

# Youth Teaching Resources

March 31, 2024



## Season of Lent

March 3, 2024—"Can I Be Good?"—Psalm 19

March 10, 2024—"Can I Be Grateful?"—Psalm 107 (RCL:1-3, 17-22)

March 17, 2024—"Can I Be Whole-Hearted?"—Psalm 119:9-16

March 24, 2024—"Can I Be Safe?"—Psalm 31 (RCL 31:9-16)

## Season of Easter

**March 31, 2024—"Good News for Everyone"—Acts 10:34-43**

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# Good News for Everyone

*Acts 10:34-43*

## YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Tyler Johnson

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Gathering

As your group comes together, be sure to start your time asking students how they are doing, what their week looks like, and reflect on the previous week's challenge.

### Opening Activity

Ask students if there is anything they ever changed their mind about? It could be about something silly, like what they are going to wear that day, or something more serious, like a closely held belief or custom. What for students goes into changing their mind? In today's lesson Tony explores a passage that highlights a powerful individual changing their mind about the resurrection and lordship of Christ.

### Listening to the Scripture

*Read aloud Acts 10: 34-43.*

- We don't use the word lordship, or lord too much anymore outside of Jesus, the only thing that may come to mind is landlord to a renter. When you think of lordship in 2024, how do you think of it, especially in the context that Jesus is Lord of all?
- Along with lordship, another word that gets tossed around in church but not really anywhere else is savior. The word savior is central to the identity of Jesus. How do you interact with the word savior? And how do you look at Jesus as savior using your own definition?
- The message of Jesus was supposed to be and is a message for all people. Do you think the message of Jesus is still for all people today?

If you would like to continue the discussion, consider *Digging Deeper*.

- When has your perspective on life changed? And was it a person or people who helped you change your perspective on something?

If the group is up for a challenge, discuss what Tony poses as *The Hardest Question*: Did they know?

- It is always interesting to find out what people knew and when they knew it. A question for students along these lines is "what would it take for you to believe something new, like Cornelius."

## Application

Before closing, introduce this week's challenge.

Take time to understand your convictions on why you believe what you believe about Jesus. How does what you believe impact your daily life?

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Perspective**—While racial attitudes provide the most obvious example, traditional attitudes also have been challenged by growing acceptance in culture—and in many churches—of persons who have been divorced and remarried, or who don’t match up to default notions of gender and relationships. These issues often hit home when a family member is affected, and we begin to take a closer look at assumptions or viewpoints we had not previously examined. Even where full acceptance remains elusive, few of us could say that our perspectives on these matters have not shifted during the past 30-40 years.

**Cornelius**—A centurion was a Roman military officer who commanded 100 men. The Latin *centum*, meaning “hundred,” also gave rise to our word “century” and “cent.” Six units of 100 men comprised a “cohort,” and ten cohorts formed a “legion.” It is not surprising that a sizable contingent of Roman soldiers would be stationed in Caesarea because it, not Jerusalem, was the official seat of the Roman government for Palestine.

**The cosmic Christ**—J. Bradley Chance describes the importance of the core gospel in this way: “The proclamation of the gospel message is the means whereby the church fulfills its calling as ‘witnesses’ (cf. 10:41). That gospel, even in its abbreviated form as presented here by Peter, culminates in the proclamation that Jesus has been ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead (10:42). This clear affirmation of the cosmic lordship of Christ is *the* essence of the gospel message. The miraculous deeds, the agonizing death, the triumph of resurrection, and the glory of ascension all bear witness to the central confession that ‘Jesus is Lord.’ Appropriately, therefore, Peter *begins* his witness with the central confession (10:36) and ends with an affirmation of that same confession as he acknowledges Jesus as the judge of both the living and the dead (10:42), which encompasses that which was, is, and will be” (*Acts*, Smyth & Helwys Commentary [Smyth & Helwys, 2007], 177).

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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## Did they know?

