

WEEK 3 ELEMENTARY LESSON GUIDE

the messengers



THE BIG IDEA

God can deliver everyone.

THE BIBLE

Peter's Vision: Acts 11:1-18;
John 13:34-35

LARGE GROUP TIME

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

MUSIC | Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *You can lead kids in worship with any songs you like best, but here are a few songs that go along with this month's theme. Make sure you have purchased any licenses required to play or perform these songs. For more information, [read this!](#)*
 - "Messengers" (Lecrae)
 - "Send Me" (Yancy)
 - "As the World Shakes" (Hillsong Kids)
 - "Spirit Move" (Bright Ones)
 - "Love One Another" (Newsboys)

ACTIVITY | Animal Toss

- Welcome back! We're still exploring how the early church delivered the message about Jesus around the world.
- In today's story, the apostle Peter had a vision of a sheet covered with all kinds of animals. Here's a game to help us picture that!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Create two teams. Place alternating team members around the edges of a large sheet, holding the edges about waist high. Toss about a dozen stuffed animals onto the sheet. When you say "Go," Team 1 must try to toss the animals off the sheet while Team 2 tries to keep them on the sheet. At the end of a one-minute round, count how many animals are still on the sheet versus how many fell off and determine a winner!*

- ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Give preteens a chance to be creative. Lay out a large white sheet or a large piece of white paper (like bulletin board paper). Have each kid draw their favorite animal(s) on the sheet or give them a notecard with an animal to draw on the sheet. Fill it with animals and hang it up in your space.
- ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Split kids into teams. Play “Popcorn” by placing animals on the sheet or parachute. Challenge teams to keep the animals in the sheets the longest or who makes them fly out the fastest.

ACTIVITY | Card Couriers

- In this next game, you’ll be couriers who need to deliver some postcards. They are stuck in the sorting machine, though. Help us rescue the cards so we can deliver them to the people who need them most!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set up a line for four or five kids to play Card Couriers at once. For each kid, stack five plastic cups upside down with a postcard between each cup. The goal is to yank each card out quickly so that the upper cup stacks onto the cup beneath. If the cups topple, reset the stack, and begin again. The first kid to get all cups stacked correctly wins!

QUESTION | How many invites would you send out?

- Parties are fun ways to celebrate good news! And if you had good news to celebrate, like a birthday or a graduation, you might want to send out invitations, whether it’s by mail, email, or even a text.
- **Would you invite just a few close friends?** If so, tell us why!
- **Or would you invite everyone you know?** If so, tell us why!
- Today, we’re going to hear about how Jesus invites everyone to know him. . . and we get to be the ones who deliver the invitations!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Turn this into a poll with other party-related questions. Then, have preteens go to different areas of the room depending on their answers. For example, *Would it be in the morning or at night? Would you have lots of sweets or lots of snacks? Would it be in the summer or the winter?*

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

BIBLE STORY | Peter’s Vision

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Hang a large white sheet or screen up in front and shine a bright light from behind (a projector would work, too). Find pictures of a few animals (cows, pigs, chickens, alligators, ostrich, etc.) with identifiable outlines. Cut them out and place them on popsicle sticks to use as shadow puppets. Invite a few kids to hold shadow puppets of various animals behind the sheet while you tell the story from Acts 11:1–18. Or, take the sheet and plush animals from the Animal Toss activity and set it up in the front of the room to help kids visualize.
- When the church was just starting around two thousand years ago, they didn’t know who they should let in.

- Some people thought that only those who followed Old Testament law could be invited to join.
- People who weren't traditionally taught to follow Old Testament law were called Gentiles. And throughout the land, many Gentiles heard about Jesus and wanted to follow him.
- But some church members criticized Peter for spending time with Gentiles. They thought that God's church should only be for other people who followed the law.
- But the apostle Peter had a vision that encouraged him to share the message about Jesus with everyone – whether they followed the law or not! It went like this:
 - Peter was praying when he saw something like a large sheet coming down from heaven. And on the sheet were all kinds of animals! Cows and sheep and pigs and lizards and birds. It was like a whole zoo on the sheet!
 - Then, Peter heard a voice that told him to kill and eat these animals. He was rather hungry. But Peter was confused. Some of the animals were unclean, according to the Old Testament.
 - "No, I won't, God!" Peter replied. "I've never eaten anything unclean or impure!"
 - Then the voice from heaven said, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." The voice said this three times, then the sheet went back up to heaven.
- The Old Testament law said that certain animals were unclean to eat. But through this vision, God was saying that they weren't unclean anymore. God made them clean! Peter took this to mean that the church should welcome the Gentiles, who did not follow the law.
- Right then, three men, who were Gentiles, came to Peter, and the Holy Spirit told Peter it was all right to go with them. So Peter followed them to a man's house.
 - The man told Peter that an angel had appeared to him and told him to send for Peter, who would bring a message of good news from Jesus!
 - As Peter began to speak, everyone began to receive the Holy Spirit, just like the other members of the early church.
 - Peter then said to the people who were criticizing him, "If God gave the Gentiles the same Holy Spirit that we received for believing in Jesus, who was I to stand in God's way?"
- Everyone was amazed to see that the Holy Spirit was available to everyone.

BIG IDEA | God can deliver everyone.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Print four of the Big Idea graphic for this week on postcard paper or cardstock paper and cut them out. Make enough copies for everyone. Depending on the size of your group, the Special Messenger (SM) can either hand cards out to the kids, or hand stacks of cards to leaders to hand out to the kids.*
- **Storyteller:** We usually see the Special Messenger around this time, but I don't see them. Do you?
- **SM:** Special messenger, reporting for delivery!
- **Storyteller:** Perfect timing, what have you got for me today?

