

WEEK 3 LESSON GUIDE

WHAT'S
NEXT?

BIG IDEA

We can love
like Jesus does.

BIBLE

Peter Meets with Cornelius:
Acts 10:1–8; 11:1–18; John 13:34–35

ABOUT THIS WEEK

One of the most fun parts of solving a puzzle is the feeling of joy we get whenever we overcome a difficult challenge. This week, we'll learn about how God spoke to Cornelius and Peter to show that everyone is welcome to follow Jesus. Their story helps us see how God helps us overcome our challenges so that **we can love like Jesus does.**

LARGE GROUP TIME

It's time to travel through another maze of a Bible story. Last time, we looked at the puzzling but true story of how Peter prayed for Tabitha, and God brought her back to life. We learned how important it is to pray for others. *What's next?* Well, today we'll learn alongside Peter again as he hangs out with someone he never thought he would.

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Care Connection

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a ball of yarn. Have kids sit in a circle. Hand the ball of yarn to one person, who will hold onto one end of the yarn and roll or toss the ball to someone else in the circle. As they do this, they should say something kind about the person getting the ball (ex., Sam always shares, Alex is a good listener, Jamie tells funny jokes). The string should now be stretched out between the two people. Holding onto their part of the string, the second person then rolls or tosses the ball of yarn to someone else and repeats the process. Keep going until everyone has had a chance to say something kind about somebody, and a continuous piece of yarn is zigzagging throughout the circle of kids.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Adjust the setup by having preteens sit in two rows facing each other six feet apart. They can say something kind about a person in the opposite row while tossing them the yarn. Once the yarn maze has been complete, invite kids to go through the maze one at a time, trying their best not to touch the strings. After their turn, they can return to their place in the row to hold the yarn again.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *You may want to provide kind phrases that the kids can repeat after you.*
- **What puzzling challenge do you think awaits us today?** Riddle me this:
 - I'm found in socks, scarves, and mittens,
 - Also, in the paws of cats and kittens.

- Pass me around from here to there,
- While saying something that shows you care.
- It looks like we're doing something with yarn. Look at what we've made together.
- It's a labyrinth of love, a web of warmth, a puzzle of pleasantries, a connection of care. This reminds me of how God connects two unlikely people in today's Bible story and teaches them how to love the way Jesus loves!

ACTIVITY | People Puzzle

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a game of "the human knot" in small groups or one large group, making sure there is an even number of people in each group. Each kid should first link right hands with someone else in the group but not with those directly next to them. Then, do the same with their left hand and make sure it is with a different person than the one holding their right hand. Once everyone in the group is connected, challenge them to untangle themselves so that they form a continuous circle.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Give kids pieces of string or rope to hold (instead of holding hands) so it's easier for them to move around and untangle.*
- We had to work together to untangle ourselves and solve this people puzzle. We needed each other because we were all connected.
- Today's story is about people who were tangled up in their own way of thinking about others. They wanted to keep outsiders outside their circles, but God was about to show them they were all connected and could be part of God's family.

POLL | Maze-Like Situations

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, have kids indicate their answers to each question by moving to opposite sides of the room, then discuss with each other why they chose as they did.*
- You're stuck in a life-sized maze and call out for help. It will take one hour for your best friend to find you, but someone you don't usually get along with is just one minute away. **Whose help would you accept? Why?**
- We tend to stick with the people we know and like, and that's usually a safe choice. And sometimes, we don't give others a chance because they're very different from us and don't fit in with our group.
- In today's Bible story, we'll find out that Peter had to deal with a similar maze-like situation that he didn't know how to get through. Thankfully, God showed him the way.

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

SCRIPTURE | Acts 10:1–8; 11:1–18 (Peter Meets with Cornelius)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Like in Week 1, prepare a mystery box with a large question mark drawn or posted on it. Keep a Bible inside the box until it is time to read from it.*
- **What question do you ask when you want to know what will happen soon? That's right—what's next?** Why, it's another puzzling but true Bible story, of course!
- In today's story, God connected a man named Cornelius with the apostle Peter. This was a big question mark for Peter because Cornelius was a Gentile, which meant that he did not grow up learning about God the way Peter did. But God showed Peter a surprising truth.
- **First, let's read what God said to Cornelius in Acts 10:1–8.**
 - Cornelius was a centurion, a soldier in the Roman army. He was not someone who grew up hearing about God, but he and his family loved God. An angel was sent to let Cornelius know that God was pleased with him. Now, it was time for him to meet Peter and hear God's next message: that anyone can follow Jesus.

