

People View

^ Acts 10:9-20, key v15

People Bias

First Impressions

First impressions are incredibly powerful, shaping our perceptions of others and influencing our subsequent behavior towards them.

People form opinions about others within a mere seven seconds of meeting them.

Stereotypes and preconceived notions

Ethnic Group

Age

Accent and Dialect

Appearance and attire

Snap judgments based on how we dress, style our hair, or present ourselves physically.

Other factors like environment

In the Oasis Cafe?

A dark alley late at night?

Example of the pastor dressing up as a homeless person

as a homeless person

Conclusion

In conclusion, we form opinions about people at an alarming speed, usually within seconds of meeting them. These initial impressions are influenced by non-verbal cues, stereotypes, and our own cognitive biases.

Change in people view in New Testament

One thread running through Acts, but also the letters of Paul is the acceptance by the Jewish Christians of non-Jewish people - Gentiles

Two parts

One: could Gentiles even become Christians?

Two: What is the expected behaviour of these Gentile Christians

Circumcision, Food regulations, and others

Acts 10 is the beginning about the question whether Gentiles could become Christians

Acts 10 and beyond

Cornelius, family and friends

Was a Roman army officer

But somehow he believed in God, in Yahweh

We do not know how

He prays to God and God speaks to him

via an angel

this is another Mary, Zechariah moment

pivotal in God's plan

he sends angels

"Send for Peter who is in Joppa"

And he does

Peter's vision

God's activity to change Peter's mind

Is a vision

A sheet with animals that the Jewish faith & Moses instructions have declared unclean

With an invitation to eat them

Peter refuses

But God said "What God has made clean, you must not profane"

Three times - very significant message

Do not ignore

And then God warns Peter that Cornelius messengers are at the door

Sent by God

The rest of Peter and Cornelius story

Peter goes with the messengers to

Cornelius

He preaches in his household

And the Holy Spirit interrupts Peter's message

By falling on all who heard the word

^ Acts 10:44

Peter's fellow Jews were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out even over the Gentiles

Acts 10:45

And Paul could not do otherwise than baptise these people as Christians

Even if he himself was reluctant

Can anyone withhold the water for baptising these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have

These are not people like us, but God has given them the Spirit, just as he gave to us

What is going on!?

The rest of the early Church's story

Chapter 11, Peter reports to the Church Council (the first one) in Jerusalem

He tells the whole story

And with him they agreed that this was of God, and that therefore Gentiles could become Christians

Starting a mission to non-Jewish people

Of which later Paul is the foremost

Chapter 15, Paul reports to the Church

Chapter 15, Paul reports to the Church Council

Paul states that Gentile Christians do not need to be circumcised

And it takes almost the whole chapter to report on the meeting where the Church agrees that this is OK, too

What does this story say to us today?

First of all, what does it mean to be unclean

For Jewish people it meant that the food that Peter saw in the sheet

Could not be touched at all

The implication is that the Jewish people separated themselves from all the people that eat these food stuffs as well

So, by making the food clean God also removed the barrier for the Jewish Christians to interact with non-Jewish people

So that they could also come to faith

Without this, we would not believe in Jesus Christ, as Christianity would be limited to the Jewish people

We are after all gentiles

although some may have a Jewish heritage, known or unknown

But the question for us is: who do we regard as unclean?

This is where we talked about our bias

We immediately make a judgement about people

me included

Could they become Christian?

And excluding loads of people

Some of it, because they are not part of who we meet in the first place

But it may also be, because we subconsciously avoid being in contact with them.

But God has made all people clean

Even if they are physically dirty

Or have done or are doing unspeakable things

That's why there is a successful mission to prisons for instance

So the question I want to think about today, do we have barriers in us, that stops us from interacting with all people?

And to bring the gospel also to them?