

THE MESSENGERS

WEEK 3

BIG IDEA

God can deliver everyone.

BIBLE

Peter's Vision: Acts 11:1-18; (John 13:34-35)

FREE TIME

PLAY | Free Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tables will be set with games and activities for kids to play until the lesson begins.*
- *This is a great opportunity to get to know some kids and work on building relationships.*

QUESTION | How many invites would you send out?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** This question will be written on the board as a discussion starter while kids arrive.
- **If you could invite anyone in the world to your party, who would you invite?**

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a selection of worship music videos during free time. Some may choose to dance along while it may be background music for others.*

- *Alternatively, learn a few of the motions yourself, introduce them to the class and dance along together to kick things off!*

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT?

ACTIVITY | Animal Toss

- Welcome back! We're still exploring how the early church delivered the message about Jesus around the world.
- In today's story, the apostle Peter had a vision of a sheet covered with all kinds of animals. Here's a game to help us picture that!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Create two teams. Place alternating team members around the edges of a large sheet, holding the edges about waist high. Toss about a dozen stuffed animals onto the sheet. When you say "Go," Team 1 must try to toss the animals off the sheet while Team 2 tries to keep them on the sheet. At the end of a one-minute round, count how many animals are still on the sheet versus how many fell off and determine a winner!*

SO WHAT?

BIBLE STORY | Peter's Vision

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have kids open their Bible to Acts 11. Hang a large white sheet or screen up in front and shine a bright light from behind (a projector would work, too). Find pictures of a few animals (cows, pigs, chickens, alligators, ostrich, etc.) with identifiable outlines. Cut them out and place them on popsicle sticks to use as shadow puppets. Invite a few kids to hold shadow puppets of various animals behind the sheet while you tell the story from Acts 11:1–18. Or, take the sheet and plush*

animals from the Animal Toss activity and set it up in the front of the room to help kids visualize.

- When the church was just starting around two thousand years ago, they didn't know who they should let in.
 - Some people thought that only those who followed Old Testament law could be invited to join.
 - People who weren't traditionally taught to follow Old Testament law were called Gentiles. And throughout the land, many Gentiles heard about Jesus and wanted to follow him.
 - But some church members criticized Peter for spending time with Gentiles. They thought that God's church should only be for other people who followed the law.
- But the apostle Peter had a vision that encouraged him to share the message about Jesus with everyone – whether they followed the law or not! It went like this:
 - Peter was praying when he saw something like a large sheet coming down from heaven. And on the sheet were all kinds of animals! Cows and sheep and pigs and lizards and birds. It was like a whole zoo on the sheet!
 - Then, Peter heard a voice that told him to kill and eat these animals. He was rather hungry. But Peter was confused. Some of the animals were unclean, according to the Old Testament.
 - "No, I won't, God!" Peter replied. "I've never eaten anything unclean or impure!"
 - Then the voice from heaven said, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." The voice said this three times, then the sheet went back up to heaven.
- The Old Testament law said that certain animals were unclean to eat. But through this vision, God was saying that they weren't unclean anymore. God made them clean! Peter took this to mean that the church should welcome the Gentiles, who did not follow the law.
- Right then, three men, who were Gentiles, came to Peter, and the Holy Spirit told Peter it was all right to go with them. So Peter followed them to a man's house.
 - The man told Peter that an angel had appeared to him and told

him to send for Peter, who would bring a message of good news from Jesus!

- As Peter began to speak, everyone began to receive the Holy Spirit, just like the other members of the early church.
- Peter then said to the people who were criticizing him, "If God gave the Gentiles the same Holy Spirit that we received for believing in Jesus, who was I to stand in God's way?"
- Everyone was amazed to see that the Holy Spirit was available to everyone.

