**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 4 of 4

# Peter and Cornelius

### MEETING AIM

To challenge the children’s perceptions of who they might share the goods news of Jesus with and to listen to God and hear what he wants them to do.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 10

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

We all have our preconceived ideas, whether conscious or subconscious, about who makes a ‘suitable’ follower of Jesus. Peter certainly did and we are no different! Allow God to speak during your preparation of this session and show you his heart for others.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met; share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children’s lives and share something appropriate from your own life. Ask the children to tell everyone about their favourite food and the food they hate the most.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Divide into two teams and arrange each team standing in a line facing the same direction except for the person at the front of the line, who faces the opposite way.

Whisper to this person an action to mime, eg riding a bike, swimming, peeling a banana, brushing teeth or taking a selfie. This person turns and taps the next person on the shoulder and performs the mime. This is passed down the line until the last person is reached and they guess the original action. The first person goes to the back of the line and play begins again.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** items for each group to wear that distinguishes them; white sheet; card; pens; paper plates

You are going to tell the story in modern-day terms, involving the children in creating it. When a word is in bold, replace it with the name, place or item chosen by the group.

Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army. He was not Jewish, but he lived in a place called Caesarea in Judea. He loved God.

Peter was a Jew and a disciple of Jesus. He was staying in a place called Joppa.

Jews and non-Jews (called Gentiles) didn’t mix. Peter didn’t think the good news about Jesus was for people like Cornelius. In fact, it was against Jewish law for Peter to even mix with people like Cornelius.

*Ask the children who this would be where they live. Two different schools? Two different neighbourhoods? Decide on local places for Caesarea and Joppa. What would Peter and Cornelius be called? What types of foods do the two groups like to eat? Divide everyone into two groups, standing on separate sides of the room with a divider down the middle. Give each group some card and ask them to create a place name sign. On the paper plates they can draw their group’s favourite foods.*

An angel appeared to **Cornelius** and told him to send some servants to a place called **Joppa**, find a man called **Peter** and bring him to **Caesarea**.

Meanwhile in **Joppa***,* **Peter** was peckish. While he was waiting for his **food**, he had a vision from God. In his vision, a large sheet was let down from heaven. *Hold a large sheet over the group.* On it was all the food that the people from **Caesarea** ate. *Place the paper plates on top.* It was completely against **Peter**’s beliefs to eat this food. It was unclean! But he heard a voice saying to him: “Get up and eat it.” *Ask the group what they think Peter said.*

The sheet was lowered three times with the same voice telling him to eat. Just as he was trying to understand what this vision meant, he heard a knock at the door. *Send some of the group over to the other side of the room.*

The Holy Spirit told **Peter** to go with these men because they’d been sent by God. So, with a bunch of others from **Joppa**, he began the journey. **Cornelius** was expecting them and had gathered a crowd to welcome them. *What do you think they did when they arrived? Would it have been awkward?*

Going inside the house, **Peter** reminded them that it was against Jewish law for him to visit the house of a **Gentile**. But God had shown him that he shouldn’t call anyone impure or unclean. Even **Gentiles**! **Cornelius** told **Peter** about his visit from the angel and they were all astonished.

**Peter** realised that the good news about Jesus wasn’t just for the **Jews**. As he was talking, the Holy Spirit came on them and they all started speaking in other languages and praising God together. *How strange would that have been? Can you imagine this happening today?*

The people from **Caesarea** were baptised in water. *If you are able, sprinkle some water over this group.* The Church began to grow with both **Jews** and **Gentiles** hearing and sharing the good news about Jesus!

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* Was there anything you didn’t understand about this story?
* Why didn’t Peter understand the vision straight away?
* How would it feel to go to the one place where you are unwelcome?
* How does this story affect our lives today?
* What does this story tell us about God?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** white sheet; pens; small squares of material; music and the means to play it

Spread the white sheet out on the floor. Explain that God asked Peter to go to the people he didn’t think were worth talking to about Jesus. It was uncomfortable for him and maybe he was scared too.

Give everyone squares of material and pens. Play some reflective music and invite everyone to have a quiet moment, asking God what he wants them to do. Explain ways we can hear God – thoughts, pictures, Bible verses, words etc.

Write or draw on their material what they have heard, and place it on the larger sheet. They can take the squares home to show their parents or carers.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** balloons; pens; music and the means to play it

Think of the people you would love to know Jesus. Write their names on the balloons. Play dancing music and bat the balloons around the room. When the music stops, grab a balloon and pray for that person to know Jesus. Restart the music and bat the balloons again.

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