

UNIT 32 | SESSION 3

GENTILES BECAME PART OF THE CHURCH

ACTS 11

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Corinthians 12:12

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Even though some people tried to stop it, the gospel spread throughout the earth—not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The good news about Jesus is for everyone. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



PREPARE

PREPARE YOUR HEART TO TEACH; PLAN THE SESSION



WELCOME

GREET KIDS and OPEN THE SESSION



LEARN

TEACH KIDS THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL



LOVE

LEAD KIDS TO LOVE THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL



LIVE

LEAD KIDS TO LIVE OUT THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LEADER Bible Study

Acts 11 recounts the first time people were called "Christians" because they were recognized as followers of Jesus. In this passage, Peter was criticized by some of the believing Jews for going into the house of Cornelius and eating with Gentiles; however, these same critics later realized that God's power was at work even among the Gentiles.

How did the church in Antioch demonstrate God's plan for all people to be saved through the gospel? What is the proper response of Christ followers upon hearing that the lost have been found through coming to faith in Jesus?

The church in Antioch displayed the power of the gospel as Gentile believers and Jewish believers became one body under the headship of Christ. It was the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that held these brothers and sisters together, allowing for differing customs and backgrounds to be overcome. In fact, when Peter defended the Gentile salvation to the church in Jerusalem, he recited Jesus' words from Acts 1:5 on the baptism of the Spirit. He reminded the naysayers among them that if the Gentiles truly received the Spirit, why should the rest of them get in the way of God's salvation at work? The evidence of the Holy Spirit among them, leading them to live in holy fellowship and bold proclamation, proved that God's hand was working in the lives of those who were previously outside the faith.

Turning away from their disapproval, the members of the circumcision party first became stunned into silence and then glorified God for the repentance of these new Gentile followers. May we, too, be quick to move to celebration and praise when anyone trusts in Jesus for salvation, rather than be unsure or prone to criticism. Let our own hearts seek to pray that the Spirit produces good fruit in the lives of those who proclaim His truth, encouraging and lifting them up as they seek and serve His name alongside us.

Highlight God's goodness in bringing these new followers to Himself. Encourage your kids to share the gospel with those who may be different from themselves, trusting that the good news of Jesus brings us together for the good of His church and the glory of God.

TERMS TO KNOW

Gentiles: people who are not part of God's chosen family at birth. Jesus was a light to the Gentiles (Matt. 4:16-17; Luke 2:32). At the house of Cornelius, the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45).



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



Activity Page
- ☐ "Map It" activity page

Session Starter (Option 2)
- ☐ balloons, 1 per kid
- ☐ small empty cardboard tubes, 1 per kid
- ☐ ribbons or small square-cut papers



Introduce the Session
- ☐ countdown video

Big Picture Question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline
- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story
- ☐ "Gentiles Became Part of the Church" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids
- ☐ "Unit 32, Session 3" questions from kids video

Missions Moment
- ☐ "McCaman Family Photos" printable

Key Passage Activity
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Many Parts (1 Corinthians 12:12) song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ yarn



Review & Bible Skills
- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



Activity Choice (Option 1)
- ☐ coffee filters, 1 per kid
- ☐ pipettes, 1 per kid
- ☐ water

Activity Choice (Option 2)
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster
- ☐ construction papers in a variety of colors, 1 per kid
- ☐ brown craft paper

Reflection and Prayer
- ☐ Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

> **SAY** "*What activities or sports have you joined? How did it feel to join those groups?*"

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Map It!" on the activity page.

> **SAY** "*Today, we will learn that as the church spread to more cities, more people joined the church, including Gentile believers.*"

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: JOIN IN TAG



Choose one kid to be It and tell him that he will try to tag the other kids. Explain to the kids that when they are tagged by It, they must stay near him and try to tag other kids as well. As time passes and more kids are tagged, the group will grow until no more kids are left to tag. Play again as time allows, choosing different kids to be It each time.

> **SAY** "*As a church body, we are united in Jesus and work together to share the gospel. When God uses us to share the gospel, the body of Christ grows. The gospel is for everyone! Today, we will learn how that as the church grew, Gentiles—or non-Jewish people—became part of the church.*"

☐ OPTION 2: CELEBRATION POPPER



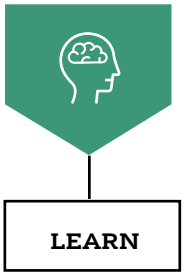
Before the session, cut off the top of balloons, leaving the bottom that you tie. Create enough for each kid. Provide each kid with a small cardboard tube, the balloons previously cut, and tape. Lead kids to take the open, cut end of the balloon and put it on the cardboard tube. Then assist kids in tying the end of the balloon as normal. Direct kids to use the tape to secure the balloon to the cardboard tube.

Next, provide kids with ribbon or small square-cut papers to be the confetti. Tell kids to place the confetti in the cardboard tube. Finally, invite kids to try out their poppers by pulling back on the balloon to see the confetti fly.

