



The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles

Key Theme

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

Key Passages

- Acts 10:1–48; Mark 7:14–23; 1 Timothy 4:1–5; Romans 14:1–3; Leviticus 11, 20:25–26

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the significance of the conversion of Cornelius and his household.
- Provide an argument for the ending of the prohibition of unclean foods.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “Is it OK to eat a pork roast in a Gentile’s house?”



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.

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



Activity: Pick and Choose

Students will look at passages referring to food prohibitions and make an argument that all foods are now clean under the New Covenant.

- Print one Pick and Choose Worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.
- Pencils



Activity: Truth Be Told Review Game (Optional)

The students will review the lesson by playing a board game.

- Truth Be Told Game Board and Answer Key
- Game pieces for each team
- Truth Be Told Question and Number Cards
- Poster putty



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.

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 it. And then God spoke again, “What God has cleansed you must not call common” (Acts 10:13–14). 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 associate 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—“Then 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 10:15). 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.

Review

Last week we used our time to talk about the conversion of Saul as recorded in Acts 9. Saul's conversion was a radical event that took a murdering blasphemer and turned him into a persistent evangelist who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in the face of many forms of persecution. God had changed his heart after knocking him to the ground and blinding him for three days. Saul turned from his wickedness to trust in Jesus as the Savior he had learned about while studying the Scriptures as a strict Pharisee.

? Why is Saul's conversion such an important example of the gospel's power? *As Paul later wrote in Romans 1:16–17, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Saul's radical conversion is an example of how God can turn a murderer into a bold preacher, changing a heart of stone into a heart of flesh.*

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Saul immediately began preaching Christ to the Jews in Damascus whom he had expected to help him arrest the followers of the Way.

? Against what do we need to guard ourselves when we hear of a dramatic conversion like Saul's? *We need to remember that every conversion is a miracle that is accomplished only by the grace and mercy of God granted to His enemies while they are still sinners (Romans 5:6–8). We can use our testimonies, regardless of how dramatic, to tell people of the goodness and holiness of God compared to our sinfulness.*

That power of the gospel and work of the Holy Spirit spread through the regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. And the church multiplied. Peter was part of the spreading of the gospel, and Acts 9 ends with several accounts of Peter's work such as healing a paralytic in Lydda and then raising a woman from the dead in Joppa. As a result of the message accompanied by the signs, many turned to the Lord for salvation. That is where we pick up the storyline of Acts; Peter is staying in the city of Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner.



► Write on the board, "Is it OK to eat a pork roast in a Gentile's house?"

Acts 10:1–23



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's read Acts 10:1–23 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Where was Cornelius living? *Caesarea, a city on the Mediterranean coast of Judea.*
- ? What was Cornelius's position? *He was a Roman Centurion over a group in the Italian Regiment/Cohort of the Roman Army. A centurion was in charge of 100 men, hence the "cent" prefix.*
- ? How is Cornelius described? *He was a devout man who feared God, was generous to the poor, and prayed always.*

- ? **Who spoke to Cornelius?** *An angel spoke to him in a vision.*
- ? **When did this happen?** *It was the ninth hour, so three in the afternoon (counting from sunrise, or six in the morning).*
- ? **How did Cornelius react to the vision?** *He was afraid and replied, "What is it, Lord?"*
- ? **What did the angel acknowledge about Cornelius?** *He acknowledged his prayers and generosity.*
- ? **What does the phrase "have come up as a memorial before God" mean?** *With the imagery of God in heaven above, the prayers had "gone up" to God. Our prayers and sacrifices rising up to God is common imagery. God remembers and acknowledges Cornelius's prayers and alms as a fragrant offering to God.*
- ? **What did the angel instruct Cornelius to do?** *He was to send for Peter to come to his house.*
- ? **Who did Cornelius send?** *Three men who were his closest servants, one of them being a soldier under his charge.*
- ? **Where would they find Peter?** *In Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner.*
- ? **What is a tanner?** *A tanner makes leather from animal skins.*
- ? **How long did it take them to get to Joppa?** *If they left in the afternoon (the ninth hour) and arrived at around noon (the sixth hour) the next day, they traveled the 30 miles in about 21 hours.*
- ? **What was Peter doing as they were approaching?** *He was praying on the roof of Simon's house.*
- ? **What was Peter feeling on the roof?** *He got very hungry.*
- ? **What happened to Peter as he was on the roof?** *He entered some sort of trance and saw a vision.*
- ? **What did he see in his vision?** *He saw a sheet gathered at the four corners being let down from heaven.*
- ? **What was in the sheet?** *All kinds of animals, beasts, birds, and creeping things.*
- ? **How did Peter describe the animals?** *He said they were common and unclean.*
- ? **What did he mean by "unclean"?** *These were animals that God had forbidden the Jews from eating.*
- ? **Turn to Leviticus 11, and let's look at some of the creatures he would have seen?** *11:4–7 mentions the camel and the hyrax and swine among the beasts. 11:13–19 identifies bats, storks, vultures, eagles, owls, and other birds as unclean. 11:20–23 allowed crickets, grasshoppers, and locust to be eaten, but not other flying insects with four walking legs. 11:27 identifies things that walk on paws, like cats and dogs, as unclean. 11:29–31 lists mice, moles, and various lizards as unclean, and snakes would have been included as well.*
- ? **What did God call Peter to do?** *He told him to rise, kill an animal, and eat it.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to the command?** *Even though he was very hungry, he said he would not eat them as he had never eaten anything unclean.*

