



Reach Out I'll Be There

Bible Story: Reach Out I'll Be There (Peter Goes to the House of Cornelius) • Acts 10

Bottom Line: Knowing Jesus changes the way you see others.

Key Question: What are some ways people are different from each other?

Memory Verse: *Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see.*
Hebrews 11:1 (NirV)

Life App: Faith—Trusting in what you can't see because of what you can see

Basic Truth: I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

Story: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways (Large Group, 35 minutes)

Engage kids' hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible story, worship, and prayer experience in a Large Group setting.

SFX: Play high-energy music as kids enter.

CG: Theme Slide

Host enters.

Welcome

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sporting event (NBA and NHL Finals), movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

Opener

HOST: "What's happening, everyone?! We have such a good day in store for you. Are you ready to focus? That's right. All month long we've been trying to figure out how we can focus and take a closer look at all that God is doing in the world. And to help us focus, we have a crazy game unlike anything we have ever tried before. So we have some amazing Small Group Leaders. They're pretty awesome, right? Many of them you see from week to week, and so, well you kind of get used to them. But what if something changed on them and you didn't even notice it? Well, maybe you need to take a closer look."

Can I have my five leaders come to the stage?

Host brings up Small Group Leaders from the image. They go back stage to get ready. They line up in the order of their photos but do not come on stage until the Host calls them out.

"Earlier today, we took photos of five of your leaders. Since that photo, each leader has changed one thing about him or herself. I'll put up a picture of a leader *one at a time* and give you 15 seconds to look at the picture. Then the picture on the screen will go off, and the leader will step up on stage. The first person to spot the difference wins a prize. Raise your hand and I'll call on you. Get it? This should be fun!"

CG: Leader Photos 1-5

Do in order with however many leaders you took pictures of beforehand.

(After the game) That was so much fun! Your focus is on point today! Now let's stand and worship together!"

Worship

Communicator enters Worship Leaders exit.

COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: “Hey, everyone! I can’t believe it is already the end of June. The good news though? There is still plenty of summer left, and equally good news . . . we are here together! Let’s start with a little bit of competition. How many of you would say that you are sports fans? *(Pause for responses.)* Awesome! Me too! You know, one of the things that makes sports so fun is the fans. And with fans of one team comes, well, the fans of *other* teams . . . or what we like to call . . . rivalries! Some of these rivalries are intense. Let’s see how you do with some of these more famous sport rivalries. We’ll put up picture of a team on the screen. You need to shout out their greatest rival. Got it?”

“How about this team?”

Note: The following are examples of more famous sports rivalries. Feel free to edit these and come up with some rivalries of teams in your area.

CG: New York Yankees Logo

Pause for responses.

“Yes!”

CG: Boston Red Sox Logo

“That one was probably pretty easy for some of you, but how about these.”

Go through other rivalries as you have time.

*Other suggestions:

Los Angeles Lakers / Boston Celtics

University of Michigan / Ohio State

Green Bay Packers / Chicago Bears

Barcelona / Real Madrid

Montreal Canadiens / Boston Bruins

Dallas Cowboys / Philadelphia Eagles

“(After sharing rivalries) Those are some bitter rivalries!”

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: “Have you ever been around people who are fans of your team’s rival? Maybe you hear them talk about their team and make a big deal about them. All you want to do is defend your team and talk about how they are better. Sure it can be hard to get along with someone who likes a rival team, but in the end, most of those fan rivalries don’t really end friendships. But they do make me wonder. How do we get along with people you don’t agree with? I mean, it is one thing when it is a sports team, but what about when it’s bigger than that? You don’t agree with a friend about a school project. Or you don’t agree with your coach about who starts the game. Or maybe you don’t agree with your mom or dad about the time you should go to bed at night. Not getting along with others can be difficult, but we can discover wisdom about how to handle these situations. And that wisdom starts with the Bible. Let’s head there now.”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “We continue God’s Big Story in the book of Acts. You might remember that Acts was written by a doctor named Luke. He shares the events that happened immediately after Jesus died and rose again and sent His followers out into the world with the mission to spread His message. That mission started small with telling those living locally to them in Jerusalem. But then the message spread further to places throughout Judea and Samaria, and eventually to areas outside Israel.”

