

GOD'S NEW COVENANT**Acts 10:1–11:18**

Memory Verse: *“To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name”* (Acts 10:43 ESV).

Background Helps:

This week's passage of Scripture tells the story of Peter's evangelization of the Gentile household of Cornelius, a turning point in salvation history. So important is this story that it is told twice: (1) the actual narrative of the events in Acts 10 followed by (2) Peter's personal recital of the events in Acts 11:1-18. These events are referred to again by Peter at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:7-9.

The term “covenant” does not appear in the narrative itself, but the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's covenant story is made clear in Acts 10:1–11:18, as well as in Paul's later teaching in Romans 11:11-24 and Ephesians 2:11–3:13. In Romans Paul shows that the Gentiles have been grafted into the “olive tree” of Israel (11:17-24), so that there is but one people of God; and in Ephesians he indicates that the Gentiles have become “fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus [with the Jews] through the gospel” (3:6; cf. 2:11-12, 19).


Lesson Helps:

A possible evangelistic lesson aim: My students will learn about the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household, so that they will believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Or for believers: My students will learn about the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household, so that they will proclaim the gospel to their own unsaved relatives and friends.

Acts 10 lends itself well to a dramatization of the events. Select two groups of people at opposite ends of the room to portray Cornelius and his associates and Peter and his associates, respectively. Assign the various roles and give people a script, instructing them to move back and forth across the room at appropriate points as they read their lines.

As the teacher, use Acts 11:1-18 as a way of summarizing the story and emphasizing the point that the new covenant was being extended to the Gentiles, who were receiving forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit. With non-Christians, invite them to believe in Christ, using the memory verse (Acts 10:43). With believers, emphasize their responsibility to follow Cornelius's example and share their faith with friends and relatives (by opening their home?).

Home Assignment:

 Read Acts 13:1–15:35.

 Memorize Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV.