

LEAD SHEET

ACTS : You Won't Believe This! - WK. 4

PETER & CORNELIUS

FEBRUARY 7, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

PERSONALIZE SCRIPTURE

If you want to know God better, memorize and apply His Word!

GETTING STARTED

General Discussion:

- Do you prefer spending time with people who are similar or dissimilar to you?
- How do you feel when you are in an unfamiliar culture?
- What do you think the Church's role is in unifying people who are different from each other?

We are going to learn about different people groups in the early Church and how the Gospel broke down some walls of division.

DIGGING IN

Read Acts 10:1-8

Discussion Questions:

1. Who do we meet in this passage?
(A man named Cornelius.)
2. Briefly describe this individual.
(A soldier, God-fearing, a good guy, a leader.)
3. What does the angel tell Cornelius to do?
(To send men to Joppa to retrieve Peter.)
4. Does Cornelius obey? Why or why not?
(Yes, immediately.)

Meanwhile, Peter is about to have a vision of his own.

Read Acts 10:9-23

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is Peter when he has his vision?
(On the rooftop praying.)

2. Where is Peter when he has his vision?
(A lot of animals and instructions to eat them.)

3. How does Peter react to the vision? *(He finds it objectionable because the animals are unclean, and Jewish law prohibits consuming unclean animals.)*

Jewish dietary laws were restrictive *(see Leviticus 11)*. Peter was obeying Jewish law; so his objection makes sense. What follows, given that background, is likely very confusing for him.

Discussion Questions (Continued):

4. What does the voice say to him in verse 15?
(Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.)

5. How many times does this same thing happen?
(Three times.)

6. This vision occurs three times. Do you think Peter remembers denying Christ three times? Do you think he remembers Jesus asking him three times if Peter loved Him? *(Allow for discussion.)*

7. Does Peter understand the vision? *(No, see verse 17.)*

8. As Peter ponders his vision, who shows up?
(The men Cornelius sent.)

9. How many men did Cornelius send? *(Again, it's three. There is something to that number.)*

10. Does Peter honor their request to return to Caesarea with them? *(Yes, he does. He goes the next day.)*

Read Acts 10:24-48

Discussion Questions:

1. Who goes with Peter? (*Other Christians from Joppa.*)
2. How does Cornelius greet Peter? (*He bows at Peter's feet—Peter asks him to stop, as he is just a man.*)
3. Is Cornelius alone?
(*No, he is not. Many gathered with him.*)
4. What does Peter say to the group when he enters the house? (*You all know it's wrong for me to be here, but God showed me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.*)

Peter then asks why Cornelius sent for him.

Discussion Questions (Continued):

5. How does Cornelius answer? (*He describes the vision he had and said he is ready to listen to whatever God has instructed Peter to tell them.*)
6. What does Peter say? (*He connects his vision about the unclean animals with the recognition that God does not count any people as unclean, and then preaches for a long time about Jesus.*)
7. What miracle occurs as Peter speaks? (*The Holy Spirit comes upon the gathered Gentiles.*)
8. How do the gathered Jews feel about this? (*They are "astonished" that the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles.*)

It is hard for us to wrap our minds around this, but this whole thing is extraordinary. God spoke to Cornelius, a Gentile (non-Jew). He spoke to Peter, a Jew who surrendered to Jesus. The two of them, ordinarily, would not associate. Just like the dietary laws, Jews were forbidden to speak to Gentiles.

That God would supernaturally stamp the Gentiles by sending the same gift of tongues to them as He had given the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost is noteworthy and unprecedented. What happens next is even crazier!

Discussion Questions (Continued):

9. What does Peter declare in verse 47?

(That no one should interfere with the baptism of the Gentile believers.)

10. What else does Peter do?

(He stays with them for a few days.)

A huge barrier is knocked down—one that literally changes the course of history as Gentiles are accepted into the family of God. Again, it is hard for us to wrap our minds around this, but prior to this, Jews and Gentiles did not associate *at all*. It was taboo. Arguably, the greatest racism in the history of mankind.

MAKING IT REAL

Racism still exists in the Church today, and sometimes the Church refuses to talk about it. Today, we want to use this story as an inspiration—nothing should separate the people of God.

There are tons of passages in the Bible discussing God’s incapability of showing favoritism or partiality. I want to look at a few together now.

- **Romans 10:12**
- **John 13:34**
- **James 2:9**
- **Romans 2:11**
- **Colossians 3:10-11** • **Mark 12:31**
- **Galatians 2:15-16**

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the Bible says about racism? (*There is no place for it in the Church, we should not show favoritism, we should not avoid people who are different from us.*)

2. Why do you think God's people, historically, have participated in racism? (*Cultural differences, sin, ignorance, etc.*)

3. Do you think the early Church in Acts struggled with the same tensions we struggle with today? If so, which ones? (*Cultural differences; differences in perspective; pride; bigotry; etc.*)

4. How do you see racism in your world today? (*Allow students to share. There could be many perspectives.*)

5. Do you think the Church engages in these topics enough? Why or why not? (*Allow for discussion.*)

The Gospel should change every part of our lives. The Church should be active in every part of society. There should not be any topic that is off limits.

General Discussion:

- How would you like to see the Church take a more active role in the conversation about racism?

- Do you think churches should be separated by race? (*Allow for discussion.*)

- How can the Church eliminate racial barriers similar to those that existed in the story of Peter and Cornelius? (*Interact, serve, show respect for, spend time with, etc.*)

- Okay, now here's the difficult part: you are the Church. What is something you can do not just to identify the problem, but to elicit actual change—to be a part of the solution? (*Allow for discussion.*)

Challenge your students to answer definitively. Maybe it is learning about another culture. Maybe it is not engaging in racial jokes. Maybe it is to befriend a classmate of a different race. Maybe it is to serve in a community unlike theirs. Maybe it is to spend time with someone they do not know of a different culture. Next, challenge them to do it, letting them know you will be following up.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for one another to have the attitude of Peter, and the realization that God does not distinguish between races and nationalities. He wants all people to know Him.