

Peter And Cornelius

Acts 10:1-8, 24-48

MEMORY VERSE

ACTS 10:43

"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A large bundle of sticks, tied together.

A bolt, a nut, a nail, a needle, a pin, a pencil, a pen, a walnut, a pecan, a leaf, a seed, a piece of wood, a toothpick, a toothbrush, a fork, a spoon, salt, pepper, an apple, an orange, and any other items you can think of.

More than enough small branches with forked twigs for your students, yarn, ribbon, acorns, buttons, pebbles, wiggle eyes, and the like.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Let's Stick Together

Tie a large bundle of sticks together. Pass it around and let each child try to break in half the bundle of sticks. Open the bundle and pass out the sticks to individual children. Have them try to break the individual sticks (they should be able to do this easily).

Explain that the bundle tied together was impossible to break, but when separated from the group, easily broken. This is like the body of Christ; when we are all tied together, despite our differences, we are not overcome, but when we are isolated from one another, we are easily overcome. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

LESSON TIME!

Do you sometimes wonder about people of other nations who are different than you? They dress differently. They may eat different foods. They act and believe differently than you do. Maybe their skin is darker or lighter than yours is.

We have a tendency to not trust those that are not like us. We may even judge others or think that we are better than they are. We have the idea that our ways are the right ways, but **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

The Jewish people of Jesus' day had a problem. They thought they were better than the Gentile (non-Jewish) people were. They were taught from childhood that the people of the Gentile nations were unclean and that Jews were not to associate with them. They were also told that salvation was only for the Jews.

Today's story is about two people who were very different from each other. Cornelius was a Gentile centurion in the Roman army in charge of 100 foot soldiers. Peter was a Jewish fisherman and one of Jesus' disciples. Since the Romans ruled over Israel, the Jews hated them. Because of their nationalities, they had nothing to do with each other.

In today's lesson we will see how God showed Peter that even the Gentiles (non-Jews) could be saved. In a dream, Peter was told that what God accepts is not to be considered unclean. God's love through Jesus is for everyone. He loves all of us the same, even though we are all different. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

ACTS 10:1-4

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

Cornelius and his family loved and worshiped God. He generously helped others and faithfully prayed to God on a daily basis. One afternoon Cornelius in a vision saw an angel of God who came to talk to him. Cornelius was afraid. The angel acknowledged Cornelius prayers and gifts to the poor and that God had accepted them as an offering to Him.

Perhaps Cornelius didn't understand everything about the Lord, but He desired to know who God is. It is interesting that God chose to reveal Himself to Cornelius because he was seeking after Him. When we honestly in our hearts want to know about God He will reveal Himself to us. Maybe there is a friend or someone in our family who will tell us about the Lord. Let us see what God says...

ACTS 10:5-8

"Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.

"He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

The angel told Cornelius to send for Peter who was in Joppa staying with Simon the tanner. Cornelius told two servants and a religious soldier about the vision and sent them to find Peter in Joppa.

God could have told Him the whole plan of salvation right there and invited Him to be saved, but He chose to use someone to share the gospel with him. He chose to use Peter. He was going to use this situation to teach Peter and the entire church at that time that God had accepted the Gentiles and wanted to save them.

God accepts everyone! He has no favorites. No matter who we are God desires for us to be saved. In fact, He told us to go into all nations to preach the gospel of salvation. God has a desire for the whole world to know Him. We cannot think that God does not want to save some one because they are different from us. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

ACTS 10:24-26

And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."

When Peter arrived, Cornelius had his relatives and friends waiting to hear him. Peter came in and Cornelius bowed down to worship Peter. We might think that it sounds strange for Cornelius to worship Peter, but he did not know any better. Remember an angel had spoken to Cornelius and told him to find Peter. Maybe he thought Peter was the one he was to worship. But Peter knew the truth and told him to get up. He told him not to worship him because he was a man just like any other man.

ACTS 10:27-29

And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

"Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

Peter acknowledged that they were probably surprised that he had come since it was against Jewish law to associate with Gentiles. God has shown him that he should not call any man unclean. So when they sent for him, he did not object. Why did they send for him?

Peter had recently had a dream himself in which God had told him not to call anything unclean that He had called clean. God was going to do a work among the Gentiles. Peter was to accept them and not reject them because they were different. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.** You can read more about Peter's dream in verses 9 – 22 in the same chapter.

ACTS 10:30-32

So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

"and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.