> **SAY** "*Poppers are used to celebrate and show excitement. Today, we will learn how Christians celebrated because Gentile believers became part of the church. We can celebrate, too, when anyone trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord.*"

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

> **SAY** "Hi, *everyone! I'm happy you are here today. My name is* **[your name]**. *I brought my Bible with me. Did you bring yours? If you brought your Bible, please take it out.* **[Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.]**
>
> *The Bible teaches us the good news of how Jesus came to save us from our sin. In fact, Jesus came to save anyone who trusts in Him. In our story today, we will learn that as the gospel went to more new cities, the church became filled with people from different cultures and backgrounds.*"

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

> **SAY** "*As we think about the church, let's review our big picture question:* **What is the church?** *Can anyone tell me the answer?* **[Allow responses.] The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.**
>
> *God's church is made up of many different people. People in the church might live in the United States, or they might live in Africa. They might speak English, or they might speak Spanish. Churches all over the world meet together because they love Jesus. Churches may be different in some ways, but believers are joined together because of what Jesus has done for us. Today, our Bible story helps us learn how the early church welcomed and celebrated Gentile believers joining the church.*"

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

> **SAY** "*We learned how God used Peter to help start His church. The apostle Peter traveled to different towns, following the Spirit's lead and even performed miracles. Last week, we learned that God led Peter to a Gentile man named Cornelius who trusted in Jesus and became part of the church. Today, we will learn how Peter helped the church in Jerusalem see that Jesus is for all people, including the Gentiles, and that more Gentiles became part of the church.*"



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 11. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Gentiles Became Part of the Church." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

GENTILES BECAME PART OF THE CHURCH

"**God had called Peter to tell everyone the good news about Jesus**, *no matter who they were or where they came from.* **So Peter shared the gospel not only with Jews, but with Gentiles. The Gentiles in Caesarea heard Peter's message and believed. God gave His Holy Spirit to these new believers, and they were baptized.**

Before long, the apostles and other believers throughout Judea heard that Gentiles had believed the good news about Jesus. *They were surprised, so Peter shared about the vision God had given to him of the sheet of clean and unclean animals and his encounter with Cornelius.* **Peter explained that the gospel is for all people. Then the believers praised God and understood that Jesus had come for the Gentiles, too!**

At the same time, believers who scattered after Stephen's murder had traveled to places like Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. *In those places, the believers only shared the gospel with the Jews.* But **some believers from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and preached the gospel to the Greeks**, *too.* **God was with them, and a large number of the Greeks believed the good news.**

The church at Jerusalem heard about these new believers, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. *Barnabas was a good man. He loved God and was full of faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.* **When Barnabas arrived, he saw that God was gracious to these believers. He was glad and encouraged them to keep following God. Even more people trusted in Jesus.**

Then Barnabas left Antioch and went to Tarsus to look for Paul. He found Paul and brought him back to Antioch. *They stayed with the church in Antioch for a year, teaching large crowds of people. Jesus' followers were first called Christians at Antioch.*

Christ Connection: Even though some people tried to stop it, the gospel spread throughout the earth—not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The good news about Jesus is for everyone. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more."

STORYTELLING TIPS

Define it: Remind kids that the word *Gentile* refers to anyone who is not Jewish.

Create pause: When telling the story, use dramatic pauses to emphasize something important is happening and to give kids a chance to think about what is happening in the story.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

> **SAY** "*Even though the apostles were Jewish, was the good news of Jesus only for Jews?* **[Allow responses.]** *No! The good news is for all people, everywhere! But the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were hesitant to accept Gentiles into the church. Peter helped them understand that God does save all people who believe in Jesus. Who did Peter say came upon the Gentiles who trusted in Jesus?* **[Allow responses.]** *Peter told the Jewish believers that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Gentile believers. This truth changed the Jewish believers' minds, and they glorified God. Anyone, Jew or Gentile, who trusts in Jesus is given the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
>
> *After Stephen's murder, some Jews went to Antioch. Who did many of these believers share the gospel with?* **[Allow responses.]** *Many shared with Jewish people, but some shared the good news with Gentiles. As the Gentiles heard the gospel, they trusted in Jesus and were saved.*
>
> *Eventually, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to see these Gentile believers in Antioch. Barnabas was glad when he met the Greek believers, and he encouraged them to remain true to Jesus. We can be glad too when others trust in Jesus. When people trust in Jesus, the church can help them know and love Jesus more.*"

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

> **SAY** "*Even though some people tried to stop it, the gospel spread throughout the earth—not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The good news about Jesus is for everyone. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more.*"

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 32, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How did people know what to write in the Bible?
2. How do the stories of the Bible help us understand that God sent Jesus to offer salvation to all people?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the "McCaman Family Photos" as you tell the kids about the church planters.

