

If you are trying to lose weight, you may be on a diet. If you are dealing with a medical issue, you may have been given a new diet to try. My family had to make some changes to our diet after our second oldest was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes.

Jewish people have been on a kosher diet since the time of Moses and cannot eat pork or other “unclean” food. I’m glad I don’t have those restrictions. I’m not sure I would want to give up pancakes and sausage or bacon and eggs for breakfast, ham or pulled pork sandwiches for lunch, pork roast and BBQ ribs for dinner.

Peter could not eat any pork or other unclean foods until the day when he was very hungry at lunch time and started dreaming about food. Peter dreamed about a picnic blanket loaded with foods that he was not supposed to eat being lowered in front of him. A voice told Peter three times to eat what was in the picnic blanket. Three times Peter said, “No, Lord. I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.” (Acts 10:14) Three times God told Peter, “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” (Acts 10:16)

Is it ok to say “No!” to God. Peter did three times. He would learn to listen and say yes to God. But it took some time. Do we ever say “No!” to God? We do that every time we refuse to forgive someone who has hurt or offended us. We say no to God whenever we want revenge. We say no to God when we turn our backs on those who need our help.

We may also be guilty of saying “Yes, but ...” to God.

- Yes, but give me a little time.
- Yes, but we’ve never done it that way before.
- Yes, but I’m going to need more money, more help.
- Yes, but I think others should take their turn.
- Yes, but this is not my thing. You should ask someone else.

God answered Peter’s “No” by sending three men to his door. The Holy Spirit told Peter, “Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don’t worry, for I have sent them.” (Acts 10:19-20) When Peter asked the men what they wanted, they told him, “We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message.” (Acts 10:22)

Peter invited the men into the house where he was staying. The next day they started their road trip to Cornelius’ house in Caesarea. When Peter arrived, the house was full of people waiting to hear him. Peter told Cornelius, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me.” (Acts 10:28-29) Cornelius said that an angel told him to send for Peter and the people in house were waiting to hear his message.

Peter answered, **“I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.”** (Acts 10:34-35) God showed Peter that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone. Then Peter told the people that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay for the sins of all people. Then the Holy Spirit was given to the people in the house. It was a Gentile Pentecost. There were Jewish Christians who went with Peter and saw what happened. No one could object to Peter’s instructions to baptize the Gentiles. Then Peter stayed with Cornelius for several days to tell them more about Jesus.

The news of what happened in Caesarea got back to Jerusalem. When Peter returned, some of the Jewish believers accused Peter of entering the home of Gentiles and eating with them. Jesus was accused of eating with tax collectors and sinners. Those who complained had to learn that Jesus came to save all people. Peter told them everything that happened and why he baptized them. Then Peter said, **“Since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?”** (Acts 11:17)

When Peter was done talking, they said, **“We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”** (Acts 11:18) This would open the door for the Apostle Paul to take the Gospel message to the Gentiles. It would open the door for most of us to receive the gift of faith and be welcomed into God’s family.

God sent Peter to the house of Cornelius. God sent Paul to the Gentiles in modern day Turkey, Greece, and Rome. Where is God sending us today? We may be like those early Jewish Christians and think that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not for everyone. But the Gospel is for everyone. Jesus’ final command to His Disciples before He ascended to heaven was, **“Go and make disciples of the all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”** (Matthew 28;19) All nations mean all people.

In our highly divided nation, we may be tempted to think that people with a different political or worldview don’t have a place in God’s family. But that is not true. At least two of Jesus’ disciples had very different political views. Simon was a Zealot, a revolutionary who wanted to overthrow the Roman government. Matthew collected taxes for the Romans. Both men were sent by Jesus to bring the Gospel message to all nations, all people, all political persuasions.

The Holy Spirit may be sending us to people who have different political views. We can try to ignore the problems in our nation and hope they will go away, but that is not going to work. We can attack those who hold a different worldview, but that will only make things work. Or we can try to listen and engage the people with a different perspective in conversation. The Gospel is for all people.

Everyone has been given the gift of life from God. Every person is important in God’s eyes. There are so many people in our nation today who think this life is all there is, who do not know that life is a gift from God, that Jesus gives forgiveness and hope to all who believe in Him.

Conversations with these people may not be easy, but they are important. Peter tells us, “If someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.” (1 Peter 3:15-16) We don’t have to convince or persuade anyone. We do need to tell them about the hope we have in Christ and let the Holy Spirit work.

Peter had no idea what he was getting into when God sent him to the house of Cornelius. We have no idea what to expect when God puts us in a place to talk about the hope we have in Christ. We do know that God can and will do some amazing things. God’s Word and Spirit bring people to faith. We just make the introduction.

You may need to stick to your current diet and avoid things that are not good for you. But don’t say no to God when He is sending you to someone or someplace different today. You may be amazed at what God can do through you. Peter was.