

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Date: 06.15.25 | Peter and Cornelius - Gentiles Become Part of the Church
Scripture: Acts 10-11

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students:

- God is eternal and has existed for eternity past and will exist for eternity into the future.
- Each person who comes to faith in Christ receives the Holy Spirit and is given a spiritual gift.
- Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit to minister to God's people in a special way.
- The Holy Spirit intercedes before the Father on our behalf.
- The Holy Spirit inspired and guided people to write the Bible.

High School Students:

- God is eternal, and although He is not bound by time, He chooses to operate in it to relate to us.
- Each person who comes to faith in Christ receives the Holy Spirit and is endowed with a spiritual gift to be used to serve in the church.
- Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has come to convict, teach, comfort, lead, strengthen, and seal us, as well as to produce fruit within and through us.
- The Holy Spirit intercedes before the Father on our behalf when we do not know how to or what to pray.
- The Holy Spirit inspired and guided people to write the Bible and used the personalities and voices of men to communicate the very words of God.



MEMORY VERSE

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." - Acts 2:38-39

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

- **Ask a Series of Questions:**

Tell students: “I’m going to ask some questions. If your answer is ‘yes,’ raise your hand (or step forward). If not, stay still.”

Use questions like:

- Have you ever felt left out?
- Have you ever been the new person?
- Have you ever been told you couldn’t join something?
- Have you ever seen someone get mistreated because they were different?

- **Brief Group Discussion:**

Ask:

- “What did it feel like to be left out?”
- “Have you ever seen someone else be excluded?”
- “What kinds of things divide people into groups—today and in Bible times?”

- **Transition into the Lesson:**

Say:

“In Acts 10 and 11, something shocking happens—God tells Peter that the message of Jesus isn’t just for one group of people. He shows Peter and the whole church that everyone is welcome in His family. Let’s find out how it happened—and why it changed everything.”

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BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

God uses the apostle Peter in powerful and unexpected ways as the gospel moves beyond Jerusalem. As Peter travels through the coastal towns of Judea, God works through him to perform miracles, drawing many to faith in Jesus. However, the most significant turning point comes in the town of Caesarea, where the gospel crosses a boundary long held in Jewish thought: the division between Jew and Gentile.

Cornelius, a Roman centurion living in Caesarea, is described as a devout man who fears God, prays regularly, and gives generously to the poor, especially to the Jewish people. Though a Gentile, Cornelius worships the one true God, and God responds by sending him a vision. An angel tells him that his prayers have been heard and instructs him to send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Peter (Acts 10:1-8).

At the same time, Peter receives a strange and challenging vision. A sheet descends from heaven containing all kinds of animals, many of which would be considered unclean by Jewish law. A voice commands, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” Peter protests, saying he has never eaten anything impure. But the voice replies, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (Acts 10:15). This happens three times, reinforcing the message. At first, Peter is confused. But the vision is God’s way of preparing him to welcome Gentiles as members of His family. God was overturning the old clean/unclean distinctions and dietary laws in general, along with all other ceremonial laws in the Mosaic covenant—including sacrifices, festivals, special days, and circumcision. Nothing like this was to get in the way of fellowship with Gentiles, as Galatians 2 also shows. The animals in the vision, Peter will soon discover, represent Gentiles, whom God himself is accepting into his family (Acts 10:9–16).

As Peter puzzled over the vision, the men sent by Cornelius arrived. The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go with them without hesitation (Acts 10:17–23). When Peter arrives at Cornelius’s home, he does something devout Jews would normally avoid—he enters the house of a Gentile (Acts 10:24–29). Cornelius recounts his vision, and Peter begins to understand the meaning on his own.

Peter proclaims the good news of Jesus: “God does not show favoritism but accepts from

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every nation the one who fears him and does what is right” (Acts 10:34–35). He declares that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and recounts the story of Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection (Acts 10:36–43).

