



# WITHOUT FAVORITISM

Disciples & Early Church • U2# 2 1st-3rd Gr. • July 21, 2024

## Concept

God offers love and forgiveness to all people without favorites.

## Goal

Students will learn that God doesn't have favorites, and that he wants us to love all people and tell them about Jesus.

## Passage

Acts 10

Key Verse: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism..."Acts 10:34 (NIV)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b>Learning Activity #2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 sets of 9 "My Favorite. . ." cards</li> </ul> <p><b>Lesson:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costumes for Peter and Cornelius</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity Station:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Bible the Really Interesting Bits!, Brian Delf</i></li> <li>• White bed sheet</li> <li>• Printed images of "unclean" animals, 3 sets of images/CT class</li> <li>• Scissors</li> <li>• Markers</li> <li>• Tape</li> </ul>

### \*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

# Background Information (for the teacher)

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The particular event of Peter and Cornelius would never have happened if God hadn't persuaded Peter that His mission was always to share the gospel with ALL people. Because Peter responded to God and went to the home of Cornelius, the gospel was received and Gentiles were saved, much to the astonishment of the Jewish believers. Acts 10 is ultimately an account of the crossing of ethnic and religious barriers in order to share Christ with all people. "Though Peter was not by training or inclination an overly scrupulous Jew, and though as a Christian his inherited prejudices were gradually wearing thin, he was not prepared to go so far as to minister directly to Gentiles. A special revelation was necessary for that, and Luke now tells how God took the initiative in overcoming Peter's reluctance... Peter's shock and repugnance are expressed in his words: 'Surely not, Lord.' Peter was scandalized by the unholy mixture of clean and unclean and by the fact that no distinctions were made in the command to 'kill and eat.' Indeed, it was a command given him by one he acclaimed as 'Lord'...The particular application had to do with nullifying Jewish dietary laws for Christians in accord with Jesus' remarks on the subject in Mark 7:17-23. But Peter was soon to learn that the range of the vision's message extended much more widely, touching directly on Jewish-Gentile relations as he had known them and on those relations in ways he could never have anticipated. Three times this interchange took place, with the message being three times indelibly impressed on Peter's subconscious." [1]

As our society becomes increasingly fragmented and hostile in terms of culture and race, it is extremely important to ground our children in the mission and desire to share the love of Christ with all people. We need to help the children develop a vision for who they can become in the world Christian movement. The story of Peter and Cornelius holds timeless relevance to the church, which is often focused on a religious desire to "stay clean." We must guard against our natural tendency to view those "in the world" as the enemy to be avoided rather than "as the objects of God's love, whom His saving will is seeking to reach." [2] "If we only knew God and His love how we would look on every man we see as one upon whom that love rests and for whom it longs. We would begin to wonder about the mystery of grace that has taken up the Church as the body of Christ, as a partner in the great work of making that love known, and rendered itself dependent upon its faithfulness. And, we would see that all who live to do God's will must believe this to be its central glory: our doing the will that wills that all men should be saved." [3]

[1] The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol.9, Frank E. Gaebelin, the Zondervan Publishing Corp., 1991, pp. 387-388.

[2] God's Will: Our Dwelling Place, Andrew Murray, ©1982, Whitaker House, p. 127.

[3] Ibid, p. 126.

### **Activity Stations**

- **Craft – “Unclean Foods” from Leviticus 11**
  - **Instructions:** Use the provided bed sheet, printed images and drawing paper to make a prop for the Lesson. Explain that the Jewish law didn't allow the Jews to eat anything with pork, shellfish or reptile. (Has anyone ever eaten a snake? They say it tastes just like chicken!) Have children choose a picture/pictures of unclean food to color and cut out. Have them tape their pictures to the sheet.
- **Research**
  - **Instructions:** Look at pages 30-31 of “The Bible the Really Interesting Bits!” with the students. Tell the students that God gave the Jewish people dietary laws to follow when He first established them as the nation of Israel. His purpose in giving them laws and setting them apart from other nations was that they would show others His great character and love. But they blew it because they thought God set them apart because they were better than others. When Jesus came to earth He cancelled those dietary laws (look at Mark 7:14-16) and made it clear that He came to earth for ALL people.

### **Skit – “What’s Wrong?” presented by Drama Team**

Let's return to our classrooms.

In Jesus' time, there were two very different groups of people. One group of people was the Jews and the other group, those who were not Jews, was called Gentiles. The Jews and Gentiles celebrated different holidays, wore different clothes, ate different food. They were very different from each other. Most Gentiles worshipped the king of the country and believed there were many gods who existed to make their lives go the way they wanted them to. They followed only rules made by the king.

The Jews and some God-fearing Gentiles, however, worshipped the God of the Bible. Jesus and His disciples were Jewish and lived by the laws given in the Old Testament. In those laws there were some rules about what the Jews should and shouldn't eat. They weren't to eat a lot of the things that you colored in the Activity Station – no lobster or shrimp, no bacon, no ham sandwiches or pork chops. To the Jews, this was food that would make them unclean. They thought that if they ate certain foods they would become unclean and no longer be God's favorites. To them, the idea of eating a pig was as bad as the idea of rolling around in horse poop. Yuck!

