

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 4: Session 7 – Transformation

Class 20: Acts 10:9-23 – Peter’s Vision

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Illustrate human tendency to observe differences and then exclude items/people based on those observations
- Discuss the tradition of “clean” and “unclean” that Peter had lived with all his life
- Focus on how paying attention to God is a life-changing choice for Peter regarding his traditional choices

Materials needed:

1. Video clip (available on rfour.org) from *Wall-E*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. A way to show the list for activity to the class (print out or show on a screen)
 - List of words is located in the “DO ACTIVITY” section of lesson

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question: What food do you really dislike?*

INTRO

- Last class, we started a new session of stories where the characters are changed due to their decisions to pay attention to and interact with God.
- The story we read last class was of Jesus’ transfiguration. In it, he goes up a mountain to pray and during that prayer time, Jesus’ clothes turn bright white and then Jesus, Peter, James, and John are able to see and hear things that normally they wouldn’t see and hear.

- The story we're going to read today is less dramatic, but in some ways, probably more impressive – though, ultimately, you get to decide that.
- To help us get started we're going to do an activity that will help us, hopefully, think about how hard it is to stop noticing / paying attention to differences that determine what belongs and what does not belong
- We're going to do that with some simple word lists – of the four words, we then decide which one doesn't belong.
- Stating reasons for why the word should be removed are encouraged; also it's fine to discuss why or why not a word should be removed

DO ACTIVITY

For each number, determine which word does not belong in the group of words and why

1. Rye, Loaf, Sourdough, Pumpernickel
2. Tire, Engine, Trunk, Car
3. Inch, Ounce, Liter, Yard
4. Water, Cloth, Oil, Alcohol
5. Sapphire, Gold, Emerald, Ruby
6. Charcoal, Gasoline, Coal, Clay
7. Ivory, Leather, Wood, Fur

ANSWERS

1. LOAF because it is the shape bread comes in -- the other options are all types of bread
2. CAR because it refers to a vehicle; others are PARTS of a car
3. LITER this is a metric unit of measurement whereas the other units are considered "Imperial" forms of measurement (used mostly by the USA, but sometimes Great Britain as well)
4. CLOTH since it is not a liquid
5. GOLD is a metal, not a gemstone
6. *Various:* CLAY is not a fuel that we burn to create energy and/or heat –OR– GASOLINE does not start with "c" –OR– GASOLINE is also a liquid, not a solid
7. WOOD is not a material made from an animal

TELL / TRANSITION to SCRIPTURE

- Even though some of the groupings of the words were more difficult to determine than others, there certainly were plenty of reasons we had for why certain words should be removed
- One of the reasons why we have thoughts about what belongs and what doesn't belong is because this is a basic way of how we organize and understand the world
 - For example, certain things belong in the kitchen – like a spatula and the refrigerator
 - And other things belong in the bathroom – like a toothbrush and the toilet.
- We organize items in our lives like this ALL the time
- When it comes to the Israelites, one of the ways they organized the world was by saying there were two groups of people: “us” and “everyone else” (aka Gentiles)
- They also did the same thing with food – there was food they could eat (clean) and food they could not eat (unclean)
- And today's story involves God telling Peter to change these lifelong discernments
- Let's see what happens

READ Acts 10:9-23 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

9About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. 13Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." 14But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." 16This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. 17Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and

were standing by the gate. 18They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.

19While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. 20Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." 21So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" 22They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him.

ASK

- Verse 9 – Where does Peter go? (the roof)
- And why does he go there? (to pray)
- Does that remind you of a story we recently read where the characters went upwards to be able to pray? (hopefully yes, the transfiguration story)
- While he's praying what happens? (he gets hungry AND falls into a trance)
- What does Peter see in the trance? (unclean food that he's not supposed to eat)
- What does the voice in the trance tell Peter to do? (to eat and to not call "unclean" what God calls clean)
- How many times did that happen? (three times)
- Verse 17 – Does Peter understand the trance he's had at first? (no)
- Verse 19 – Then what does Peter hear? (the Holy Spirit tells him that God has sent the men who are visiting him)
- Verse 22 – What nationality would a "centurion" be, do you think? (Roman!)
- Verse 22 – What do the messengers say Cornelius was directed by? (a holy angel)
- Verse 23 – What is Peter's response to these men? (he houses them and then goes with them to Cornelius' house the next day)

TELL

- So there's a three-step process that I want us to think about
- We see the last two steps in this story
- The first step, the unseen step in this story, is all the time and decisions and learning Peter experienced by following Jesus – including learning how to listen to God in prayer
- Step 2 – which is the first step we see in this story – is Peter actually doing what Jesus taught him: Peter chooses to make time in his day to pray and listen to God in prayer

- Because Peter does this, Peter then receives this communication from God to not reject the things that God tells Peter to accept
- Step 3, then, is Cornelius' messengers arriving and telling Peter that God is talking to Cornelius and telling him (Cornelius) that he is to listen to Peter
- But for that to work, for Peter to speak with Cornelius, Peter needs to change. Peter needs to not dismiss Cornelius as a Gentile
- And that's a big change for Peter and could not have been easy for him to make that decision
- It's a good thing that Peter listened to God.
- And here's why: Most of us in this room, if not all of us, are not Jewish.
- That means we would've been considered unclean – just like Cornelius
- And just like Peter said no to the unclean food (at first), he could've also said no to Cornelius...and us.
- But because Peter listened to God, Peter had a different voice that told him who was in and who was out.
- Peter has been told his whole life who was in and who was out by scripture and his faith tradition
- But in today's story, God tells Peter something that goes against Peter's faith tradition and scripture
- And, because Peter chose to listen to God and put God first, Peter was then able to make a decision that changed him and changed the course of history
- To help us think, a little bit, about what this struggle between two different priorities feels like, we're going to watch the following video clip from the movie Wall-E
- Specifically, pay attention to the little robot – his name is Moe. He has a decision to make at the end of the clip. Let's see what he decides.

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- What things seem to be important to Moe, the little robot? (to keep things clean and to stay on the line in front of him)
- At the end of the clip, what two things did Moe seem to weigh against each other? (staying on the track vs going off the track so he could keep cleaning)
- By his actions, what do you think Moe's most important priority was? (cleaning)

TELL

- We see in Moe a conflict of priorities.
- Eventually, Moe chooses one set of rules over another set of rules (and thinks he's going to get hurt for doing so -- at the very end when he jumps of the line).
- Ironically, the set of rules he chooses to follow is to go where the dirt is -- which is, in some ways, what God tells Peter to do: Go where the unclean is – that is where you are most needed
- And, just like Moe, we can see by Peter's actions what Peter's highest and most important priority is. For Peter, he is to follow God's direction, even if it means changing some very basic beliefs that he's held all his life
- That's pretty amazing – for both Peter AND Cornelius

CLOSING PRAYER