Leviticus 11

- ? **What might Peter have been thinking as God gave this command?** *He may have been thinking God was testing him, or he may have been confused about why God would be testing him in this way. But we must remember that God does not tempt people to sin, so God was not asking him to do something sinful. We can understand Peter's desire to be faithful to God's Law regarding foods.*
- ? **How did God respond to Peter's refusal?** *"What God has cleansed you must not call common."*
- ? **What does this response indicate about the animals being offered to Peter?** *God had cleansed them, so they were no longer unclean and could be eaten.*
- ? **How many times was the sheet and command given to Peter?** *Three times.*
- ? **Where have we seen Peter interacting with God in a set of three?** *He denied Jesus three times, and Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him.*
- ? **What does this three-part repetition indicate?** *It is a sign of surety in the communication—God meant what He was saying.*
- ? **Did Peter immediately understand the vision?** *No, he wondered within himself what it meant.*
- ? **Who was approaching at that moment?** *The three men sent by Cornelius.*
- ? **What did the Spirit tell Peter while he was thinking about the vision?** *He told him to go and meet the three men and believe what they had to say.*
- ? **How did Peter respond to their message?** *He believed them, invited them inside, and lodged them for the night.*
- ? **What did they likely do as they entered Simon's house?** *They likely ate together since the meal was being prepared (v. 10).*
- ? **When did they leave for Caesarea?** *The next day.*
- ? **Who went with them?** *There was Peter, the three men from Cornelius, and "some brethren from Joppa." Acts 10:45 says they were "of the circumcision," so they were Jews, and 11:12 tells us there were six of them.*
- ? **Was it normal for a Jew to invite Romans into the home to eat and sleep?** *No, Jews were not to eat with Gentiles, so this was an uncommon act.*
- ? **Why was Peter willing to violate this command?** *This actually wasn't a direct command from God, but a rule the Jews employed to keep from being defiled. It seems that Peter had understood what he plainly states in 10:28—that the Gentiles were not unclean.*

Discover the Truth

As we think about this section of Scripture, it is also interesting to note that Peter was staying at the house of a tanner. Handling the hides and carcasses of animals every day would make Simon unclean based on Leviticus 11:39–40 and the restrictions on handling dead animals. Simon would have been considered a social outcast by the Jews, so Peter was already involved in breaking a social taboo. Inviting the Roman Gentiles into the house and eating with them was another step in that direction.

- ? **What do we learn about God’s character in this passage?** *He was able to orchestrate the events so that the men got to the house at noon when Peter was hungry and was receiving the vision, demonstrating His sovereignty. Even though circumstances were changing, God is still immutable, and His unchanging character endures.*

SOVEREIGN

IMMUTABLE

God was using all of these circumstances to help Peter understand more fully how the gospel was to spread—even to the Gentiles. While things about the Old Covenant and the practices of the Jews were changing, God was still faithful to His promises and His character. The real significant change is revealed as we follow Peter to meet Cornelius.



