



## Week 4 - Boldness in Discipleship and Evangelism

### Day 1 - Acts 8:9-25

*9 Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. 10 All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place.*

*14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit 16 (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! 21 You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness." 24 Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me."*

*25 Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.*

### Understanding the Reading:

Simon the magician enters the story of Acts as a foil to both Philip and Peter. As we've seen previously, Peter and Philip have both risen to the occasion of leading a new religious movement in the context of persecution and resistance. Their goal isn't power or prestige, but to communicate the news of Jesus to both Jew and Gentile. Our first hint at Simon's mismatched aspirations is that we learn he "previously practiced magic," which is strictly forbidden in the Torah (see Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-12). Many extrabiblical stories about Simon (later called *Simon Magus*) appear throughout the first few centuries of Christian writing (e.g. in the writings of Justin Martyr and

Irenaeus). For the first Christians he becomes an example of an early heretic. He's more of a sympathetic character in the book of Acts itself.

Having heard the gospel and responding with faith and eventually baptism, he follows Philip as a disciple, but his journey is cut short when he tries to pay for this new power of the Spirit, harkening back to his past as a popular magician and wonder-worker. We might also hear echoes of the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who centered money and possessions instead of their discipleship to Jesus.

We should be both warned by Simon's desire for the Spirit's power as well as resonate with it. Though we too should avoid thinking we can buy or coerce our way into the power of the Spirit, the desire for the power of the Spirit is not a bad one, nor is Simon's prayer to avoid the curses Peter prays over him.

Ultimately, this story is one of mixed motivations. First, Simon isn't wrong to want the power of the Spirit and that's something we should all want. Especially for Simon, having witnessed the Spirit's power alive in believers should drive a person to want more. However, how we get that power is another question. Do we think we can apprehend it by our own gifts or abilities? Is it like acquiring any old skill? Do we think we have enough in and of ourselves to get it? Or, more succinctly, *who* do you want to follow -- someone that amazes you with spectacle, or one with true power?

#### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Do you sympathize with Simon the Magician or feel for him in this story? Why or why not?
2. Are Peter and Philip too hard on Simon when he asks to pay for the power of the Spirit? Could they have corrected him another way?
3. Reflect on a time when you might have had mixed motivations. How did you notice the mixing of a good desire with a mismatched approach? How can you assure yourself that your motivations aren't mixed?

#### **Day 2 - Acts 9:32-43**

*32 Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" And immediately he got up. 35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.*

*36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. 37 At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." 39 So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. 41 He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. 42 This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

The gospel continues to move westward; here indicated by the mention of the towns of Joppa and Lydda. We don't know how the good news about Jesus has already found its way here (potentially on Philip's own route on his way to Caesarea) but the gospel is already here and making an impact on the lives of the hearers.

We previously discussed a common thread of the apostles working wonders and healing people *in Jesus' name*. That is, the apostles do work on the authority of another; in fact, the powerful Jewish and Roman leaders question where they get such authority. 9:34 is one of the only instances where an apostle says it's Jesus doing the healing right then and there, and not just in his name or by his authority. This often-overlooked detail bolsters a central claim to Peter's message: Jesus is alive and still at work in the world via the Holy Spirit. It's not as if Jesus departed and handed the keys to the apostles entirely. Rather, Jesus is still the one healing and reconciling all things, the apostles are simply the appendages of this work Jesus himself is doing.

The gospel, having made its way westward, is alive in a woman named Tabitha. This is the only time in Acts that a woman is explicitly called a "disciple." Tabitha/Dorcas had a caring community of other believers around her as we see details and features associated with the early Christian community described in her story (e.g. widows, communal prayer, intentional acts of hospitality and charity). Again, the gospel seems to be spreading on its own, without concrete explanation, ahead of any apostle's purposeful arrival.

We might say, having experienced a good quality or behavior in someone, that we "see something in" that person. Likewise, we might say we don't see something if someone exhibits bad behavior. Tabitha/Dorcas literally *sees* something in Peter and we could guess that what she sees when she opens her eyes from the sleep of death is the power of the Spirit resting on Peter. Common across most of the New Testament writings about the Spirit, the Holy Spirit rests on bodies (e.g. at Jesus' own baptism). The Spirit isn't an ethereal force somewhere out there that we tap into from time to time. The Spirit finds His home physically in humanity and that's what Tabitha sees that makes her sit up and live again.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Does Jesus still heal today? Have you experienced the healing of Jesus in your life or in the life of someone you love?
2. How might we understand these instances of the gospel seemingly having a mind or activity all its own? How did the gospel spread westward without the purposeful activity of one of the apostles?
3. Have you seen the power of the Spirit at work in someone's life? Maybe even your own life? What did it look like?

