Preschool–Grade 6

Peter and Cornelius

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God is no respecter of persons. He does not treat one kind of person as better than another, and the Holy Ghost is for every one who hears and obeys.
Bible passage: Acts 10. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:" *Acts 10:34 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Who Gets In? (5–10 minutes)

Tell the class you are opening a pretend club. Read rules one at a time, and kids who don't fit sit down: "Only kids with brown eyes." "Only kids who are nine." "Only kids who like soccer." Soon almost everyone is sitting. Then say: "New rule: everyone God made gets in!" and everyone stands. Ask: *Is it fair to leave people out for things like that? Does God have a club like the first one?* Say: "Today Peter learns how God sees people."

2. Bible story: God Is No Respecter of Persons (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Acts 10. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Cornelius prays. In Caesarea lived Cornelius, a **centurion**, a captain over soldiers, of a group called the Italian band (Acts 10:1). **Look up Acts 10:2.** He was **devout** (he loved and served God), he and all his house feared God, he gave much **alms** (gifts to poor people), and he prayed to God **alway** (always). But he was a **Gentile**, a person who was not a Jew. About the ninth hour (three in the afternoon), he saw in a vision an angel of God, who told him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter, staying with Simon a **tanner** (a man who makes leather) by the sea side: "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (10:3–6). Cornelius sent two servants and a devout soldier (10:7–8).

Peter's vision. The next day, about the sixth hour (noon), Peter went up on the housetop to pray. He was very hungry, and he fell into a **trance**, like a dream while he was awake (10:9–10). He saw heaven opened and a **vessel** come down "as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners," full of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things and **fowls** (birds) (10:11–12). A voice said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (10:13–14). **Common or unclean** means things God's law told the Jews not to eat. **Look up Acts 10:15.** This was done **thrice** (three times), and the vessel went back up into heaven (10:16).

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Three men at the gate. While Peter wondered what the vision meant, the men from Cornelius stood at the gate (10:17–18). **Look up Acts 10:19–20.** The Spirit said three men were looking for him, and to go with them, "doubting nothing." The next day Peter went, with some believers from Joppa (10:23).

In the house of Cornelius. Cornelius had called together his **kinsmen** (relatives) and near friends (10:24). He fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him, but Peter said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (10:25–26). **Look up Acts 10:28.** It was **unlawful** (against the rules) for a Jew to visit a person of another nation, but God had shown Peter not to call any man common or unclean. The sheet was about **people**! **Look up Acts 10:34–35.** Peter preached Jesus: "he is Lord of all" (10:36). He told how God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power, how Jesus went about doing good, was put to death, and how God raised Him up the third day (10:38–40). **Look up Acts 10:43.**

The Holy Ghost falls. Look up Acts 10:44. The believers who came with Peter were **astonished** (amazed) that the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Gentiles too, "for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (10:45–46). **Magnify** means praise. **Look up Acts 10:47–48.** Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, and they asked him to **tarry** (stay) a few days.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Cornelius already prayed and gave to the poor, but the angel said Peter would tell him what he "oughtest to do" (10:6). Why do you think he still needed to hear Peter?
2. Why do you think God used a sheet of animals to teach Peter about people?
3. Peter said, "I myself also am a man" (10:26). What does that teach us about how to treat leaders, and how leaders should act?
4. Who are people kids sometimes leave out? What would "no respecter of persons" look like at school?
5. How did Peter and his friends know God had given the Gentiles the Holy Ghost (10:45–46)?

Recall questions

1. What city did Cornelius live in? *(Caesarea, Acts 10:1)*
2. Where was Peter when he saw the vision? *(On the housetop, 10:9)*
3. In whose name did Peter command them to be baptized? *(In the name of the Lord, 10:48)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **of a truth** means truly; **perceive** means understand; a **respecter of persons** is someone who treats one kind of person better than another. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God is no respecter of persons. He loves you, and the Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Peter told Cornelius that 'through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins' (Acts 10:43, KJV). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4), just as Cornelius and his house did (Acts 10:46). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5). It is for every one."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: find one person who is often left out, and include them.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Acts 10:1: What was Cornelius's job? *(A centurion)*
2. Acts 10:6: Peter stayed with a man named Simon. What was his job? *(A tanner)*
3. Acts 10:12: Name one kind of animal in the sheet. *(Four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things or fowls)*
4. Acts 10:24: Who did Cornelius call together? *(His kinsmen and near friends)*
5. Acts 10:36: What did Peter say about Jesus? *(He is Lord of all)*
6. Acts 10:46: What did they hear the Gentiles do? *(Speak with tongues, and magnify God)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are no respecter of persons. Help us treat every person the way You do, and never leave anyone out. Thank You that Your gift of the Holy Ghost is for every one. In Jesus' name, amen."

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