(OPTIONAL) VIDEO | The Messengers, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For more re-inforcement of what kids have just learned, you can play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

BIG IDEA | God can deliver everyone.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Print four of the Big Idea graphic for this week on postcard paper or cardstock paper and cut them out. Make enough copies for everyone. Depending on the size of your group, the Special Messenger (SM) can either hand cards out to the kids, or hand stacks of cards to leaders to hand out to the kids.*
- **Storyteller:** We usually see the Special Messenger around this time, but I don't see them. Do you?
- **SM:** Special messenger, reporting for delivery!
- **Storyteller:** Perfect timing, what have you got for me today?
- **SM:** *(Enter and begin passing out postcards.)* This delivery is for everyone! Today, everyone gets a card! Can someone read their card for me? *(Pause for someone to read.)* That's right! **God can deliver everyone!**
- **Storyteller:** That's right! **God can deliver everyone.** That's this week's Big Idea! Hey, can I have a card too?
- **SM:** *(Hand a card to the leader.)* Sure. Here's a card for you. Now everyone, tell us what the Big Idea is. **God can deliver everyone!**

ACTIVITY | Who's In?

- Today's Bible story shows us that some members of the early church were not sure who they should let in and who they should keep out. That's a problem that still happens today, and not just in church!
- Can you imagine if our church only allowed a select few to join? Let's play a game to see what that would be like!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have kids seated in a circle, with one less chair in the circle than there are kids. Pick one person to start in the middle and go up to anyone seated and ask them, "Who can join?" Then the person answers, "Only people with [name any criteria they want]." So if the person said, "Only people with a sibling." Then everyone who doesn't have a sibling needs to stand up and switch seats, while the person in the middle tries to snag a seat in the chaos. Whoever is left standing starts a new round. Advise kids to avoid calling out characteristics involving race or physical attributes.*

- Those were some interesting criteria of people who were allowed to join. **But what's the correct answer to the question?** That's it! Everyone. That's who belongs. Every single one of you!
- **God can deliver everyone!**

NOW WHAT?

REFLECTION | Who Gets an Invitation?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story about a time when you had a party and you forgot to invite someone. Or a time when you weren't invited to a party you expected to be invited to. Invite kids to share their own experiences if they'd like.*
- Nobody likes being left out. Thankfully, God doesn't leave anyone out. Everyone is supposed to hear the message of God's love. Everyone deserves an invitation because **God can deliver everyone!**

MEMORY VERSE | Postcard Verse

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *The memory verse will be in the front of the room. Hand out blank postcards from the Card Courier activity or Big Idea reveal. The memory verse will be on the blank side. Then, have the kids randomly pair up with one another and swap cards. One kid will recite the verse from memory while the other checks it against the card. Take turns until both kids have recited the verse from memory correctly. Do this until everyone has had a turn and no one is left with their own postcard.*

PRAYER

- God, we are so thankful that you can deliver everyone. You love the whole world and welcome everyone to celebrate this good news

together! Please show us what we can do to invite more people to know you, and to not leave anyone out. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **What did Peter see in his vision?**
- **How did Peter change because of his vision?**
- **Read Acts 11:15–17. What helped Peter see that welcoming Gentiles into the church was God's way?**
- **What are some ways we keep others out of our circle of friends? How about out of our church?**
- **What can we change to make sure we welcome everyone?**
- **How can we as a church show the world that we follow Jesus?**

ACTIVITY | Good News for Everyone

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On the printable, have kids think about people that they might not typically talk to about Jesus. Have them write their name or draw a picture of a few of these people.*
- Nowadays, it's really easy for people to get deliveries, whether it's a gift or pizza. We learned today that **God can deliver everyone**, but it's not always easy to deliver that message, right?
- Sometimes we don't even know that we are leaving people out. It's important that we pay attention to the things we say and do so that everyone will know that they can have access to Jesus, just like we do!
 - **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have preteens make an acrostic with the word, "EVERYONE," and ideas on how they can practice inclusivity at home, school, and church.*

MEMORY VERSE | Isaiah 6:8 (NLT)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Practice this month's memory verse together. Award a token to any kid that can say last week's verse from memory.*
- Let's practice this month's memory verse together!
- **"Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'"**