While Peter is still speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on all who hear the message—Gentiles included. The Jewish believers with Peter are astonished. This outpouring is the same gift they received at Pentecost. Peter responds, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (Acts 10:47). Cornelius and his household are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44–48).

When Peter returns to Jerusalem, he faces criticism from Jewish believers for entering a Gentile home and eating with them (Acts 11:1–3). But Peter recounts the whole story—both visions: the Spirit’s command and the Spirit’s outpouring. He concludes, “If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17). This testimony silences the critics, who begin to praise God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

This moment is a major turning point. It shows that Gentiles are not second-class citizens in God’s kingdom—they are fully accepted, purified, and included through faith in Jesus. From this point forward, the early church’s mission increasingly turned toward the Gentile world.

The conversion of Cornelius—recorded in the longest narrative section of Acts—signals a radical shift in the makeup of the church. Repetition in Acts 10–11 underscores the event’s importance. The visions of Cornelius and Peter are recounted multiple times, emphasizing that this was not a mistake or coincidence—it was God’s plan.

Peter’s vision made it clear: the old ceremonial laws, including dietary restrictions and distinctions of clean and unclean, are fulfilled in Christ. These things were never meant to be obstacles to fellowship or salvation. The gospel now breaks down every dividing wall—cultural, social, and religious.

Cornelius was a Gentile who worshipped the one true God and treated the Jewish people with kindness and generosity. Gentiles were not part of God’s chosen family by birth. Jesus was a light to the Gentiles (Matthew 4:16–17; Luke 2:32). At the house of Cornelius,

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the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45). God prepared both Cornelius and Peter for this invitation that would change the church forever. Though not accepted in Jewish religious society, Cornelius was used by God to open Peter's eyes to the greater reality—that the gospel builds bridges rather than reinforces boundaries.

Peter's vision seemed less direct than Cornelius's. Still, God patiently and repeatedly instilled the greater message: those whom He purifies through faith are fully brought into His family, with no barriers based on custom or culture. This revelation challenged Jewish traditions and defied favoritism, creating tension in the early church (Acts 11:1–18). Still, as Peter preached and declared Jesus to be Lord of all, the Holy Spirit fell on those who believed, proving God's desire to save anyone who trusts in His Son.

The good news of Jesus Christ is for all types of people. We are all called to faithfully invite others to believe the gospel.

Acts 11 also recounts the first time people were called "Christians," a name given in Antioch where both Jewish and Gentile believers worshiped together. Though Peter was initially criticized for going into the house of Cornelius, his testimony led to amazement and ultimately worship, as his fellow believers recognized that God's power was clearly at work among the Gentiles.

The church in Antioch became a living picture of gospel unity. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit brought Jewish and Gentile believers into one body under the headship of Christ. When Peter defended the salvation of Gentiles before the church in Jerusalem, he reminded them of Jesus' promise from Acts 1:5—that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If Gentiles had truly received that same Spirit, then how could anyone stand in the way of God's saving work?



LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



Remind your group that we are studying the New Testament. The book of Acts is about God sending the Holy Spirit to permanently dwell within Jesus' disciples and other believers after He ascended back to heaven. With the help of the Holy Spirit, those who followed Christ told many people about Jesus, helped others, and started the first churches. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the message of Jesus began to spread all over the world.

**TELL
THE
STORY**



Tell the story:

In the Old Testament, the Law commanded God's people not to eat certain foods to show they were set apart from other nations. God called the foods they were able to eat "clean." Today, we will learn how God gave Peter a vision of unclean animals to help him understand that Jesus is for all people. The church became filled with people from different cultures and backgrounds as the gospel spread.

Read directly from Scripture, use The Jesus Storybook Bible, The Biggest Story Bible, or the summary provided in the lesson

Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army who lived in Caesarea. "He was a devout man who feared God with all of His household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God" (Acts 10:2). One afternoon, Cornelius saw an angel of God in a vision, which frightened him.

