

Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further International Bible Lessons

Acts 11:1-18
Sunday October 25, 2015
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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be *the answers* to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class. The *Class Preparation Guide* includes the questions below, and it can be given to students at the end of the previous class so they can pray, read, and think ahead to prepare for the next week’s Bible class.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Give at least two possible reasons why the news about Peter and Cornelius traveled so fast to Jerusalem.

The Christian Jews in Caesarea, where Philip went to preach earlier, who believed strongly that believers needed to be circumcised and obey the ceremonial food laws to be true Christians, would have quickly sent a delegation to Jerusalem to report what they had heard, especially when

these Gentile Christians came into their midst to worship. If Peter was wrong, they wanted him denounced and stopped quickly by the other apostles before his error spread.

2. Why was Peter criticized for welcoming Cornelius and his household into the Church and baptizing them?

He was criticized because he broke the Jewish ceremonial laws about being in the home and eating with people who were not Jewish. In their opinion, he was not keeping himself pure and separate from impure and unclean pagans or Gentiles. He should not have baptized them and welcomed the males into the church until they were circumcised. Peter would have been making the Church impure from their point of view.

3. Why did God make previously unclean foods clean?

After God sent Jesus to save believers from their sins, write the law of God on their hearts, and fill them with the Holy Spirit, they were then to go and tell everyone in all nations the good news about Jesus and the gift of eternal life. The ceremonial laws about unclean foods were now no longer needed to keep God's people away from pagans and from following pagan ways. The unclean food laws would have prevented God's people from getting close enough to Gentiles and pagans to tell them the good news of forgiveness through Jesus, peace through Jesus, and empowerment to live for God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

4. Why do you think Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote so much about Peter and his meeting with Cornelius?

God knew that the Church in the coming years and decades, as Paul experienced, would need a good, solid, reminder and teaching that a person did not need to accept Judaism or Jewish ceremonial practices in order to be saved or be a member of the Christian Church. Christ came to make people followers of Him, not followers of Him and obsolete ceremonial laws. Luke wrote so much because God wanted to emphasize how important the teaching and mission to all nations was to God and all people everywhere.

5. What did the Spirit say to Peter and why was this message of the Spirit to Peter so important?

The Spirit told him to “have no hesitation about going with them,” the men that Cornelius sent to him — even though they were Gentiles (Acts 11:12). Peter knew the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the voice confirmed the truth and the meaning of the vision he had seen. Peter then had the witness of the vision (which he saw three times) and the witness of the Holy Spirit, which convinced him that he was to go and change his obsolete beliefs. God was truly serious about this change of direction and practice as the mission to the Gentiles began in earnest through Peter, Paul, and others.