



The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles

12

Key Theme

- God sees all men as sinners in need of salvation.

Key Passages

- Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:1–6, 10:11–15, 10:28, 10:34–35

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Explain the significance of the conversion of Cornelius and his household.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes

Students will fill out The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

Peter had a vision from God which taught him that salvation through Jesus Christ wasn't just for the Jews. When he was called to Cornelius's home, Peter explained the gospel to the Gentiles. All those who heard the truth believed and were baptized.



Activity 2: Truth Be Told Review Game

Students will review the lesson by playing the Truth Be Told Review Game.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



THE GOSPEL GOES TO THE GENTILES CLASS NOTES

- Print one The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes for each student
- The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Matthew 28:19 Memory Verse Poster



TRUTH BE TOLD REVIEW GAME

- Assemble the Truth Be Told Game Board Posters found in your curriculum kit.
- Print the Truth Be Told Game Components from the Resource DVD-ROM. Keep the Truth Be Told Question Answer Key for your use.
- Cut apart the Truth Be Told Number Cards. These will determine how many spaces to move. OR bring in dice or a game spinner to be used to move teams around the board.
- Cut apart the Truth Be Told Question Cards.
- Bring buttons or other small items to use as game pieces for each team and poster putty for adhering game pieces to the game board.

- Truth Be Told Game Board
- Truth Be Told Number Cards OR use dice or a game spinner
- Truth Be Told Question Cards
- Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team
- Poster putty



Memory Verse

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

The zealous Jew Saul was powerfully met on the road to Damascus by the Lord Himself. Saul was on his way to persecute those Jews who were following the truth of the risen Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1–4). The Bible tells us that Paul was baptized, and soon after, he preached Christ in the synagogues to the other Jews.

Almost all of the believers in the early church were Jews. Jesus was born into a Jewish family. His apostles were Jewish, and they taught, like Paul, in the synagogues to the Jewish nation.

But before Jesus left this earth, He commanded His followers to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19). They would receive power from the Holy Spirit as they went out to witness to all of Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). This commission included the Gentiles. At this time in history, anyone not of Jewish ancestry was considered a Gentile. And the Gentiles were despised by the Jews because of their religious and cultural differences. Because of the animosity between them the only thing that could motivate the Jews to go to the Gentile nations with the good news of Christ would be the grace of God through faith.

We see this grace clearly as it plays out between the Apostle Peter and Cornelius, who was a centurion in the Italian army. Their meeting was supernaturally orchestrated by God Himself as Cornelius encountered an angel of God. The angel instructed him to send messengers to Joppa to look for Peter (Acts 10:1–5). The next day, Peter experienced a vision from God. In the vision Peter saw heaven open up. And a great sheet holding all kinds of four-footed animals, creeping things, and birds descended down to earth (Acts 10:11–12). Apparently, at least some of the animals Peter saw in his vision were considered “unclean” animals. This refers to animals that the Jews were not permitted to eat because of Old Testament Laws.

But Peter heard a voice telling him to eat the animals he saw. Peter responded to the Lord saying he could not eat. And then God spoke again, “What God has cleansed you must not call common” (Acts 10:13–15). After three “discussions” between Peter and the Lord, the object was taken up into heaven (Acts 10:16). Peter pondered the vision and what it might mean.

About this time, the men sent by Cornelius, the centurion, arrived in Joppa at the house where Peter was staying. They told Peter that he was to come to Caesarea to meet the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:22). Peter agreed to go. This was highly unusual as Jews would not associ-

ate with Gentiles, much less visit their homes. But Peter had learned something from his vision of the unclean food. He explains it in Acts 10:28, “He said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.’”

God had taught Peter an important lesson. The Lord said that what He cleansed would not be unclean, or common (Acts 10:15). And Peter acknowledged this fact when he told Cornelius that God shows no partiality between people. But whoever fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34–35). Peter continued speaking with Cornelius about Jesus Christ—His life, His death, and His Resurrection (Acts 10:38–40).

And as Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and the other Gentiles who were with him, and they believed in Jesus. Then Peter commanded that they be baptized in the name of the Lord. The Jews who had come with Peter were astounded that these Gentiles could come to know the truth about Jesus (Acts 10:45, 10:48).

In this amazing providential meeting, God made it clear that He accepts both Jew and Gentile into His church. And believers are, in fact, to preach to ALL nations!

