

**Acts 10:44–48**

*Ps. 98*

*1 John 5:1–6*

*John 15:9–17*

# Counted In!

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Children will thank God for surprises as they hear about Peter, Cornelius, and others who have decided to follow Jesus.*

## ■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

### Focus on Acts 10:44–48

#### **WHAT is important to know?**

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” A. Katherine Grieb

Peter’s question—“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”—underlines the priority of God’s action and the subsequent response of the church. To restate the words spoken to Peter in his vision at Joppa, “what God has made clean,” the church must not call profane (10:15). The pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his companions shows God’s acceptance of these Gentiles. They have received the gift of the Spirit (speaking in tongues and extolling God) “just as we have,” a clear reference back to the outpouring of the Spirit upon Jewish Christians at Pentecost.

#### **WHERE is God in these words?**

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

It is instructive that in Peter’s sermon in Cornelius’s house the Holy Spirit interrupts him again. It is as if the Holy Spirit seeks to remind the listeners that, as eloquent as Peter’s sermon was, what is crucial is not Peter’s perception of the gospel, but Peter allowing God to speak through and in spite of him. God was and is and must always be the subject of salvation. Peter was an instrument, not the source of salvation. The new revelation made possible by the inbreaking of the Holy One was clear.

#### **SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?**

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis

In this brief text we find exemplified the extravagance of the Holy Spirit and the wideness of God’s grace. This story demonstrates that the Spirit is not bound by the limitations that even faithful believers have. The Spirit is not only poured out on the Gentiles; it is given to the Jewish Christians, enabling them to see with new eyes and capture a new vision of the kingdom of God. This is an important text for the church today. Not only do the wounds of exclusion run deep in our culture and in the church; the realities of uncrossed boundaries still exist.

#### **NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?**

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara K. Lundblad

“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (v. 47). Peter echoes the question the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip back in chapter 8: “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” Those who heard that story could have shouted, “Everything prevents you! You’re a different race, you are from a far-off country, you are a sexual misfit, and you have had very little instruction.” In both stories, there were good reasons to withhold the water of baptism. Yet the Holy Spirit surprised Philip on a desert road and surprised Peter in Cornelius’s house. The Holy Spirit can be disruptive.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Acts 10:44–48**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Who’s “in” and who’s “out”? In children’s friendships, allegiances change quickly. Even young children may be familiar with feeling “out” of a circle of friends because of a small disagreement. Hopefully, those feelings of being the outsider are short-lived. For some children, however, being on the outside might feel much too familiar. Use today’s Bible story to help learners take an inclusive look at God’s limitless love. Many families will observe today as Mother’s Day. Enjoy the excitement children may bring to the day, but also be sensitive to any whose families are not celebrating for some reason.

*Dear Lord, send your Spirit to fill my heart and guide my life. Bless me and the children I teach. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- small table or large box
- white cloth
- cross
- 1 helium-filled Mylar balloon or other balloons
- scissors, tape
- string
- large box
- gift wrap
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Bible
- copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- pencils
- corrugated paper, sandpaper
- crayons
- Color Pack 18, 19, 32
- Internet-connected device (optional)

For Responding

- option 1: chairs; *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- option 2: materials listed by activity
- option 3: craft sticks, paper, pencils, scissors, thick toothpicks, rubber bands

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, attach a 3' string to a helium-filled Mylar balloon. Tape the end of the string to the bottom of a large box, close it, and wrap it with gift wrap. Cut out the balloons on Color Pack 18 and tape each one to the bottom of a chair or table in your learning space. Cut corrugated paper and sandpaper into 3" squares, one of each per child.

As you welcome children, ask them to help to make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a white cloth and placing a cross on it. Invite them to pick up the gift-wrapped box and wonder to themselves about what might be in it.

Gather with learners around the worship table and place the gift-wrapped box on it. Proclaim today to be “Surprise Sunday.” Invite learners to tell about times they have been surprised with something good and times they have surprised people in their families with good things. Say today’s Bible story includes some surprises. Pray aloud, inviting learners to repeat each phrase:

*Dear God, / help us to learn more about your surprising ways / from the Bible. / Fill our hearts / with your surprising love. / Amen.*

Option: If you don't have a helium-filled Mylar balloon, inflate five or six regular balloons to put in the box, being mindful of allergies. When you open it, move the box up and down rapidly so the balloons bounce out.

Option: Older children may enjoy hearing the story that leads to the focus story for today. Watch a storyteller present this story at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr5hBx5UO0A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr5hBx5UO0A).

EASY  
PREP

If you are unable to play the song, sing a familiar Sunday school song, pausing as noted in the activity.

## EXPLORING

Hold up the gift-wrapped box and invite the children to tell what they think is in it. Quickly open the box so the balloon pops out. Comment that some surprises make us look twice because they're unbelievable.

Open your Bible to Acts 10 and say this is where today's Bible story is found. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Surprises for Peter and Cornelius) and pencils. Explain that this story has some surprising sentences. Read aloud the story. Stop after each sentence that has an underlined word and invite learners to find the correct rhyming word to replace it. After you finish, invite learners to read the corrected story in unison with you.

Tell the children there are questions hidden in surprising places. Invite them to look for the six questions from Color Pack 18, hidden before the session. Have them arrange the questions in order from one to six. Ask volunteers to read each question aloud in turn and discuss it as a group.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Peter Visits Cornelius) and crayons. Give each learner a piece of corrugated paper and a piece of sandpaper. Invite them to place corrugated paper or sandpaper under various parts of the picture and then rub the side of a crayon over it to make a surprising design. Option: Encourage learners to find other textured surfaces in your learning space to place under their coloring.