> **SAY** "*Twenty-three percent of people living in Florida were born outside the continental United States. People from all over the world have moved to South Florida, and two-thirds of the people speak Spanish. Pastor David McCaman said having people from different parts of the world creates a church with many different ways people do day to day activities or daily customs.*
>
> *While people can be different in many ways, Jesus loves every person the same. When nonbelievers see unity in Christians who do not all look the same, it can be a great testimony to what God's love can do. Pastor David says: 'Nothing unites those with so many cultural differences like Jesus.'*"



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Remind kids that the good news of Jesus is for everyone. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more. Pray for Pastor David and Gospel City Church as they celebrate the diversity of their church and ask God to help many more people believe in Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Corinthians 12:12 together.

> **SAY** *"The Bible reminds us that the church is one body in Jesus. He is who we worship, and the reason we serve together."*

Prompt the kids to sit in a circle. Provide one kid with a ball of yarn. Lead him to say the first word of the key passage. Then direct him to toss the ball of yarn to another kid while hold the end of the yarn. Lead the kid now holding the yarn to say the next word of the key passage and then toss the yarn to another kid while also holding onto the string of yarn. Repeat until the entire key passage is said aloud. At this point, all kids should be holding the yarn. Discuss how this is a picture of how they are unified in Jesus.

Lead kids to sing "Many Parts (1 Corinthians 12:12)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

> **SAY** *"Thank You, Lord, that Your plan for salvation includes all people. We pray that You will lead more people to trust in Jesus. Give us hearts that desire to rejoice when others believe. Amen."*

Transition from **LEARN** *to* **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Acts 11. Explain the differences between chapter numbers and verse numbers in the Bible. Invite kids to practice finding different chapter numbers in Acts and different verse numbers as well. Then lead kids to find Acts 11:18.

Consider pointing out the location of Antioch (E10) on the New Testament Mediterranean Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Acts 11:18 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"The Jewish believers in Jerusalem rejoiced when they realized the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. Rather than focus on the differences between Jews and Gentiles, they chose to praise God and be thankful He saved the Gentiles.*
>
> *As the church, we can rejoice and be thankful when others believe in Jesus too. Even when new people come to church who may be different from us, we can choose to be happy they are here and pray that God saves them through Jesus."*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"How were the Gentiles saved?"*

Remind kids that Gentiles were saved just as the Jewish believers were: by faith in Jesus. Discuss how the Bible records how the Gentiles repented of sin, turned to Jesus, and were given the Holy Spirit.

> **SAY** *"Do you rejoice when others trust in Jesus? Why?"*

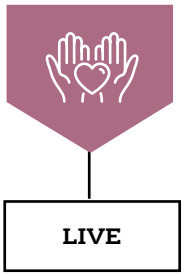
Answers will vary. Discuss how the greatest event that can happen in anyone's life is to trust in Jesus as his or her Savior. Tell kids that salvation is more special than birthdays, vacations, getting new toys, etc. Encourage kids to celebrate and praise God when they hear about someone trusting in Jesus.

> **SAY** *"The church in Antioch grew after Barnabas arrived and encouraged the believers there. Why do you think the church grew after Barnabas encouraged the believers in Antioch?"*

Discuss how Barnabas encouraged the believers to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts. Explain that one way we can show we are devoted to God is by being obedient to His command to share the good news of Jesus with others. Discuss how sharing the gospel is how the church grows as others hear and believe the good news.

Transition from **LOVE** *to* **LIVE**





THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE *(10 minutes)*

☐ OPTION 1: COLORS UNITE



Distribute a coffee filter, markers, a pipette, and water to each kid. Lead kids to flatten out the coffee filters by pressing firmly from the center outward. Lead kids to use washable markers to create different colors of dots all over the coffee filter. Then direct kids to use pipettes or eyedroppers to drop one drop of water on each colored dot. Tell kids to watch the colors "explode" and observe how the dots are united together to create a beautiful design.

> **SAY** *"Watching the colors come together to make beautiful designs reminds me that God has created all people from different cultures and places to be united together through Jesus. We can pray for the McCamans as they tell people in South Florida about Jesus. God calls us to celebrate when others believe and help them know and love Jesus more."*

☐ OPTION 2: MANY HANDS, ONE IMAGE



Provide each kid with a piece of construction paper in a variety of colors, a pencil, and scissors. Lead kids to trace one of their hands on the piece of paper. Then, direct kids to cut out the hands.

Ask kids to gather together as one large group and use their hands to make a single image such as a cross, a butterfly, a heart, a flower, etc. Encourage kids to be creative as they decide how to make their hands into one image. Provide kids with a piece of craft paper and glue. Then direct kids to glue the hands to the craft paper as they form their image. Assist kids as needed, offering guidance on the overall design.

> **SAY** *"Each hand on this image represents a unique kid. The hand sizes are all different but when they came together, they formed one image. This is like the church. We are many parts but one body united in Jesus.* ***The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.***"

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER *(5 minutes)*

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.