our work in nursing.

Reflect: [Facilitator, have participants break up into small groups to discuss the next two questions. Participants can begin their time with brief introductions.]

3. [Small Group] Does your practice of prayer reflect consistency or is it more random?

4. [Small Group] What are some of the struggles you face in having consistent prayer time?

Reflect: [Facilitator have the participants share a few answers from the previous small group questions]

Read: [Facilitator reads] Partnering with God requires that we open ourselves to God's will during times of prayer. We also need to respond in obedience and trust to the Lord's message. As we conclude today, write out a personal prayer that the Lord will connect you with another nurse at your workplace. [Facilitator, give participants time to personally respond, then if the participants feel comfortable, they may share their prayer with their small group.]

Concluding Prayer: As a group pray the Lord's Prayer/Our Father

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and
the power and the glory forever. Amen (Matthew 6:9-10)*

Session 2: Professionalism in Partnerships

The Lord uses prayerful and faithful Christian Nurses and Midwives to partner with patients, families, colleagues and other health care workers. In this session, we will see how the godly characteristics of Cornelius and Peter set the stage for a partnership.

Prayer: [Facilitator to assign someone to read the following prayer out loud.]

*I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

*He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.*

He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

*He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.*

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.

*Holy and awesome is his name! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.*

His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111)

Read: [Facilitator reads] Yesterday, we seen how Cornelius had obeyed the Lord and immediately sent men to get Simon, named Peter in Joppa. The men arrive at the house when Peter was still dazed and confused from his own unique vision, yet welcomes them in. The group leaves the next morning for the day long trip to Cornelius' house (Acts 10:1-23). As we return to our passage, we will discover a unique partnership developing between Cornelius and Peter.

Read: Acts 10:22-24 [Facilitator ask a participant to read the passage out loud]

Reflect: [Facilitator guide the discussion with all participants for the next two questions].

5. What was Cornelius' reputation with his servants and his community (Acts 10:22)?

6. Cornelius and Peter, unbeknownst to one another, become partners. Who was all in attendance at Cornelius' house waiting for Peter to arrive?

Reflect: [Facilitator reads] Not only did God recognize Cornelius righteousness, but Cornelius' closest colleagues and those in his community knew of his character. [Facilitator, have participants break up into small groups to discuss the next three questions].

7. [Small Group] What are some attributes of righteousness that are characteristics of Christians found throughout scripture?
8. [Small Group] What professional characteristics are important for nursing, but may not be necessarily found in scripture. For example, nursing care that is evidenced based or supported by professional standards.
9. [Small Group] Why is it important for Christian nurses to live righteous lives and be professional? See 1 Peter 2:15-17 for guidance

Reflect: [Facilitator have the participants share a few answers from the previous small group questions]

Read: [Facilitator reads] We have begun to see the beginnings of a partnership with glimpses into its true impact. We also are encouraged to partner with God and partner with others. These cohorts may be patients, families, colleagues and even strangers. We also have seen how our character is an important factor in developing partnerships.

As we conclude today, reflect on your personal character as a Christian nurse and pray for the Lord to open your heart to areas that you can become more Christ-like. Review the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:3-12. [Facilitator, give participants time to personally respond. If participants feel comfortable, they may share their prayer.]

Concluding Prayer: Pray out loud the following passage by the Apostle Peter:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Amen. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Session 3: Exploring the Need

Prayer: [Facilitator can assign someone to read the following prayer.]

*I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

*He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the Lord is gracious and merciful.*

He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

*He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.*

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever.

*Holy and awesome is his name! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.*

His praise endures forever! (Psalm 111)

Read: [Facilitator reads] Cornelius and Peter responded to God's message through prayer and obedience. Peter is on his way to Cornelius' house and Cornelius is gathering family, friends, and colleagues to hear what Peter has to say (10:23-24). God knew the need, spread the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) and ultimately used Peter and Cornelius to meet the need. As we reflect on this emerging partnership let's take time to pause and reflect on a specific "need in nursing" you may have. The need may be individually for your facility or school, nationally within your area or country, or internationally across nations or groups.

Reflect: [Facilitator, have participants break up into small groups for the activities].

10. [Small Group] Each person writes out a specific nursing/professional need you have

11. [Small Group] If you are with a group, share your individual needs with one another.

12. [Small Group] Assist each other in finding applicable Bible verses to support the need.

13. [Small Group] Assist each other in finding applicable Bible verses to support the need.

14. [Small Group] Share professional wisdom to assist one another with their need.

Read [Facilitator interrupt discussion to allow a time of prayer within the groups. Bring group back together for final prayer] Devote this time in praying for your specified need. Reflect on the following verses to guide you in praying for your needs. Feel free to find other scripture passages that pertain to your specific needs.

James 3:17: wisdom from above, pure, gently, accommodating, merciful, bearing good fruit, without partiality, without hypocrisy.

Psalm 127:1-2: the Lord builds a house, vain to rise up early and retire late if the Lord is not behind our work.

