



All One Family

(based on Acts 10:1-48)

Peter and Cornelius didn't know each other, but they had a lot in common. They prayed to God every day. They shared God's love by helping others. They worshiped God in their own ways. They could have been friends except for one big difference: Peter was Jewish, and Cornelius was not.

In those days, there was a big divide between those who were Jewish and those who were not. They wouldn't even eat the same food. It was as if there was an invisible line between them. No one wanted to step over the line.

That was about to change. The Holy Spirit was erasing that line. This is how it happened.

God sent two dreams, one to Cornelius and another to Peter. In the first dream, God told Cornelius to invite Peter to his house. In the second dream, Peter saw a very big sheet with all sorts of animals, birds, snakes, and frogs on it. Peter heard a voice saying, "Go ahead. Eat."

Peter said, "I have never eaten these kinds of animals, birds, snakes, and frogs. They are unclean."

"Peter," he heard the voice say. "God has made them clean. You must not call them unclean."

This happened three times—not just once. Then the dream was over. Peter was puzzled about his dream.

As Peter awoke, the men sent by Cornelius arrived. "Come in," he told the men. "You have come a long way. Spend the night here."

The next morning Peter, the men, and some of Peter's friends went north to where Cornelius lived.

When Peter arrived, he found Cornelius, his family, and all his close friends gathered in one place. They had all come to listen to Peter. When Peter heard about Cornelius's dream, he was very excited. "That's what my dream meant," Peter said. "We are all meant to be together as part of God's family. Now I know for sure that God loves everyone the same."

Cornelius asked Peter to teach them, so Peter told them all about Jesus and God's grace. While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon every person in the house. Everyone started to speak in different languages as the Holy Spirit helped them. It was very noisy and very exciting.

Peter was amazed. "The Holy Spirit has come upon everyone," he said. "It doesn't matter if you are Jewish or not Jewish, rich or poor, male or female. We are all part of God's family."

Cornelius, his family, and all his close friends became followers of Jesus that day. They were all baptized. They invited Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Everything had changed. Everyone was welcome. Everyone belonged in God's family.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- With a pencil, draw a line down a sheet of paper to make two columns, labeling the columns “Same” and “Different.” As you reread the story, take turns listing or drawing things that Peter and Cornelius had in common in the “Same” column. List or draw differences in the “Different” column. Have one person erase the pencil line that divides the columns to remind them how God helped Peter and Cornelius to erase their dividing lines.
- Both Peter and Cornelius had dreams from God, telling them to do something that they thought they could never do to welcome the other. Ask members of your family to listen to God, maybe even in a dream, for one way to practice hospitality this week.



Responding to God's Grace

- Ask some family members to line up on one side of the room or yard, facing the rest of the family on the opposite side. Play a modified game of “Red Rover” with the familiar invitation, “Red Rover, Red Rover, send (Name) over.” Instead of keeping the named person from breaking through the line, catch him or her with a group hug. Play until everyone gets to run into a hug.
- Using a picture of your family, a church pictorial directory, or a community or world map, encourage your children to think of real or imagined lines that exist between people. Invite your children to put sticky notes where they think God’s help is needed to bring people together. Brainstorm ways each person in the family can welcome others or bring people together in any of the situations they identified.
- Plan a random act of hospitality, inviting someone you do not know well to join your family for a treat. Keep it simple. Offer someone a glass of iced tea, invite a child to play, or extend an invitation for someone to go for a walk. Work together to do the inviting, preparing, and welcoming.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- In celebration of God bringing people together, have the whole family build walls of cushions, pillows, or blocks. Take turns knocking them down.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Loving God, help me welcome everyone at work and play. Amen.