

# Sunday School Lesson



By Bessie Wilbon

## INTRODUCTION

The first century church made a major breakthrough in the event recorded in Acts 10 and 11. After living and growing for perhaps eight years as an all-Jewish body, the church took its gospel message to a family of uncircumcized Gentiles at Caesarea. There was no problem with getting the Gentiles to accept Christ and be baptized. It had been less easy to persuade the messenger, Peter, to approach Gentiles with the message of salvation; and it was still less easy to gain acceptance for Gentiles among the Jewish Christians.

Despite all the marvelous vitality of its early days, the church did not reach beyond the descendants of Abraham. Even Peter seemed to forget that folk "afar off" are included in the gospel provision and promise. Philip, "the evangelist," preached successfully in Samaria, and Peter also worked for a time there. It was a step toward "all nations."

God would wait forever for the church to address Gentiles with the gospel. For that major breakthrough He found Cornelius, a Roman army officer, ready to listen, and He prepared a reluctant apostle to bring the message. Again it was Peter, chosen to use the keys of the Kingdom, who opened the way to salvation in Christ.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Chapter eleven of Acts shows how the Jewish Christians were brought to accept Gentiles as bona fide members of the body of Christ. It does not even mention the name of Cornelius, but dwells on the means by which God persuaded Peter, first to approach the Gentiles at all, and then to recognize that they were accepted for discipleship on the same basis as the Jews.

## THE LESSON

"When Peter went to Jerusalem, those who were in favor of circumcizing Gentiles criticized him, saying, 'You were a guest in the home of uncircumcized Gentiles, and you even ate with them!' So Peter gave them a complete account of what had happened from the very beginning: While I was praying in the city of Joppa, I had a vision. I saw something coming down that looked like a large sheet being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it stopped next to me. I looked closely inside and saw domesticated and wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat!' But I said, 'Certainly not, Lord! No ritually unclean or defiled food has ever entered my mouth.' The voice spoke again from heaven, 'Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean.'" (To learn the rest of the story, read Acts 11.)

If Peter was irritated at what could seem a personal affront to him as an apostle, he didn't show it. Neither did he argue. He set forth the facts and let them speak for themselves. So also the story of the gospel is still better than all reasonings to convince the unbeliever.

Peter was a guest of Simon the tanner in Joppa, and had gone to the housetop to pray as the noon meal was being prepared. Every detail of the experience pointed toward God's intervention. Prayer led to a sleep-like trance, in which Peter saw a vision. Heaven itself lowered the "vessel" in front of the hungry man. It was for him!

The subject of eating permeates the whole discussion. It is the visible part of the question "What and who is acceptable with God?" The voice identified immediately as from the Lord on Heaven, directed Peter to get up, kill, and eat. Peter, a thorough going, lifelong Jew, had totally abstained from foods prohibited by God's law. And that was the basis of his refusal to follow God's command at this time. Peter had a perfect record of compliance up to now, and he was not about to break it, even at a word from Heaven. Peter did not say, "Lord, to eat this meat would be to go against Your law." As a real traditionalist he said, "I refuse to break my record." How like most of us he was!

The cleansing power of God changes the most common or unclean thing into something very uncommon. And God can do that with anything or anyone. Peter was to learn that through Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary every person could be lifted out of the ranks of the "unclean."

Acts 10 and 11 tell of three conversions. Peter was converted to acceptance of the truth that the gospel is for all men everywhere, and so he preached to Cornelius. Cornelius was converted to full and obedient acceptance of Christ as the Savior sent by the God he already worshipped. The Judean brethren were converted to acceptance of the fact that God really included Gentiles in His salvation plan.

The conversions marked a conclusion and a beginning.

## AABWE Changes Its Name

After an exciting and enthusiastic second year in Charlotte, the local chapter of the American Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs has changed its name and re-organized as a local organization. The group's new name is the Carolina Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs (CABWE). There are over 100 members and they expect to top 150 early this year.

One of the main reasons for re-organizing under a local chapter was the size of the business community in Charlotte and surrounding area and the tremendous response to this group's activities held during 1986.