### **Day 3 - Acts 10:1-11:18**

*10:1 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.*

*17 Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. 18 They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. 20 Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." 21 So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" 22 They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.*

*The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. 24 The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. 26 But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; 28 and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?"*

*30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. 31 He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' 33 Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say."*

*34 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how*

*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

*44 While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, 46 for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 47 “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.*

*11:1 Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, 3 saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” 4 Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6 As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ 8 But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ 9 But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ 10 This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11 At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12 The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14 he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” 18 When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

This story marks the opening of the gospel to the rest of the world (i.e. the Gentiles). Cornelius, certainly a historical figure, symbolizes the Gentile reception of the gospel message. Several times in Acts we hear about Gentiles who “fear God” (13:16, 26; 16:14; 18:7; also Luke 7:1-9). We aren’t sure if this is a particular “brand” of Gentile, or just descriptive of their receptivity to the gospel. Being devout in some way, we see Cornelius praying at 3pm (a typical time of prayer and the hour of the evening sacrifice in Judaism as described in Daniel 9:21, for instance). Cornelius’ prayers are answered verbally and with instructions to search for these two Simons – one named Peter and one a tanner.

Simultaneously, a hungry Peter has a vision of now edible foods that were previously deemed unclean by the Law, though not all of them are specifically forbidden. This story reminds us of Peter’s humanity following several chapters of him demonstrating divine power. He believes he

knows what's clean and what's not, and he essentially argues with his divine messenger about what he sees in this vision.

Side-by-side, Peter and Cornelius' encounters with God's expansion to the Gentiles are encounters about receptivity. Will Peter be receptive, as a Jew, to the inclusion of non-jews? Will Cornelius, a devout gentile, be receptive to his and his "household's" own inclusion? In their paths converging, there is some measure of receptivity, but they both stumble along the way. Peter needs the message repeated three times in his dream. Cornelius worships Peter, aiming his devotion toward the wrong person. On an initial reading, one may skim over the retellings of their experiences, but it demonstrates their ongoing understanding of what God has just done: brought the universal invitation to "repentance that leads to life" to everyone. When Peter tells the other apostles they are silenced, but not for long as they praise God for this new development.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. How would you describe someone who is "devout?" What do they do? How do they act?
2. Are you receptive to the work that the Spirit wants to work in your life? What could we practice to become more receptive to the work of the Spirit?
3. We know factually that the gospel invitation is extended to everyone, but in practice that invitation can be withheld from people. What ways can we remember the universal invitation that Peter and Cornelius experienced? How can we extend that invitation?

### **Day 4 - Acts 12:1-17**

*12:1 About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. 2 He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. 3 After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. 5 While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.*

*6 The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. 8 The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."*

*12 As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. 14 On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. 15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." 16 Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. 17 He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out*

of the prison. And he added, "Tell this to James and to the believers." Then he left and went to another place.

### **Understanding the Reading:**

The Herod in this passage is Herod Agrippa I, who was the grandson of Herod the Great (the Herod who ordered the massacre of the infants in Matthew's gospel story). This conflict between the followers of Jesus (represented in Peter) and the powers in 1<sup>st</sup> century Jerusalem (represented by Herod) is the first time Acts really zooms out to show the spread of the gospel is impacting a wider group of people, not just powerful sects like the Sadducees. One may also wonder, why was it important for the author of Acts to share that this conflict happened "during the season of Unleavened Bread" (12:2). This detail recalls the same season in which Jesus was arrested (Luke 22:1).

Peter's arrest is an echo of Jesus' arrest and drives a central point of Acts' narrative: the early disciples were called to the imitation of Jesus, even to the point of arrest and potentially crucifixion. Peter models Christian leadership by walking through many of the same narrative beats as Jesus. However, this isn't just simply miming the works of Christ in front of others, but repeating the words and deeds of Jesus that lead to the apostles' arrest.

Following his arrest we see another instance of angelic rescue, as we witness a few other times in the book of Acts (5:17-21; 16:23-29; 26:17-22). Stories like this one are a feature of not only the New Testament stories of the Apostles, but also extrabiblical material from around the same time period (e.g. The Acts of Paul and Thecla). As Peter himself notes, these miraculous rescues assure the captive that God wants to rescue them and that it will prove a point to his captors and detractors. The angel seems to pop in and out of these narratives, serving one specific purpose of freeing Peter and leaving when he's home free. One might imagine how these stories were passed around among the early Christians as we remember that many scholars believe the author of Luke and Acts was compiling something like an oral history. How else would we have the specific detail that "Peter came to himself" unless Peter reported it directly to the author, someone Peter had told reported it, or the author editorialized Peter's interior reaction?