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Here in Acts 10, the Bible records that Peter had a vision while on a rooftop in Joppa. Peter saw something like a great sheet lowered from heaven full of unclean animals. A voice told Peter to kill and eat. His response was, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” Then the voice told Peter, “What God has cleansed you must not call common” (Acts 10:14–15). This was repeated three times. What did this strange vision mean? Even Peter wondered what the vision might mean (Acts 9:17).

To understand the meaning of the vision and Peter’s response, we must go all the way back to the book of Leviticus. God, in His Law, gave His people, Israel, very strict standards regarding their diet. We read about these restrictions in Leviticus 11.

These are the animals which you may eat . . . whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat. Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud

but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. (Leviticus 11:2–7).

Included in this list of animals they were not to eat were the rock hyrax, the hare (the Hebrew word *arnebeth* which was an undetermined animal), and swine (Leviticus 11:5–7). The Law also forbade eating anything from the sea that didn't have fins or scales (Leviticus 11:10). There were certain flying creatures and insects they could and couldn't eat as well (Leviticus 11:13–23). As a result of these laws, Jewish thinking included a very strict division between clean and unclean animals. No self-respecting Jew, including Peter, would ever eat anything but clean animals.

Some may ask why God made a distinction between clean and unclean animals. We are not told why, but we can make some educated guesses. First, there are some animals that are more liable to carry diseases. Since the preparation of food in those days wasn't anything like it is now, God was protecting Israel from the threat of an epidemic. The Israelites lived in close community. There were millions of them, and they often traveled together. If sickness broke out, it would affect many if not the entire community.

The second reason for the dietary laws, and probably the more important one, is that God wanted to distinguish His people from the other peoples that lived around them. In those days, the primary source of entertainment was feasting, so social contact mainly occurred at large banquets. It seems that God gave the Jews these peculiar dietary laws so they wouldn't mix socially with pagan Gentiles around them. God was preventing them from having social relationships with Gentiles so that they would not adopt the pagan practices of their idolatrous neighbors.

As the restrictions on interacting with Gentiles passed away, so did the laws pertaining to restrictions on the food. While the interpretation of Peter's vision was to see the Gentiles as "clean," there is also an immediate context of God declaring those animals clean for food. This is confirmed by Paul's recognition that all creatures of God can be received as food with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:1–5). Mark also recognized that Jesus also taught that all foods were clean in Mark 7:19. In the New Covenant, the old dietary laws have been fulfilled for us in Christ.

In Peter's day, the Jews viewed Gentiles as unclean. A strict Jew would never be a guest in a Gentile house, nor would he invite one to his home. Even the dirt from

a Gentile country was considered unclean. If anyone happened to track some Gentile dirt into Israel, it defiled the dirt of Israel. Therefore, when travelers left a Gentile country, they would always shake the dust off their feet to avoid polluting the land of Israel. That's why when Jesus sent out the seventy to preach the gospel, He told them that if anyone didn't receive their words, they were to shake the dust off their feet. In other words, they were to treat him as a Gentile (Matthew 10:5–14).

When Jesus came, He intended to make Jew and Gentile into one new man (see Ephesians 2:11–18). The deep divisions and hostility were to be a thing of the past. In Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11). This was an easy thing for Christ to accomplish through His life, death, and Resurrection; however, it was a very difficult thing for the Jew to practice.

God showed Peter through this vision in Acts 10 that he was no longer to divide people into categories of clean and unclean. Peter got the message and entered the house of Cornelius to share the gospel with them.

What a lesson in evangelizing and Christian living. Many Christians tend to categorize people—those who are "worthy" to hear the gospel and those who aren't; those God can save and those who are beyond help; those who are "good enough" to come to our church and those who should not be there because they are different from us. The fact is we are all sinners in need of grace. There is no one beyond the reach of God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. And we are commanded to preach the gospel and make disciples of all people, regardless of ethnicity, class, or any other distinction. This is far easier to do if we can look at people as God sees them—sinners who need to repent and turn to Christ in order to receive eternal life.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, salvation is from you, and I praise you for it! The precious lesson that Peter learned in his vision still applies to us today. There is no partiality with you. You exemplified that when you ministered to little children, women, the poor, and the powerless. Examine my heart and root out any prejudice I have a tendency to show. Help me and my students to see others as you see them—as sinners who need to hear the gospel, repent, and receive your great grace. Teach me and my students to reflect your love and grace to all and to boldly share the truth of the gospel.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes

MATERIALS

- The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes for each student
- The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see what happened when Peter had a vision from God.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 11 Lesson Theme Poster. The powerful Jew, Saul, hated the truth about Jesus and wanted to stop it from spreading. But Jesus got his attention in a big way when He stopped Saul in his tracks on the road to Damascus. Saul's life was changed forever! From that moment on, he would live, work, suffer, and finally die for Jesus Christ—the one he once hated.

- Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson to point out the events you are discussing.

Matthew 28:19

His Hebrew name, Saul, was used less after he met Jesus. Paul was his Roman name. And since he preached the truth to many people in many nations, he became known as Paul. At first Paul preached only in the synagogues, the places where the Jews met for worship. The first believers in the early church were Jews. Jesus was born into a Jewish family. His apostles were Jewish, and they also taught in the synagogues to other Jews. They believed God wanted the Jews to be saved, so their job was to preach to the Jews. This is all true, but there's more to it.

? *Refer to the Matthew 28:19 Memory Verse Poster. Remember what our last memory verse was? Can someone recite it for us? Choose a student to recite it. Or, invite the class to read the verse from the poster.*

Refer to Lesson 6 Lesson Theme Poster. This is what is known as the Great Commission. It was Jesus's last command to His disciples before He went back to His Father.

? Jesus wanted His followers to tell others about Him. But who did Jesus want His disciples to tell? Where did He tell them to go? *Go to all nations.*

Yes. The followers of Jesus were to go and preach to all nations— not just the Jewish nation. *Refer to Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster. God was spreading His gospel to other places. Remember how the persecution of the Christians caused the truth to spread to Samaria? And God also spread the truth to Ethiopia by sending Philip out to meet the Ethiopian and speak the truth to him.*

Today we are going to learn how God worked in two men's lives, through two different visions, to make it clear that He wanted ALL men to hear the gospel so they could also turn to Jesus Christ. It started with a vision the Lord gave to a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius was a Gentile, not a Jew, who believed in God.

Acts 10:1–6

Turn to Acts 10:1–6 so we can read those verses. *Acts 10:1–6. Choose students to read the verses.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Interesting! Let's answer a few questions about Cornelius. Use your Bible to find the answers.

Observe the Text

? What did Cornelius think of God? *Acts 10:2. He feared God.*

Yes. That verse tells us Cornelius was a godly man who prayed, helped others, and feared God. He was also a Gentile, not a Jew.

? Look at #1 on your class notes. Will someone answer that? *Assign a reader. Gentile. Have students complete #1 on their class notes.*

- ? **Who did Cornelius see in his vision?** *Acts 10:3. An angel of God.*
- ? **And what did the angel say to Cornelius in this vision?** *Acts 10:5. Send men to Joppa and send for Simon Peter.*

God sent an angel to give the message to the Gentile Cornelius to send someone to Joppa and find the Apostle Peter.

About that time, Peter, who was visiting Joppa, was up on a housetop praying. Peter was up there praying to the Lord, and he saw a vision from God. Let's read what Peter saw in his vision.

Turn to Acts 10:11–15. Let's read those verses. *Acts 10:11–15. Choose students to read.*

Acts 10:11–15

- ? **Good. Look back at verse 11. What did Peter see opened?** *Heaven opened.*
Yes. Heaven opened. The vision was coming from God in heaven.
- ? **What did Peter see that was lowered down?** *Acts 10:11. A great sheet.*
- ? **And what was on that great sheet?** *Acts 10:12. All kinds of animals, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds.*
- ? **Then Peter heard a voice. What did that voice say to him?** *Acts 10:13. Rise, Peter, kill and eat.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to that command? Did he want to eat?** *Acts 10:14. No. He said, "I have never eaten anything common or unclean."*
- ? **And what did the voice say to that?** *Acts 10:15. What God has cleansed you must not call common.*

The Jews had strict laws about what they could and could not eat. Some types of animals were considered unclean, and they were commanded not to eat them. We'll see in a minute what this strange vision meant.

- ? **Let's go back to the class notes. Will someone read #2? What is the answer?** *Assign a reader. Peter, vision. Have students complete #2.*
- ? **How about #3? Who will read that?** *Assign a reader. Sheet, beasts, birds. Have students complete #3.*
- ? **What about #4? What words are missing?** *Assign a reader. Kill, eat. Have students complete #4.*
- ? **And #5? How did Peter respond?** *Assign a reader. Never. Have students complete #5.*

Discover the Truth

So far we have read about two visions from God—one to a Gentile and the other to a Jew. The Gentile was told to bring Peter to his home. And Peter was told that the things God has cleansed are clean. Let's see what it all means.



