



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Acts 10:9-35

Ephesians 2:13-18

Session Theme:

Welcome

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Food for Thought

Bring a variety of foods to class. These might include items from several food groups, such as fruit, cheese, cookies or crackers, etc. Ask kids if there are any foods here that they think someone may not eat. Explain that vegans would likely avoid the cheese (if made from milk), pure carnivores may not eat the fruit, and diabetics may be leery of the cookies or crackers. Are there any foods the kids, themselves, would avoid? Why or why not?

Different people often eat different foods. Their reasons may be personal, cultural, or health-related. But no matter how diverse our backgrounds, we are all fellow human beings, loved by God. Is there anything that can unite us? Let's find out what Peter learned about this in today's Bible story!

c. Opening Prayer

Gracious God, no matter how different people may seem on the outside, you know their hearts. Help us to be welcoming to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (children's song)
- "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Service

The believers of the early Church cared for each other and took care of one another's needs. They met together in Scripture and prayer and lived their lives in love and service to their neighbors. Simon wanted to use God's power in a self-serving way, rather than for others.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level:

Children: Read aloud the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read aloud Scripture from the Bible

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Pre-Readers: Coloring Page and Activity

Elementary: Children's Pages (Worksheet and Drama)

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Pre-Readers: Teacher leads a simple prayer

Children: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Acts 10:9-35

1. Read Deuteronomy 14:3-20. In the Law of Moses, what were some of the animals that Jewish people were not allowed to eat? Why do you think that God would have given his people such rules?

The Israelites were forbidden to eat animals that ate carrion, the flesh of other animals, or feces. The unclean animals were more likely to carry disease and make the people ill. Perhaps more importantly, the practice of eating certain foods and not others would have set God's people apart from other nations and was an outward sign of their obedience to God.

2. Read Mark 7:14-20. In this passage, what did Jesus tell his disciples? How was he helping them (and us) understand the true nature of sin? If not food, what is it that Jesus says makes us "unclean"?

Jesus said that it is what comes out of a person's heart that defiles him, not what he eats. Sin is something which comes from tainted sinful nature (inside us). Sin is not something like external mud or dirt that gets on us by accident. Sin comes from within. It is our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds which make us unclean.

3. Read the lead-up to today's story in Acts 10:1-8. Who was Cornelius? What was his job and position? How does the Bible describe his character?

Cornelius was a Roman military officer, a centurion. (The Latin word "century" means 100; centurions commanded a company of 100 soldiers.) Even though Cornelius was not a Jew, he respected the Jewish religion and people. The Bible describes him as a devout man, who feared God, gave generously, and prayed continually.

4. Why do you think most Jewish people would have been suspicious of Cornelius or would have been cautious about meeting him?

At the time, the Roman Empire was a foreign power in control of Judea. The soldiers of the Roman legions were an occupying military force. Unfortunately, many Roman leaders and soldiers abused and oppressed those over whom they ruled. Since Cornelius was a Roman leader, the Jewish people would have been cautious about his motives.

5. What did the voice tell Peter in Acts 10:15? How does today's story show that God was not just talking about different kinds of food, but about different kinds of people?

The voice from heaven said: "What God has made clean, do not call common." The example that God provided was the distinction between clean and unclean animals, but God was preparing Peter to meet Cornelius and the Gentile believers like him.

Most Jews would not enter the house of a Gentile for fear of becoming ceremonially unclean, but this is exactly where Jesus was sending Peter. This was the beginning of God's salvation in Christ being extended to people beyond the Jewish nation.

6. Read Acts 10:34-35. How would you describe what is meant by "not showing partiality" (v. 34)? In what way is this a matter of fairness and equal opportunity? How is this different from simply saying "all people are equal"?

God does not discriminate against people based on their heritage or culture. God welcomes all who answer his call to follow him. This is not to say that there are no differences between people, or that all people are equal (in terms of rich and poor, wise or foolish, etc.), but that we treat all people with dignity and integrity, regardless of how they may differ. To say that "God shows no partiality" means that God is fair and just. His love is not based on who we are, but on who he is. God is willing and able to save people that we don't think are worthy.

7. Read the follow-up to this story in Acts 10:44-48. How did the Holy Spirit confirm God's will for the Gentiles? Why was this so important for the early church?

The Holy Spirit descended upon these Gentiles before they were baptized. Receiving the Holy Spirit was associated with baptism and faith (being proclaimed a child of God). The gift of the Spirit impressed upon those Jewish Christians who were present that the Gentiles had also been made God's children, were a part of God's plan for his kingdom, and were welcome in it.

8. Read Ephesians 2:13-18. According to these verses, what did Christ accomplish? How does this change the way we treat one another?

In fulfilling the Law, Jesus made it possible for those who were not under the Law to be brought into his people. All who are brought into Christ through baptism are one in him, and all are saved by Christ's work, and not by works of the Law. Because of this, we treat each other based on who we are in Christ, and not on who we are according to the standards of the world.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Class Welcome Sign Craft

For all children

Materials Needed:

- Poster board or large piece of paper
- Pencils
- Markers or nontoxic acrylic paints
- If using paints: cups of water, paintbrushes, paper towels

Instructions:

Today's story is about welcoming others into the family of faith. Sometimes those people may seem very different from us, as Peter experienced with Cornelius the centurion. Nonetheless, regardless of what we see, God knows people's hearts.

