

COVENANT — THE FIRST CHURCH

The Gentile Revival

LESSON 05

JULY 05, 2026

LESSON TEXT

Acts 10:1–8, 21–23, 44–48

FOCUS VERSES

Acts 10:45–47

⁴⁵And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

⁴⁶For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

⁴⁷Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God extended the same covenant to the Gentiles as to the Jews.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will participate in God's plan for every kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

COVENANT CONTEXT

This story completes the pattern Jesus prophesied to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the end of the earth. Against cultural prejudices and biases, God called the Jewish preacher named Peter to preach the gospel to a Gentile household, and God invited the rest of the world into covenant with Him.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What has been the biggest surprise in your life?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the surprise of God sending a Jewish preacher to preach the gospel to the Gentile household of Cornelius.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection. **(I)**

I. TWO VISIONS

A. Cornelius's Vision

B. Peter's Vision

C. I will recognize that God speaks to people from different cultures.

DISCUSS: *Who are the people like Cornelius in your life? What is God calling you to do to reach out*

to them?

II. CONFIRMATION OF THE VISIONS

A. Peter's Journey

B. I will be an integral part of spreading the gospel to everyone. **(V)**

***DISCUSS:** If you think there are people not worthy of you investing your time, what passages in the Bible teach you that we are called to reach everyone with the gospel?*

III. PETER'S SERMON

A. Extending Covenant to the Gentiles

***DISCUSS:** What keeps you from bringing up Jesus to people you don't know?*

B. The Same New Birth as the Jews

***DISCUSS:** In what place can you step out in obedient faith and share the gospel with someone?*

C. I will witness to others about the plan of salvation.

***DISCUSS:** In what scenario would you need to have great courage to share the gospel?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to give us a vision of the people of the world who need the gospel
- For God to bring to light any prejudices we might unknowingly harbor in our hearts

LESSON CONNECTION

(I) In his autobiography, the famous lawyer and leader from India, Mahatma Gandhi, wrote about his student days in South Africa. He read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus, he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of his beloved India. Surely there was a religion out there somewhere that would free his people from the cruel system that kept dividing his nation deeper. One Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby Christian church in Calcutta and talk to the minister about what it looked like to become a Christian.

However, when he entered the sanctuary, the usher refused to give him a seat and suggested he go worship with "his own people." That service was only for people of high caste status or for Whites; Gandhi was neither. He left that church and never returned to it. "If Christians have caste differences also," he said, "I might as well remain a Hindu." Although he was not able to find those differences and prejudices in the Gospels, sadly they were present in a church (and usher) who called themselves Christian.

That usher's prejudice not only betrayed Jesus but also turned a person away from finding salvation through the gospel. The attitude Gandhi encountered influenced him to permanently turn from Christianity and dedicate himself to spreading Hinduism to India's millions, despite the rigors of the caste system. How different might India's history have been if the usher had displayed Christlikeness that seemingly insignificant Sunday morning.

We would do well to learn from Jesus compassionately reaching out to Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. And we would do well to learn from the unnamed usher who turned away a seeking soul from Christianity due to prejudice. Today many teams of greeters and ushers gladly welcome people to our churches, but we would be naive to think there are not examples of indifference, condescension, or simply unconcern in our sanctuaries. These attitudes can do great damage to guests' perceptions of the body of Christ and of Jesus Christ Himself. Let us seek the Lord in showing His love to everyone.

BIBLE LESSON

I. TWO VISIONS

A. Cornelius's Vision

When the church was first formed on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, only the Jews were included, but God had more for more people than just the Jews. Jesus' command to His disciples to take the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth was getting ready to unfold. God was about to use an unlikely candidate to kick open the door of salvation to the Gentiles. It began with a vision sent to a Roman centurion named Cornelius in the city of Caesarea. The fact that the gospel to the Gentiles began there and with that man is truly remarkable. Cornelius was an officer of the Roman army. Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government, the epicenter of the world's power. Jews hated Rome, their government, and their armies.

Being of the Italian band, Cornelius was Roman to the core, and all his soldiers would have been much like him. They would have been raised and schooled in Roman arrogance and pride. It would have been normal for them to feel superior to the Jewish people, and they would have treated the Jews as such. Meanwhile, throughout Israel were calls to overthrow the Roman domination. Some believe Judas betrayed Jesus because he felt if Jesus was the Messiah, He was not working fast enough to overthrow Rome. How sad that Judas did not trust God to work out His plan in His own way. God was getting ready to "overthrow" the powerful Roman Empire in Acts 10, but He was going to do it with the gospel.

