



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N23 June 7, 2026

## POWER AND PURPOSE

"Recognizing the Work of the Spirit"

Acts 11:1-18

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

*"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."*

Romans 8:9



What do people often attempt to add to the Gospel?

People are obsessed with customization. We want everything from customized homes to customized phones to customized lattes. Customization often increases our personal enjoyment, elevates our sense of societal status and gives us a sense of greater control or influence over our possessions and experiences. Soft drink companies sell more soda when each bottle is personalized with your name or the name of a celebrity you follow.

Smartphones require individualized cases. Fashion requires accessories. Large ticket vehicles require aftermarket enhancements. We want "it all" and we want in "our way!"

Customization is often tied to our sense of identity. We want certain colors, certain flourishes or certain modifications to make a statement about ourselves. We may feel better about acquiring our possessions if the possessions display our taste and our loyalties or increase our desired social status. Frequently we want others to identify us with the things we have customized. As much as we strive for individualization through customization, we often are controlled by the ones who offer the options we choose. Customization offers us the perception of variety while making us slaves to price mark-ups, frivolous fashions or what is called "bloatware" (features that promise a lot but do very little). Customization is not always a bad idea. But we often get into trouble when we care more about customization than original function.

Unfortunately, customization can also creep into our faith. Eden's first couple wanted more than what was offered in God's good garden. Their eldest son wanted sacrifices to be accepted on his own customized terms. Noah's neighbors were described as having "every intention of their hearts" as evil and thus against the plan of God. The builders of Babel custom-designed their city's tower to reach for what God did not intend. Customization in the realm of faith often contaminates the original with accretions and excess.

When the good news of Jesus was being spread as described in the book of Acts, additional requirements or customizations were added to the terms of the Gospel by certain parties. These additions were identity markers and gave a level of control to those who demanded them to be observed by followers of Christ. Faith plus the addition of a prescribed diet was presented as requirement for Christianity. Becoming a Jewish proselyte through rituals and observances was an accretion to the simplicity of the faith proclaimed by the apostles. This add-on also gave members of a certain party control over who was "in or out" of the new community. The early church would continue to struggle with this issue until its first official council (Acts 15).

Church history is full of tales of various innovations added to faith as means to entice people away from simple faith. These additions often led to increasing the personal wealth and control of those managing such innovations. Icons, indulgences, relics and rites have all been offered by those wishing to customize faith beyond the simple expressions of worship, teaching, communion and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47). Many new and unbiblical doctrines have been made into dogmas that elevate the initiates and condemn the detractors of such novelties.

Any teacher, group or institution that adds or takes away from the clear teachings of the Bible and requires its adherents to adopt their ways over and above the freedom found in Christ is in danger of causing other to stumble. Legalists and libertines alike corrupt the Gospel with excessive rules or excessive denunciations of simple humility and holiness. Be wary of anyone who sells you on what you are missing in your practice of faith. We all need to grow in our faith, but we should never feel as though our faith is lacking because of something else we must do or stop doing. Be on the lookout for those who are selling needless additions to your faith.



## 1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Read Acts 11:1-18

1 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, 3 "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." 4 But Peter began and explained it to them in order: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. 6 Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9 But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' 10 This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. 11 And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. 12 And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; 14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' 15 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 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?" 18 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."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the phrase "Gentiles also had received the word of God" (v. 1).
- Underline the phrase "Gentiles also God has granted repentance" (v. 18).
- Circle the words "circumcision party" and "uncircumcised men" in v. 4.
- Draw a box around the words "common and unclean" in v. 8.
- Double underline the phrase "What God has made clean, do not call common" (v. 9).
- Draw a line connecting the phrase "three times" (v. 10) with "three men" (v. 11).
- Put brackets around the phrase "make no distinction" in v. 12.
- Draw a line connecting all the words for God in vv. 12-18.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What did Luke and Peter claim happened to the Gentiles (vv. 1, 14-18)?
2. What accusation was made against Peter (v. 2)? Who made this accusation?
3. What convinced Peter to share the Gospel with Gentiles (vv. 4-12)?
4. Peter had a vision about food (vv. 4-10). What was the purpose of this vision?
5. Explain how Acts 11:12 relates to Acts 11:9.
6. Who are the “us” and “them” mentioned in Acts 11:17? What gift did they both receive?
7. God is “unchanging” (Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jam 1:17). How can God remain “unchanging” and yet appear to change Old Testament restrictions related to diet and hospitality (Mk 7:19; Acts 11:17-18)?
8. Who “fell silent” (v. 18) and what did they conclude after Peter’s testimony?
9. Who do many people today consider beyond the reach of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
10. What are some implications for modern-day evangelism considering Acts 11:1-18?

