

Peter's Vision

Acts 10:9-16

MEMORY VERSE

ACTS 10:15b

"What God has cleansed you must not call common."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Tape and paper plates.

A large sheet of paper, magazines, scissors and paste.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Is It in the Word?

Make a 4' square with tape in the floor. Have the children use paper plates as Frisbees and let them try to get them in the square on the floor. If it makes it in, they win, if not they lose.

Explain that God's Word is our "IN." If a lesson or concept is in the Word of God, it is true; if it is not, it is false, no matter what the world says about it. There are many things we accept as fact because of our tradition, but if it's not from God's Word it must be re-evaluated. Everything that we think or do needs to line up with God's Word.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever thought something was right, only to find out later that it really was not right at all. Maybe you had good intentions and were trying to do the right thing, but really it was not. The Lord sometimes teaches us valuable lessons this way. He sometimes has to do things in our lives to cause us to think about why we do the things we do. An important question that we have to ask ourselves in anything we do is, “What does the Bible say about this?”

In our story today, the Lord is going to teach the apostle Peter a valuable lesson about His desire to reach the whole world with the gospel. Peter was raised a certain way and had to “unlearn” some thing so that he could be used more by God. He had to learn that God’s word and plans are more important than traditions.

Through prayer, Peter learned that in God’s kingdom, people are more important than tradition. The Gospel of Jesus fulfilled the law. To show Peter that God wants to reach all people, including the Gentiles, Peter would receive a heavenly vision. **The standard of God is more important than the traditions of men.**

ACTS 10:9

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

Peter was near the city of Caesarea and he wanted to spend some time talking to God. Much was happening with the early church, so finding a quiet place to pray was probably a real blessing to Peter.

Rooftops in the Middle East were used as a storage place. In the city of Jericho, the roof of Rahab was used for hiding spies (Joshua 2:6). The Middle Eastern people stored the stalks of flax used to make linen and linseed oil on their roofs. Most homes had limited space with little or no yards.

In Daniel 6:10 we read that on his roof chamber, facing Jerusalem, Daniel prayed three times a day. He knew how important it was to start out each day with God by his side.

It is always good for us to pray. We see that Peter is praying around noon time. The Bible says that we should always be in an attitude of prayer. We are able to talk to God when we pray. Praying is a good habit for us to develop. God showed something very important to Peter while he was praying one day.

ACTS 10:10-11

Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

The preparation for a meal would take some time, since everything was fresh, and gathered daily in the market. As Peter was praying, the Holy Spirit started to move within him. In a vision he beheld something lowered to him from the opening sky.

In the Bible we see at different times that God uses dreams to speak things to people. He chose to use a dream to communicate something very important to Peter. Let's see what God wanted to show Peter.

ACTS 10:12-13

In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

Peter saw things on this sheet that would cause him to become ceremonially unclean according to his Jewish custom. Just having the vision of such animals probably aroused fear in his heart.

The Old Testament shows us how God had separated His people from other nations. He did not want them to participate in the practices of other nations. In Leviticus 11 we read about the things God declared unclean and how He did not want anything of these unclean things around His people.

By the time Jesus was on earth, these practices were no longer acts of obedience to a personal God, but rather ceremonial practices used to establish self-righteousness. Many of the priests and religious leaders had added on a lot of their own ideas to God's Word. That is what tradition is. This had also become a way and means for the religious leaders to become rich, as the sacrifices the people tried to bring to God were rejected for ones provided by the temple vendors at a high price. **The standard of God is more important than the traditions of men.**

In other words, what God was asking Peter to do would be considered “unlawful.” It may have seemed like a contradiction to Peter. But God was now offering salvation found in His son Jesus to the entire world. For the gospel to spread the Jews that were becoming Christians would have to break out of their tradition and share the gospel with the Gentiles. God is more concerned with a personal relationship with us than He is in rules and regulations.

Peter’s Picnic

Use a very large sheet of paper to represent the sheet in Peter’s vision. Let the children cut out pictures from magazines representing the people of every race and kindred and glue them to the large sheet.

Explain how the gospel was to the Jew first, but God also intended it for the Gentiles; this was something the first century Jew could hardly even imagine, even though it was prophesied. God used the unclean food to give Peter a message about spreading the good news of Jesus.

ACTS 10:14-16

But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Peter’s response to this vision was born out the tradition of his people. All he could see when he looked at this vision was un-holiness and un-cleanliness. The Lord was doing this in order to show him that the Gentiles can be saved also, even though it went against his tradition.

Peter knew that these animals came from God. Now Peter was going to learn the truth of Titus 1:15, “To the pure all things are pure.” Everything we receive from the Lord is pure. Titus 1:15 goes on to explain that evil comes from inside us; man is born with it. Even our thoughts and our plans cannot always be 100% pure. Paul wrote in Romans 14:14, “I know and I am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

The Lord was preparing Peter for the work that He was going to do within the lives of the Gentiles. The Jews were taught that the Gentiles were repulsive, unclean and completely unfit for salvation, but God did not teach that. He loved the Gentiles every bit as much as His chosen people; He desired to redeem them and have relationship with them as well. With the sacrifice of Jesus completed no one seeking to be restored to God would be rejected because of ethnic background. **The standard of God is more important than the tradition of men.**

Isn't it a wonderful truth that God will accept anyone who will come to Him. Jesus said, "whosoever will may come." Have you desired to come to Jesus to have your sins forgiven and to receive eternal life? If you have not you can today. Just realize that you have sinned and then ask Jesus to forgive you and come into your life. He promises to do that. Do not worry about keeping a tradition. We cannot get to heaven any other way than by accepting Jesus.

Truth or Tradition?

On the board write several popular phrases. These will either represent truth from God's Word or traditions of men. Have the children try to discern from God's Word whether these are truth or tradition.

Some suggestions are:

You win some you lose some (truth; Ecclesiastes 3:6).

A penny saved is a penny earned (truth; Proverbs 6:6-8).

Do unto others as they have done to you (tradition; Matthew 7:12 teaches about our conduct, not our response).

Knowledge is power (truth; Proverbs 24:5-6).

I think therefore I am (tradition; Ephesians 1:3-6 shows us we "are" because of the creation and good pleasure of God).

To love others you must first love yourself (tradition; Philippians 2:3 teaches that we must esteem others higher than ourselves).

Forgive and forget (truth; Jeremiah 31:34 teaches that the Lord will remember our sins "no more"; we are to forgive as we have been forgiven).

Jesus loves you (truth; John 3:16).

God is love (truth; I John 4:7-8).

Obey your parents (truth; Ephesians 6:1-3).

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to test everything by the Word of God, trusting that **the standard of God is more important than the traditions of men.** If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.