Cornelius feared God, prayed always, and gave generously to bless others. One mid-afternoon Cornelius had a vision of an angel who honored him for his generosity and faithfulness toward God. What a marvelous reminder that God notices every effort we make to draw closer to Him. This otherwise unknown centurion got God's attention because he stepped out of his pagan upbringing and reached up to God in faith.

The angel instructed Cornelius to send men to a preacher named Peter who would tell Cornelius what to do. This preacher had the keys to the Kingdom and would open the door for Gentiles to become part of the church of Jesus Christ and enter into covenant with God. God was offering salvation to the whole world, and He was using supernatural visions to do it.

B. Peter's Vision

While God was laying his right hand on Cornelius, His left hand was on Simon Peter in Joppa. As Cornelius's men journeyed to Joppa, God gave Peter his own vision. The Lord was pulling these two worlds together. Peter's vision

took place in Joppa in the house of Simon the tanner. This man Simon and his occupation as a tanner are mentioned three times in the Book of Acts. These repeated references definitely call us to notice where the preacher of Pentecost was staying: in the house of a tanner, a person at the furthest edge of acceptable society for a Jew.

Jews typically shunned tanners because they handled carcasses of animals, so they were considered unclean by the Levitical law. (See Leviticus 11:39–40.) Those who made their living handling dead animals, especially tanners, had to live a certain distance from the city. The home of this ostracized Jew was the launching pad for the church to go to the “off-limits” Gentile world. It was no accident God placed Peter there for the vision. Peter was on the rooftop where he would see the Mediterranean Sea stretching out to the nations of the known world, even those the Jews wanted nothing to do with.

In his vision Peter saw a great sheet coming down from heaven. God had an emphatic message for Peter. The sheet had four corners and was filled with all kinds of creatures, indicating that God’s church was to accept all peoples of the earth from the north, south, east, and west. The voice told Peter to eat, but Peter refused, arguing it was something he had never done. Just as Jesus said to Peter three times, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17), when He called Peter to the work of God, again He commanded Peter three times to take the next step in spreading the gospel.

This great message of inclusion was in the context of Jewish dietary law. Jews were very particular about their eating. Jesus was clearly saying to Peter that a new day had dawned and everyone had a seat at the table with Jesus Christ. The gospel was to be preached to all of humanity, and the Jewish church must go forward into all the world—even into the Gentile world.

C. I will recognize that God speaks to people from different cultures.

We live in a very exciting time in spreading the gospel to everyone on the earth. Thanks to translation apps and social media, communication with other cultures and languages is possible in ways never thought possible in previous generations. These possibilities are endless as long as we keep our ears tuned to God’s voice. He is calling everyone around the world to repentance. (See Acts 17:30.) God will work to bring those with the gospel together with those who hunger for the gospel. As Christians, we must keep God’s vision of outreach foremost in our minds.

***DISCUSS:** Who are the people like Cornelius in your life? What is God calling you to do to reach out to them?*

II. CONFIRMATION OF THE VISIONS

A. Peter’s Journey

When Peter had the vision of eating unclean animals, his first reaction was total rejection. It was against everything he had been taught. The Spirit kept speaking to him, and thankfully Peter kept listening. God was not only revealing to him that righteousness is not through keeping Jewish law, but God was also telling Peter that He was declaring the Gentiles worthy to hear the gospel and be born again. In the midst of Peter’s uncertainty and questions, clear direction from God was knocking on Simon’s front door. God had perfectly orchestrated the timing of the arrival of Cornelius’s men and Peter’s vision that it was impossible to ignore what God was saying: “Go to the Gentile

centurion's house. The old barriers are torn down." This preacher of Pentecost was learning to walk in the Spirit. God had spoken, and Peter was now willing to step out in faith into a world of uncertainty.

Often God will call us out of where we are comfortable and familiar. It is human nature to prefer the known, but our walk of faith requires us to step out into the unknown and obey God's voice. The Christian life was never meant to be a cozy, settled-in lifestyle. It is boldly trusting God and sometimes walking into uncomfortable settings to carry the gospel to all people.

B. I will be an integral part of spreading the gospel to everyone.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" is the clarion call to the church. It is the reason we exist—to spread the gospel. However, we must not make the mistake of only focusing on the work of global missions. Jesus made this clear when He told His disciples to start in Jerusalem, right where they were. It is sometimes easier to have a burden for people across the sea than for people across the street or across town. Conflict with and even prejudice against our neighbors will often be a challenge, but we need to pray about those and work hard to reconcile with our neighbors if our relationships are broken. It would be good for all of us to examine our feelings about the people close to us.