The angel told him, "God has heard your prayers, and He has seen how you help others." Then the angel told Cornelius to send for a man named Peter, who was in the city of Joppa. So Cornelius sent two of his servants and one soldier to Joppa.



Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...

The next day, as the servants and the soldier were nearing the city, Peter went up on the roof of the house to pray. Peter saw a vision of something like a large sheet coming down from heaven. In the sheet were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat!"

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“No, Lord!” Peter said. “I have never eaten anything that is unclean or used for sacrifices.” Again, a voice said to him, “God has made these clean. Do not call them unclean.” This happened three times, and then the whole thing was taken up into heaven. Peter tried to understand what the vision meant.

Then Cornelius’ men arrived at the gate. They explained that Cornelius had seen a vision, and an angel instructed him to send for Peter. So the next day, Peter went with the men to Caesarea.

When Peter got to Cornelius’ house, he explained to Cornelius that God does not consider some people to be better than others. God had sent good news to the Israelites: Jesus is Lord of all. After Jesus was killed, God raised Him from the dead on the third day, and Jesus appeared to many people. Jesus told His followers to tell others about Him. Peter said, “Everyone who believes in Jesus will have their sins forgiven.”

As Peter said this, the Holy Spirit came down on those who heard the message, not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles, or non-Jews. The Jewish believers were amazed.

Cornelius, his friends, and his relatives were baptized in the name of Jesus, and Peter stayed with them for a few days.

God had called Peter to tell everyone the good news about Jesus, no matter who they were or where they came from. So Peter shared the gospel not only with Jews but with Gentiles. The Gentiles in Caesarea heard Peter’s message and believed. God gave His Holy Spirit to these new believers, and they were baptized.

Before long, the apostles and other believers throughout Judea heard that Gentiles believed in the good news about Jesus. They were surprised, so Peter shared the vision God had given him of the sheet of clean and unclean animals and his encounter with Cornelius. Peter explained that the gospel is for all people. Then the believers praised God and understood that Jesus had come for the Gentiles, too!

At the same time, believers who scattered after Stephen’s murder had traveled to places like Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. In those places, the believers only shared the gospel with the Jews. But some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and preached the gospel to the Greeks, too. God was with them, and a large number of the Greeks believed the good news.

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The church at Jerusalem heard about these new believers, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas was a good man. He loved God and was full of faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. When Barnabas arrived, he saw that God was gracious to these believers. He was glad and encouraged them to keep following God. Even more people trusted in Jesus.

Then Barnabas left Antioch and went to Tarsus to look for Paul. He found Paul and brought him back to Antioch. They stayed with the church in Antioch for a year, teaching large crowds of people. Jesus' followers were first called Christians at Antioch.

While persecution had caused the church in Jerusalem to spread out, God used it for good. As believers came to Antioch, more Gentiles trusted in Jesus and became part of the church.

Re-tell the Bible Story: Have students retell the story as best as possible

Share the GOSPEL: God showed Peter that just as there is no “clean” and “unclean” food in Christ, there are no “clean” and “unclean” people. God calls believers to tell everyone the good news about Jesus, no matter who they are or where they come from. Jesus is Lord of all, and all people are invited to trust in Him and become a part of the church.

Even though some people tried to stop it, the gospel spread throughout the earth, not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The good news about Jesus is for everyone. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more.

The power of the gospel is greater than persecution, opposition in the church, and cultural differences. Nothing can hinder God's plan to offer salvation to all people. As Peter saw the power of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius and his household, he knew Jesus was for all. We can join God in His mission to tell all people the good news and pray that they have hearts to receive Jesus as Savior.

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QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

Who was Cornelius?

Why did God send visions to Cornelius and Peter?

God wants all people to know Him. Our Bible story taught us that God revealed Himself to Cornelius through a vision. Through this vision, Cornelius was told by the angel of God to send for Peter. God also gave Peter a vision. **What did Peter see in his vision? (Acts 10:11-12).** Peter saw a large sheet coming down from heaven, lowered by its four corners and filled with all kinds of animals. God commanded Peter to kill and eat the animals, but Peter refused. Then God told Peter how He had made the impure clean.

