

Becoming Like Jesus | Week 3 - Jesus Fostered Reconciliation**Message Big Idea**

To be deeply formed into the image of Christ, we must engage in habits that can help bring racial solidarity in the church and to the world.

Scripture

Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 10:2-4, Acts 10, Galatians 2:11-14

Points to Keep In Mind

1. At COMMUNITY, we want to practice racial solidarity. That means standing with, listening to, and empathizing with; this is not a season or a response to a news story. It is a priority because we believe that is part of becoming more like Jesus. Perhaps some symbols of racism have been dismantled: segregation in schools and rights for people of color. However, the consequences of those generational inequities are still present in our society, and our biases result in racial conflict and division that permeates so much of our culture.
2. Peter's empathy is grounded in his connection to God. He listened to Cornelius' story, which confronted his cultural and religious narratives and biases. He stays with Cornelius for several days. It wasn't like he came over for coffee and left 30 minutes later, relieved to leave behind an uncomfortable situation. Peter confesses his wrongheaded thinking to those he would have previously only shown hostility or indifference (vs. 34, 35). He allowed his experience of God to redefine his ideas about God through his dream and witnessing the power of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. He even stood up to others when his actions among the Gentiles were criticized (in the next chapter).
3. Cornelius was not an Israelite. Before, he'd never been part of the "people of God" circle. Secondly, he was a Roman and part of the empire oppressing Peter's people. There would have been many Jewish people that still wanted to see God restore the Kingdom to Israel out of the hands of the Roman Empire. Peter would have hesitated to visit Cornelius because, for centuries, any contact with Gentiles was strictly prohibited by Jewish Law.
4. It is also worth pointing out that Peter has to defend himself in the next chapter as the Jewish leaders criticize him in Jerusalem. We see that Peter (also called Cephas) and Paul clashed over the issue of Gentile inclusion in Antioch (Galatians 2:11ff). The book of Romans, often misunderstood to be a systematic work of theology, has as its central concern the coming together of Jews and Gentiles as one people of God. You could say one of the greatest concerns Paul had was the threat of a church split along ethnic lines. See also Acts 15, the very first council of the church.
5. Our Church's concern for racial solidarity is not in response to a news story or because it is fashionable today, nor is it born out of a desire to be "woke." Racial solidarity was at the heart of the Church's story from the very beginning. It also recognizes the truths in the prophetic tradition: while sin is individual, it is social and structural. God has always called his people to be agents of peace and justice (for more info, see Leviticus 19:33-34, Amos 5, Isaiah 1:1-17, Luke 1:46-55, Luke 4:14-30, James 1:27).

Additional questions and quotes

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized? communitychristian.org/baptism/
4. Who have you been able to BLESS?
5. "[The work of solidarity is not so we] despise ourselves or others, but that we listen and live humbly and incarnationally and through that process see the image of God in one another." –Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life*
6. "Instead of being deeply formed, we settle for being shallowly shaped." -Rich Villodas