“Now before we get into the story, here’s something important to understand. Way back near the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we read how God called a man named Abraham and promised to make his name great and to make a great nation through him. Abraham eventually had Isaac, who eventually had Jacob. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel after an interesting wrestling match with God, and the twelve sons that came from Jacob, or Israel, grew into tribes. God truly had taken one man, Abraham, and made an entire nation out of him. God called the nation of Israel to be His special nation. This meant they would live differently from other people groups in the area. This included what they ate, what clothes they wore, how they worshipped, who they associated with, and the laws they followed. The people of Israel, or Israelites, stood out from the non-Israelites around them. Those non-Israelites were called Gentiles.”

“A Gentile was a non-Israelite or a non-Jewish person. And the Gentiles and Jews couldn’t have been more different than each other. They lived differently. They ate differently. They worshipped differently. They were just DIFF-ER-ENT. And Jewish people were expected not to hang out with Gentiles.”

“And that is where we begin today.”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:1-2, NIV) ‘A man named Cornelius lived in Caesarea. He was a Roman commander in the Italian Regiment. Cornelius and all his family were faithful and worshiped God. He gave freely to people who were in need. He prayed to God regularly.’”

“So . . . we have this guy named Cornelius . . .”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 1 - Cornelius zoomed in face

“What do we know about him? He was generous. He prayed regularly. He worshipped God. Notice . . . he worshipped *God*, not gods. He was a worshipper of the one True God. But there’s something else. Did it say anywhere that he was Jewish?”

Pause for responses.

“Nope. He was a ROMAN commander living in the ROMAN military base of Caesarea Maritima. This was not a Jewish man. This was a Gentile. And now this is confusing.”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 2 - Cornelius zoomed out in Roman commander uniform

“And it is about to get even stranger. *(Read directly from Acts 10:3, NIV) ‘One day about three o’clock in the afternoon he had a vision. He saw clearly an angel of God. The angel came to him and said, “Cornelius!”’*”

“Three in the afternoon was the typical time when *Jewish* people would pray, and here, while Cornelius was praying, God spoke to him through an angel.”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:4, NIV) ‘Cornelius was afraid. He stared at the angel. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to poor people are like an offering to God. So he has remembered you.”’”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 3 - An angel talking to Cornelius

“What a cool moment! God *noticed* a Gentile—this Roman official who had worshipped God and given to the poor and prayed regularly! God saw him! And God was about to do something pretty amazing in his life. And it started with some instructions . . .”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:5-6 NIV) ‘Now send men to Joppa. Have them bring back a man named Simon. He is also called Peter. He is staying with another Simon, a man who works with leather. His house is by the sea.’”

“Once the angel left, Cornelius called for two of his servants and a soldier and told them what had happened. Then he told them to go to Joppa. Now Joppa was about 40 miles down the coast, so no short trip. But did you catch who the angel told Cornelius to send for?”

Pause for responses.

“That’s right! Peter. The same Peter who was a disciple of Jesus. The same Peter who had been a leader in the early church, who was there in Jerusalem during Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down and filled the believers. This guy had been at the center of the Jesus movement . . . and now he was supposed to make a house call to a previously unknown Gentile!”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 4 - Collage of Peter

“Now we saw Cornelius’ vision. But the crazy thing is, that Peter was about to have a vision as well. Peter, who was staying at the house of Simon the tanner, went up on the roof of the house to pray. And while there, this vision happened. Let’s check it out.”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:11-16, NIV) ‘He saw heaven open up. There he saw something that looked like a large sheet. It was being let down to earth by its four corners. It had all kinds of four-footed animals in it. It also had reptiles and birds in it. Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’”

“No, Lord! I will not!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything that is not pure and ‘clean.’” The voice spoke to him a second time. It said, “Do not say anything is not pure that God has made ‘clean.’” This happened three times. Right away the sheet was taken back up to heaven.”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 5 - Animals in sheet with Peter looking onward, shocked

“Woah. Pretty strange, right? The sheet filled with animals and a voice telling Peter to kill and eat. But notice Peter’s response. ‘I have never eaten anything that is not pure and clean.’ What was that all about?”

