

=THE CONVERSION=

Lesson 8

Cornelius, The Centurion

Objects to have:

Symbols of past Sundays' lessons: The piece of fabric, the pitcher, the black and white heart, the HIDE-AND-SEEK sign, the hammer, the completed jigsaw puzzle picture, a letter from the high priest

Chalk and chalkboard

Three drawings of a big ear

Scotch or masking tape

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

(Hold up at the appropriate times each of the objects that could be used to review the past Sundays' lessons.) A man who was crippled lay on a bed. Only one Person could help him; who was the Person who helped him? A lady needed to be saved; Jesus saw her where? Did she get saved? One man in the temple admitted that he was a sinner; the other man thought that he was good. What were these two men called? A man had to climb a tree in order to see Jesus; what was that man's name? Two criminals were hung on crosses at the same time that Jesus was crucified. What happened to the one; what happened to the other? God told a man to go into the desert to talk with another man about being saved. What is the name of the man who went into the dessert? Who got some letters from the high priest, and why did he get them?

Our Bible story for today is found in the book of Acts. (Show the children Acts chapter 10, then lay down your Bible.) The Bible tells a lot about God's people, the Israelites. God was very particular with His people, the Israelites. We sometimes call the Israelites Jewish people. Many, many years ago God told His people, the Jews, not to have good friends among the people who were not Jews. God did not want His people, the Jews, to talk the way other people talked nor to do the things which other people did. Those who were not Jews did not know God's ways and did not follow God's ways. Jesus' disciples always wanted to obey God. They would not go into the home of anyone who was not a Jew. One of Jesus' disciples was named Peter. Peter would obey God and not go to the home of anyone who was not a Jew.

Telling the story:

(Draw on the chalkboard the coastline which leads from Cæsarea of Judea, south 28 or 30 miles to Joppa. Tell the children that this line shows where land starts. Tell them that in this land is where the Israelite people live. Point to the left telling them that this is all water, the Mediterranean Sea. Draw a house on the land at the location of Joppa.) Peter was staying in this house at Joppa. (Draw a house on the land at the location on Cæsarea.) Cornelius was living in this house at Cæsarea. Cornelius was a soldier. He was a very important soldier. In fact, Cornelius was an officer in the army. He was not in the Jewish army; he was in the Roman army. Cornelius commanded many, many soldiers. Many soldiers had to do what Cornelius told them to do. Cornelius was not a Jewish man; he was a Gentile.

Because Cornelius was a Gentile, he had heard only a little bit about God. He had also heard of Jesus, but he did not understand that Jesus is the Son of God. He knew that Jesus was a man who did many wonderful things. He knew that people went to listen to Jesus when He preached. He knew that Jesus had been killed on the cross. Cornelius wanted to know more about these things. Cornelius knew there had to be a God. He knew that some day he would have to stand and face God, that everybody has to die and that everybody has to face God. Because Cornelius knew this, he wanted always to do right. Cornelius would pray, hoping that God would hear him. (Put an ear on the board—at the far right side.) Cornelius wanted God to talk to him because he wanted to know what to do to please God. Somehow Cornelius knew that there was one thing he could do; he could help people. So Cornelius was very unselfish; he often gave gifts of money to people who needed help.

One day Cornelius was in his bedroom. That day he wanted so badly to be close to God and to feel God close to him that he decided not to eat at all that day. No matter how hungry he would become, he would not eat anything that day. What he wanted to do was to pray and to wait for God to talk to him. It got to be later in the afternoon; lunchtime had been over for a few hours. Cornelius was praying. God heard Cornelius. (Put another ear on the board—at the top of the board.) From Heaven God heard Cornelius trying to talk to Him.

Suddenly, Cornelius saw an angel in his room. Cornelius was afraid. Cornelius had never seen an angel before. The angel said to Cornelius, “In the city of Joppa is a man by the name of Peter. Send somebody to get Peter. Peter will tell you what to do to get close to God.” As soon as the angel left, Cornelius called to two of his servants and to one of his soldiers.