'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'

Cornelius answered that four days before when he was praying, an angel appeared and told him that God had heard his prayers and remembered his gifts to the poor. He told him to send for Peter in Joppa at Simon's house. He had assembled his friends and family in God's presence to hear what Peter would tell them. He knew that Peter would bring an important message from God so he gathered together as many people as possible to hear.

We also should be eager to hear what God has to say to us. We can read His Word, the Bible, to find out what He has to say to us. He promises that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand. But the main thing He wants us to know is if we do not have a relationship with Him, we can have one by simply trusting in Him.

ACTS 10:34-35

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

"But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Peter understood that God loved and accepted all men who fear Him and do what is right. Peter has realized that God does not have any favorites. He loves everyone the same. Have you ever felt like someone was playing favorites and you were left out of something? Maybe a group at school did not want you to be part of their group or team. God is never like that. He loves you and me the same as He loved Paul the Apostle or someone like Billy Graham today.

The Bible says that God does not want to see anyone perish, but that everyone would come to repentance. Have you come to know Him? It does not matter how different we are from anyone else. He loves us and desires for us to be saved. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

Sorting

Spread out on a table a bolt, a nut, a nail, a needle, a pin, a pencil, a pen, a walnut, a pecan, a leaf, a seed, a piece of wood, a toothpick, a toothbrush, a fork, a spoon, salt pepper, an apple, an orange, and any other items you can think of. Ask for volunteers to sort these items into categories. They might be something like:

1. Bolt, Nut, Washer, Nail
2. Needle, Pin
3. Pencil, Pen
4. Walnut, Pecan, Seed, Wood
5. Toothpick, Toothbrush
6. Fork, Spoon, Salt, Pepper
7. Apple, Orange

After all the items are sorted, present some new possibilities, like:

1. Wood, Nail, Washer
2. Bolt, Fork, Spoon, Needle, (if they're metal)
3. Pin, Pen
4. Nut, Walnut, Pecan,
5. Toothpick, Pencil, Apple, Orange, Toothbrush

Explain that there are many possibilities. The point is that even though things may appear different at first, they may have something in common. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

ACTS 10:36-39a

"The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

"that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

"And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem..."

Peter acknowledged that they had heard the message of the good news that God had provided peace and reconciliation through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. They had also seen what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth in Judea. How Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. He helped and healed those in need because God was with him.

He is now explaining the gospel further.

ACTS 10:39b-43

" whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

"Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

"not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Peter went on to share the gospel. Jesus was killed by hanging on a wooden cross, but God raised Him from the dead after three days. He was seen by witnesses that God had chosen. They saw Him; they ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

Jesus commanded them to preach about Him to the people and to testify that He is God's appointed judge of the living and the dead. He is the Holy One that the prophets wrote about in the Old Testament of the Bible. Everyone who believes on Him receives forgiveness of his or her sins through Jesus' name. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

What wonderful news for Cornelius and his friends to hear! They could receive forgiveness of sins by believing in Jesus. They could be accepted into God's family just like the Jews could. They could receive all of the promises of scripture. We also today can receive forgiveness of sin through belief in Jesus just like Cornelius and his friends.

ACTS 10:44

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and all who were with him who heard and believed Peter's message about Jesus. This was confirming to Cornelius and his friends that they were accepted by God and empowered for service. But this also spoke to Peter that the Gentiles were received into the family of God. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

ACTS 10:45-46

And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were surprised that the Holy Spirit had come on the Gentiles. This proved that salvation was for everyone. They heard them speaking in tongues and praising God just like the Jewish believers had done as they received the Holy Spirit. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

ACTS 10:47

"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Peter asked if there was any reason that these believers could not also be baptized. It was obvious that God had accepted them as believers just like the Jewish Christians. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

We should never judge others by what they wear or what they eat. They may not be wrong, just different. We need to look at others like God would. Have they accepted Jesus in their heart? If they have asked Jesus into their hearts then God has accepted them. We also should accept them. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

Stick People

Provide more than enough small branches with forked twigs for your students to make "stick people"; you may want extras for legs and arms, etc. Provide different colors of yarn for wrapping around the people for clothes; make ribbon, acorns, buttons, pebbles, wiggle eyes, and the like for decorations.

When your class is done, compare the finished products and explain how different each one is from the others. We are as diverse as this; all of the same materials, but each completely unique. **All Christians are in the family of God no matter how different we may be.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to love the body of Christ, even those who are different. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.