



## OVERVIEW SECTION

### How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

**How to Read This Lesson Plan** (defines all components of the lesson plan)

**Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation** (a reminder of why we do this)

**Scripture(s) for the Session** (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

**Key Verses & Theology** (background for teachers to ponder)

**Themes to Focus on from the Scripture** (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

**Preparation** (including supplies needed)

**Classroom Statement** (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

**Step-by-step process of the lesson** (including the scripture to be read)

**Suggested variations for age groups** (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

### Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

### Scripture(s) for the Session: Acts 10:9 – 23

*Please READ this aloud in every class you teach.* The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

**Key Verses & Theology:** These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

*14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15 The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."* God's promise to Abraham is that his people would be as numerous as the stars and would be a blessing to all nations. However, the Israelites during Jesus' time and Peter's time are very insular (and had been! Being insular was a tradition). If you were not an Israelite, then you were a Gentile. And the Israelites had become pretty certain that they were not, in any manner, going to interact with Gentiles. If the Israelites spend all this time and energy keeping everyone out, how exactly are they going to be a blessing to all nations? This vision, then, that Peter has, is about this tension between how God calls Israel to function and how Israel often thought it was to function.

*17 ...Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen.* Peter is praying when he has this vision. It is not a dream. It is a picture given to Peter as he pays attention to God. And it puzzles him. Sometimes, when we're paying attention to God, we're going to hear things, see things, think things that don't make sense right away. Sometimes the things won't make sense because they go against traditions that we've been practicing for so, so long. And we just won't be able to get our minds around it. That's ok, because....

*22 "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."* It's ok if we don't have all the answers, because God is talking to others, too. And when others are listening, then what we are being shown is then made clear with the help of others. It's like we're each given a piece of a puzzle and then God points us in the correct direction, so that when we compare information, a bigger picture starts coming together. As individuals, we are not made to know it all. This is humbling, but also necessary. Peter was able to have the vision. But he would not have had the boldness to carry it out in the way that Cornelius does. Cornelius is an upper-class Roman citizen. Even though his servants are polite, his actions are very forward and direct in a way that the Israelites would not have been (and could not have been due to cultural conditioning mentioned earlier) towards Romans. Cornelius' rather naked desire is what helps cut through the fog/confusion Peter has about the vision.

**Themes to Focus on from the Scripture:** Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

**Who's in, who's out** – The Israelites were giving God a bad name. They were supposed to be a light to all nations, but instead they kept excluding all the nations but themselves. How are other people, other countries supposed to learn about God, if Israel just keeps ignoring them and shunning them and calling them 'unclean'? They won't! And so God, starting with Jesus, but really driving the point home with Peter (as well as with Pentecost – everyone speaking in different languages) is really

seeking to shift this inward, insular focus of the Israelites outward. The reason for this outward shift is because the insularity of the Israelites makes God look like God is playing favorites. The message the Israelites are sending is that in order to be loved and cared about by the one true God, you have to be an Israelite. But that's not the truth of who God is, so God is challenging Israel. God is calling not just one nation home, but all nations home, to God. None are out, all are in.

**Prayer/Vision/Repetition** – Of course, on his own, Peter would not have come to this conclusion of reaching out to the Gentiles. And on his own, Cornelius would not have known to seek out Peter. But because they were both praying, then they were able to be pointed toward each other and prepared for each other. Cornelius is directed by a “holy angel.” Angel simply means “messenger of God.” If Cornelius isn't seeking God's direction, then he most likely would not have listened to this messenger. Prayer prepares us to hear messages from others who are listening and paying attention to God. When Peter is praying, he sees pictures and hears a voice say something that seems to involve these pictures. A vision is another way in which we might hear God when we pray. Also, the picture and the words are repeated a total of three times in Peter's prayer. This is another way in which we might hear God, through repetition of the message.

**Synchronized (congruence; one accord)** – This story is about the start of the bridging of a chasm that is between the Israelites and the rest of the world. It's about the removal of boundaries that says “Israel is *in* with God and everyone else is *out* with God.” And the only way that chasm is bridged is by God. And the only way individuals can receive that instruction and wisdom from God is by praying. Once this happens, though, amazing things can start to happen. It may not seem like much to us, but in the last verse, the fact that Peter went to Joppa, that is astounding! And it is the beginning of something new. All because two people were paying attention to God.

---

## THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

### Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: Newspaper, sharpened sticks (I used dowel rods and sharpened them in a pencil sharpener), carrot peelers (bought a number at Dollar Store, table knives and bars of ivory soap (leave out of the box a day before).