Careful readers may note a curious thing about how Peter's speech begins. Cornelius, a Gentile, had invited Peter to come and speak because he and others wanted to learn more about the new faith that had come about through Jesus.

We learn about the invitation in the words of the messengers who came to Peter in Joppa: "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" (v. 22).

After Peter arrived, Cornelius was confused enough to bow at Peter's feet and had to be assured that Peter was a mortal like him (vv. 25-26). When Peter saw the large number of relatives and friends that Cornelius had gathered, he noted the awkwardness of the setting and asked why they had sent for him (vv. 27-29)

Cornelius recounted his vision from three days earlier, indicating that he and his companions had called Peter and gathered to hear him so they could "listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say" (v. 33).

This implies that Cornelius lacked information about Christ, but Peter began his summary of the gospel with "You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ ..." (v. 36).

Did Peter assume that Cornelius and company were already acquainted with the gospel message?

In considering the question, we should remember that Luke is reporting the speech at least second-hand, and long after the actual encounter, so we can't expect it to be a verbatim account.

As Luke constructed Peter's speech for his book, the audience he had in mind was his own potential readers, not just Cornelius and his friends. They would know—or should know—the heart of the gospel already. Luke's interest was to remind them that Christ's mission was for all people. Since Luke himself was a Gentile and wrote with Gentiles in mind, this message would hold special interest.

Cornelius and company may not have known the gospel message that was for all peoples when Peter arrived, but Luke's readers would have known it.

From another angle, we may want to ask deeper questions about how Peter came to break through his own prejudice and understand that the gospel was for all people. J. Bradley

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Chance suggests that Luke's account of Peter's growing appreciation for Gentile believers can be visualized as a play in two acts, with Act One consisting of two scenes in which Peter works miracles and evangelizes Jews as he makes his way toward Joppa, where he had been instructed to visit a man named Simon, a tanner (Acts 9:32-43). Peter's willingness to visit a tanner (whose smelly work rendered him ritually unclean) suggests a growing willingness to step outside the exclusivist box of his Jewish background.

Act Two (10:1-11:18) moves into the Gentile world and plays out in seven scenes. In *Scene One* (10:1-8) Luke leaves Peter in Joppa while taking the reader north to Caesarea, where a Roman centurion named Cornelius was granted a vision from God during his afternoon prayers.

*Scene Two* brings us back to Joppa on the following day (10:9-16), where Peter was praying alone on the flat roof of his host's home. Peter also saw a vision, one that challenged him to recognize "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (10:15). The vision was repeated three times, apparently to make sure Peter got the point.

Three messengers from Cornelius showed up in *Scene Three* (10:17-23a), and the Spirit instructed Peter to accompany them without hesitation. Employing a lesson learned from the vision, Peter invited the men to come in and rest overnight, something that strictly observant Jews would not have done.

*Scene Four* (10:23b-33) relates Peter's arrival and opening conversation with Cornelius and others who were gathered with him. Recognizing the odd nature of his visit in a Gentile's home, and accompanied by other Jewish Christians, Peter explained that God had taught him not to call anyone profane or unclean (10:28). Cornelius then described his own vision and asked Peter to proclaim whatever God laid on his heart (10:33).

Peter's sermon (10:34-43, the text for today) comprises *Scene Five*. In it, he proclaimed the basics of the gospel message, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the command to proclaim the good news to all, calling for repentance and promising the forgiveness of sins.

Peter's sermon was quickly interrupted by *Scene Six* (10:44-48) in which the Spirit of God was poured out on all who were gathered. The Gentile believers spoke in tongues and praised God, demonstrating the same evidence of the Spirit's blessing that Jewish believers had experienced in Acts 2.

The *last scene* in the lengthy story (11:1-18) finds Peter back in Jerusalem, recounting his experience to other church leaders. Some criticized him for having lodged and presumably eaten with the Gentiles, but Peter insisted that if God wanted to bless the Gentiles with the Spirit, it was hardly his place to interfere (11:17).