Acts 10-11 represent a cosmic shift in the life of God's people. The way followers of God would worship, pray, fellowship, evangelize and disciple would be forever changed after Peter's day trip to Caesarea. This one meeting between Jesus' chief apostle and this leader of a Roman army would rock the world forever. Word of Peter's historic congress with Gentiles reached Jerusalem before he did (Acts 11:1). Some in the church objected to Peter's perceived indiscretions regarding ritual purity. Luke records Peter's defense of his actions by recounting Peter's testimony to those accusing him of defilement and disregard for sacred tradition. Luke's combined account of the Roman centurion's conversion and Peter's defense of his actions in this matter highlight the importance of this event in the life of the church. "Let us remember again the principle of proportion; God designs large segments of Scripture to explain things he considers important. In this case, sixty-six verses cover the conversion of Cornelius compared with thirty-one for the conversion of Saul and only thirteen for events at Pentecost. One could draw different conclusions from those numbers, but certainly this breakthrough of the gospel to a Roman was a watershed event in the early church" (Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary, 176).

The objection of the "circumcision party" (v. 2) was not that unclean Gentiles had received the Gospel or that they were baptized into the community of faith. Rather they were upset that food was shared between Peter and Gentiles. Nowhere in Acts 10 or 11 is eating in a Gentile home ever mentioned. Yet the occurrence of entering a Gentile home, implying a "sharing of table" with those considered unclean, was such a hot button that the early church would wrestle with this for years to come (Acts 10-15; Gal 2:11-14). "Peter's argument [Acts 11:3-18] implicitly claimed that Gentiles were full members of the church, and therefore that circumcision and keeping of the law were unnecessary for salvation; it also contained the wider implication that the Jewish distinction between clean and unclean foods and people was obsolete. But this was an earth-shattering idea for Jews, and was not to be accepted without much heart-searching and controversy" (I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 210).

Peter's defense is a retelling of what the Spirit of God led him to do. First, he has a vision (Acts 11:5-10). In Peter's retelling, a large or "great sheet" was lowered from heaven. The voice of God instructs Peter to eat from all the animals found in this sheet. Peter objects stating that he has never eaten this type of "unclean or common" food before. God corrects Peter's logic by claiming himself as God to be the one who can "make clean" that which has previously been known to be unclean. God's change of course and cleansing related to food and more importantly people is not arbitrary or capricious. "The verb 'made clean' [Acts 11:9] is the term used in the LXX for the pronouncements of the

priests concerning persons which had been impure and which, after the appropriate purification, were then declared clean (cf. Lev 13:6, 13, 17). This is the main point of the vision: God has declared all animals to be clean, an assertion that implies the abolishment of the dietary laws. In view of Luke's earlier reports about Peter's convictions concerning the significance of Jesus and his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation, there can be little doubt that this cleansing refers to Jesus' death and its effects. If this is indeed the meaning of the vision, Peter must change his behavior in obedience to the heavenly voice" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 491).

