



BRIDGES

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Being A Person of Grace

Do you want to be someone who has a positive impact on the lives of others? I do. Many years ago, I remember reading a book about a person who was down and out. He was rejected, persecuted, and near the end of his ability to hang on. This all changed when he met a person who was kind, generous, and full of grace. That stranger's kindness during that brief encounter radically changed the other person's life. I thought to myself when reading that book, "I want to be like that stranger."

The book I am talking about is the book of Acts in the Bible. In Acts 9 to 11, Peter is the stranger who encounters several people who are "down and out." Every person who encountered Peter, even briefly, was radically impacted for the good. Some of the people that Peter impacted are named in scripture: Aeneas the paralytic, Tabitha who died, Simon the tanner, and Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. Each of these people was in some way on the outside, rejected, or down and out. Peter, though, with God at work in him, changed each one of their lives. This caused me to ponder the question, "What was unique about Peter that caused him to be such a person of grace?"



Looking at these stories (Acts 9:32-11:18), several traits about Peter's faith became apparent:

- **Peter believed and trusted in the power of God.** When Peter met Aeneas, the paralytic, he trusted in the healing power of God and was not afraid to pray for Aeneas. And the Lord, according to His grace, healed him. Many people don't positively impact others because they do not trust in the power of God. People who do not trust in the power of God don't pray, don't hope, and don't help. Trusting in His power means that you and I can present the needs of that person to God.
- **Peter was willing to step into an impossible situation.** He did this when he went to see Tabitha. When he arrived, she had already died. This did not stop Peter; he went into her room and told her to get up (Acts 9:40). With God, there are no impossible situations. With God, nobody has been lost so far that He cannot save.

- **Peter trusted God with his comforts.** We see this when he stayed at the home of Simon the tanner. Staying at such a home would not have been comfortable due to the stench of tanning hides. Yet, Peter stayed there many days. We do not have a record of what happened to Simon, but I am sure Simon's story is another story of a person discovering that they are loved by God through being loved by a disciple of Jesus. This was only possible if Peter let go of certain comforts, which he did. I think one of the reasons that many Christians do not tell others about Jesus is because they "do not feel comfortable." To be a person of grace involves moving out of one's comfort zone.

• **Peter trusted God with a willingness to be changed by God.** We see this when God tells him, "What I have made clean, do not call common." Peter resists and says, "By no means, Lord!" But because God is including the Gentiles in the good news of

Jesus, Peter had to change not just his view of food but his view of Gentiles. And Peter does. Many people want to be used by God, but are unwilling to undergo the changes that require them to be a person of grace.

- **Peter trusted God enough not to get in His way.** In Acts 10, God does a mighty work when He pours out His Spirit on the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44). Instead of resisting what God is doing (getting in His way), Peter meets God in what He is doing and baptizes the whole household. I like what he says when the church in Jerusalem criticizes him for doing so. Peter says, "Who was I that I could stand in God's way (Acts 11:17)?" In other words, he got out of God's way, which is an act of faith.

How about you? Do you want to impact people for the good? If so, I encourage you to evaluate and deepen your trust in the Lord's power, not be afraid of impossible situations, not worry about life comforts, have the humility to be changed, and not get in the way of God, because it really is all about Him.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Trent Eastman