Walk over to the doorframe.

“What Peter was talking about is the Jewish laws that he followed. Remember what we said earlier—God asked His people to live differently, and that included what they ate, what they wore, how they worshipped, who they were influenced by. We’ll use this door (*pointing to the doorframe*) to represent some of these things. For instance, the foods represented in the vision. Up to this point, these foods had been off limits to the Jewish people. In other words, that door was closed to them.”

Close or pretends to close the door.

“You can see it in Peter’s reaction. He was obviously very confused. ‘Why is God telling me to do something I’m not supposed to do? I would never eat anything unclean . . . I can’t walk through that door.’ But then notice what the voice in the vision said in response—‘Do not say anything is not pure that God has made clean.’”

“It is clear that something was happening. And while Peter was trying to figure it out, Cornelius’ men arrived.”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 6 - Cornelius’ men knocking on the door.

“Now in case Peter thought this whole vision was the result of some bad pizza or something, the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter . . .”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:19-20, NIV) ‘Peter was still thinking about the vision. The Holy Spirit spoke to him. “Simon,” he said, “three men are looking for you. Get up and go downstairs. Don’t let anything keep you from going with them. I have sent them.”’”

"In other words, God told Peter, 'What's about to happen is from Me.' Peter went down to meet the men; they introduced themselves and told Peter about Cornelius and how an angel had told him to invite Peter to his house. Then check this next verse out. *(Read directly from Acts 10:23 NIV)* 'Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.'"

Communicator walks through the doorway.

"Now here's one thing to keep in mind: Gentiles and Jews weren't supposed to have close contact. So when Peter invited the Gentile men into the house where he was staying, it was a big deal. And then the next day, when Peter left with them for Caesarea, when he traveled 40 miles with the intention to go to Cornelius' house, it was also a huge deal. A Jewish person would NEVER go into the home of a Gentile. It was considered unclean, and it would make that Jewish person unclean. Check out what happened though when Peter arrived at Cornelius' house . . ."

(Read directly from Acts 10:25, NIV while walking through the doorway) 'When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him. As a sign of respect, he fell at Peter's feet.'"

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 7 - Peter and Cornelius meeting

"Did you catch that? Where was Peter? *(Pause for responses)* Right . . . he was IN *(from doorway)* Cornelius' house! This was a big deal. And what he found there was pretty amazing. There was a large group of people in Cornelius' home . . . I'm imagining he had told his friends and family about the vision, and they had all come to see what would happen when Peter arrived. So Peter ENTERED the home and addressed the group. And what he said is fascinating!"

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 8 - Peter talking to group in Cornelius' home

(Read directly from Acts 10:28, NIV) 'He said to them, "You know that it is against our law for a Jew to enter a Gentile home. A Jew shouldn't have any close contact with a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not say anyone is not pure and clean.'"

“Peter started by saying, ‘I shouldn’t even be here! Jewish law does not permit me to enter this house.’ But then he said that God had shown him that he shouldn’t say anyone is not pure or clean. Now, where do you think he got that idea?”

Pause for responses.

“Exactly—the vision he had on the rooftop! Now, there’s an interesting difference though between the vision and what was happening, and we even see it in Peter’s words. The vision was about animals and God told Peter not to say *anything* is not pure or clean . . . but here Peter says ‘anyONE’. It turns out that the vision was not so much about animals but it was really about *people*. Peter seemed to have an ‘aha’ moment at some point. In other words, maybe this door (*at the doorframe*) that had been closed for so long was no longer closed.”

