



Welcome, One and All!

By Deborah Wassenberg

Introduction:

This lesson weaves Ephesians 4:4–6 together with the story of Peter in the House of Cornelius to show that we stick together, we welcome everyone, and we are one family. We belong together because we belong to Jesus.

Bible Lesson: Peter and Cornelius

Bible References: Acts 10; Ephesians 4:4-6

The Welcome Party:

Greet children as they arrive with a smile, friendly face, and a warm hello. Say, 'So glad you made it!' 'It's great to see you!' Shake hands, fist pump, or high five. Hand out 'Welcome' stickers, and offer refreshments. Make your welcome a bit more exaggerated than usual.

Setting: Outskirts of Town

Make a large signpost with a new sign that reads: 'You have arrived in the town of...UNITY. ALL Welcome!'

Characters for Storytelling:

Mayor Bailey: Wearing an oversized welcome badge on his jacket

Jovey: The Mayor's sidekick, decked out in multiple welcome badges, carrying a bucket filled with streamers (or confetti) and party blowers, one of which is in his mouth.

Visuals You Will Need:

1. Peter
2. Cornelius
3. Cornelius and the Angel
4. Peter's strange vision
5. Cornelius' messengers arrive
6. Peter visits Cornelius and his family
7. Cornelius' family filled with the Holy Spirit
8. Peter baptises Cornelius and his family

Words:

Mayor Bailey: G'day!
I'm the welcoming committee!
My name is Mayor Bailey.
On behalf of the town of Unity, let me be the first to say,
WELCOME!
We're glad you're here.
(Pauses, waiting for something to happen...then repeats his welcome only louder)
We're glad you're here!
(Aside)
Jovey, where are you?

Jovey enters with a party blower sticking out of his mouth, tooting it. He is also throwing streamers (or confetti) over the children.

Mayor Bailey: Jovey!
You missed your cue.

Jovey: Sorry, Mr Mayor.
This is my first welcoming party.
I wasn't sure how everything worked.

Mayor Bailey: Never mind that now!
Welcome the nice people to our town.

Jovey: *(In a wooden and rehearsed fashion)*
Welcome to Unity!
A town for everyone.
We receive you with open arms.
(Hits the Mayor with the bucket!)
Sorry, Mr Mayor.

Mayor Bailey: *(Sighs)*
I'm sure we'll get better at welcoming people.
(To the children)
Our town of Unity wasn't always as friendly as this.
We didn't like outsiders.

Jovey: Na-uh!
We didn't need anybody.

Mayor Bailey: It's true.
We used to lock the door and windows.
Hide the lamingtons and pretend we weren't home.

Jovey: We were a closed off little town until the Preacher came.

Mayor Bailey: The Preacher told us a story from the Bible.
We were changed forever and that brought a big change to our town.
I'll share the story with you...

*Jovey holds the flashcards for the children to see. (Or uses a pointer at the screen.)
He is very proud of his job and takes it seriously.)*

Visual 1: Peter was one of Jesus' disciples.
He loved God and followed all the Jewish rules.
He lived by strict purity laws (things or situations that were 'clean' or 'unclean').
He only ate kosher food (no pork, or animals without split hooves, and no food prepared in a Gentile kitchen).
And he kept social separation customs (he did not enter Gentiles' homes, he did not share food with Gentiles).

Visual 2: Cornelius was a Roman soldier.
Not Jewish.
A Gentile.
But he loved God, too.

Visual 3: One day, Cornelius was praying, and an angel said,
'Send for a man named Peter.
He has something important to tell you.'

Visual 4: Meanwhile, Peter was praying on a rooftop.
God gave him a strange vision of animals he wasn't allowed to eat.
A voice said, 'Peter, get up and eat.'
It was God!
Peter said, 'I can't! That's not allowed.'
Then God said something surprising:
'Don't call anything unclean that I have made clean.'

Visual 5: Just then Cornelius's messengers arrived.
Peter realised God was teaching him something:
God welcomes *everyone*.
His family is for *all people*!

Visual 6: Peter went to Cornelius' house – something he normally wouldn't do.
Cornelius gathered his whole family to listen.
Peter said, 'God doesn't show favouritism.
Jesus is Lord of all!'

Visual 7: As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit filled Cornelius and his family.
Peter was amazed.
'They belong to Jesus, too!
We are one family!'

