

A Good Shepherd Early Church Story

Two Dreams

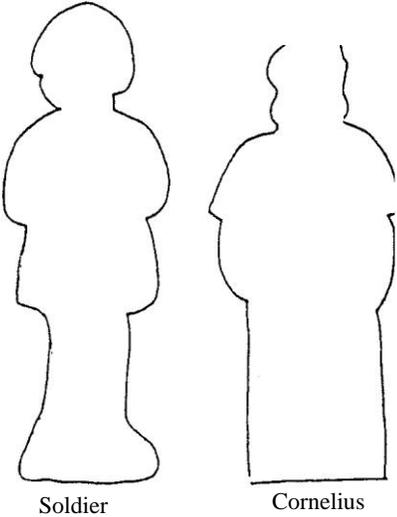
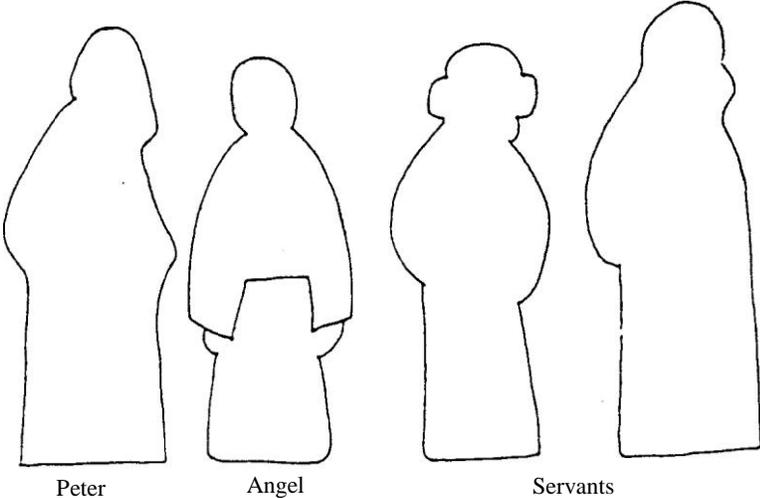
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TWO DREAMS ... MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold
 - wooden Peter figure
 - wooden Cornelius figure
 - wooden angel figure
 - wooden soldier figure
 - 2 wooden servant figures



TWO DREAMS ... ACTS 10: 1-48

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Carrying it with two hands, return to the circle, sit down and place the basket next to you.

During the few seconds of silence, reverently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Peter figure to one side of the storytelling area.

Place Cornelius to the other side of the storytelling area.

Touch Cornelius as you talk about him.

Shake your head slowly as you speak.

Place the angel next to Cornelius.

Touch first the angel figure and then the Cornelius figure.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me, I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

Peter had been in jail, but now he was free. Peter was a very faithful Jew. He thought other people should become Jews before they could believe in Jesus and be saved.

Meanwhile there was a man in Caesarea, named Cornelius. Cornelius was the captain of a group of soldiers.

Cornelius was a very religious and good man. He worshiped God and he gave a lot of money to poor people.

But he didn't know about Jesus and he wasn't a Jew.

One afternoon about three o'clock, when Cornelius was praying, he had a vision. He saw an angel who called him by name. Cornelius was very surprised and he asked the angel, "What is this all about?"

The angel said, "God has heard your prayers and God knows about how much you have given to poor people. Now God wants you to send some men to Joppa. They must get a man named Peter who is visiting with Simon, the leather maker."

Place the angel back in the basket.

Place the three men next to Cornelius. Then move them toward Peter.

Fold your hands as though in prayer.

Touch Peter as you speak.

Emphasize the word "he".

With both hands, pantomime holding the top corners of a large sheet.

Touch the side of Peter's head where his ear would be.

Shake your head as you speak.

Again touch the Peter figure on the side of the head.

Hold up three fingers as you speak.

Place the three men nearer to Peter.

Then the angel left.

Cornelius sent for two of his servants and one soldier. He told them what had happened to him. Then he sent them to Joppa to get Peter.

The next day as they came close to Joppa, Peter was up on the roof of Simon's house, where he was praying.

It was nearly noon and Peter was getting hungry.

While he was waiting for the food, Peter fell asleep. Then he had a vision.

In the vision a huge sheet came down from heaven. On the sheet were all kinds of animals, snakes and birds.

Peter heard a voice that said, "Peter, get up. Kill these and eat them."

But Peter knew that faithful Jews only ate certain kinds of *animals*. They had been taught that God thought other animals were unclean and should not be eaten. So Peter said, "Lord, I can't do that! I have never eaten anything that is unclean and not fit to eat."

But the voice said, "When God says that something is good for you to eat, don't say that it isn't fit for food."

This same thing happened three times. Then the sheet was taken up to heaven.

Peter was awake, wondering what all this meant, when the men whom Cornelius had sent came and stood by the gate. They were asking for Peter.

Hold both hands, palms up, as you speak of the Holy Spirit.

Place the Peter figure next to the three men.

Touch the three men, one at a time.

Move Peter and the three men toward Cornelius.

Move the Cornelius figure to bow to Peter.

Stand Cornelius next to Peter.

Touch the Peter figure as you speak.

Nod your head once or twice as you speak.

Lean forward slightly as you speak.