Under the leadership of Jean Henderson, past president, and Judy Diamond, past vice president, women were drawn to come together and combine energies in finding resources, gaining insight into common problems such as financing a business and gathering vital business know-how about starting a new business.

The group holds its monthly meetings at McDonald's Cafeteria on Beatties Ford Rd. and in each month's meeting there is always something worthwhile for the new and experienced woman business owner to gain. The group is conscious of the buying power of the black community in Charlotte, and has actively sought out those black businesses that they could patronize and help support. The approximate total of sales done between businesses in the AABWE organization (among member businesses only) with the combined efforts of the City and County M/WBE programs is well over \$100,000.

The group has also gained the respect of all the other AABWE chapters across the U.S. because it was the largest chapter. While in Asheville, NC, for the annual convention last year, the group learned that their growth and recognition had been instrumental in bringing AABWE into the national limelight.

The yearly agenda has included a number of forums of value to black businesswomen. The highlight of the year was the "Women Business Owners' Conference" featuring lecturers Rosha McGill, Jean Henderson, Marilyn Wright, and Joan Jackson.

Workshops were sponsored by the group at the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce - including a workshop facilitated by Louise Warren of the Digital Equipment Corporation, entitled "You Can Surpass Yourself."

AABWE Charlotte Chapter also got a scholarship program off to a gigantic start with four high school seniors receiving \$1,000 each to the schools of his/her choice.

The next meeting of Carolina Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs (CABWE) will be at McDonald's Cafeteria on Beatties Ford Rd. on Monday night, January 26, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served and a cover charge of \$2 per person. Highlights of the first meeting for 1987 will be election of officers, agenda for 1987, and committee assignments. Please bring business cards. For more information, call Laura McClettie at 535-5370.

## Local Teachers

## Participate In

## Videoconference

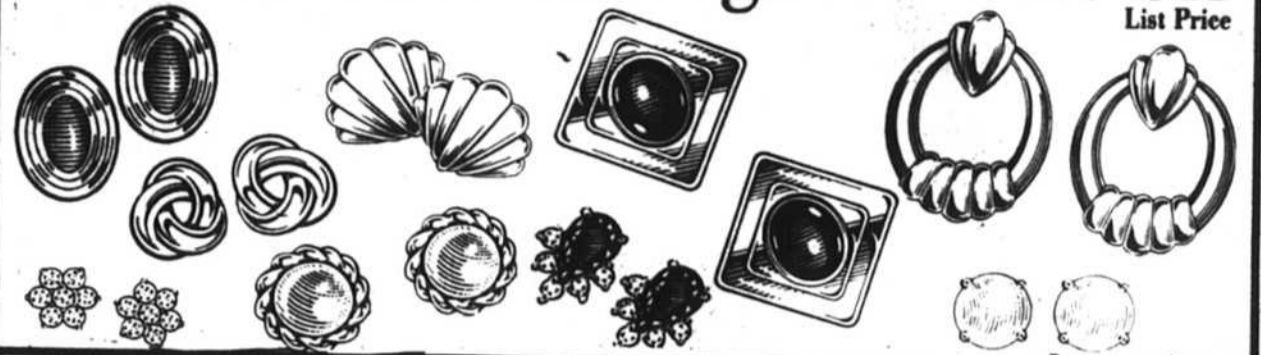
"Is Independent Studio Teaching a Viable Career?" will be discussed in a four-hour videoconference on January 29. Sponsored locally by Community School of the Arts and the Bill Duff Piano Company, the conference will take place in the Cablevision auditorium, 316 E. Morehead St., in Charlotte. Starting at 11 a.m.

The videoconference will be broadcast live from Cincinnati via satellite to workshop sites throughout the U.S. and Canada. The conference is presented by "Clavier" magazine and produced by Baldwin Piano and Organ Company. It is estimated that more than 10,000 teachers and students will be in attendance coast to coast.

Five outstanding music educators, all recognized independent studio teachers, will serve as panel members. Telephone hook-ups at each site will allow attendees across the country to phone in questions for the panel.