“So Peter asked the packed house why they had sent for him, and Cornelius, this godly Gentile, recounted the vision and all of the events that led to this moment. As he listened to Cornelius speak, Peter had an astounding realization.”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:34-35, NIV) ‘Then Peter began to speak. “I now realize how true it is that God treats everyone the same,” he said. “He accepts people from every nation. He accepts anyone who has respect for him and does what is right.””

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 9 – Peter’s aha moment

“At some point, Peter came to a powerful and incredibly important realization. Jesus is not just the Savior of Israel. He is the Savior of the world. God is a God of ALL people—not just one group of people. Peter might not have gotten it before . . . but he surely got it now.”

“(Read directly from Acts 10:36, NIV) ““You know the message God sent to the people of Israel. It is the good news of peace through Jesus Christ. He is Lord OF ALL.” (emphasis added)”

“In other words, Jesus opened the door for everyone . . .”

Communicator opens (pretends to open) the door on the doorway and walk through.

“. . . to come in through faith. Jew or Gentile. All are welcome.”

“While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came and filled those in Cornelius’ house. Surely for Peter, the scene must have resembled Pentecost back in Jerusalem. The Jewish believers that came with Peter were amazed because of what God was doing even though these were Gentiles. Something new was happening! It was an amazing scene as these Gentiles put their faith in Jesus and were baptized.”

CG: Graphic Novel Slide 10 - Peter baptizing Cornelius

“If you remember back at the beginning of the story, we said that God called Abraham to be a great nation. The main reason God formed that nation, the nation of Israel, was to be His partner in reaching the world. God told Abraham that He would bless him and that through him and the nation that would come from him, ALL NATIONS would be blessed. God’s dream has always been to have all nations—all people—in a relationship with Him. These events at Cornelius’ house may be some of the clearest examples we have of this, for sure. And here’s the thing, it was just getting started.”

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “During the intro, we looked at a few bitter sports rivalries. One we mentioned was the Yankees and Red Sox. Back in the mid-2000s, there was a crazy story that came out of that rivalry. You may have heard about the Red Sox improbable comeback in the playoffs against the Yankees after being down three games to none. But what you might not know is that one of those Red Sox players, Johnny Damon, who helped orchestrate that comeback, became a Yankee just a year later! This was a shock to both sides really because these two sides were such rivals!”

“Can you imagine that first day that Damon walked through the door of that Yankees locker room as a Red Sox player now wearing the pinstripes of a Yankees uniform? That probably took some getting used to, not only for

him but also for his teammates. But the fact is they were baseball players, and the common bond was baseball.”

“I’d like to say that after this moment at Cornelius’ house with Peter everything from here on was peaceful with everyone getting along. But the truth is some of the Jewish people had a really hard time accepting the Gentiles, and some Gentiles had a really hard time with the Jewish people. But in spite of their many differences, the one common bond they all had was this . . .”

Walk through the doorway.

“Jesus. They were welcomed in and through Jesus and Jesus alone. Jesus is what they had in common, and He is enough.”

“My guess is that you have found yourself in a situation—maybe even at church—where you feel really different than somebody else. And sometimes those differences can drive us apart. But the beautiful thing is: no matter where we are coming from, no matter what our stories are . . . all of us are welcomed in and through Jesus (*walking through door*). He is what we have in common, and He is enough!”

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: “Today as head back to Small Group, think about this:

CG: Key Question Slide

“What are some ways people are different from each other? We can’t help it. God made each of us unique. So think about the ways each of us is unique. Consider how some of those difference might keep us from being friends with each other. But also think about this: how does knowing Jesus help us overcome those differences? How can you work together to still be friends even when you’re different? If you’re having a hard time answering these, don’t worry. You’ll get to chat more about it with your Small Group. As we head out, let’s pray and thank God that Jesus makes it possible for everyone to be part of His family. Let’s pray.”

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

SFX: Play high-energy music as the kids exit.