For this activity, kids will make a large welcome sign to welcome visitors to the class. Those visitors may be friends, or relatives, or anyone from the church.



To make the sign, do the following:

In the center of the poster, use a pencil to write "Welcome!" in large, block letters.

Still using pencil, invite kids to either trace their hand or draw a Christian symbol. These drawings should go around the center words as a frame. (See illustration.)

In marker or paint, trace over the words. You might invite one artistic student to do this, or ask each child to trace over one letter, or if your class is quite young, do it yourself.

Next, have kids trace over their handprint or make a symbol using the same medium as for the letters (markers or paint).

Let the poster dry, if needed, and hang it outside the classroom or on the door.

Activity 2: Peter's Vision Game

For all children

Materials Needed:

- Large area to play a game
- Paper
- Markers
- Tape

Instructions:

Give each kid a piece of paper and a marker.

Divide the class into four groups. One group is cows, another pigs, another birds, and the other sheep.

Invite everyone to write the name of their animal category on the front side of their paper.

Next, give kids a piece of tape and show them how to make a loop with the sticky side out. Press this onto the back side of the paper.

Ask the entire class to grab their paper and stand in a square, with groups mixed together (for example, a bird member may stand beside a sheep member). Invite them to imagine they are all animals on the cloth that Peter saw in his vision.

Once the square is formed, have kids take their papers and press them to the floor under their feet. The tape should help the papers stay in place.

Choose one person to be Peter and to stand in the middle of the square.

Peter calls out one of the animal groups (for example, "Cows!"). When that happens, all of the kids in that group leave their spots and quickly go to another empty spot in the square. Peter also tries to take someone's place in the square.

If Peter succeeds, whoever has no spot to stand will be the next Peter and repeat the process for the next round.



Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Two animals are pictured near the top of the page:

- Jews were allowed to eat mutton (lamb meat).
- Jews were not allowed to eat pork (pig meat).

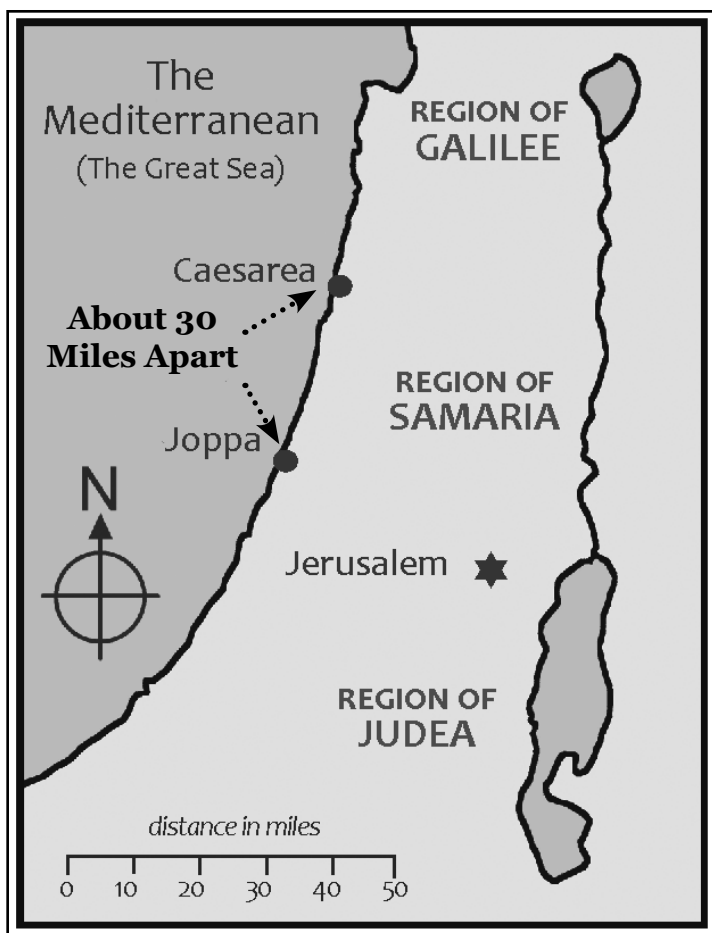
Bible Verse: Acts 10:15

- "What God has made clean, do not call common."
- "In the New Testament,
Jews and Gentiles were able to be friends!"

Word Definitions:

- Understand = to come to learn the way things are and why
- Partiality = to play favorites, or to be unfair based on who you like better
- Nation = a group of people from a certain country or land
- Fear = in the Bible this word means to respect and obey
- Acceptable = considered to be right or okay, something that is not rejected

Map Answer Key:



Reflection for the Week Ahead

Often in life, we are aware of the ways we don't fit in with others, but we don't notice the things we actually do have in common. When we share faith in God and a desire to do right, as in today's story, we have a solid starting point. Regardless of skin color, or food preferences, or age differences, or backgrounds, there may be more uniting us than we know.

Peter learned this in today's Bible story. There were many reasons for him to avoid the centurion, both cultural and political. Yet God wanted Peter to welcome the man, who had a good and faithful heart. How can we do the same thing in our own lives?

Talk to each other about these questions:

Have you ever been surprised by someone who seemed very different from you, yet shared your faith? When?

How can we welcome new people into our church or Sunday school? What is one specific thing we can do to help someone feel comfortable here?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer asking God to give you the presence of mind to recognize an opening to talk about him and the courage to carry through.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.

A: _____

D: _____

T: _____

R: _____

C: _____