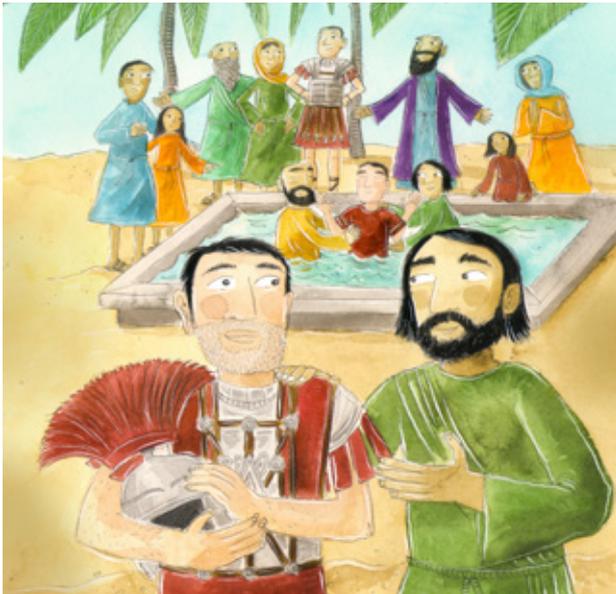


Acts 10:44-48

Surprised by God

Peter is preaching the gospel in Caesarea, and – just as at Pentecost – people are filled with the Holy Spirit. But these people are Gentiles. Those with Peter are astounded, but Peter knows this is because the gospel is for all people. The people are baptized and Peter stays with them for a while.



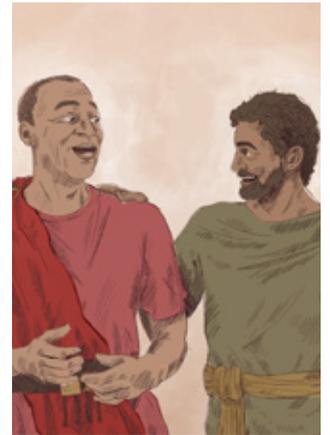
Bible notes



This is the climax of the story of Peter and Cornelius. Peter's surprising vision, urging him to eat all kinds of creatures, clean and unclean, is followed by an invitation from this Gentile God-fearer. When Peter finds out that he has been invited at the behest of an angel, he begins to 'truly understand that God shows no partiality', and he preaches 'peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all' (10:34-36). As he speaks, Cornelius the Gentile centurion, together with his relatives and close friends, receives the Holy Spirit. Peter recognises the work of God in this outpouring 'even on the Gentiles'. He realises, as he will later explain to the church in Jerusalem, that the Spirit is telling him 'not to make a distinction between them and us' (11:12), and they are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. When Peter tells the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem what has happened, he says, 'who was I that I could hinder God?' (11:17), and hearing this they fall silent. Then they praise God who 'has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life' (11:18). God's word gradually unfolds and is increasingly accepted, by Peter's change of mind, in Cornelius' commitment, and in the renewed praises of the church in Jerusalem. Peter remembers the word of Jesus, who had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' (11:16, see Luke 3:16 and Acts 1:5).

First impressions

- What aspects of the Christian faith might be surprising or astonishing to others?
- How could you step outside your comfort zone this week, to discover and experience your faith in new ways?
- How does/might your church show God's love and welcome to people who have different backgrounds or lifestyles to the majority?



LISTEN



Play 'Jesus, Friend of Sinners', Casting Crowns on *Come to the Well*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY6VAy9y_iQ Listen to the words: 'Open our eyes to the world at the end of our pointing fingers'. In silence, hand over to God all the unhelpful stereotypes and images of the world that come to mind.

ACT



Plan an inclusive event for your family and friends. Don't forget to invite those on the edge.

A prayer of adoration

Amazing God, who created every language,
who knows our every question before we even think it,
who understands not only our words,
but the thoughts, hopes, dreams and fears behind them.
You hear the loudest cry and the smallest sigh.
We are blown away by your love.
We long to share it, especially with those
who think they are beyond the limits. Amen.

WATCH



Find a clip of Netflix's *Is It Cake?* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A14JSsALNUg>) and have fun guessing whether the items shown are safe to eat, or not. You can't always judge what's on the inside by looking at the outside! What can we learn about openness and acceptance from the story of Peter and Cornelius?

REFLECT

Could you be better friends to somebody you know? Could you work on bringing an acquaintance into your circle of friends? Could you invite someone you don't know well over for a play date or take them out for coffee?