

Session 6

Peter and Cornelius

God loves everyone equally

Scripture: Acts 10

Supplies:

- A copy of the balloon game
- Stationery
- Strange combinations of food for welcome game
- Waste material e.g., toilet rolls, bottle tops, pipe cleaners, any size empty containers and boxes
- Leaves, bark, pebbles, seeds
- Googly eye
- Glue
- Stickers with the wording "God loves everyone equally"
- Balloons



Welcome

Strange concoctions: Make some strange concoctions and let the children take turns tasting them and guessing what they are.

For example: Cook spaghetti and add food colouring to it.

Cook sago until it is see-through and then add green food colouring.

Ask a child or two to come taste it. Ask children if it tasted the way they thought it would. Also ask them which strange concoctions they eat, like French fries with chocolate sauce.

In the Jewish tradition certain foods were forbidden and seen as unclean. They were not allowed to eat these foods. It was so strict that they weren't even allowed to have any of these foods in their house. It is a very important part of today's story.

Pop the balloon game: Divide the group in two. Without the children realising, you must favour one group over the other. Tell the children that today they are going to guess who the main characters of the story are. (We are going to play a variation of "hangman".) They are going to do this by guessing which letter is used in the characters' names. For each letter that isn't used, we're going to pop one balloon.

(Play fairly with the team that you are favouring. For the other team you can unfairly pop some balloons). The answers are "P e t e r" and "C o r n e l i u s". Ask the children if they think that it was fair. In today's session we are going to learn that God doesn't have any favourites.



Worship

Settle-down ritual: Children close their eyes in prayer.

Touch your feet and thank God that you can go where He sends you.

Touch your hands and thank God that you can help others.

Touch your mouth and say thank you that God gives you words to be kind and nice to others.

Touch your ears and thank God that you can make time for others and listen to their stories.

Touch your eyes and thank God that you can see people who are suffering.

Touch your head and thank God that you can make plans to help your friends.

Touch your heart (put your hand on your chest) and thank God that you are his child and that He loves you.



Word

Our story today starts in Acts 10. To find out more about these characters, we're going to read Acts 10:1 and 2.

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.”

God made every person in this world. Although Cornelius wasn't a Jew, God still listened to his prayers (Psalm 145:18). “One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God who came to him and said: ‘Cornelius!’ Cornelius stared at him in fear. ‘What is it, Lord?’ he asked. The angel answered: ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.’ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.”

We must remember that when we go through the history of the Bible there were already people who thought they were better than others. They thought that there was no room for non-Jewish people in the Kingdom of God. God also spoke to Peter, but in a different way.

“About noon the following day, as they were on their journey, approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat. He fell into a trance while the meal was being prepared. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him: ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’”

Even today God's instructions are sometimes hard to understand. The things our tradition taught us and the things that are God's heart for the world are sometimes different things.

Maybe God is asking you to share Jesus' Good News with that child that isn't very clean and has a runny nose. God looks beyond the things we like and that we don't like. He knows what the people around us need and He knows how to care for their broken hearts; sometimes through us!

We must realise that God was busy working in Cornelius' heart. At the same time, he was working with Peter because Cornelius was not a Jew. But God speaks to Peter: “If God says you can do something, then you don't have to be scared. You can know that you are allowed to do it.” God said this to him three times!

While Peter was still sitting and thinking about what was happening, the men who were sent by Cornelius arrived at Peter's house. He couldn't hear them knocking or speaking. The Holy Spirit told him to go downstairs and to open the door.

Peter: “Good day. My name is Peter, why are you looking for me?”

They answered Peter: “Cornelius is our leader. An angel told Cornelius that he must ask you to come visit him and talk to him.” Peter invited them inside because it was late.

The next day Peter went with the men to Cornelius' house. There were many of Cornelius' friends and family there. Peter spoke to them and told them that he only just learned that God doesn't have any favourites. God loves everyone very much (Acts 10:34).

He shared the Good News of Jesus with them. While Peter was still talking, the Holy Spirit entered the lives of everyone who was listening.

These non-Jewish people also began to speak in tongues. They were baptised and equipped to share the Good News themselves. We can say that they were the first missionaries.

Children reflect on the story:

1. I wonder how you used to look at people who are different from you.
2. I wonder what you are going to do now when you meet someone who is different.
3. I wonder if you think it's fair that God loves everyone equally.
4. I wonder who you want to share the Good News with.



Working and Playing

- Use any clean recycled items and let the children make their own creative characters. Put a sticker on them that says: “God loves everyone equally!”
- Use the same activity in a larger group. Let them make a big character to put in their classroom. Add a sticker that says: “God doesn’ t have any favourites!”
- Use leaves/seeds/stones/dried flowers and let the children use them to make cute animal characters.
- Children can also use macaroni and other items to make a picture of themselves with the words: “God loves me just as I am!”

Closing prayer to end the session.

