

## LESSON 35: Business Performance

# A Startling Paradigm Shift

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### SETTING THE STAGE

The Apostle Peter had been raised and trained in the Jewish traditions and had been taught that Jews were to be set apart from the rest of the world. In particular, they had strict rules against associating with non-Jewish people—or what the Bible refers to as Gentiles.

Jews were not allowed to be inside a Gentile person's home or even to dine with them. During the time of Jesus, the prominence of the Pharisee's dogma made this avoidance of Gentiles even more pronounced. Without any significant interactions with Gentiles, unless it was under the heavy hand of the Roman Centurions, most Jews had a disdain, if not hatred for Gentiles. That is why the story in Acts 10 has such profound importance and was so hard for Peter's peers to receive.

### THE BIBLE STORY

#### Read Acts 10:24-48

*The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"*

*Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."*



*Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

*“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Peter experienced a dramatic paradigm shift from his cultural view that had been ingrained in him since childhood. How uncomfortable do you think it must have been for him to travel with Gentile soldiers and then enter a Gentile’s home? Have you had a similar experience with someone of another race? If so, describe your experience and how you felt. If not, what hesitations would you have, if given the opportunity?

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2. Soon after Peter's experience, the Jewish Christians moved from being consistently segregated from Gentiles to actually living and doing life with those who became Christians. How do you believe God viewed this transition? How might that apply to our workplaces today regarding diversity?

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3. Peter learned to accept Gentiles into the Jewish community, provided they became followers of Jesus. How did this likely change the way he viewed other Gentiles, even the ones who were not followers of Jesus?

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4. How should this story impact our view on working with people from other races or cultures?

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5. Are there any principles or ideas from this story that you should use to improve your outlook or actions towards diversity and inclusion in your workplace?

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