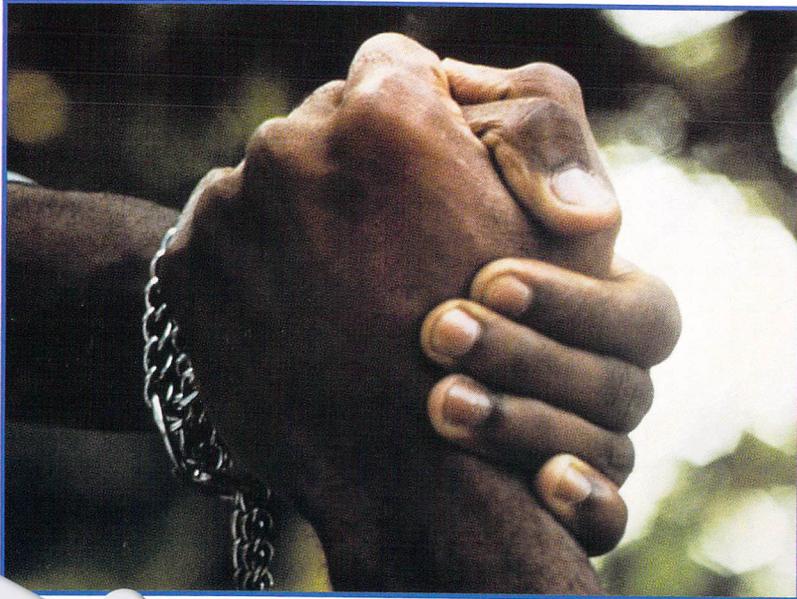


### RACISM AND PREJUDICE

#### Introduction

Have you ever felt shut out ... not invited to the party because of ... ? Well, this is what this study is all about. The Bible story is about a revelation made to the apostle Peter when the church was still young. In the orthodox Judaism of the time, food was considered "unclean" (religiously unacceptable) if it was from certain animals. In the same way, certain people were religiously unacceptable to them—in particular Gentiles, people who were foreigners and not raised in their religious traditions. Peter found that in Christ this was going to change.

Just prior to this passage, God had given a God-fearing Gentile by the name of Cornelius a vision. In the vision, an angel of God told this Roman army officer to send for Peter. Listen to the Bible story. Then, move into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire.



1. What immediately strikes you in this Bible story?

  - the attitude of Peter toward Gentiles
  - the spiritual desire of Cornelius the Gentile
  - the way God communicated through visions
  - the willingness of Peter to break the rules
2. If a sheet were to drop from heaven with all the foods on your "avoid" list, what would be on the sheet?

<input type="checkbox"/> meat	<input type="checkbox"/> anchovy pizza
<input type="checkbox"/> vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/> sushi
<input type="checkbox"/> high-fat foods	<input type="checkbox"/> raw oysters
<input type="checkbox"/> health foods	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> anything not sold at McDonald's	
3. Imagine you are Peter. First you are told in a vision to eat meat that Jews are forbidden to eat. Now God tells you to go visit a Gentile, who was also considered impure or unclean. How are you feeling?

<input type="checkbox"/> cautious	<input type="checkbox"/> angry
<input type="checkbox"/> excited	<input type="checkbox"/> fearful
<input type="checkbox"/> confused	<input type="checkbox"/> awkward
4. What kind of person would you have the most trouble going to if God asked you to go to his or her house and give help?

  - a person of another race
  - a homosexual
  - a person who lives in a dirty, smelly house
  - a person who lives in a wealthy, exclusive neighborhood
  - an atheist
  - a person with AIDS
  - a person who speaks another language
  - other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PETER'S VISION

<sup>9</sup>About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

<sup>10</sup>He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup>He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup>It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup>Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

<sup>14</sup>"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

<sup>15</sup>The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

<sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

<sup>17</sup>While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup>They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

<sup>19</sup>While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup>So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." ...

<sup>25</sup>As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup>But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

<sup>27</sup>Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup>He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup>So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

Acts 10:9–20,25–29

5. Being totally honest, what kind of walls have you permitted between yourself and others?

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> racial         | <input type="checkbox"/> moral        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> religious      | <input type="checkbox"/> political    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> economic       | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> denominational |                                       |

6. What's the most common reason you feel excluded from a group?

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> race                  | <input type="checkbox"/> cliques      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> religion              | <input type="checkbox"/> career       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> social status         | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> interests / abilities |                                       |

7. If you were put in charge of reconciliation in your school or community, what would you do?

8. What people wouldn't feel at home in your group or church?

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> people from the other side of the tracks         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people of a different color or ethnic background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people who don't wear our kind of clothes        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people who are not very religious                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people who are too religious                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people who are down-and-out                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people who are upper class                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____                                     |

9. What can your group or church do to help those people feel accepted?

10. If God gave you personally a vision about your attitude toward other people, what would he tell you?

11. Respond to that message in prayer. How else would you like the group to pray for you?