- Visual 8:** Peter baptised them, and everyone celebrated.
Different backgrounds.
Different cultures.
One Lord.
One faith.
One family.
- Jovey:** We realised our town and everyone in it had been doing everything wrong.
God welcomes everyone and so should we.
Our town was transformed!
- Mayor Bailey:** **Unity means belonging.**
We're all part of God's family.
Unity means welcoming.
No one is left out.
Unity means working together.
We help, share, and encourage.
Unity means showing Jesus.
When we get along, people see God's love.
Unity means same purpose.
We follow Jesus together.

Ministry to the Children:

In our story today, the town of Unity used to shut people out. They kept their doors closed. They didn't welcome anyone new. The Bible says something similar happens between you and God. It's not that God shuts you out — it's that **sin** shuts you away from Him. Sin is anything you think, say, or do that goes against God's way — lying, fighting, selfishness, ignoring God, hurting others. Sin builds a wall between God and you. It stops you from being close to Him. It separates you from His family.

But God loves you too much to leave you separated. So He sent Jesus — His Son — to break down the wall of sin. Jesus lived a perfect life. He died on the Cross to take away your sin. He rose again to give you new life. Jesus makes a way for you to come back to God. He opens the door wide and says, **'Welcome one and all.'**

When you repent (turn away from sin and turn back to God), you're saying, 'I don't want to live my way anymore. I want to live God's way.' **God always forgives a repentant heart.** When we repent and believe in Jesus, God welcomes us in. He says, 'You belong with Me.' 'You are My child.' 'You are part of My family forever.'

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:4-6

There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you too were called to **one** hope of your calling, **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all in all.

You will need:

- A giant foam finger (aka a number one fan hand)
- Or make one from cardboard



What to do:

- Write the Memory Verse on a whiteboard so all the children can see it.
- Read the words aloud and add the actions.
- The volunteer holding the foam finger raises it every time the word 'one' is read aloud to emphasise the word.

Words:

There is **one**
Body
And **one**
Spirit
Just as you too
Were called
To **one**
Hope of your calling
One Lord
One faith
One baptism
One God
And Father of all
Who is over all
And through
All in all

Actions:

Lift the hand, children point finger upwards
Arms outstretched to include everybody
Lift the hand, children point finger upwards
Use hands to make a dove fly upwards
Point to others
Pretend to call with hands cupped around mouth
Lift the hand, children point finger upwards
Hand to ear and listening to words from Heaven
Lift the hand, children point upwards
Lift the hand, children point upwards
Lift the hand, children point upwards
Lift the hand, children point upwards
Arms outstretched to include everybody
Arms stretched up as high as they can go
Take a step forward, as through a doorway
Big arm sweeps round and round

End with a big cheer!

Morning Tea: Be Our Guest!

Create an inviting space for the children to sit and eat together. Make platters of food to be passed around and shared.

- Fruit platters
- Cheese and cracker platters

Game: Steal the Bacon!

You will need:

- Objects that can be grabbed quickly, such as shoes, toys, balls, fruits, pens, etc. (around 30 in number if there are 10 to 20 children playing)

How to play:

- Divide the group into two equal teams.
- Have the two teams stand face-to-face in two parallel lines, with enough gap in between.
- Find as many objects as you can and place only one in the centre.
- Assign a number (in sequence) to each member of a team, so that every member of one side has a counterpart with the same number in the opposing team.
- A leader will call out a number at random (from the assigned numbers), and the kids with that assigned number should try to grab the object in the centre.
- The team that gets the object gets a point, and the team with the highest score wins.

Craft: Welcome Placemats!

What You Need

- A sheet of A3 or large construction paper
- Felt-tip pens, crayons, or coloured pencils
- Stickers, washi tape, or stamps
- Glue stick
- Scissors (leaders cut if needed)
- Printed “WELCOME” letters, photos, or shapes

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Lay out Your Paper

Put your big sheet of paper in front of you. This will be your placemat.

2. Add the Big Word: **WELCOME**

Choose one of these options:

- Write **WELCOME** in big bubble letters across the top.
- Glue on pre-cut letters.
- Ask a leader to help you trace the word if you want it fancy.

Make the word colourful — this is the first thing people will see.

3. Decorate the Edges

Use markers, stickers, or stamps to make a border.

4. Add Friendly Pictures

Draw or glue pictures that make people feel welcome:

A big smiling face

A heart

People waving

Your Church family

A Cross or a Bible (simple shapes)

Encourage kids to think: *What makes someone feel happy when they arrive?*

5. Add Your Special Touch

Choose one:

- Write a short message like "We're glad you're here!"
- Add your name in a corner
- Draw something that shows kindness (helping hands, sharing, praying)

This makes each placemat unique.

6. Make It Strong

Ask a leader to laminate the placemat or cover it with clear contact paper. This helps it last longer and keeps the colours bright.