

Grading Things

We are constantly grading or ranking things

- Triage: **Definitely Good** **Maybe** **Definitely Bad**

What are our ranking criteria for...

- Sports teams
- Skilled workers
- Fruits and vegetables
- Patients in the emergency room
- Potential friends

What is the problem if we get it wrong?

How does this happen in the church?

One Step to God

Acts 10:9-23

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 Spanish: page 1399
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Cultural Setting: Ranking of people by the Jewish people

Ranking pattern by first century Jewish people

– **Definitely good:**

- Religious/practicing Jews, especially Sabbath and food laws
- Especially the most ‘fastidious’ (very careful about accuracy and detail of obedience)

– **Okay/maybe:**

- Non-Jews (Gentiles) who fully embraced Judaism **Cornelius**

– **Definitely bad:** **Non-Jews who partially embraced Judaism?**

- Non-Jews (Gentiles) who followed false gods and idols
- Jews who went against God’s laws
- Anyone who sided with Rome (like tax collectors)

Big idea of the book of Leviticus:

Nothing unclean must ever approach God

God said, “You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, **so they will not die in their uncleanness** for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.” *Leviticus 15:31*

“These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves about in the water and every creature that moves along the ground. **You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean**, between living creatures that **may be eaten** and those that **may not be eaten.**” *Leviticus 11:46-47*

defile = treat as common something that is holy

Acts 10:1-11:18

Cornelius in Caesarea →
Gentile, Roman army officer
Worshipped God of Israel

Angel: "Send for Simon Peter"

← **Simon Peter** in Joppa
Jewish Christian
Leader of Christian church
Angel: "Go to Cornelius"

Peter preached the Gospel

Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and his household

Peter accepted them & baptized them

Jewish Christians were hesitant, then they accepted Cornelius

- **A dramatic transformation of Christian church!**

This story is told 3 times → very important for Luke!

Acts 10:9-23

9-16: God's vision for Peter: God has made all foods clean

17-20: • Peter was hungry and praying

21-23: • "God frequently reveals himself **not only in but also by means of** our human situations"

- Luke emphasizes the interweaving of the two sides of this story: corroborating visions and experiences
- Peter refuses the command of God. A test??
 - Jesus had taught this, but it was hard to learn

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corroborating = separate and confirming

Jesus called the crowd to him and said,
 “Listen and understand.
 What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them,
 but what comes out of their mouth,
 that is what defiles them.”

Matthew 15:10-11

defile = make unclean, impure

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21-23: • “God frequently reveals himself **not only in
 but also by means of** our human situations”

- Luke emphasizes the interweaving of the two sides of this story: corroborating visions and experiences
- Peter refuses the command of God. A test??
 - Jesus had taught this, but it was hard to learn
- God makes Peter puzzle over this!
 - God often is a ‘minimalist’ teacher: expects us to do real work in learning

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Acts 10:9-23

9-16: God's vision for Peter: God has made all foods clean

17-20: The Spirit's direct command: go with the 3 men

- 21-23:
- Peter is still puzzling while the men arrive
 - The 3 men are puzzling over how to proceed
 - Have to ask for directions
 - Stand at the gate and call out
 - Spirit doesn't explain. He just directs
 - Obedience goes against all Peter has ever known
 - This presents the 'crisis': What will Peter do?

Acts 10:9-23

9-16: God's vision for Peter: God has made all foods clean

17-20: The Spirit's direct command: go with the 3 men

21-23: Peter obeys: welcomes the Gentiles & goes with them

- Peter asks for their story and listens
- They describe Cornelius & God's message to him
 - Holy angel said: Peter should "...come to Cornelius's house so that he could hear what you have to say."
- Peter obeys
 - They stay in his house, and almost certainly eats with him
 - Peter (and 6 others) go to Cornelius's house

