

*Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” Acts 10:34,35*

Let's try to imagine the impact of Peter's words to the Roman soldier on both Peter and the Gentile. Most of the early believers were Jewish. The book of Leviticus, named for the Levites who were Jewish priests, contains detailed laws of how to lead a holy life. Included in this book are lists of 'clean' and 'unclean' foods, animals, and people. On top of that, the Jewish people of the first century thought that it was scandalous to even talk to Gentiles. The world that the Jewish believers knew was turned up-side down by Jesus. God sent poor Peter to spread the Good News to Samaria and now Joppa, past the converted Samaritans and then the Ethiopian. God's love and grace were not only for Israel, but for all people. One cannot have a Lord who is Lord of only part of creation.

So who are the gentiles in our lives? Who is God calling us to tell the Good News that Jesus is Lord of all? Are we called across the world where Christianity has been repressed or to minister to the homeless we pass every day? Peter shows us that we have to pay attention to where-and-what God is calling us to do. Often times we have to stop and reflect on how God is using us and others to help those we're called to serve.

Bethel is involved with so many ministries blessed by God – Hope House, the Outreach Houses, Bethel Builds, Circle of Love, and the Homeless ministry to name a few. It's important that we are mindful not to begin to think of these as our ministries, as it is God who makes and fulfills promises through us. In the final section of today's reading, the Holy Spirit descends on the Gentiles, affirming Peter's ministry to them. In the end, there are no human "heroes," but God who finds ways to do his work through them.

*Good and gracious God, thank you for equipping us to fulfill your ministries. Help us keep steadfast in listening and watching for your direction. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

*The writer:* Jacqui Shanda was baptized, grew up at Bethel, and has been on staff as Director of Education since 1994. She and her husband, John, have a son, daughter-in-law and new grandson (pictures available on request).