READ THE WORD

So, the men who were sent by Cornelius came to the house where Peter was staying and asked him to come back with them to meet Cornelius. Peter agreed to go with them.

Acts 10:28

It was unusual that Peter said he would go to Cornelius's home. And Acts 10:28 explains why. Turn there in your Bibles. *Acts 10:28. Assign a reader.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now look at that verse and answer these questions.

Observe the Text

? **What was unlawful?** *It was unlawful for a Jew to go to the house of someone from a different nation.*

The Jewish religious laws were very strict. And it was against their laws for any Jew to go to the home of a Gentile—anyone who was not a Jew.

? **But what had God just shown Peter?** The answer is in Acts 10:28. *That he should not call any man unclean or common.*

? **When did God show Peter that?** Look back to Acts 10:15 for a hint. *Allow discussion.*

It was during Peter's vision from the Lord. God told Peter to eat all the animals. But Peter said he could not eat them because they were common and unclean. But three times, God said that if He had cleansed it, then no one should call it common or unclean.

Acts 10:34–35

Peter understood what God was telling him. And he made this truth clear when he was with Cornelius. We'll read Acts 10:34–35, so you can see what I mean. *Choose students to read.*

? **What did Peter say that God shows?** Look in Acts 10:34. *He shows no partiality.*

? **What does it mean that God shows no partiality?** *Allow discussion.*

? **Someone read Acts 10:35 again. That verse explains what Peter meant.** *Read Acts 10:35. Everyone who fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*

Discover the Truth

God taught Peter that everyone who loves God is accepted by God. Until then, Peter thought Jesus had come only to the Jews. But now, Peter understood that God would welcome Jews AND Gentiles into His church.

So while Peter was with the Gentile Cornelius and his family, he told them about the Savior, Jesus—that He had been crucified and had risen from

the dead. The Gentiles who heard Peter that day believed all he said. And they repented of their sins and were baptized!

Through all of this, God was showing something very important: salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life through Jesus Christ are for everyone who believes, repents, and trusts in Christ. Jesus is for Jews AND Gentiles. The gospel is for the whole world!

Let's fill in the rest of our class notes before we move on to our game.

? What goes in the blanks for #6? Someone read that for us? *Assign a reader. Unclean/common. Have students complete #6.*

? Good. God showed Peter not to call any man unclean or common. Now let's read #7. How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Everyone/accepted. Have students fill in #7 on the class notes.*

And the last one, #8. Circle all the correct answers as I read them to you. Ready? *A, B, and C all apply. Have students complete #8 as you read it aloud.*



➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.



Truth Be Told Review Game

MATERIALS

- Truth Be Told Game Board
- Truth Be Told Question Cards
- Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- Truth Be Told Number Cards OR dice or spinner
- Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team
- Poster putty

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide your class into teams. Teams will take turns drawing a Truth Be Told Question Card. Team members will take turns answering the questions. They will quickly determine an answer and give it. If they are correct, they will draw a Truth Be Told Number Card and move that number of spaces on the game board. As play proceeds, follow the directions on the game board. Alternate between teams as long as time permits.

We are going to review now by playing "Truth Be Told." I'll put you into teams. Teams will take turns picking a question card and answering the question. If the answer is correct, you will draw a number card and move your game piece that many spaces. All directions on the board must be followed. Place used cards underneath the stacks.

Answers to the questions are provided on the Truth Be Told Question Answer Key on the Resource DVD-ROM.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God brought Cornelius and Peter together. But first He had to show Peter that the gospel is for everyone. Then Peter could go to Cornelius's house and preach the gospel.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 12 Lesson Theme Poster. The Lord brought the Gentile centurion Cornelius and the Jewish Apostle Peter together to show that the gospel was not only for the Jews.

What happened at Cornelius's house was important because God showed Peter clearly that the gospel was for the Gentiles, too.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

The gospel is for everyone! God's Word says that all have sinned. We all need salvation from our sins. Every person in every nation needs to hear the gospel. The rich and famous need the gospel. And the poor, homeless, and sick need the gospel. Your family, your friends, and your neighbors need to hear the gospel.

Jesus came to earth to provide all sinners the way to have eternal life with Him. ANYONE who repents of his sins, trusts and believes in Jesus as his Savior, and receives God's free gift of salvation will be saved.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for eternal life through Jesus Christ that is available to everyone.
- Ask God to help us see ALL people as sinners who need the gospel, and to help us tell them that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone.