



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Labor Day Series, Lesson 15

Lesson Title: New Friends – New Year

Take Home Point: Include others just as Jesus includes you.

Warm-Up:

One of my favorite stories about accepting people for who they are comes from one of my nieces. When she was about seven years old, I was riding in the car with my brother and his family. While driving toward their house, we saw two children playing on the sidewalk. One was blonde and fair-skinned, the other obviously of African descent. As we approached nearer to them, my niece got very excited and said, "Those are my friends Diane and Jenny!" Then, to make sure we were clear about which one was which, she casually added, "Jenny's the one with the purple pants." In all the years since then, I have not encountered a better example of accepting someone because of who they are, not where they come from, their skin color, family wealth, or any other external factor.

Read: Acts 10:22-48

Observation (What happened?):

What did Cornelius do to prepare for the coming of Peter to his house?

What were the first words of Peter when he began his sermon to the house full of people?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What do you think were Peter's emotions as he heard Cornelius explain why he had asked Peter to come?

Why were the circumcised believers astonished when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles in the room?

Insight:

It's easy to look at this as the first instance of God opening his family to Gentiles, but it occurs a number of times in Scripture. The entire book of Ruth is about the acceptance of Ruth into the Jewish family of Boaz. And she becomes none other than the grandmother of King David. Jonah is directed to the city of Nineveh to preach repentance in the face of God's promised judgment. Remember what the Lord says when Jonah grouses about the Ninevites escaping God's judgment? "Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" We are to be open and loving to others, too, because everyone is in the same boat – sinful, destined for eternal separation from God, and in need of rescue through Christ Jesus.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

What attitudes do you demonstrate to your family and friends, toward people different from you – both those you know and those you don't know?

Think of one thing you can do at your church to make others feel welcome. Do it this week.