Preschool–Grade 6

Peter and Cornelius

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God is no respecter of persons. The gospel and the gift of the Holy Ghost are for every person, so we can't treat anyone as less than others.
Bible passage: Acts 10. Students read Acts 10:9–20 and 10:34–48 out loud themselves.
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)* and "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." *Acts 2:39 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Acts 10 and Acts 2:37–39. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Walls (5–10 minutes)

Draw a big circle on the board. Ask students to call out reasons kids leave other kids out: they're new, they dress differently, they speak another language, they're younger, they're not good at sports. Write each one as a brick around the circle, until the circle has a wall. Ask: *Which of these walls would God build?* Say: "Peter had a wall like this too, and God took it down with a sheet full of animals."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the first part in your own words: Cornelius was a centurion, an army officer, in Caesarea. He was devout, feared God with all his house, gave much alms and prayed to God alway (10:1–2). In a vision at the ninth hour (three in the afternoon), an angel of God told him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter, who "shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (10:3–6). He sent two servants and a devout soldier (10:7–8).

Read out loud: Acts 10:9–20. Old words in this passage:

- **the sixth hour** (10:9): about noon; **trance** (10:10): a vision while awake
- **vessel** (10:11): a container; **knit at the four corners**: tied at the corners
- **fowls** (10:12): birds; **common or unclean** (10:14): food the law of Moses forbade
- **thrice** (10:16): three times; **doubted in himself** (10:17): wondered
- **doubting nothing** (10:20): without holding back

Tell the middle part in your own words: Peter lodged the men and went with them the next day, with certain brethren from Joppa (10:23). Cornelius had called his kinsmen and near friends (10:24). He fell at Peter's feet and worshipped him, and Peter said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (10:25–26). Peter said it was unlawful for a Jew to keep company with someone of another nation, "but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (10:28).

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Read out loud: Acts 10:34–48. Old words in this passage:

- **perceive** (10:34): understand; **no respecter of persons**: God does not favor one kind of person
- **worketh righteousness** (10:35): does what is right; **accepted with him**: welcome to God
- **anointed** (10:38): chose and filled for His work; **oppressed of the devil**: held down by the devil
- **hanged on a tree** (10:39): put to death on the cross; **quick and dead** (10:42): the living and the dead
- **they of the circumcision** (10:45): the Jewish believers; **Gentiles**: people who are not Jews
- **magnify** (10:46): praise; **forbid** (10:47): stop; **tarry** (10:48): stay

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Cornelius was devout and prayed alway (10:2), yet God sent Peter to tell him what he ought to do (10:6). What does that teach us about how much God wants every person to hear the whole gospel?
2. Peter was sure about what he would never eat (10:14). Why is it hard to change something you've always thought? How did Peter respond when God showed him (10:28–29)?
3. Peter said, "I myself also am a man" (10:26). How does that help us when people praise us?
4. Look at 10:44–46. How did the Jewish believers know the Gentiles had received the same gift? Compare it with Acts 2:4.
5. Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water?" (10:47). Why do you think he commanded them to be baptized, even after they had received the Holy Ghost?
6. Where are the "walls" in your school or neighborhood? What would it look like to treat people the way God does?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **of a truth** means truly; **perceive** means understand; **no respecter of persons** means God doesn't favor anyone for how they look, where they come from or what they have. In Acts 2:39, **the promise** is the gift of the Holy Ghost Peter had just preached about (Acts 2:38), and **afar off** means far away.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Acts 10:34 this week; keep working on Acts 2:39 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Acts 10 shows the new birth reaching the Gentiles, people like most of us. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). Peter preached it to Cornelius: 'through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins' (Acts 10:43, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it at Pentecost: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4), the same gift Cornelius and his house received (Acts 10:45–46). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). The promise is for you too (Acts 2:39)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Is there a person or group I have quietly called "common," less than me?
2. What is one way I can show God's love to someone different from me this week?
3. Write a short prayer thanking God that His promise is for every one, and asking Him to help you see people the way He does.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: sit with, talk to or pray for someone you would usually leave out.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You are no respecter of persons, and that Your promise is for every one You call. Take down the walls in our hearts. Help us share the gospel with everyone. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

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