

THE THIRD OPTION LIFE GROUP (LESSON WEEK 2)

GOD'S SOLUTION TO RACISM AND DIVISION: THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST

In today's lesson, we are studying the story of Peter's call and vision to bring the gospel to the gentile family of Cornelius in Acts 10. It is a story of how God removed the division between Jews and gentiles through a revelation of His grace. The big idea is that God is not a respecter of persons; He doesn't have favorites. He has unconditional favor on all who come to Jesus. If we will see people and treat people like God does, we can heal wounds, break down walls, and walk in love and unity.

1. **Possible ice breaker:** Share one of the most interesting cross-cultural experiences you've ever had. Describe a first-time experience with people who were different than you and had a different culture than you. How did you feel and what did you learn? Why do you think those experiences are good for us?

2. Why do you think God insisted on Peter going to the house of the gentile commander to bring the gospel instead of just sharing the gospel with Cornelius, himself? Why was it so important that the Jewish and gentile Christians know that gentiles didn't have to become Jews first before they could follow Jesus? Why is it so important for people to see a church where all people regardless of race, culture, or background are fully united in Christ?

3. How do you think Peter was able to justify his bias towards gentiles? What are ways that you've seen people justify their discriminatory attitudes or behaviors towards others? Can you relate to having assumptions about people that either created bias or prevented you from showing them the honor and respect that you could've shown them, if you would have known how they really felt?

4. God specifically commands Peter not call "unclean" anything that He calls "clean." We see in this how God hates the sin of racism because it creates shame and hinders people from feeling and knowing their worth and identity to God. Someone said, "Conviction is feeling bad for something wrong you've done; shame is feeling something bad because of who you are." Can you share a time when you felt shamed? What burden did you feel like that put on your life?

5. This story helps us see how grace can really heal and change everything for the better, when we really understand and apply it to our relationships. Which one of the following ways grace change relationships can you especially relate to?
 - a. Grace removes the strongholds of pride and inferiority from our relationships as we realize, at the foot of the cross, we are all just sinners saved by grace. Nothing I do or I have done makes me more special to God or less special than anyone else because my standing is based on what Jesus did.

- b. Grace helps me to afford to be able to forgive others who've hurt or shamed me because I realize how much Jesus forgave me.
 - c. When my identity is in Christ, it sets me free from being envious or feeling threatened by others or feeling a need to prove myself.
 - d. Grace gives me the freedom to value, believe in, and unconditionally love anyone.
6. It was significant that God wanted Peter to go to Cornelius' house as a way of showing honor. It is also significant that when he did, God showed up in such a powerful way to bring blessing, favor, and revival to the church.
- a. Why is it so important to go beyond tolerance to acts of honor in relating to people whom we have differences with?
 - b. What is the significance of having "honorable assumptions" verses "dishonorable assumptions" towards people?
 - c. Why does God not just want us to see beyond people's differences but to actually honor, celebrate, and affirm the great value people bring to us because of their differences.
 - d. What does this say about how God wants to bring blessing, revival, and renewal in our world today?
7. **Ministry point.** Is there some way we can pray for each other to take shame off some area and speak blessing and honor upon each other? How can we help each other experience the following promise?

"Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion. Instead of disgrace you will inherit a double portion in your land and everlasting joy will be yours." (Isaiah 51:7)