Close your group time by asking the Lord to send his workers for the harvest (Luke 10:2)

Concluding Prayer: Pray out loud the following:

- 1 *The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*
- 2 *All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit.*
- 3 *Commit your work to the Lord,
and your plans will be established.*
- 4 *The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.*
- 5 *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.*
- 6 *By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.*
- 7 *When a man's ways please the Lord,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*
- 8 *Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.*
- 9 *The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps. (Proverbs 16:1-9) Amen*

Cornelius invites Peter and the Lord by saying, “Now that we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” (Acts 10:33). May we follow Cornelius’ humility in listening to the Lord.

Session 4: Partners in Changing the World

Prayer: [Facilitator can assign someone to read the following prayer.]

Read: [Facilitator reads] We return to our reflection on the partnership with Cornelius and Peter. Both men have received distinct messages from the Lord. Two days later Peter finds Cornelius and a “crowd” assembled waiting for his message.

Read: Acts 10:25-35 [Facilitator assigns multiple participants to read sections of the passage out loud]

Reflect: [Facilitator guide the discussion with all participants for the next three questions].

1. What were the social, cultural, ethnic and religious barriers that were part of Peter and Cornelius meeting? (Acts 10:28)

Read [Facilitator read] From the time of the vision, to meeting Cornelius, Peter’s heart and spirit had been transformed.

“But Peter said, By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice came to him again a second time, What God has made clean, do not call common. This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven... but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.” (14-16; 28).

2. How do you think Peter, God’s personal messenger of salvation to the discriminated Gentiles, was transformed by the experience?

it is paramount to recognize that Jews were a separated people group in all aspects of life (language, culture, religion, society, etc) while living amidst the Romans, Greeks, and other peoples. Many countries may see something similar with immigrants and/or populations of indigenous people living among the majority people group.

Read: [Facilitator reads] 21st century life is still filled with social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and economical barriers between people. A common barrier for Christians can be people of other religions (Muslim), ethnic (racism), social (caste system/educational).

3. Write down the challenges you face as a nurse/midwife for the following as applicable:

- social
- cultural
- ethnic
- religious
- economical

Read: [Facilitator reads] The once exclusive gospel for the Israelite became inclusive for all and spread throughout the world (Acts 11:1).

In our professional practice we are expected to cross social, cultural and religious barriers, yet we hesitate within our “Christian” or “personal” circles to collaborate with various religions, cultures and social groups.

Reflect: [Facilitator, have participants break up into small groups to discuss the final activities. If possible, would be beneficial if participants returned to groups from Day 3].

1. As you reflect on your specific need for nursing you shared yesterday, review your “sphere of influence” and think of ways to reach outside of your cultural/religious circle to elicit assistance.
2. Many times, like Peter, we need a new vision of the Lord’s plan. As we spiritually “walk to Cornelius’ house” to seek the Lord for solutions, how may the Holy Spirit be calling you to change?
3. End this time with a 2-fold prayer:
 - a. The Holy Spirit to remove social, religious, ethnic and economical prejudices from your personal/local/national area of nursing.
 - b. Commit individually to break through personal prejudices with God’s love (Acts 10:34; 11:17-18; Galatians 3:28)

Concluding Prayer: As a group pray the following prayer:

Thank You Father, for in Christ Jesus we are all sons and daughters of God, through faith. For as many of us were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:28 with modifications) Amen.

Session 5: Thanksgiving & Sharing

Prayer: The Lord has truly brought an international partnership full circle. As we conclude our time together, thank and praise the Lord for how his word has become evident in our lives.

*Praise the Lord!
Praise, O servants of the Lord,
 praise the name of the Lord!
Blessed be the name of the Lord
 from this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its setting,
 the name of the Lord is to be praised!
The Lord is high above all nations,
 and his glory above the heavens!
Who is like the Lord our God,
 who is seated on high,
 who looks far down
 on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
 and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
 to make them sit with princes,
 with the princes of his people.
He gives the barren woman a home,
 making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 113)*

Read: Acts 10:36-48

Read: [Facilitator reads] This divine partnership with Peter and Cornelius brought salvation to Cornelius, his family and to the entire household. It is hard to imagine that Cornelius and the others kept the experience to themselves. In today's culture, the miraculous event would be tweeted, blogged, and go viral on YouTube and TikTok.

Reflect: [Facilitator guide the discussion with all participants for the next two questions].

1. Discuss how you can share with nurses at your workplace your "viral" encounter with God during this study.
2. Verse 48 says that Peter stayed with the Cornelius group for many days. This reminds us that the Lord also brings about relationships among partners and everyone involved. Write down 1 or 2 specific people you have connected with that you can maintain contact with through email, whatsapp, etc...

3. Conclude this session by praying Ephesians 1:17-19 for your new partners and then over one another.

Concluding Prayer: Pray out loud

Heavenly Father, Truly I understand that You show no partiality, but in every nation and people group, anyone who fears You and does what is right is acceptable to You. As for the word that You sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ as is Lord of all. We know and believe You God that You anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for You were with him. Father in Heaven, we believe You put Jesus to death by hanging him on a tree but raised him on the third day and made Him to appear to his disciples and many others. Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by You God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through His name. Amen. (Acts 10:34-43 edited for modern prayer)