**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 4 of 4

# Peter and Cornelius

### MEETING AIM

To engage with the story of how Peter realised that God wanted everyone to hear about Jesus, which is still true today.

### 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.

This is an important story in the spread of the gospel as the early Christians realised Jesus had not come just for Jews but for Gentiles too. It’s also a story about the importance of recognising our differences more generally and respecting them.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children and share any refreshments you have. In welcoming the children, talk about how they have been able to show their love for others, especially any other child in the group.

### PLAY – 10 mins

Play a sorting game by creating different groups of children, to demonstrate the many differences there are between people. For example, separate girls from boys; different ages from each other; those who walked, drove, cycled, came by bus to church; those who wear glasses or not; those wearing shoes or trainers; those who live in A or B or C or go to school X, Y or Z; those with a brother or sister or neither. Children may suggest other differences.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** two large seaside buckets and spades, with letter C and P stuck on and a long piece of string attached to the handle of bucket P; photo or picture of a pig, a crab and a rabbit; a chair

Gather the children together and tell this story:

This story takes place in two seaside towns, which is why we’ve got buckets and spades. *Place them either side of you.*

Captain Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army. He lived in Caesarea, a beautiful new city by the sea. He loved God, he prayed to him, as did everyone in his family, but he didn’t know much about Jesus. He was a good and generous man and gave money to the poor. He was not a Jew. Some of the food he ate was food that Jewish people did not eat. He especially liked **pork from the pig farm, crab from the sea and rabbit from the countryside**. *This is a rhyme which the children repeat when appropriate. Ask three children to place three photos in the C bucket.*

One afternoon at three o’clock an angel came to him and said: “Cornelius, God has heard your prayers. Send for a man called Simon Peter to come to you. He lives in the seaside town of Joppa.” Cornelius was very surprised, but he did what the angel had told him. Joppa was 48km away from Caesarea – a day’s journey.

The next day, waiting for his lunch, Peter, Jesus’ disciple, went up onto the roof of the house. He was living in Joppa, a seaside town with a high cliff and a large harbour. It was hot and he fell asleep. In his sleep he had a dream. In this dream he saw a bucket coming out of the sky. Inside the bucket was **pork from the pig farm, crab from the sea and rabbit from the countryside**. *Transfer the three photos from bucket C to bucket P. A child stands on a chair to lower the bucket to the floor. Different children could do this two more times.*

A voice said to Peter: “Eat this food!” But Peter said: “I can’t. Jews think this food is dirty.”

The voice replied: “God says it is OK to eat this food.”

A second time the bucket came down. Inside was **pork from the pig farm, crab from the sea and rabbit from the countryside**. A second time a voice said: “Eat this food!” *Repeat as before.*

A third time the bucket came down. *Repeat as before.*

Peter woke up. He was very puzzled. Then the Holy Spirit told him that some men from Captain Cornelius had just arrived and were looking for him. Because of his dream, Peter knew he had to go with them to the seaside town of Caesarea. The next day they left.

Before his dream Peter would never had gone into the home of anyone who ate **pork from the pig farm, crab from the sea and rabbit from the countryside**. *Transfer photos to the C bucket.* The first followers of Jesus had been Jews and Jesus himself was a Jew. But now Peter knew God was saying it wasn’t just Jewish people who could become followers of Jesus. Rules about what you could eat didn’t matter. God loves everyone and wants everyone to hear about and love Jesus. So, Peter went into the house of Captain Cornelius, who was really, really pleased to meet him. Peter told everyone in the house about Jesus and everyone who was listening began to worship Jesus and to follow him.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What differences were there between you in the game at the start?
* What differences are there that make some people think they’re better than others?
* How did Peter think he was different and more special than Captain Cornelius?
* What made him change his mind?
* If God loves everyone, it’s important that everyone should hear about Jesus; so who can we tell about Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** A4 paper; sticky tape; scissors; pencils

Stick two pieces of paper short-end together with tape. Fold the long sheets like a concertina. Draw the outline of a figure and cut out to create a line of joined-up people. Give a chain of people to each child and encourage them to draw on distinctive features of people they would like to tell about Jesus. As you work, chat about what they might say to these people.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Line the children up with the tallest and shortest at either end. Then take the shortest and put them next to the tallest, the second tallest next to the second shortest etc. Comment that you have mixed everyone up as an example of how our differences don’t matter. In these new pairs, give children 60 seconds to talk about who they want to tell about Jesus, just as Peter told Captain Cornelius. Pray for the children. You could sing the song [‘Big family of God’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_F5pr6gEkBU) by Nick and Becky Drake to conclude.

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