What did Peter's vision mean? (Acts 10:34-36) What did God want Peter to see clearly?

After going to Cornelius, a Gentile man, Peter understood that God does not show favoritism toward anyone. Even though Cornelius was not Jewish, Jesus had come to save him, too. Jesus is Lord of all; anyone can trust in Jesus and be saved from their sin.

How were the Gentiles saved? (Acts 11:17-18, 21) Gentiles were saved just as the Jewish believers were: by faith in Jesus. The Bible records how they repented of sin, turned to Jesus, and were given the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter began to share the gospel with Cornelius and his entire household. **What happened while Peter was still speaking? (Acts 10:44-46). What does the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius tell us about who the gospel is for?** The Holy Spirit came down on all who heard the gospel and believed. They began speaking in other languages and proclaiming God's greatness, just as the apostles had done when the Holy Spirit first came on them. Then Cornelius and his household were baptized.

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Why is it important that Cornelius, a Gentile, could be part of God's kingdom? Why is it important that Peter (a Jew) and Cornelius could share a meal together?

God helped Peter understand that the Gentiles needed to hear and believe the gospel just as the Jews did. The good news of Jesus is for all people, everywhere. Even when Jesus was on earth, He ministered to people from different cultures and backgrounds, including a Gentile woman (Matt. 15:22-28). Yet the believers in Jerusalem were hesitant to accept Gentiles into the church. **What did Peter tell them that changed their mind? (Acts 11:15-18)** When the Jewish believers heard that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Gentile believers, they glorified God and knew the gospel was for all people. The gift of the Holy Spirit is evidence of salvation, as only those who trust in Jesus are born again through the Spirit.

If God does not show favoritism, should we? Everyone is a sinner before a holy God, and therefore, no one is better than another. Worldly ways might elevate someone based on power, wealth, or looks, but God does not. We are all made in God's image and should treat each person with value and respect.

Should we allow differences to keep us from sharing the gospel with others? Why not? Jews and Gentiles had many differences, including food customs and religious beliefs, yet the gospel was able to cross any barrier. Everyone needs to hear the good news because everyone is a sinner who needs forgiveness.

While Peter had gone to Caesarea to see Cornelius, many other believers were scattered to different cities because of persecution. **Who did many of these believers share the gospel with? (Acts 11:19-20).** These scattered believers began sharing the gospel with Jews only. Yet, others started sharing the good news with Greeks or Gentiles. As the Greeks heard the gospel, they trusted Jesus.

When the church in Jerusalem heard about the Greek believers in Antioch, whom did they send to confirm this report? (Acts 11:22) They sent Barnabas, a good man, full of the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was glad when he met the Greek believers, and he encouraged them to remain true to Jesus.

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How are people made “clean”? Think about Jesus’ words in Matthew 15:11 and how it is not what a person eats that makes them unclean. Because of sin, all people are unclean, and our hearts are wicked. Being made clean is another way to say forgiven of sin. Only faith in Jesus makes us clean.

Do you know people who are different from you? How can you share Jesus with them? We all know people who are different from us—culturally, with different upbringings, etc. Be bold to share Jesus with all people, knowing that Jesus is Lord of all and shows no favoritism.

What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?

What does the story teach me about myself?

Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?

Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

How does this story help me live on mission?

Application (include Mission Measures where applicable)- See Attached Application Questions. Choose the questions that work well with this section of scripture and tailor them to fit the age group of your students.

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PRAYER PROMPT:

Lord, thank You for sending Jesus to die in our place for our sins. We praise You for Your love for us, no matter where we're from or what we look like. Help us have the courage to share the good news with those around us, no matter how different they may be from us. We love You. Amen.

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

Our Creek Families will collect money in the funnel for United Christian Ministries in May and June.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Acts 2:38-39

38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.

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Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?

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Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD >>>

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD >>>

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?