- Peter previously thought that only people like him were invited to follow Jesus. But it turns out that God sent Jesus to save the whole world.
- **Let's read Acts 11:5–10 to see how God taught Peter this lesson.**
- What a puzzling vision. Until now, Peter followed a very strict way of eating taught for over a thousand years. There were certain foods that were considered “*impure or unclean*” that he stayed away from, but God was sending him a new message—because of Jesus, all things were made clean. God gave Peter this vision so he could understand what to do when he met up with Cornelius.
- You see, people like Peter used to stay away from Gentile people like Cornelius because the Gentiles would eat food that was considered unclean.
- **What's next? Let's read Acts 11:11–18.**
 - It all made sense now. God showed Peter the vision to let him know that he didn't need to separate himself from Gentiles anymore. He could show the same love and share the good news with them, too.
 - Isn't that a-maze-ing? When God helped Peter and Cornelius meet, Peter saw with his own eyes that God loved Cornelius and his family as much as God loved Peter, even though they were different.
- **When someone decides to follow Jesus and connects with God through prayer, what's next?** Loving the way Jesus loves! That means loving people even if they aren't the same as we are.

BIG IDEA | We can love like Jesus does.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a foam board cut into five pieces using a craft knife—you can shape the edges like jigsaw puzzle pieces or make straight edges. Write one word of the Big Idea on each piece and hide them around the room. Invite kids to find the pieces and put them together in the center of the room.*
- **Now that we learned from the Bible story, what's next?** It's time for the Big Idea! Let's piece it together.
- **We can love like Jesus does.**

ACTIVITY | The Circle Of Love

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, have kids hold hands in a circle. Ask a series of questions (see suggestions below), and if the statement is true for them, have them step into the middle of the circle, letting go of their partners' hands. Keep going until everyone is huddled together on the “inside” of the circle. Do this again, but this time, have kids come to the middle if the statement is not true for them.*
- Peter had his own ideas about the kind of people Cornelius and his family were. Peter never felt like he should spend time with them until God pointed out that they could be part of God's family, too.
- Sometimes, we might assume things about people without getting to know them first. We might leave them on the outside of our circle and not bother inviting them in. But if we take the time to get to know each other, we'll be able to see what God sees—that we are all loved by God in the same way.
- **Step inside the circle if this describes you.**
 - You love math.
 - You are the oldest sibling.
 - You love to play sports.
 - You love vegetables.
 - You were born in a different city than this one.
 - You like riding roller coasters.
 - You love to play video or computer games.
- **Now, step into the circle if this does not describe you.**
 - You love chocolate.

- You love to read books.
 - You speak more than one language.
 - You love to sing.
 - You've broken a bone.
 - You love pizza.
 - You have a pet.
- Whether we are alike or different, we are all alike in one major way—Jesus loves us. And that's why **we can love like Jesus does**, by inviting even people who are not like us to join us.

ACTIVITY | Seeing Things Differently

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you will need different kinds of glasses like [prism glasses](#), [3-D glasses](#), [magnifying glasses](#), and [optical illusion glasses](#), along with printouts of brain teasers and logic puzzles like [this](#). Place the glasses in a basket to be shared between three contestants. Hand each person a copy of the same worksheet but with different glasses to wear as they try to solve the puzzles. When you call out “switch,” have each contestant choose a different pair of glasses from the basket. Keep going until one person solves the puzzle or sets a time limit to see who got the furthest. Repeat with a new set of contestants and new puzzle sheets.
 - ✳ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Have kids make a play dough puzzle board, like [this](#), using a few items, then invite others to complete the puzzle by finding and placing the matching objects on top of the prints. Discuss how they were challenged to see the objects differently.
- In our Bible story, Peter was challenged to see things differently than he ever had before. His openness and obedience to God allowed him to love others in a new way.
- **It can be easy to love someone whom we know and like, but what about the people we don't know or who maybe have a different perspective? People who may not see things the same way we do or share our opinions?**
- Looking at things differently requires practice. It's definitely easier and more comfortable to stick with seeing things the way we normally do. But Jesus challenges us to train our eyes and our hearts to accept others so that **we can love like Jesus does**.

