

MinistryPlace.net

# Peter and Cornelius , God Shows No Favoritism

*Scripture: Acts 10:1-48*

**Theme: The Gospel is for every nation and every person**

*Jr High (Ages 12-14)*

---

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

This Sunday school lesson explores how God's love and grace extend beyond cultural, religious, or social boundaries, using the story of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10:1-48) as a powerful example. Cornelius, a Gentile Roman centurion, prayed earnestly for God's help and was miraculously visited by an angel who commanded him to seek out Peter in Judea. Peter, initially hesitant due to Jewish traditions that forbade interaction with outsiders, later experienced a vision where God instructed him to eat unclean animals, a sign that God had changed his mind about who could receive salvation. After Cornelius' delegation arrived, Peter witnessed their faith and was convinced that God's mercy was not limited to Jews but included all who turn to Him. The lesson teaches that the Gospel is universal, mea

Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

## Bible Story

One day, God's Spirit spoke to a Roman centurion named Cornelius, a devout man who feared God and loved his neighbors. Cornelius lived in Caesarea, a city far from Jerusalem, and was well known for his generosity. Though he wasn't Jewish, he had never ignored God's commands to show kindness to everyone, even Gentiles, because he believed in the one true God. That morning, an angel appeared to him in a vision, saying, 'Cornelius, you and your family are praying at this very hour. Your prayers have been heard, and your gifts to the poor are remembered.' The angel told Cornelius to send for Peter, the apostle in Jerusalem, and meet him at the house of a friend named Simon the Tanner. Cornelius knew this was from God, though he didn't understand why yet.

Meanwhile, Peter was in Jerusalem, eating with his disciples one evening when the Holy Spirit fell upon him like a mighty wind. The Spirit spoke through him in a language he didn't know, Greek, because he was surrounded by

Gentiles. Peter's mind was troubled. He had been told God's word only for the Jewish people, and he didn't know how to include these outsiders. But then he remembered how God had shown mercy to others, like the woman with the bleeding disease or the man born blind. Suddenly, three men appeared at the door, asking if he could visit Cornelius. Peter hesitated, but the Spirit told him, 'Look, I have sent you to preach to the Gentiles.'

Peter called the centurions and their friends to the house of Simon the Tanner. He explained how God had sent the Spirit to him, and they were amazed. Cornelius and his family, who had heard about Peter's teachings, arrived early with friends. Peter told them how God had opened his heart to accept Gentiles, just as He had promised in His word. 'God doesn't judge people by race or tradition,' Peter said, 'but by what is in their hearts, whether they fear God and do what is right.' The Gentiles listened, and Peter shared how Jesus had died to forgive sins, just like God had commanded.

As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Gentile believers, just as it had done on the apostles at Pentecost. They all spoke in tongues, praising God with joy. Peter confirmed this was God's work, not his own. Cornelius and his family were filled with wonder and gratitude. They had spent years praying for God to show mercy to the Gentiles, and now they saw it firsthand. Peter reminded them that God had always wanted everyone, no matter their background, to know Him through faith in Jesus. The story spread, and soon, the Good News of salvation was shared with people from every corner of the world.

Cornelius and his family returned to their home in Caesarea, where they continued to worship God together. Peter stayed in Jerusalem for a time, teaching the Jewish believers about this new way God was working. The early church realized that God's love wasn't just for the people of Israel, it was for everyone. This moment changed everything, showing that the Gospel wasn't just for a few, but for all who would accept it with open hearts. Just like Cornelius, we can choose to trust God's plan, even when it feels unexpected. And just like these believers, we can share the message of hope with everyone we meet, because God's love has no limits!

## Key Verse

**Acts 10:34-35 , 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.'**

The key verse (Acts 10:34-35 , 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.') calls us to respond to God's truth.

## Activities

### Activity 1: Gentile vs. Jew Coloring Page

Students color and discuss differences and similarities between 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' using a simple illustration. This helps them visualize the theme of Acts 10.

**Supplies needed:**

- *Printed coloring page (e.g., a simple illustration of a Jewish temple vs. a Gentile home), colored pencils/crayons*

1. Distribute the coloring page to students and have them color the two groups (e.g., a temple for Jews, a Gentile home).
2. After coloring, discuss: What were some differences you saw? Why did Peter and the apostles initially think Cornelius was unworthy? How did God change their minds? (Hint: Look at Acts 10:34-35).

### Activity 2: Wall-Breaker Craft: The Cross as Unity

Students create a handprint wall with barriers between hands (e.g., 'Jew' and 'Gentile') and decorate with a cross to symbolize how Christ breaks down division.

**Supplies needed:**

- *Cardstock or paper, washable markers, glue sticks, construction paper (red for cross), scissors, tape*
- *Printed 'barriers' (e.g., chains, walls) for decorating*

1. Have students make a handprint on the paper, placing two hands side-by-side with a small gap (barrier) between them.
2. Cut out red paper to form a cross and glue it between the hands. Decorate the barriers with drawings of divisions (e.g., 'Purity laws,' 'race,' 'status').
3. Discuss: Why did Peter think Gentiles were out of bounds? How does the cross show God's plan to unite all people?

### Activity 3: Story Map: Peter's Vision and Cornelius' Visit

Students create a timeline with key events from Acts 10:1-48 to understand the progression of God's work.

#### Supplies needed:

- Paper strips, markers, glue, printed event cards (e.g., 'Cornelius prays to God,' 'Peter's vision of unclean animals')
1. Assign each student a key event (e.g., Cornelius' request, the vision, the meal). Glue or tape them in order on a long strip of paper.
  2. Add drawings or labels to explain each event. Discuss: How did God show Cornelius and Peter that all people belong to Him?

### Discussion Questions

- 1. What did Peter see in his vision that changed his mind about Cornelius? (Hint: Look at Acts 10:34, 35.)
- 2. Why do you think some people today might still think 'us vs. them' is true? How can we follow Peter's example?
- 3. How does the cross show that Jesus broke down all barriers (race, religion, status)?
- 4. If you could have a conversation with someone who thinks 'the Gospel is only for certain people,' what would you say?
- 5. How can we share God's message of unity with others this week?

### Prayer Focus

*Pray for students to trust God's invitation to all nations and to follow His call to break down barriers in their own lives or communities.*

#### >> Missions Spotlight

The Gospel is for everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from. Missionaries like Peter show us that God's love is universal. Challenge students to think of someone they can share God's love with this week, no matter what their background is.

#### -> To the Cross

Peter realized God doesn't care about traditions or status, Jesus died to bring all people together, like a bridge over every division.