Immediately after Peter's tripart vision, there is a knock at Peter's door. Three unclean Gentiles request that Peter accompany them to a Roman centurion's home in Caesarea. God's Spirit, still speaking to Peter, instructs him to go with them "making no distinction" (Acts 11:12), no doubt a reference to their non-kosher classification. Peter follows the Spirit's prompting and goes with them, entering the house of Cornelius. Peter does bring six witnesses with him, making a contingent of seven Jewish witnesses to the work of God among those God is "making clean" through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17). While Peter speaks the good news of Jesus to the crowd assembled in Cornelius' Gentile home, the Holy Spirit comes upon those believing, confirming the idea that God has made clean these dirty Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter shares in his testimony that this manifestation of the Spirit reminded him of John the Baptist's testimony (Acts 11:16) and his own experience at Pentecost (Acts 11:17).

Peter's argument was convincing (Acts 11:18). "Peter's speech trumps rather than refutes the charges. Taking a leaf from the brief of Gamaliel (5:34-39), he questions the wisdom of resisting the divine (11:17). This stifles the opposition, which drops all reference to circumcision and praises the God who offers salvation to gentiles. In this path-breaking act, his ministry in Acts has come to an effective end. From the perspective of the principle established, this non-meeting is the most important meeting in Acts" (Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary on the Book of Acts*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, 283).

People today are frequently tempted to add obligatory practices to the unencumbered message of the Gospel. While we may not require circumcision or kosher meal planning in our practice of faith, we can also be guilty of adding stipulations to the message of grace. Life change is important in the life of a believer. But one does not become a believer by first changing their life. Because God "makes clean," who are we to consider people beyond the reach of the Gospel? Sharing Christ with others means we may have to deal with people outside our comfort zone. The Gospel changes people, including those who share the Gospel. Shining the light in the darkness may mean we may have to venture out into the darkness to shine.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *receive* “The report of the reception of the word reaches the apostles and brethren in Judea—in other words, all the church. The idea of ‘receiving the word of God’ (ἔδξαντο τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, edexanto ton logon tou theou) describes a positive response to the gospel. To receive the word of God is to welcome the gospel message with one’s heart (Luke 8:13 [an initial positive response that is reversed later]; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Thess. 1:6–7)” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 405).

v. 2 *circumcision* “When Peter went up to Jerusalem, he faced the sort of criticism that Jesus did when challenged by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law about eating with sinners (Lk. 5:30; 15:2; 19:7). The difference now was that the objections came from the circumcised believers and the problem was specifically Peter’s going into the house of ‘the uncircumcised’ and eating with them (cf. 10:48, where his stay with them for a few days clearly involved eating with them). They criticized him for an action that seemed to have more significance for them than the salvation of these Gentiles” (David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 342).

v. 3 *uncircumcised* “Luke used the expression as significant to his readers, though it only had its origin in the events that he was narrating. It was true, nevertheless, that even then there were those in the church who were especially sensitive to the issues that Peter had raised, and the term is appropriately applied to these people (cf. 15:5). Their criticism focused on Peter’s having been a guest in the home of a Gentile. This was a serious breach of church polity, and something of the bitterness of their feelings comes out in the phrase uncircumcised men (v. 3). This description was the greatest reproach that Jews had of Gentiles, for it emphasized their exclusion from the covenant” (David J. Williams, *Acts*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 199).

v. 3 *ate* “If Jewish Christians felt bound by the Jewish food laws, there could not be fellowship with Gentile Christians (or contact with non-Christian Gentiles) unless the Gentiles were circumcised and observed the Jewish food laws themselves. That this problem was no figment of Luke’s imagination is seen by the way in which the problem was still a live one at the time of the incident reported in Galatians 2:11–14 (when even Peter went back on his earlier practice). Behind the strong feeling of the Jewish Christians there may have been the fear that, if they ceased to follow the practice of Judaism, they might find themselves under attack from their fellow Jews, just like Stephen and his associates” (Marshall, 207).