- **SM:** *(Enter and begin passing out postcards.)* This delivery is for everyone! Today, everyone gets a card! Can someone read their card for me? *(Pause for someone to read.)* That's right! God can deliver everyone!
- **Storyteller:** That's right! **God can deliver everyone.** That's this week's Big Idea! Hey, can I have a card too?
- **SM:** *(Hand a card to the leader.)* Sure. Here's a card for you. Now everyone, tell us what the Big Idea is. **God can deliver everyone!**

VIDEO | The Messengers, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

ACTIVITY | Insta-Story Recap

- **God can deliver everyone,** and we can deliver that good news on every platform! Let's try one out together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have kids form groups of three or four and assign a few verses of today's Bible Story in Acts 11:1–18. If you have a large group, feel free to give multiple groups the same snippets. Have kids come up with a creative one-sentence summary of the verses they were given. You can record each group in order and post them on your ministry's social media page as a story or reel. Or piece it together as a video and send to parents. You can show [this video](#) for inspiration!*

ACTIVITY | Who's In?

- Today's Bible story shows us that some members of the early church were not sure who they should let in and who they should keep out. That's a problem that still happens today, and not just in church!
- Can you imagine if our church only allowed a select few to join? Let's play a game to see what that would be like!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have kids seated in a circle, with one less chair in the circle than there are kids. Pick one person to start in the middle and go up to anyone seated and ask them, "Who can join?" Then the person answers, "Only people with [name any criteria they want]." So if the person said, "Only people with a sibling." Then everyone who doesn't have a sibling needs to stand up and switch seats, while the person in the middle tries to snag a seat in the chaos. Whoever is left standing starts a new round. Advise kids to avoid calling out characteristics involving race or physical attributes.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Have a leader name different criteria from the middle of the circle. Instead of having them switch seats, have kids stand up each time they hear something that pertains to them.*
- Those were some interesting criteria of people who were allowed to join. **But what's the correct answer to the question?** That's it! Everyone. That's who belongs. Every single one of you!
- **God can deliver everyone!**

BIBLE | John 13:34–35

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Find John 13:34–35 in your Bible and read it with the group.
- **What is the new command?** To love one another!
- **Why do you think Jesus said this was something new?** Think about the story of Peter and what he learned about unclean animals.
- **Why should we love one another?** Read verse 34.
- When we show love to other people, the world will know that we follow Jesus. Showing love to others is one way to spread the message about Jesus!

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Who Gets an Invitation?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story about a time when you had a party and you forgot to invite someone. Or a time when you weren't invited to a party you expected to be invited to. Invite kids to share their own experiences if they'd like.
- Nobody likes being left out. Thankfully, God doesn't leave anyone out. Everyone is supposed to hear the message of God's love. Everyone deserves an invitation because **God can deliver everyone!**

ACTIVITY | Post-It-Card

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a giant postcard out of poster paper. After you are done with the activity, invite kids to decorate the front of the "postcard."
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Ask each preteen to write their name on the top of a postcard. Have the preteens sit in a circle (or in smaller groups), and pass the postcards around, each person taking time to write something kind about the name at the top. At the end, each preteen should have a postcard with loads of warm fuzzies written about them! Then, ask them to think about all of the things God loves about them, too.
- We don't do it on purpose, but sometimes we might make people feel left out, especially when they are new to our church.
- **What are some things we can do to include everyone?**
- Write down your ideas on sticky notes and put them on this giant postcard!

MEMORY VERSE | Postcard Verse

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Write or project the memory verse in the front of the room. Hand out blank postcards from the Card Courier activity or Big Idea reveal. Have kids copy down the memory verse on the blank side and sign their names. Then, have the kids randomly pair up with one another and swap cards. One kid will recite the verse from memory while the other checks it against the card. Take turns until both kids have recited the verse from memory correctly. Do this until everyone has had a turn and no one is left with their own postcard.
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** Have pre-made postcards, each with a word or phrase from the memory verse, in different colors and let kids work on their own or in partners to lay them out on the floor in the correct order.

PRAYER

- God, we are so thankful that you can deliver everyone. You love the whole world and welcome everyone to celebrate this good news together! Please show us what we can do to invite more people to know you, and to not leave anyone out. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

- **What did Peter see in his vision?**
- **How did Peter change because of his vision?**
- **Read Acts 11:15–17. What helped Peter see that welcoming Gentiles into the church was God’s way?**
- **Read John 13:34–35. How will others know that you love and follow Jesus?**
- **What are some ways we keep others out of our circle of friends? How about out of our church?**
- **What can we change to make sure we welcome everyone?**
- **How can we as a church show the world that we follow Jesus?**

ACTIVITY | Good News for Everyone

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On the printable, have kids think about people that they might not typically talk to about Jesus. Have them write their name or draw a picture of a few of these people.*
- Nowadays, it’s really easy for people to get deliveries, whether it’s a gift or pizza. We learned today that **God can deliver everyone**, but it’s not always easy to deliver that message, right?
- Sometimes we don’t even know that we are leaving people out. It’s important that we pay attention to the things we say and do so that everyone will know that they can have access to Jesus, just like we do!
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Have preteens make an acrostic with the word, “EVERYONE,” and ideas on how they can practice inclusivity at home, school, and church.*
 - ✂ **SPECIAL NEEDS HACK:** *Write the words of the Big Idea on individual labels and have them stick them on the printable in the correct order.*

MEMORY VERSE | Isaiah 6:8 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Practice this month’s memory verse with the signs (a combination of SEE and ASL) we’ve provided in your Programming folder or at growcurriculum.org/Isaiah6-8.*
- Let’s practice this month’s memory verse together!
- **“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”**