



— **Down To Earth** —
Mark, Acts, Revelation
Small Group Plan

Heaven is an acquired taste.
No one will go who doesn't want to go.

This may sound odd to some but consider what comprises heaven. If you do not come to accept and enjoy, here on earth, compassion, kindness, patience, generosity, peace, to name a few of God's characteristics, why would you want to be in heaven, where these qualities exist in their strongest, purest and most dominate form?

And, using the same logic, if you do not come to accept and appreciate the diversity of humankind living here on the earth, why would you want to be in heaven where "every tribe and language and people and nation" will be present?

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What physical, cultural, and emotional barriers divide people today?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— **HEAVEN SHAPING EARTH** —

Matthew 6:9-10

⁹ Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, **on earth as it is in heaven.**

Revelation 5:9-10

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from **every tribe and language and people and nation.** ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 7:9

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from **every nation, tribe, people and language**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

- How can we do God's will here **on earth** as it's being done **in heaven** ?
- To ask it another way — how does heaven shape earth?

— DIVERSITY LAUNCHING FAITH —

Acts 2:5, 9-11

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from **every nation** under heaven ... ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs.

Acts 6:1

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the **Hellenistic Jews** among them complained against the **Hebraic Jews** because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

Acts 8:26-27

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road — the desert road — that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an **Ethiopian eunuch**, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 10:1-2, 19-20, 34-35

¹ At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the **Italian Regiment**. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing ... ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." ... ³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from **every nation** the one who fears him and does what is right."

Acts 11:1-3, 18

¹ The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that **the Gentiles** also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcised believers criticized him** ³ and said, "You went into the house of **uncircumcised men** and ate with them." ... ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, **even to Gentiles** God has granted repentance that leads to life."

- How did the earth Christian movement struggle with racial diversity?
- Why were they able to overcome it?

— COMPASSION LIVING NOW —

Mark 12:28-31

²⁸ “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ **Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘**Love your neighbor** as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

- How does the first commandment **naturally lead to the** second commandment?
- How does the first commandment **empower us** to live the second commandment?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How does the diversity message of heaven speak to our current situation on earth?
- How can Christians bridge the barriers that exist in our world and help bring people together?
- Close in prayer by thanking God for giving each of us our distinctiveness.