v. 9 *common* “The whole vision, including the order and the rebuke, was repeated three times, so that the heavenly voice addressed him six times altogether with the same basic message. In consequence, Peter grasped that the clean and unclean animals (a distinction which Jesus had abolished) were a symbol of clean and unclean, circumcised and uncircumcised persons” (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*, The Bible Speaks Today, 194).

v. 12 *no distinction* “Peter’s order of events is important because it helps us to live through his experience with him, and so to learn just how God had shown him that he should not call anybody impure or unclean (10:28). It took four successive hammer-blows of divine revelation before his racial and religious prejudice was overcome” (Stott, 194).

v. 12 *six brothers* “Peter says that he took six brethren with him. Together with himself, that made seven persons present. In Egyptian law, which the Jews would know well, seven witnesses were necessary to prove a case completely. In Roman law, which they would also know well, seven seals were necessary to authenticate a really important document. So Peter is in effect saying: ‘I am not arguing with you. I am telling you the facts, and of these facts there are seven witnesses. The case is proved’” (William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The New Daily Study Bible, 101).

v. 15 *began* “‘As I began’ underscores again God’s initiative in the salvation of the Gentiles in Caesarea. Peter had not finished his proclamation of the good news of Jesus when the Holy Spirit ‘fell’, i.e., came in dramatic and recognizable fashion upon the Gentiles. The comparative particle ‘just as’ relates the coming of the Spirit on Cornelius and his household to the coming of the Spirit on the apostles ‘at the beginning’, i.e., on Pentecost” (Schnabel, 510).

v. 16 *remembered* “Peter recalls the substance of what Luke has recorded in 1:5 and ends his explanation with a quotation of Jesus himself (Luke 3:16). Thus, he interprets the descent of the Spirit on Cornelius and his guests; they have been ‘baptized’ with the Spirit, just as Jerusalem Jews were on the first Christian Pentecost” (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible, 472).

v. 18 *silent* “His critics were silenced. God had acted, and had clearly shown his will. That he had bestowed his blessing on Gentiles also—or even on Gentiles—giving them through his Spirit a change of mind and heart and the assurance of eternal life, was a matter for wonder and praise. Their objections ceased; their praise began. The practical problems which were to become so acute when large-scale Gentile evangelization began did not arise at this stage” (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 223).

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## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Don't get in God's way; share the kindness and good news of Jesus with everyone, even those you consider most offensive.



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

Last week my daughter shared how God had answered a prayer request. I thought, this is a spiritual paycheck; this is worth all the times I threw out my personal agenda and leaned into intentional conversations. How often are you having gospel conversations at home? If you're scratching your head right now wondering what I'm talking about, let me explain. Most of our conversations at home center around school, sports, chores, or friends, with a few random topics sprinkled in. If you're like me, most conversations begin with, "Did you..." Feel free to insert any task – finish your homework, clean the toilet, take the dog out, fold your clothes, etc. Honestly, being a taskmaster is one of my least favorite things. I want to flip that script and spend more time talking about God. Here are a few questions to ask yourself: How often am I bringing God into the conversation? Did I talk about God last week at all? Did I say positive things about church or just tell the kids to get ready and get in the car on Sunday? Did I tell my kids what I'm learning about God through Bible study? Am I talking with them about what God is doing in my life? Do we pray for people who might not know Christ, specifically and by name? Our kids need to hear all this and more. They need to join us in gospel celebration and walk with us through spiritual failures (within age-appropriate reason, of course). Let's have an eagerness to share what God is doing with our favorite people. We're praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 11:1-18

1. What had the apostles and brothers heard about the Gentiles?
2. Why were the men upset and what was Peter's response?
3. What gift did God give the Gentiles and Jewish believers?

### What Do You Think?

Why is it a big deal that the Gentiles could be granted repentance?

### What Do You Do?

Peter shared with others the great things God was doing. What is God doing in your life? Share this story with one person this week.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit helps me become more like God.

### MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 16:9

*"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."*

### KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.