

Acts 10:9-48

First Century Foodies?

Learning Objectives

- To remind ourselves that the Gospel is an invitation that has been extended to everyone.
 - Seek out areas where we might have misinterpreted the purpose of scripture and try to discover the Lord's larger truths.
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Pray for your time together as a group.

Icebreaker Question

? (optional, in place of game) When's the last time you felt like your world got turned upside down?

Icebreaker Game: Action Telephone

Leader's Note: The objective of this activity is to illustrate how Israel's misinterpretation of God's law caused them to act in seriously misdirected ways. We hope to highlight that God's revelation to Peter was not creating a new rule but clarifying His original will for all people.

Rules: Have everyone number off and leave the room except two people. (If you don't want people to leave the room, you could have everyone close their eyes until their number is called.) Have the first person make up a command and whisper it into the ear of the second person (like: hop on one foot while twirling an invisible lasso). Now have the third person come back into the room (or open their eyes), and have the second person act out what they were told without talking. Now the third person will have to whisper to the fourth person what they think the original command was without acting it out. Continue this process all through your group. The fourth person will act out the command for the fifth person and the fifth person will describe the command to the sixth based on what they saw, etc. After the game is done. Tell the group what the original command was. Laugh.

Ask the Group: This activity was designed to highlight the idea of misinterpretation. How do you think we sometimes misinterpret God's commands in our lives?

Possible Answers: Because the Bible was written at a different time and to a different culture it is easy to sometimes misunderstand the true intention behind God's commands. We sometimes allow our current culture to skew what we see in scripture. We often put too much stock in our feelings and desires rather than what we know to be true. We may take scripture out of context and apply it to many different situations as a way of having black and white answers concerning how to please God. We can also water down God's commands by saying they don't apply to our lives today.

Read Out Loud: Previously In Acts

The book of Acts shows how the Holy Spirit – working through early Christians – helped spread the Gospel and build the global church. However, in those early years, those first followers were predominantly Jews who interpreted Jesus’ teachings through a Jewish lens. In fact, in the world’s eyes, Christianity was seen as a sect of Judaism, not too different from the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. But, as we’ll see, Acts 10 is where Jewish Christians began to understand that Christianity was accessible to all. The first part of Acts 10 introduces us to Cornelius, a powerful military leader of Rome with a strong faith and a rich desire to know more about Christ. He receives a vision from God telling him to send the men of his household to Joppa, where they will find one of Jesus’ disciples, a man named Simon Peter. However, around the same time, Peter is receiving his own special vision...

Read Out Loud: Acts 10:9-48 (NIV)

Peter went up on the roof to pray.¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.¹³ Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

¹⁴ “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate.¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you.²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

²² The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.”²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along.

²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.²⁶ But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.²⁸ He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

³⁰ Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was

good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people

and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

? Peter’s dream about animals on a sheet sounds a little crazy. Based on Peter’s comment in verse 14, how did Peter initially interpret the dream?

Possible Answers: It’s hard to say exactly what Peter initially understood from the

A Hyrax By Any Other Name (Rock Badger) Would Still Smell Unclean

Leviticus 11 documents God’s directions to the Israelites concerning their dietary restrictions.

Verses 44-45 outline God’s reasoning behind the commands: “For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

“God claims the right to speak to every area of our life, including what we eat. He had the right to tell Israel what to eat and what not to eat. One great purpose of the dietary laws of Israel was to sanctify – to set them apart – from other nations. It made fellowship with those who did not serve God far more difficult.” -David Guzik

<http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0311.htm>

Act 10 reveals that the Jews are no longer under these laws. This doesn’t mean that God has changed since the Old Testament, rather Jesus came into the world to provide us with a cleansing that no dietary routine could have ever accomplished – superseding the Jewish food laws.

dream. But it seems that he may have thought he was being tested by God.

? We don't always instantly understand God when He speaks to us, so how should we go about seeking His truths and interpreting Him correctly?

Possible Answers: Continue to listen to God and obey his commands, just as Peter did when he followed the three men who came to his door. Continue to seek the Holy Spirit in prayer and study scripture to see if your interpretation of a dream or thought aligns with the Bible. Seek wise counsel from mentors and other Gospel friends. Do a God's will Bible study with your small group ☺

? Verse 23 is often overlooked, but what could be the significance of Peter's inviting Cornelius' men into his house as guests? (Hint: Look at verse 28)

Possible Answers: While no specific law forbade interaction with a Gentile, the purity laws in the OT often forced a Jew to limit interaction with Gentiles. By obeying God's call to "go with" the men at the door, Peter eventually gained a clearer idea of the true meaning of his dream. In this case, obedience lead to better understanding.

? After visiting Cornelius, what added insight does Peter gain about his dream and how does verse 34 show that his view of the Gospel has changed?

Possible Answers: Peter's understanding of his dreams seems to evolve slowly: from his first exclamation, "Surely not, Lord!", to visiting Cornelius in his home, to see Cornelius and his family receive the signs of the Holy Spirit. Peter has learned that his dream wasn't simply about food but about the whole concept surrounding clean and unclean practices. Although it was a radical shift in how Peter viewed the path to salvation, he acknowledges in verse 34 that even those outside Jewish law have access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

? What are the similarities between verses 44-48 and the story of Pentecost described in Acts 2:1-12?

Possible Answer: Much like with Cornelius' family, God fearing Jews from every nation starting speaking tongues and declaring the wonders of God. In both situations, the combination of tongues and praising the Lord was a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence. As a Roman and a military leader, Cornelius would have been at the top of many Jews' most hated list. However, this replay of Pentecost is a clear message from God that Jesus's atonement is for all people, not just those who practice Judaism.

? Just as the Jews struggled with religious elitism in the first century, do you feel that we, as Christians, struggle with certain prejudices today?

Possible Answers: Some Christians are tempted to condemn anyone who does not hold to the very specific doctrine that they follow. Sometimes we disengage or even condemn those who actively practice

immoral behavior. We can also look down on those within our own community who we don't think are living up to our "proper" standards of Christian behavior. As Christians we often times don't accept someone's new faith until we see better behavior.

For Discussion and Accountability

? How might the Gospel be challenging you to change your behavior towards certain members or groups of society?

? Reflect on how God has continued to reveal Himself to you over time. Be encouraged! How can you continue to pursue a richer understanding of His desires?

? What "dietary restrictions" are you tempted to uphold in order to be right with God? How does that contrast to the Gospel and God's actual call to grace?