### Classroom Statement

This Arts & Crafts class consists of reading the story of Peter's prayer vision of unclean/clean animals and then crafting animals out of soap as a way to illustrate and remind them that God has made everything, and that God has made everything clean, including us.

### Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

**SHEPHERD ASKS** "Question of the Day."

#### **INTRODUCE yourself**

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

#### **PRAY** (Short and simple is perfect)

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

#### **TELL**

- In the story we're reading today, there are two parts to the story.
- In the first part of the story, Peter is praying. In his prayer, he is challenged by God to not call unclean what God calls clean.
- In the second part of the story, Peter is asked to visit someone.
- At first, these two parts of the story may not seem to fit together.
- But before we think that, let's listen to the story first...

## **READ Acts 10:9 - 23**

10:9 About noon the next day, as Cornelius' servants were on their journey and approaching the city of Jerusalem to see Peter, Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. 10 While a meal was being prepared for him, he went up on the roof of where he was staying to pray. While praying, he had a vision. 11 He saw the sky open and something like a large sheet came down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 Then Peter heard a voice (more like a thought) saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15 The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call unclean." 16 This happened three times, and then the sheet with the animals was suddenly taken back up into the sky.

17 Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the servants sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Peter and were standing by the gate. 18 They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. 20 Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." 21 So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" 22 They answered, "Cornelius, a Roman 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." 23 So 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 went with Peter.

## **ASK**

- At the beginning of the story, what is Peter doing? (He is praying)
- While he is praying, what does he see? (a sheet coming down from heaven with animals in it)
- What does Peter hear that he's supposed to do with the animals? (Kill and eat them – yum!)
- What is Peter's response? (No way!)
- What is Peter then told? (To not call unclean what God calls clean)
- That's the first half of the story. Then there's the second half of the story where Peter is talking to some servants of Cornelius. Who is Cornelius? (A Roman Centurion).
- What do Cornelius' servants ask Peter to do? (come to Cornelius' house)
- Does Peter agree to do this? (Yes.)

## **TELL**

- Peter is an Israelite. Israelites are also referred to as Jewish. There were certain rules they had received from God about their diet. Some of these rules involved not eating certain animals, like pigs, rabbits, reptiles and birds of prey, like hawks, owls, etc. These animals were considered "unclean."
- So at first, the vision that Peter is having might seem like God is telling Peter that he can eat whatever he wants, right?
- But then there's the second part of the story, where Cornelius' servants show up.
- Cornelius is a Roman. He is NOT Jewish.

- If you were Jewish, like Peter, then you *just did NOT* talk to or interact with people who were NOT Jewish.
- People who were NOT Jewish were thought of as “unclean.”
- God, in the prayer, is preparing Peter to talk with and share with people who were not Jewish.
- Peter would think, “They are unclean. I won’t talk to them.” But God is telling Peter, “No, do not call unclean what I call clean.”

#### **TRANSITION** to Activity

- Today, we’re going to carve animals out of soap.
- We’re using soap because what does soap do? That’s right, it makes us clean.
- The soap will be a reminder that God is the one who makes us clean.
- And that God wants all of us to be clean.
- And so God calls us to share what we know of God with other people, regardless of who they are.

#### **EXPLAIN** Activity

- I’m going to give each of you a bar of soap.
- I then want you to scrape off any lettering that’s on the soap with a carrot peeler.
- Once you’ve done that, etch onto the top of the soap an animal, maybe one of the unclean animals, like a pig or a turtle or a hawk using one of the pointed sticks on the table.
- Then using the carrot peelers and table knives and metal files, slowly and carefully cut away the soap until you reach the lines you made.
- Round out the shape with the carrot peeler after you have made a rough start.
- Add details and texture using the pointed stick.
- When you have finished carving wet the soap slightly and rub it with your fingers to smooth it out even more.
- While you do most of this, you’ll want to hold the bar of soap in your hand so that it won’t break when you press on it.

#### **DO** Soap Carving activity

NOTE: If they finish one animal and there’s a significant amount of time left, feel free to give them another bar of soap. Encourage them to make a more complex animal with their new bar of soap.

#### **TELL** (as they wrap-up the craft)

- These animals you have made are clean because they’re made out of soap.
- But they are also clean because God made them.
- Everything God has made is clean.
- You, me, everyone is clean because God made each of us.
- Let these soap animals be a reminder that you are a clean and wonderful child of God.
- Let these soap animals also be a reminder that the people around you and even those who are NOT around you are clean and wonderful children of God.

#### **CLEAN UP**

#### **DISMISS FOR SINGING**