“Servants, soldier, I want you to go on a long journey for me. There is a certain man whom you must find and bring back to me. This man can tell me what to do to find God. Go to the city called Joppa. In Joppa by the seashore is a house where a man named Peter is staying. Tell Peter that I need to see him. There are some very important things which he can tell me. Go quickly now, please.” The two servants and the soldier left and started on their journey to Joppa.

Cornelius got busy. He thought that there would be others who would want to see and hear Peter, too. He thought of all of his friends. He also thought of his wife and his children. He thought of other relatives; perhaps he had brothers and sisters who lived in other houses with their families. Cornelius said to some of his servants, “Go to the homes of my friends and my relatives. Tell them to come to my house. A very important day is coming; I want all these people to hear what Peter says to me. They, too, may find the way to God.”

While all these people in Cæsarea were hearing about the important meeting that was going to be, Cornelius’ two servants and his soldier were on their way toward Joppa. Because it was so far from here (point to the house where Cornelius lived) to here (point to the house where Peter was staying), it got to be dark before the three men got to Joppa. The two servants and the soldier stopped to sleep for a while. When it was time for them to start out again, they traveled many more miles.

While they were traveling, it was lunchtime in Joppa. Peter said, “It’s time for lunch. I am beginning to get hungry. Is lunch being prepared?” Somebody did start to fix lunch. Because Peter knew that it would be a while before lunch would be ready, he climbed the stairs in the house. He climbed to the top of the roof. The roof was flat. Therefore Peter could walk out onto the roof. Peter was just resting until lunchtime. Peter fell asleep. He had a dream which God gave him. In the dream God showed him that all kinds of people need to know about Jesus. Not just Jewish people need to know that Jesus is the Son of God and that He could be their Saviour, but Gentile people need to know about Jesus, too. Peter woke up from his dream. When he woke up, he heard someone calling his name. When he heard his name being called, God spoke to Peter. Peter listened to God. (Put an ear at the house in Joppa.) God the Holy Spirit said to Peter, “Three men are looking for you. They will ask you to come with them. Go with them. I have sent them to find you.”

Peter went downstairs from the rooftop. He walked out the door of the house, through the front garden, to the gate which was in the wall around the house. Peter opened the gate. He said, “I am Peter. Why have you come looking for me?”

The three men who were standing there said to Peter, “Cornelius has asked us to come and get you. He wants to talk with you. Cornelius is a good man. He is a soldier, an officer, in the Roman army. He is a man, however, who fears God. He wants to find the way to God. Cornelius said that an angel told him to find you.” Peter listened to the three men. I think that he was excited about what they were telling him. Because it was getting late in the day, too late to start out on a long trip, Peter asked the two servants and the soldier to come in. They walked through the garden and into the house where Peter was staying. They ate there, and then they slept there all night. The next morning Peter started on the long journey toward this city of Cæsarea (point to Cæsarea). Peter and the three men and some of Peter’s friends had to travel all that day. They rested that night for they were not at Cæsarea yet. Then they started out early the next day. Maybe they heard the rooster’s crowing and that’s what woke them up. Maybe the bright sunshine of the very early morning hours woke them up. As soon as they

woke up, they knew that they must hurry to finish their journey to the city of Cæsarea. They started out once again—Peter and the three men and Peter’s friends.

Peter and the two servants and the soldier and Peter’s friends got to the home of Cornelius. There they saw a big crowd of people in the house. All those people were waiting to hear what Peter would have to say to Cornelius. Peter came through the door of the house. Cornelius saw him. Cornelius was so glad to see him that he bowed down at Peter’s feet. Peter said, “Get up, Cornelius, I am just a man like you. God has told me to come to you. I want to tell you today about Jesus.”

When Peter was through telling the crowd about Jesus, Cornelius said, “I want Jesus to be my Saviour.” Everybody else in Cornelius’ house said the same thing. They all prayed and asked Jesus to be their Saviour. That’s the way to get close to God! Cornelius learned that he had to ask Jesus to be his Saviour, and so he did. Then Cornelius and all his friends and relatives got baptized.