READ THE WORD

So let’s look at what happened when Peter arrived in Caesarea in Acts 10:24–48. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Acts 10:24–48

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **How did Cornelius act when Peter entered his house?** *Cornelius fell at his feet and worshipped him.*
- ? **Was this an appropriate response?** *No. Peter rebuked him and reminded him that he was just a man.*
- ? **Who was in the house?** *Many close friends and relatives of Cornelius.*
- ? **What did Peter relate about his vision?** *He reminded the Gentiles of the taboo against entering their home, but told them that God had shown him not to call any man unclean.*
- ? **How does this idea relate to Peter’s vision?** *Beyond just the animals being made clean, the vision was to teach Peter that the Gentiles were not to be considered unclean.*
- ? **What did this free Peter to do?** *This gave him freedom to interact with the Gentiles so that the gospel could spread.*
- ? **What did Cornelius want Peter to do?** *He wanted the group to hear all Peter had been commanded by God to share.*
- ? **Who did Peter immediately begin speaking of?** *He quickly spoke of Jesus.*
- ? **What things did Peter say about Jesus?** *God sent Him to bring peace; He is Lord of all; He was anointed with the Holy Spirit; He healed and cast out demons; He was killed by the Jews; He was raised to life; He appeared to witnesses chosen by God; He commanded the apostles to preach to the people.*
- ? **What message did Jesus command the apostles to preach?** *Jesus was ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead and that whoever believes in His name will receive remission of sins.*
- ? **How long did it take the people to respond to this good news?** *They responded while he was still speaking, so the response was immediate.*
- ? **What signified their conversion?** *They were filled with the Holy Spirit.*

➤ It is possible that this is a condensed form of what Peter preached to the crowd.

- ? **How did the Jewish believers with Peter respond to seeing this?** *They were amazed that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit just as the Jews had.*
- ? **What previous account does this sound similar to?** *It is similar to what happened on Pentecost as they spoke in tongues glorifying God with their words.*
- ? **What does the fact that the Jews knew they were glorifying God indicate about the tongues they spoke in?** *They must have recognized them as known languages to know they were glorifying God.*
- ? **What did Peter command the new believers to do?** *He told them to be baptized.*
- ? **What is the significance of Peter asking if they should be forbidden to receive baptism?** *He was speaking to the Jews who had come with them to show them that God had granted repentance and the Spirit to the Gentiles. It seems more of a rhetorical question than a question of permission.*
- ? **How is the order here different from the order of the conversion of the Samaritans in Acts 8?** *They were baptized then received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. There is no consistent description of the order of baptism and receiving the Spirit in the early part of Acts.*

Discover the Truth

God moved mightily in the hearts of the Gentiles. They believed the words spoken by Peter, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. While these were not the first Gentiles to be converted (the Ethiopian eunuch and some of the proselytes on Pentecost), this was a significant shift in the pattern the Jewish believers had been following. Acts 11:19 explains that those who were dispersed after Stephen's death preached to the Jews as they spread.

Even as Peter returned to Jerusalem and told the other Jewish brothers what had happened, they were indignant that Peter would even eat with a Gentile (11:1–3). But Peter explained his vision and how the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, as the six witnesses with him affirmed, and told them:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15–17).

The next verse goes on to say, "When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (Acts 11:18). Just as the Jewish and Samaritan believers had received the Spirit and repentance by God's grace so had the Gentiles. The sign Jesus had promised was evident in them—

salvation had come to the Gentiles in a significant way. So from this point on, the gospel was spread among all people, and not just primarily among the Jews. We will talk more about those efforts in future lessons.



Pick and Choose

MATERIALS

- Pick and Choose Worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

I'm giving you a worksheet with an activity titled, Pick and Choose. Your task is to use the verses listed in the activity, and any others that come to mind, to refute the skeptical argument about picking and choosing which parts of the Bible to believe and obey.

The argument often sounds something like this: "Christians are hypocritical because they say they believe the Bible is all true and should be obeyed, but they pick and choose which laws they want to obey. For example, they are happy to eat shellfish and bacon when the Bible clearly says those foods are unclean and forbidden."

Work in groups to come up with an argument from Scripture to counter this claim of hypocrisy, and we'll share our conclusions in a few minutes. *Some students may believe the Old Testament food laws are still to be followed. If that is the case, graciously dialogue with them, and encourage them to interact with the Scriptures. Ultimately, this is a secondary issue and is not something that should cause division in the church (see Romans 14).*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? Who would like to share their argument? *Have one group share their argument. Whether this topic is approached from a dispensational or covenant perspective, most would agree that the laws that governed the civil*