Form pairs and have partners take turns using their pictures to help them tell the story to each other. Gather the group and discuss:

- ✎ For what surprises do you think Cornelius thanked God?
- ✎ For what surprises do you think Peter thanked God?
- ✎ For what surprises do you want to thank God?

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Reverse Musical Chairs** Children will experience the surprising way that God's love includes all people as they play a game. Remind learners how God's Spirit helped Peter to tell others about Jesus and how the Spirit also helps us to follow Jesus. Place one chair in the center of the room. Explain that when the music stops, they will race to the chair. Start the song "I've Got Spirit in My Hands" (track 13 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*), and pause it after a few lines. The child who reaches the chair first goes to get a second chair to place near the first chair. When the music stops again, the two children who reach the chairs first go together to get another chair and add it to make a line of three chairs. Play continues in this way until all children in the room have a chair to sit in. Play again as time allows. Invite learners to tell what was surprising about this game.

**YOU WILL NEED**

- 1 lb. fresh strawberries, washed, with tops removed
- apple juice
- raspberry sherbet
- ice cubes
- blue food coloring
- 1-cup measure
- ice cream scoop
- blender
- cups
- napkins

2. **Delicious Surprises** Children will enjoy a treat made from ingredients that combine with surprising results. Place the blender on a table. **Do not plug it in.** Show the ingredients to the children and have them guess what the finished product will be. Invite children to help place the strawberries, two cups of apple juice, four scoops of sherbet, and one cup of ice cubes in the blender. Have learners count as you put five drops of blue food coloring into the blender. Invite guesses about what the color of the treat will be. Have children step away from the blender before plugging it in and blending the ingredients until they're smooth. **Unplug the blender.** Pour some smoothie into a cup for each child, being mindful of allergies. Say a prayer of thanks for food and enjoy the snack. Invite learners to imagine what surprising things can happen when Jesus' followers work together.
3. **Sounds of Surprise** Children will make musical instruments from surprising materials and use them to praise God. Give each child two craft sticks and lead the group in the following steps: Trace around one stick on paper and cut out the tracing. Lay this paper on top of one craft stick. Place a short piece broken from a thick toothpick at each side of the paper, about ½" from each end. Carefully place the second craft stick on top, sandwiching the paper and toothpick pieces inside. Wrap a rubber band around each end of the "sandwich" to hold it together. Demonstrate how to play the instrument by holding it like a harmonica and humming into it. Invite them to choose songs to hum to praise God for loving them in such surprising ways. (For example: "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy," "God Is So Good," "Jesus Loves Me.")

**I've Got Spirit in My Hands**

I've got spirit in *my hands*,  
 and it's keeping me alive,  
 keeping me alive,  
 keeping me alive.

I've got spirit in *my hands*,  
 and it's keeping me alive,  
 spirit is keeping me alive.

I've got spirit in *my head* . . .

I've got spirit in *my hips* . . .

I've got spirit in *my feet* . . .

I've got spirit in *my tongue* . . .

I've got spirit in *my life* . . .

**CLOSING**

Gather with learners around the worship table. Invite them to recall the people in the Bible story who were surprised. Comment on how God's Spirit helped each one to love and care for others in surprising ways, just as God's Spirit helps each person in your church. Sing "I've Got Spirit in My Hands" (Color Pack 32; track 13 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Ask a volunteer to hold up Color Pack 19. Say that learners might be surprised to learn this is a prayer. Tell learners to say the names of the pictures when you point to them during the prayer. When you point to the balloons, they can say names of people they love. Pray aloud:

*God of surprises,*  
*When you lead us to meet people, guide our (feet).*  
*When you ask us to help others, guide our (hands).*  
*When you show us your creation, guide our (eyes).*  
*When you ask us to tell others about you, guide our (mouths).*  
*When you send us preachers and teachers like Peter, guide our (ears).*  
*Help us surprise these people with your love: (balloons).*  
*Amen!*

Say good-bye to each learner by name.

## Surprises for Peter and Cornelius

**Directions:** You can tell this story of Peter and Cornelius to others. First, you need to replace the underlined words so the story makes sense. Choose a word from the list that rhymes with the underlined word and makes sense in the story. Draw a line between the two words.

Peter made many peaches about Jesus. One day Peter preached to a group of steeples. They were called Gentiles, because they didn't have Jewish families.

Here's the end of the dory:

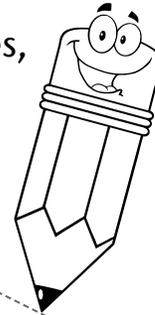
God's Spirit came to tall the people who were clearing Peter's speech. Peter and his friends baptized each one. They became Jesus' followers.

Here's what happened:

Cornelius was an important can. He loved God. He prayed. He squared what he had. He was a Gentile. Some of Jesus' disciples said he couldn't be baptized. Surprise! An angel said to Cornelius, "Send for Peter. He needs to weak to you."

Peter was in a different town. He was praying. Surprise! Peter saw a big sheet with lots of foods. Peter had been taught he should never eat these foods. But then he heard a voice from heaven. God said he could seat *any* food. God's rules are more important than people's rules.

God invites everyone to follow Jesus. People do not always understand the ways of God. But we can must that God loves us.



- hearing
- man
- shared
- speeches
- people
- speak
- eat
- trust
- story
- all

(You can read more about Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10.)

May 9, 2021  
Counted In!

Grades K-2  
Resource Sheet 2

## Peter Visits Cornelius