The Big Idea

Making the Church into the Church of many nations
is God's idea and God's work

that He initiated **and continues to build**

through a devout outsider ^{Cornelius} and a reluctant insider ^{Peter}

through enthusiastic and hesitant Christians

who both followed

who keep following

the leading and empowering of God

“God our Savior wants **all people** to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and **one mediator** between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for **all people.**” *1 Timothy 2:4-6*

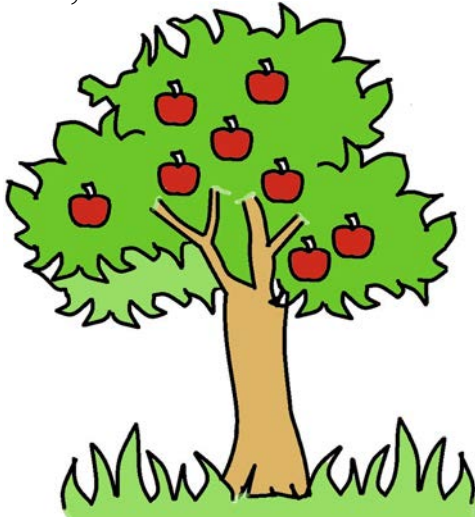
“So from now on we regard no one **from a worldly point of view.** Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **the new creation has come:** The old has gone, the new is here!”

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

- People are just one step from God: to bow to Jesus Christ
- We create ladders that require steps to climb...

Ranking people in the church

We so easily regard people
from a worldly point of view
In Christ, the new creation as come!



Application

Do not call anything impure that God has made clean

- We can easily think:
 - God has completely forgiven this person but...
 - He or she is not to be fully welcomed
- The one God has cleansed, we are to fully welcome

Application

Do not call anything impure that God has made clean
“Regard no one from a **worldly point of view”**

- We **ALL** have explicit and implicit criteria for ranking people
 - Intelligence / Emotional intelligence / Cultural intelligence
 - Family situation: married/single/divorced/widowed/remarried, kids (any/number/‘ideal’), ...
 - Socio-economic status: education/wealth/job
 - Race/ethnicity/nationality
 - Gender
 - Physical (dis)abilities/appearance
 - Age
 - Public failures / Getting caught / Societal shame / ...

Application

Do not call anything impure that God has made clean
“Regard no one from a **worldly point of view”**

- We **ALL** have explicit and implicit criteria for ranking people
 - The problem is “worldly points of view”
 - **Especially** when it has the **appearance** of godliness
 - Peter and the early church: religious laws about food, holidays
- In the church
 - **FOR** everyone: there are people we aren’t inclined to help
 - **OF** everyone: there are people we don’t **fully** welcome
 - **BY** everyone: there are people we hesitate to let lead or shape us
- We certainly are called **to grow in holiness**, and are to be hesitant to let unholy people lead and shape us
 - Key: Be sure that our standards are from **God’s point of view**

Application

Do not call anything impure that God has made clean

“Regard no one from a **worldly point of view”**

- We **ALL** have explicit and implicit criteria for ranking people
 - The problem is “worldly points of view”
- In the church: FOR, OF, BY
- Steps to take
 - Grow in awareness of my ‘worldly points of view’
 - Intentionally dismantle (tear down) this brokenness
 - Build **humble bridges** to people: listen & learn
 - Dismantle barriers and hesitations
 - Help each other: identify blind spots, build bridges, ...

Regard everyone through Christ’s view in the Gospel

The Big Idea

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that He initiated **and continues to build**

through a devout outsider and a reluctant insider

and through enthusiastic and hesitant Christians

who both followed

and who keep following

the leading and empowering of God

“So from now on we regard no one **from a worldly point of view**. Though we once regarded **Christ** in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **the new creation has come**: The old has gone, the new is here!”

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

- How are we ranking people from a worldly point of view?
- **Thanks and praise be to God** who does not rank you and me from a worldly point of view!
 - We are **all** naturally unholy and unclean
 - God cleanses us and makes us holy in **Jesus Christ** by grace through faith: a gift which we cannot earn
- Do not treat as common anyone whom God has forgiven