# BROWNLEE JEWELERS STOREWIDE CLEARANCE

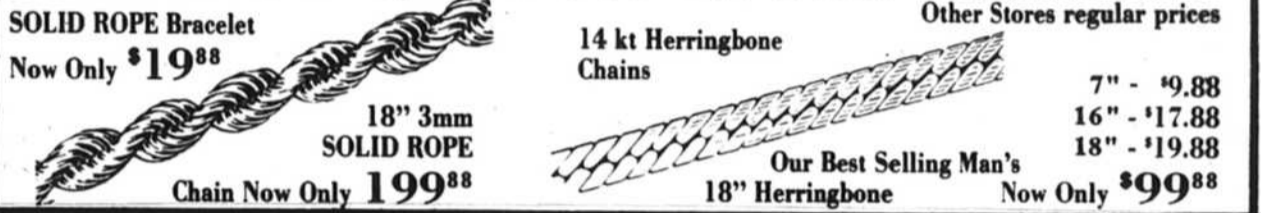
All 14kt Gold Earrings 70% off List Price



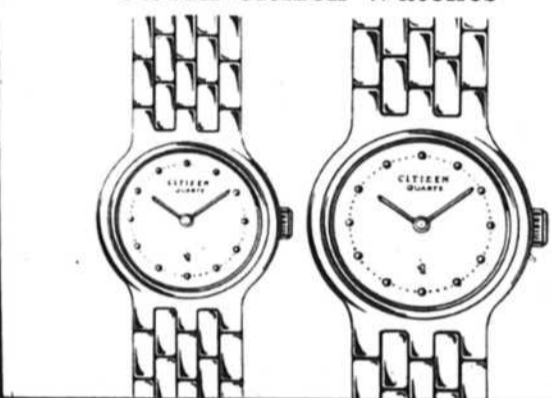
All 14kt Charms 60% off list price



SAVE UP TO 70% on Gold Chains off Other Stores regular prices



SAVE 40% off List Price On All Citizen Watches



SAVE 50% off List Price On All Longines & Wittnauer Watches



SAVE UP TO 50% and More on Seiko Watches



SAVE UP TO 70% off other stores regular prices ON FINE CULTURED PEARLS



Genuine Diamond Earrings set in 14Kt Gold NOW ONLY \$9<sup>88</sup>

Fantastic Savings on Diamond Solitaires Savings up to 50% and more

1/2ct TW. Diamond Earrings Set in 14kt Gold NOW ONLY \$99<sup>88</sup>

Fantastic Savings on all Cluster Rings Savings to 50% and More

Diamond Tennis Bracelet Clearance NOW ONLY \$988<sup>00</sup>  
2ct TW Now Only \$1488  
3ct TW Now Only \$1988  
6ct TW Now Only \$3988

Diamond Fashion! 19 DIAMOND WATERFALL 1 CARAT TW NOW ONLY \$499<sup>88</sup> \$995.00 retail value

Charge it 5 Diamond Wedding Band 14Kt Gold 1ct TW ONLY \$599<sup>88</sup>

Diamonds for Him! 3 Diamond ct TW in Heavy 14kt Mtg. NOW ONLY \$29<sup>88</sup> 10kt Gold  
Petite 7-Diamond Cluster "Little Miss Charlotte" NOW ONLY \$29<sup>88</sup>

ROPE BEAD BRACELET WITH 15 3MM 14KT BEADS NOW ONLY \$9<sup>88</sup>

FAMOUS CROSS PEN and PENCIL SET... Gold Set... \$32<sup>00</sup> REG. 52.00

GREY SET... \$17<sup>00</sup> REG. 30.00  
CHROME SET... \$14<sup>00</sup> REG. 23.00  
ENGRAVED FREE!

POLISHED BRASS BUSINESS CARD CASE REG. PRICE NOW \$10.95 ONLY \$2<sup>88</sup> ENGRAVED FREE

BROWNLEE JEWELERS SALE PRICES GOOD AT PARK ROAD SHOPPING CENTER CARMEL COMMONS CENTER CONTINUING THE BROWNLEE TRADITION SINCE 1936 BROWNLEE JEWELERS