## Introduction Continued

Not only did they believe that certain foods were unclean, but some Jewish people believed that Gentile people were unclean. They believed that a good Jewish person should have little to do with Gentiles because the Gentiles would make them spiritually dirty! This is kind of like having spiritual cooties. So let's find out what happened when God told a Jewish person to go into the home of a Gentile person!

## Transition

Let's use the sheet we made in the Activity Station as we read about the time Peter learned that God doesn't have favorites.

## Lesson Lg. Group

**Drama – Acts 10 performed by the teachers (and/or student assistants)**

**Instructions:** Lay the sheet made in the Activity Station on the floor with the pictures facing the ceiling. Have the students equally spaced around all sides of the sheet and Peter kneeling beside the sheet. The students will hold the sheet up over Peter. When the narrator reads about his vision they will lower the sheet to the ground so Peter can look in.

***Drama is attached at the end.***

## Transition

Now that you know about Peter and Cornelius, we are going to split into teams and play a game.

## Learning Activity# 2 Sm. Groups

**Game – Charades**

**Instructions:** Divide the class into small groups. Each team will sit together. The teacher will choose the team to go first. The first player will pull a "My favorite << >> is" card out of the bag, read it and first pantomime the category, i.e., food, time of year. Once the team guesses the category, the player will pantomime his/her favorite thing in that category. Each player will be given three minutes from the time he/she pulls the card out of the bag. His/her team will receive one point for each correct guess made within the three-minute time limit. If the player's team does not get the right answers, an opposing team can have one guess after the three-minute time limit. The opposing teams will receive 2 points for each correct guess.

## Transition

Stay in your teams to form small groups.

## Learning Activity# 3 Sm. Groups

- **So, what do you think God wanted to teach Peter?** (He loves all people.) We all have favorites – favorite foods, favorite TV shows, favorite colors, and even favorite people. Even though Peter thought God had favorite people he finally realized "... how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34, 35).

## Learning Activity#3 Continued

- **Why do you think God had to show Peter the sheet with the food on it three times?** (Peter didn't get it the first or second time. So Peter would believe that God really wanted him to go into a Gentile home to tell them about Jesus.) Even though Jesus had told them that He wanted all people to know God, the disciples still believed that they were the favorite people, the only ones that God loved. But God finally convinced Peter. Peter said, "... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism..." (Acts 10:34).
- **Since God wants to be friends with all people, what do you think are the most important things we can do in this life?** (To love God and others.) First we need to be friends with God and choose to love Him. Then the Holy Spirit will help us to love other people like God loves us. Are there certain people you don't like? Do you think these people need someone to tell them that God loves them? God loves everyone just the same, even the "bad" guys. He loves all people regardless of their age, hair color, where they are from, what color skin they have or whether they are good or bad. So, like Peter, it is important for us to be willing to be friends with all people and tell them about Jesus.

**Missions Prayer:** Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray now. As we pray for others to know Jesus, let's pray for opportunities to love all people, even those who are different from us. Let's ask God to help us learn to love all people.

## Optional Activity

### Sing the Love Round

Love, love, love, love.  
Christians this is your call:  
Love your neighbor as yourself,  
For God loves us all!

**Characters:**

Narrator/reader (teacher)

Peter (teacher)

Cornelius (teacher)

**Narrator:** Today we're going to learn about how God convinced a Jewish man, Peter, that He loves every person the same. This then convinced Peter to tell the Gentiles about Jesus. Peter went up to the roof to pray. He was hungry, but while waiting for food to be prepared, he fell into a trance.

*Peter get down on knees next to the children & the children hold the sheet above him with the food facing the ceiling.*

**Narrator:** He saw Heaven opening above him, and a great sheet descending to the Earth containing every sort of animal and bird. 'Eat, Peter, eat,' said a voice.

*Children lower sheet to floor.*

**Peter:** You've got to be kidding. NO way! I've never eaten any of that unclean stuff like the Gentiles eat.

**Narrator:** Then a voice said, "Don't call anything unclean that I have made clean." Two more times Peter saw the sheet descend and then it was taken back to heaven.

*Children raise and lower sheet two more times then sit down around the sheet.*

**Narrator:** Peter was wondering what this meant when three men came to his door. They wanted to take him to Cornelius' house. Cornelius was a Gentile who loved God. Then Peter understood what this vision was all about. He knew that God wanted him to go with these men to Cornelius' house. When he arrived, Cornelius, his family and friends were waiting for Peter. When Peter entered the house, Cornelius fell down on his knees before Peter. And Peter made him get up.

**Peter:** Stand up, I am only a man myself.

**Cornelius:** We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.

**Peter:** ... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

**Narrator:** Then Peter told Cornelius, his family and friends that Jesus came to this earth, died on the cross and was raised from the dead. Before He went back to heaven He told His disciples to go into all the world to tell all people that their sin can be forgiven. When Cornelius, his family and friends heard this wonderful news, they asked Jesus to forgive their sin and at that moment they became members of God's family. When Peter finally understood that God loved all people and didn't have any favorites, he said, "... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism..." (Acts 10:34). God wants to have a friendship with all people, the Jews and the Gentiles. God does not show favoritism because He loves all people. All people are sinful and need God's forgiveness to be His friend. We can never be good enough to earn His forgiveness. But God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for our sin. When we can ask Him to forgive us, He does. And He brings us into His family.