

Behavior

Lesson 3

Peter's Vision

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Begin with Prayer

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Peter's Vision

Acts 10:1-48

Memory Verse

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Romans 12:3 (The Message)

Lesson Goals

Learn that God wants us to change the way we think.
Learn that God wants us to be different because we are like Jesus.
Learn that what God says is more important than religious rules.

Behavior Focus Scripture

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:3 (The Message)

Bible Story

Read Acts 10:9-23 aloud.

Please note: This portion of the lesson is given to help in teaching the lesson. Please read through the story and read it in the Bible before teaching it. Do NOT read from this piece of paper. Instead, make a note sheet and place it next to the story in the Bible.

Welcome Time

Have you ever played a game that used rules? When you played with a different group they used different rules? How did you feel? What did you think? Today we are going to learn how the rules changed as God revealed His plan to one of the disciples.

The Jewish religion had very strict **rules** about what they could and could not eat. The things they could not eat were considered unclean. Leviticus 11 tells about the **rules** the Israelite people were to follow. The religious leaders made sure that the **rules** were known to the people. **Following the law** was very important to the Jews.

Those who were not of the Jewish religion were called Gentiles. The Jews did not hang out with Gentiles, because the Gentiles ate unclean food and **did not follow the rules** of the Jewish religion. It **was unlawful** for the Jews to hang out with the Gentiles.

One day, Peter went to pray on the roof. He was hungry. While he was there, he had a vision. A sheet was let down from heaven by its four corners. It had all kinds of animals, clean and unclean. Then a voice told Peter to get up and eat. But Peter refused saying that he had never eaten anything that was unclean (To eat something unclean was to **break the rules and disobey the law**). It happened three times and the sheet was taken back up to heaven.

Peter was thinking about the meaning of his strange vision. While he was trying to figure it out, the Spirit of God told him to go down and meet three men who were looking for him.

Cornelius prayed to God. Cornelius was a Roman centurion (he was a Gentile). He was a man who feared God. He helped the needy. One day he had a vision. In his vision Cornelius saw an angel. The angel told Cornelius that God knew about his kindness to the poor and had heard his prayers. The angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter. The angel informed Cornelius that Peter was staying with Simon, the tanner, and that Simon's house was by the sea in Joppa.

Week 3

Memorize:
Romans 12:9-13 (The Message)

Cornelius called two of his servants and a faithful soldier. He told them everything. He sent them to get Peter. They arrived just as Peter heard the voice telling him to go down because three men were looking for him. Peter invited the men to be his guests. Peter understood God's message. "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." (Acts 10:15) God intended for the gospel message to reach all people. He had to **change his way of thinking**. It was **unlawful** (against the rules) for Jews to associate with Gentiles. **Jesus' death and resurrection changed the rules**. Peter invited them in obedience to God.

Then Peter went to meet Cornelius. Cornelius had invited his friends and family to hear Peter. Peter preached the message of Christ to them. He told them that those who believed in Christ would be forgiven. While he was speaking the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. (Acts 10:44) Then Peter ordered that those who had believed should be baptized. (Acts 10:47)

Do you know Jesus? Peter had to **change his way of thinking**. He had to obey God and tell the Gentiles about the love of God. Peter told Cornelius and his guests that they had to believe in Jesus. They did. Have you ever invited Jesus into your heart? (Invited God to be a part of your life). Would you like to follow and obey God? Romans 10:9-10 tells us that we have to do two things: confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead.

Pray this prayer: Dear God, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for my sins. Thank you that He has risen from the dead; and because He lives I can have a personal relationship with you. Please forgive my sins. Please come be a part of my life and help me to **change my way of thinking**.

Review:

- 1. What did the Jewish religion and culture teach about clean and unclean animals?** (the Jews could not eat anything unclean, it was unlawful)
- 2. What did the Jewish religion and culture teach about Gentiles?** (it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with a Gentile)
- 3. What did God say to Peter?** (Do not call anything unclean, that God has called clean)
- 4. Explain that God's plan was for everyone to know Jesus, including Gentiles.** For many years the Jews had been God's chosen people. They were God's special people and He was **their** God. The observance of God's law was stressed by the religious leaders. Jews were to be different. Different meant that they were not to associate with non-Jews. God intended for everyone to know Him. When He sent Jesus to die on the cross it was for **all men**. **This changed the rules**.