SCRIPTURE | John 13:34–35

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the passage together.
- In this passage, Jesus said he was giving his followers “a new command.”
- **Why do you think “love one another” felt like a new command for people listening to Jesus?**
- Before Jesus, people were used to treating others the way they've been treated. If someone were kind to them, they would show kindness back, and if someone were unkind to them, they would be unkind, too. But Jesus taught people to love one another, no matter what others did or didn't do.
- As Jesus gave this command, he also gave them the best example to follow—his own. He told them to love “as I have loved you.” Anyone who followed Jesus knew that Jesus put others first, and now he was telling them to go and love the same way. If they did that, people would know that they were followers of Jesus.
- We can show everyone we are followers of Jesus, too. How? Once we choose to follow Jesus and learn to pray—especially for others—what's next? Loving the way Jesus loves. **We can love like Jesus does.**

VIDEO | What's Next?, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?***REFLECTION | Puzzle Station**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a bin filled with small [brain teaser toys](#), maze workbooks, or easy jigsaw puzzles for kids to complete as they think about the prompts below.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Preteens are at a stage where they long to be individuals but don't want to stand out from the crowd. Because of this desire to maintain group membership, they are more susceptible to unkind behaviors toward those outside their group. Encourage compassion and good decision-making regarding how they treat others and challenge them to practice inclusion among their peers.*
- **We can love like Jesus does**, but sometimes, our minds are the biggest puzzles standing in the way of us doing what Jesus wants us to do. When we take moments like this to think deeply about what God is saying to us, God helps us understand and see more clearly.
 - **How do you think Peter felt when he first had to share the good news with Cornelius and his family?**
 - **How might Cornelius have felt when God told him to seek out Peter?**
 - **Have you ever had your mind changed about someone you didn't like at first? What happened?**
 - **Is it hard for you to include people who are outside of your normal group? Why or why not?**

RESPONSE | Mix It Up!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need paper plates, cotton swabs, card stock, and washable paint in red, yellow, blue, and white. Give each kid a plate with a dab of each color of paint, like a palette, along with a cotton swab. Have them mix the colors together however they would like, then write or draw their responses on a piece of card stock. If you don't want to use paint, use crayons in different colors instead.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *During service this week, give kids opportunities to love on their peers by having a list of simple actions they can choose from. This could be simply inviting a peer to play with a specific toy with them, handing out supplies for an activity, taking turns, drawing a picture for someone, and so on.*
- We might be used to sticking with our usual groups and staying away from others. This means we end up excluding people on purpose for no other reason than that they're just not like us.
- Peter learned in today's Bible story—and we've also learned—that we should be looking for ways to extend God's love to more than the people closest to us. Instead of sticking to our own little bubbles, we can "mix it up" and welcome others into God's family.
 - **Speaking of which, let's mix up our paint colors and create something new.**
 - **Then, write or draw one way you are going to love someone like Jesus does this week.**
 - **Finally, draw a heart around this with the new colors you made.**
- We can do something new when we reach out and love others the way Jesus does. **We can love like Jesus does.**

MEMORY VERSE | Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!*
- **"In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."**

PRAYER

- Dear God, thank you for always guiding us and showing us the best way. We know that you created everyone differently on purpose and love us all the same. Help us to love others like Jesus does, the way you never stop loving us! Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME**DISCUSSION****● SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**

- **Why might people like Peter not have been friends with Cornelius?** *Cornelius was a Gentile and a centurion who worked for the Roman government.*
- **What vision did God give Peter? What did the vision mean?** *Peter was invited to eat foods he used to think were "unclean." God was showing him that everyone was invited to know God.*
- **How do you know that Peter understood the message God was sending him?** *Peter went to Cornelius' house and shared the good news with them.*
- **Read John 13:34. How does Jesus want us to love one another?** *The way Jesus loves us.*

● APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **What are some ways people show they love you?**
- **What are some ways you show others you love them?**
- **Who is someone you can show God's love to this week whom you haven't before?**

ACTIVITY | Popsicle Puzzle

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need popsicle sticks, painter's tape, and washable markers. Tape six popsicle sticks together. On the side, without the tape, kids can draw a heart and write the Big Idea inside. Afterward, have them remove the painter's tape to separate their puzzle pieces. See a worked example [here](#).*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have preteens make a twisting puzzle by following a tutorial like [this](#). They can draw a design and include the Big Idea.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Help kids put two jumbo craft sticks next to each other for each Big Idea word. Glue a printed word (or write it) on so the top half of the word is on one stick and the bottom half is on the other stick, then decorate. Then you can use a craft knife to cut the paper between the craft sticks. Give them zip bags to bring their puzzle home in.*
- The next time you struggle to get along with someone, put the pieces of this puzzle together and remember that Jesus showed us that God's love is available for all.
- **We can love like Jesus does.**