(V) Like Peter, we need to pay attention to what God is speaking to us. If it makes us uncomfortable and we would like to avoid dealing with people we are uncomfortable with, there is a possibility God is calling us to take the gospel especially to them. Perhaps the Holy Spirit would give us a vision or a fresh word from His Word if we just took the time to open our hearts and ears to hear His voice.

***DISCUSS:** If you think there are people not worthy of you investing your time, what passages in the Bible teach you that we are called to reach everyone with the gospel?*

III. PETER'S SERMON

A. Extending Covenant to the Gentiles

When Peter entered Cornelius's home, he was unsure of what God had in store. However, he walked in boldness and confidence that God was with him. Cornelius fell down and tried to worship Peter, but Peter immediately spoke up: "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26). Peter understood that the gospel makes everyone equal. The centurion was no better or worse than the disciple.

Both Peter and Cornelius were somewhat uncertain of how it would all work out, but Peter did what he knew to do: he preached the gospel. Cornelius did what he knew to do and opened his home. With a full house of hungry people for a closer relationship with God, Peter preached Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It was the same message he had preached to the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

***DISCUSS:** What keeps you from bringing up Jesus to people you don't know?*

B. The Same New Birth as the Jews

Peter honored Cornelius by going to his home; Cornelius honored Peter by calling his entire household to hear the

sermon. “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (Acts 10:44). Power comes when the Word of God is preached. The Holy Ghost fell on the entire household of Cornelius, and just like on the Day of Pentecost, everyone there began to speak with tongues. It was a miraculous move of God. All the Jews who had traveled with Peter from Joppa were astonished that the Holy Ghost had been poured out on the Gentiles. God waited only for Peter’s obedience, and God showed up and poured out the Holy Ghost. When we step out in faith to the call of God, we can be confident God will reward our obedient faith in ways we thought impossible.

Once they were all Spirit filled, Peter realized God had welcomed the Gentiles into covenant, so he baptized them in the name of Jesus Christ as well. Their new birth was complete: They had repented of their sins, been Spirit filled, and were then baptized in water by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The pattern Jesus prophesied had come to pass: from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and finally to the end of the earth.

***DISCUSS:** In what place can you step out in obedient faith and share the gospel with someone?*

C. I will witness to others about the plan of salvation.

God has called each of us to be like Simon Peter to people who need to hear the gospel. Though Peter had been too weak to stand for Jesus before the Cross, he now had great courage and bravery to declare the truth to everyone. We all must decide not to be afraid. Fear will always be a challenge when we take the message of salvation to those we know and those we do not know. As Peter walked toward Cornelius’s house, his faith and courage grew. God will reward that kind of bravery when we exhibit it in our lives.

***DISCUSS:** In what scenario would you need to have great courage to share the gospel?*

***Teacher Option:** Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God has called us to be fishers of men, no matter who they are or where they’re from.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Leonard Destin arrived on the Gulf of Mexico in 1835. Florida was ten years from becoming a state, and many Native Americans still lived in the area. Leonard arrived in a schooner in the midst of a hurricane that had mercilessly claimed the lives of his father and his older brother. Leonard and the remaining crew grabbed a hold of debris as they swam for their lives to shore on a deserted barrier island. They lived there for two months as they endured thirst and exposure.

Thankfully another watercraft was passing by when the soon-to-be rescuers and Destin and his crew found each other. Destin later made his way to Key West, Florida. In time Leonard acquired his own fishing craft and settled on the east end of Santa Rosa Island, close to present-day Destin, Florida. His life was one of hardship and trial as he eked out a living on the Gulf Coast. Through the years Leonard began to discover the rich world of seafood in the Gulf. He fished for oysters, crabs, and shrimp.

Then one day, twelve miles out into the Gulf, Leonard and other fishers from Alabama and Mississippi discovered

the one-hundred-fathom curve—a six-hundred-foot plunge in the ocean depths—where they could catch grouper, mackerel, and snapper in abundance. The Gulf became a miracle of supply in the world's seafood market. Because of his impact on the area, Leonard Destin has a city and tourist destination named after him in the state of Florida. His diligent and undying commitment to the art of finding seafood, catching it, and making it available to the world has cemented him in history.

For us who are called to be “fishers of men,” we need the same diligence and commitment to reach people with the gospel. It is not always easy work, and many days there are no great catches, but the refusal to quit brings big rewards. God has promised we will reap if we faint not. As long as there is one more hungry soul searching for a closer relationship with God, we must follow the leading of God's Spirit and share with them the same gospel that has changed our lives. God will do for them what He has done for us if we will preach the gospel to them as someone preached it to us.