affairs of the nation of Israel are no longer in effect. These dietary laws were established primarily to distinguish the Israelites from their neighbors. Now that the separation between Jews and Gentiles has been abolished (Acts 10; Ephesians 2:11–22), the dietary laws are no longer needed. This change does not mean that God has changed—His character is immutable—but that He has chosen different rules for different periods. God had originally commanded all creatures to eat a vegetarian diet (Genesis 1:29–31); He then allowed all meats to be eaten after the Flood (Genesis 9:1–4); then He provided specific clean meats for food to the Israelites beginning in the wilderness (Leviticus 11). In Mark 7:14–23 and Acts 10:9–16, there is a clear New Testament removal of the prohibition on eating the unclean meats—Jesus declared all foods clean, and God told Peter to eat of the unclean animals. Further, Paul affirmed that all foods can be eaten with thanksgiving to God (1 Timothy 4:1–5; Romans 14:1–3). We must explain to the skeptic that God is free to change the rules and that He has told us what rules have changed in the New Covenant in the pages of Scripture. We are free in Christ to eat all foods as long as we do not do so in a way that causes a weaker brother to stumble or violate our conscience.

While we can show the skeptic the error of his thinking, we must also remember that biblical apologetics is done to point to the hope we have in Christ. This would be a great opportunity to also share with him about how the sacrificial system changed from the blood of bulls and calves being offered over and over to the blood of the Lamb of God whose sacrifice was done once and for all (Hebrews 9:11–15). We can take this skeptical argument and direct it to a call for the skeptic to look to Christ in repentance and faith, laying his arguments aside and submitting to Jesus as Lord and Savior.





Truth Be Told Review Game (Optional)

MATERIALS

- Truth Be Told Game Board
- Truth Be Told Question Cards
- Truth Be Told Question Answer Key
- Truth Be Told Number Cards (or game spinner or dice)
- 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.

Return the used cards to 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

I think it is very safe to say that most Christians today are not from a Jewish background. Even in the Old Testament, God had intended for the Gentiles to hear of His name and come under His care with the nation of Israel. In fact, Abraham was called out of a Gentile nation and became the father of the Israelites. When Jesus died upon the Cross, He broke down the wall of separation between Gentiles and Jews. Paul described this to the Gentile Christians living in Ephesus, telling them that they had “been brought near by the blood of Christ” when they had previously been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:11–22).

But in Christ, those barriers are removed, and Jews and Gentiles are fellow citizens as saints in the kingdom of God. Before the day they met, Peter and Cornelius would have been at odds in some senses. If they met at the

Temple in Jerusalem, Peter would have to leave Cornelius behind in the Court of the Gentiles while he ventured to the inner parts of the Temple. But once God had helped Peter to understand that those divisions were no longer appropriate, they were able to eat together and enjoy all foods with thanksgiving, lodge together, and even worship God together in fullness of joy. They were both covered by the blood of Christ, baptized into union with Christ, and partakers of the same Holy Spirit.

Let us not forget that the gospel is for everyone without distinction. Each of us was called by the Spirit into fellowship with the Father and the Son that we might be partakers together of eternal life. One day, we will have the privilege of standing around the throne of God, offering Him worship alongside people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **How does this passage we studied today help you rejoice in your salvation?** *Discuss various answers, focusing attention on the fact that salvation is available to Gentiles when that was not typically the case in the past.*
- ? **Why is an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation important to understand the changes that happened as the Gentiles were brought into fellowship with the Jews?** *As we see in the early parts of Acts, the work of the Holy Spirit was a demonstration of the unity between Jews and Gentiles. Peter pointed out that Cornelius and his friends and family were to be baptized because they had "received the Holy Spirit just as we have." As Jesus had promised, the Spirit came to empower all of His disciples, regardless of their ethnicity.*
- ? **How have you understood the dietary laws that distinguished the Jews in the past and why we do not follow them? Has this lesson helped you understand this better?** *Discuss various answers.*
- ? **As you consider the challenges that skeptics bring regarding consistently applying the Bible's truth to our lives, what questions are hard for you to answer (or what questions do you still have)?** *Discuss the students' questions and encourage them to pursue their questions so that doubt does not creep up in their minds regarding these apparent inconsistencies.*
- ? **As you consider your own attitude, are there any people that you consider "unclean" and avoid sharing the gospel with? What can you do to change this attitude?** *As you discuss this question, remind the students that we are all unclean and unholy (in our sinful state) before God, yet Jesus humbled Himself to come to earth and offer us salvation. He interacted with all kinds of people, from Pharisees to lepers to prostitutes, in order to call them away from their sin and to freedom in Christ. We must not discriminate when it comes to loving others and sharing the gospel with them.*





MEMORY VERSE

Romans 1:16–17 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for breaking down the barriers that separated Jew and Gentile, uniting them in Christ.
- Praise God for providing His grace and mercy to all kinds of people.
- Ask God for a thankful heart to enjoy all of the privileges we have as His sons and daughters.