Pray

Pray that God will help you to change the way you think.
Pray that God will help you to be different because you are like Jesus.
Pray that God will help you understand that what God says is more important than religious rules.

Challenge:

The Jewish religion and culture were very strict about what the Jews could and could not eat. The Jews believed that they could not be around those who were not Jews. They thought it would somehow separate them from God. In time, their religion and culture made them feel that non-Jews were beneath them. Prejudice is not an uncommon thing. Unfortunately, it doesn't make sense. People can be very cruel. God wants us to be different. Talk about prejudice. Pray that God will help you with any prejudice. We are all God's creation. We become God's children when we believe in Jesus and invite God to be a part of our lives. Live in such a way that people will know that you **love all people** because of God's love. Write down any changes (in your behavior and attitudes) in your prayer journal.

Application:

God wants us to **see everyone as people who need God's love and mercy**. God wants everyone to know His forgiveness. Let God change the way you think.

Planning Ahead:

Barnabas is a Friend
Acts 13:1-13;15:36-41

End with
Prayer

Hands On Activities
For
Peter's Vision

Memorize: Romans 12: 3 (The Message). Put the verse on a chalk board or poster. If you use a chalk board erase the words in the verse one at a time to practice. If you use a poster, cover the words with index cards until they are all covered.

Prayer journal: Work on your prayer journal. Write down what God has said to you about your attitude toward following the rules. What has God said to you about people who are different? Write down what you need to change. Ask God to help you.

Create several teams. Ask the children secretly and individually to make the noise of a certain animal. Ask them to begin making the noises at the same time. Ask them to find those who are making the same animal noise that they are making. Ask the children to talk about differences. Tell them God loves us all the same. Tell them God wants us to love everyone and find what is good about them.

Create pictures of fruit. Assign each child to a fruit group. Tell the children what is good about each fruit. Example: oranges are sweet and juicy; bananas are smooth, apples are chewy, strawberries smell good, cantaloupe is wonderful. Talk about differences in people. Tell the children it is important to love everyone.

Create tic-tac-toe for the children. Ask the children to call the number "one or two" in the order they are seated. Separate all the children who called out number "two." Tell them secretly that they are to play so that they can let their teammate win. They are to intentionally lose. Tell them that losers will get a special recognition. (Give losers a sticker.) Talk about how the children felt. Talk about changing the way you think. Tell the children that Peter had to change the way he thought.

Play musical chairs. Tell the children that in this game the rules will change. The first time if two children arrive at the same time they will both get to stay. The second time (ask a child ahead of time to give up his seat and ask another child to remain standing) if someone is standing another child may give him his chair. The third time (ask a child ahead of time to remain standing and then say, "I still want to play," and allow it) if one child remains standing he may continue playing if he asks to do so (you may want to instruct one or two to do this). Talk about what it was like to have the rules change. Tell the children that Peter had to deal with a change in the rules.

Play a copycat game. Assign four leaders but don't let the others know. Instruct the leaders ahead of time. Then assign the children to one of the four groups. Ask questions about the Bible story but only ask the four leaders that you have assigned in advance to answer. Be sure to give the leaders high praise. You may want to use a special code (only the leaders will know) that means cross your legs. Say, "Ok, let's see the next question." Whether they answer correctly or not say, "Good try," (if incorrect) or "good answer," (if correct). Let this be the code for uncrossing their legs. Have the leaders sit down with their legs crossed. See how many children sit the same way. Have the leaders tell the other children to sit the same way. Next instruct the leaders to uncross their legs (use secret code). See how many children do the same things. Tell the children you had assigned four leaders. Ask the children how many crossed their legs because the leaders did it. Ask how many uncrossed their legs because the leaders did it. Tell the children that we should want to copy Jesus. We should want to be like Him. We should want to do what He wants us to do.

**Don't become
so well-adjusted
to your culture
that you
fit into it
without
even thinking.
Romans 12:3
(The Message)**

Romans 12: 9-13 (The Message)

**Love from the center of who you are;
don't fake it.**

**Run for dear life from evil;
hold on for dear life to good.**

**Be good friends who love deeply;
practice playing second fiddle.**

**Don't burn out;
keep yourselves fueled and aflame.**

**Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully
expectant.**

**Don't quit in hard times; pray all the
harder.**

**Help needy Christians; be inventive in hos-
pitality.**

Romans 12: 9-13 The Message