When Rhoda encounters Peter, we see more echoes of Peter's imitation of Jesus. First, she recognizes his voice, a promise of Jesus' own that his followers will recognize him by his voice (John 10:27-28). Next, those gathered don't believe Rhoda and think she has lost her mind; add this to a long line of episodes where the disciples do not recognize Jesus, like in the story of the road to Emmaus by the same author (Luke 24:13-35). Peter continues to knock (an image picked up by the early church associated with Jesus and depicted in Revelation 3:20), and finally they believe Rhoda when they see him, but Peter tells them to be quiet (echoing instances of Jesus' secrecy as in Matthew 16:20). Again, we see Jesus' own story woven through the life of Peter and Peter's ministry. The first readers of Acts would have seen these echoes of Jesus' story as imperatives to imitate Jesus as Peter does. Or, as Mark Twain quipped, "history doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Herod Agrippa I stands in a line of rulers who were threatened by Jesus and his followers – what was so threatening about Peter and his message that *this* Herod had him arrested?
2. What features of Peter's ministry in Acts can we aim to imitate or echo? We can't expect arrest and crucifixion in our context, but what bold things can we emulate from Peter's life?
3. Acts suggests that Jesus' story is still echoing through history and one can still see it in the life of his followers. How is Jesus' story echoing in your own life? How is it echoing in the people around you?

## **Day 5 - Acts 15:1-11**

*15:1 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. 3 So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses."*

*6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. 8 And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; 9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. 10 Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

This is one of Peter's shining moments. Imagine, it's not many days ago that Jesus was still present with the disciples before his ascension and now the movement is in the hands of people like Paul and Peter. Among these disciples, for which things have been going well as far as the spread of the gospel, we see one of their first big conflicts. The conflict is specifically about circumcision, but more broadly about the interpretation of Scripture.

Verse 1 calls circumcision a "custom of Moses" but we know the custom actually originates with Abraham and his family (See Genesis 17:9-14). Is this a contradiction or a mistake? Not really. Peter and Paul would have referred to the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) as the Books of Moses which meant either that Moses authored them or that they came from Moses' people who had been delivered from slavery in Egypt. This little phrase gives us a hint about the dispute. Let's assume that Peter, Paul, and the other apostles believed Moses authored the Torah, and specifically that he authored the guidance around circumcision as found in the story of Abraham in Genesis. The question in Acts 15 then could be read as, "Moses wrote that we should do this, so why shouldn't the Gentiles?"

This expands the conflict beyond rules about circumcision to questions generally about adherence to the law – Law that Paul and Peter would have likely followed down to the last detail. Paul says as much in Philippians 3:5. One of the arguments against requiring circumcision for Gentiles is the "great joy" their conversion brings to the whole community. Imagine the excitement of one Gentile's conversion immediately met with the shocking physical requirement. That is, imagine feeling the freedom God gives you in Christ only to be met with a new heap of requirements and restrictions (circumcision included).

This is where Peter's leadership journey peaks. He boldly remembers that God had chosen him to be a messenger to the Gentiles, even after his denial of Jesus. He's witnessed their life transformation and the playing out of God's mission on earth in the lives of people who had previously been



excluded. He points to the hearts of the Gentiles, now transformed by the same Spirit that sparked the community they're now in. "Why snuff that out?" he asks. A former fisherman is now arguing Mosaic law with his peers, and his argument wins and reverberates through the rest of the New Testament and into Christian history: "On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (15:11). Peter has credibility, because he is a law-abiding Jew who is now asking that the burden he's carried his whole life not be heaped onto the shoulders of those God is inviting into the fold.

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. How might the conflict around circumcision teach us how to read other passages in the Bible (specifically, in the Law)?
2. Reflect on your own conversion or faith upbringing. Was it characterized by the "great joy" described in Acts for the Gentiles? How can we offer this great joy now?
3. Peter demonstrates courage in his standing up for the Gentiles' invitation and inclusion to the church. How can we imitate Peter's bold inclusivity in our own time? What obstacles to the faith can we circumvent to include more people in God's family?

**Video Questions:**

1. How would you answer Tom's question: Who amazes you?
2. What has been a transformative experience that made you who you are and that you are glad you went through, even if it was hard?
3. Do you fall victim to the desire to be amazing instead of the desire to point to our amazing God?
4. What do you think of Colin's comment, "Divine stories are human stories"? Do you relate to your story being a story of God as well?
5. What was your reaction to Colin's story about the imaginative prayer exercise that his pastor led? Did it make you think differently than before? Why or why not?
6. How does it make you feel to imagine yourself being embraced by Jesus?
7. When you encounter people, is your first inclination to love them as people Jesus loves or as people to be evaluated?
8. What was your biggest takeaway this week?

**Prayer requests and other notes:**