Move Peter so he is standing face to face with Cornelius.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Holy Spirit told him, "There are three men here looking for you. Hurry and go with them. Don't be afraid; I sent them."

Peter went down and told the men, "I am the man you want. Why have you come?"

The men told Peter, "Captain Cornelius sent us. He is a good man who worships God and is liked by the Jewish people. An angel said that he should send us to get you. He wants to hear what you have to say."

Peter invited the men to spend the night. The next morning they started for Caesarea where Cornelius and his friends and family were waiting for them.

When Peter got to his house, Cornelius started worshiping him.

But Peter made him stop and said, "Don't worship me. I am only human."

Then he told Cornelius, "You know that many Jews are not allowed to spend any time with people who are not Jewish. But God has shown me that there is no one in God's eyes who is unclean or unfit."

Peter understood the meaning of his dream now.

Then he asked Cornelius why he'd been asked to come to Caesarea.

Cornelius told him the story about the angel.

Emphasize the word "certain" as you speak.

Touch the middle finger of each hand to the palm of the other hand, the sign for Jesus.

Lift up your hands, palms up, as you speak of the Holy Spirit.

Emphasize the word "amazed" as you speak.

Touch the Peter figure as you speak.

Touch Cornelius and the three men as you speak.

Place Peter in between Cornelius and the three men.

Then Peter responded, "Now I am certain that God treats all people alike. God is pleased with all people who worship God. If they do right, it doesn't matter what nation they are from. God loves them all."

Then Peter told Cornelius and his family and friends about Jesus, who taught people to love. He told them how Jesus died on the cross and came back to life.

Then, even as Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit came into all the people who were listening.

Some of the Jews were amazed that the Holy Spirit came to the Gentiles (the name for people who are not Jewish).

Then Peter said to everyone, "These Gentiles have been given the Holy Spirit, just like the Jews. They can be baptized just like the Jews, too."

So Peter baptized all the people there in the name of Jesus Christ.

Peter stayed for a few more days and continued to talk to the people about Jesus.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder who you have gone to see that you didn't know very well?

I wonder if there are any people anywhere that God doesn't love?

I wonder if the Holy Spirit ever talks to you?

Carefully place the wooden figures in the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose their work before you dismiss the entire group.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

TWO DREAMS ... TEACHER HELPS

There must have been significant confusion for the Jewish people who believed in Jesus. Even though they accepted that his "Good News" was for all people, they still held tightly to their Jewish laws. To become a follower of Jesus, the Gentile men had to be circumcised and their families had to vow to follow all Jewish laws and customs. In other words, most Jewish people, including Peter, believed that the Gentiles had to first become Jews and THEN could become accepted followers of Jesus. This twofold story sets out to prove differently.

Interestingly the Gentile in our story is a monotheist. Cornelius worshiped one God and lived out the righteous life of giving to the poor and caring for others. We notice in the story that he had surrounded himself with some soldiers and servants who are also believers, or at least empathetic to Cornelius. There are several times in the Old Testament where we are introduced to the "God fearers." They typically are people like Cornelius, who are not Jews and yet worshiped the God of the Jews.

Either of these stories would have been powerful on its own. Perhaps Peter would have come to the same understanding without Cornelius. And perhaps Cornelius would have learned about Jesus without Peter. But the two stories are woven together in such a way that they remove any doubt that God has a plan of salvation for ALL people from ALL nations. No one race or nation is superior in God's eyes. This is a lesson for those of us who are leaders. Many times we believe that our Western way of life, both civic and religious, is the only way to live or at least the best way to live. This story helps us see God being active in the lives of many different kinds of people, without any preferential treatment.

Notice that the final assurance that this is of God comes to the Jewish onlookers when the Gentiles are blessed with the Holy Spirit. Remembering what happened to all those who heard Peter preach at Pentecost, this was an assurance that could not be doubted. It was also Peter's assurance that he did the right thing in baptizing Cornelius and his family and friends.

The first wondering question asks the children if they have ever gone to visit someone they didn't know. Be sure to explore that question more deeply by asking them how it felt. Remind them that Peter didn't know Cornelius either. He may have had some of the same feelings as the children.

The second wondering question is one that is dealt with from children's Sunday School through a seminary education. Is there anyone that God doesn't love? Sometimes children are too young to understand loving a person, but not loving all that they do. It may help young children to ask them to remember a time when they did something that their parent(s) didn't like. If we ask, "Did your mom (dad) love what you did?" they will most likely answer "No." But when we ask if mom (dad) still loves them, they will usually answer in the positive. So it can be with God. We want young children to be assured of the love of God, always.

In our final wondering question we ask if the Holy Spirit has ever spoken to any of them. Listen carefully, with your heart, to their answers. They may not know, or they may not be able to articulate God's speaking in their young lives. For now it may be enough that they know it is possible that God will come to them in ways they can hear.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

The Jews believed that some food and some people were unclean. They wouldn't "be caught dead" with them. Who or what in your life would you want to "not be caught dead with?"

Peter came to an understanding that God's love wasn't limited to only Jews. Is there any limit that can be placed on God's love? Think about murderers, or child molesters. Does God love them?

Why do you think God used a Gentile to help Peter understand? Why wouldn't his own vision have been enough?