

THE GENTILES WERE CONVERTED

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 10



The promise of the gospel is for all men.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Peter's vision – Cornelius, a Gentile soldier, received a vision of an angel telling him to send men to Joppa to get Peter. While these men traveled, Peter received a vision from the Lord concerning animals, both clean and unclean. Peter was commanded to kill and eat both the clean and unclean animals. Peter refused because Jews were commanded not to even touch unclean animals, much less eat them.

God repeated the command and told Peter not to call unclean those things that God has made clean. We learn from Peter's later account in Acts 11:10 that the vision and command came to Peter three times. Still, Peter did not understand. While Peter pondered the vision, the men sent by Cornelius arrived. The Spirit of God told Peter to go with them without hesitation. When the Gentiles invited Peter, a Jew, to go with them, Peter agreed.

Peter interprets the vision – When Peter arrived, Cornelius tried to worship him as if he was divine. But Peter refused, explaining to Cornelius that he was only a man. Peter goes on to explain the meaning of his vision to the people gathered there. Gentiles, formally considered to be unclean by God and to be avoided, are no longer to be considered unclean.

After sharing his story and his encounter with God, Cornelius asked Peter to share all that God had commanded. Peter realized that God had been speaking and directing Cornelius, a Gentile, just as God had directed Peter himself. He concluded and announced that God shows no partiality, but accepts men from every nation. Peter went on to freely share the gospel with those present.

The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles – While Peter preached the gospel, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word. They spoke in tongues just as the disciples did on the day of Pentecost. Peter described it this way in the next chapter: "The Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning," and "God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 11:15,17).

The gift of tongues became a regular occurrence in the church among believers.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

The gospel is clearly spoken by Peter in Acts 10:39-43. Even while Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, filled them, and gave them the gift of tongues.

Clearly what the apostle Paul wrote is true when he said in Romans 1:16-17, " ... it (the gospel) is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 53:6

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Peter said that all the prophets bore witness to Jesus. This is also true of the Psalms. In Psalm 53:6 we read that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion. This was a name given to Jerusalem from the days of David. Salvation, indeed, did come out of Zion. Jesus was crucified there.

Questions for reflection:

- When it says that all of Israel will be saved, how does that leave room for the Gentiles? (The true Israel of God includes many who are natural descendents of Abraham. But it is not limited to his natural descendants. And not all of Abraham's descendents inherit the promise. The blessing of salvation is reserved for those who have faith in the promise, like Abraham did. The true Israel of God is comprised of Jews and Gentiles who have put their faith in the promise of God's salvation, which came through Abraham's descendents. That salvation came through Jesus Christ, Abraham's promised seed [see Galatians 3:16].)
- Was Peter surprised that the Gentiles were included in God's plan of salvation? (Yes. It is easy to see how men like Peter were only thinking of the nation of Israel and not the Gentiles.)
- What Scriptures did men like Peter forget or not understand? (Peter forgot or just didn't understand many Scriptures. But primarily he forgot the very first covenant promises to Abraham where God told Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through him [see Genesis 12:3].)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

REMEMBER THE PROMISE

Supplies:

- a knife
- a jar of sand
- a star

Read through the story of Peter, his vision, and the salvation of Cornelius.

Then pull out the jar of sand. Sprinkle it on the table and ask the class to tell you how the sand relates to the story. The answer can be found in Genesis 22:11-18 in the story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. The sand represents the descendants God promised Abraham from all the nations of the world. Cornelius is one of those grains of sand. If the children cannot guess by the sand, show them the star. If they cannot guess from the star, show them the knife. Ask them if they can remember the passage from the Old Testament where God announced His promise to make a great nation. The knife is their clue.

Finish by taking them back to Genesis and reading the passage and God's promise. See if they can remember what the ram in the thicket represents. Jesus is the answer and the means by which God saves people from all nations and peoples.



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PARTIALITY

Supplies:

- a pair of dice
- a large bag of lollipops

The object of this exercise is to demonstrate what it means to show partiality. Then make the connection that God does not show partiality with regard to the Gospel and the plan of salvation.

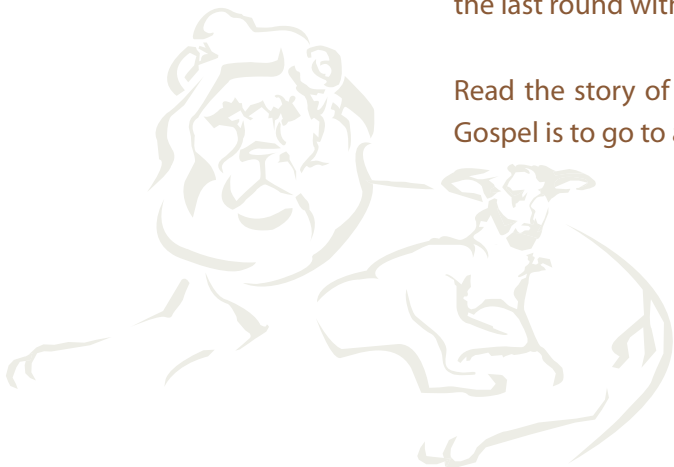
Call up a group of eight students who would like a lollipop. Explain to them that you are going to roll dice and give a lollipop to everyone except those who have the feature off the numbered list. Read to them the list.

1. Blank
2. Those with brown hair
3. Those with blonde hair
4. Those with black hair
5. Those with green eyes
6. Those with hazel eyes
7. Those with blue eyes
8. Those with brown eyes
9. Guys
10. Girls
11. Those with birthdays in between and including January- June
12. Those with birthdays in between and including July - December

Roll the dice and exclude all those represented by the number rolled. Give everyone else a lollipop. Draw out the class and ask them if what you are doing is impartial (fair) or partial (unfair)?

Give those who did not get a lollipop a second chance by allowing them to remain. Add additional students up front to make eight. Then roll the dice again. Do this until all the children have had an opportunity to come forward. If anyone is left at the last round without a lollipop, give them one.

Read the story of Peter's vision and how God was trying to teach Peter that the Gospel is to go to all men - men of every nation, both Jew and Gentile.



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CLEAN VS. UNCLEAN

Use this as an introduction to talk about Peter's dream. The animals on the following lists are not exhaustive but representative from Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

Clean

ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roe deer, wild goat, ibex, antelope, mountain sheep, sardines, peacock, pigeon, locust, katydid, cricket, grasshopper

Unclean

camel, rabbit, coney, pig, shark, catfish (shark and catfish are unclean because they don't have scales), eagle, raven, bat, bees, weasel, rat, and lizard

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Peter's vision. Review the list of unclean animals in Deuteronomy 14:4-20 and/or Leviticus 11.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

A HINT OF GOD'S PLAN

Supplies:

white board and markers

Divide the class up into four groups. Assign each of them a passage of scripture and have them discuss and present how their passage is a hint to Israel that God will save all people.

1. Genesis 22:17-18 - God's promise to Abraham to save people of every nation.
2. Joshua 2:1-14 and Joshua 6:17 – God spared Rahab the prostitute, even though she was a Gentile.
3. 1 Kings 17:8-16 – Elijah was not sent to an Israelite widow, but a Gentile one.
4. 2 Kings 5:1-14 – Naaman, a Gentile, is cleansed of leprosy while there were many Israelites with leprosy who were not cleansed.
5. Ruth 4:9-22 – Ruth, the Gentile, is redeemed by Boaz and becomes the grandmother of King David. Jesus would also be born in the line of David.

The most significant of these examples is that of Ruth. Jesus Himself has a Gentile past. Ruth, a Gentile, clearly served the God of Israel. God is interested in the heart, not the outward appearance. God, in Peter's dream, was exploding the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:12-14).

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Unclean – God began to refer to certain animals as unclean when He commanded Noah to take them into the ark (Genesis 7:2-8). In Deuteronomy 14:4-20 God listed certain animals to be unclean. The term unclean is also used to describe anything that touches these animals. Other prohibitions were called unclean. All animals already dead were unclean, and people with certain skin diseases were unclean (Leviticus 13:3).

God used this designation for two purposes. First, He wanted to protect Israel from animals that were not good for food or could more easily cause disease. In addition, God was setting up an illustration for the day when Peter would see his vision, and God would break through to the Gentiles with the Gospel.

