

Acts 10:44–48

Ps. 98

1 John 5:1–6

John 15:9–17

No Boundaries

**Goal for
the Session**

Tweens will dig into the story of Peter and Cornelius and rejoice that the Holy Spirit knows no boundaries.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Acts 10:44–48

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” A. Katherine Grieb

Peter’s question—“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”—underlines the priority of God’s action and the subsequent response of the church. To restate the words spoken to Peter in his vision at Joppa, “what God has made clean,” the church must not call profane (10:15). The pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his companions shows God’s acceptance of these Gentiles. They have received the gift of the Spirit (speaking in tongues and extolling God) “just as we have,” a clear reference back to the outpouring of the Spirit upon Jewish Christians at Pentecost.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

It is instructive that in Peter’s sermon in Cornelius’s house the Holy Spirit interrupts him again. It is as if the Holy Spirit seeks to remind the listeners that, as eloquent as Peter’s sermon was, what is crucial is not Peter’s perception of the gospel, but Peter allowing God to speak through and in spite of him. God was and is and must always be the subject of salvation. Peter was an instrument, not the source of salvation. The new revelation made possible by the inbreaking of the Holy One was clear.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis

In this brief text we find exemplified the extravagance of the Holy Spirit and the wideness of God’s grace. This story demonstrates that the Spirit is not bound by the limitations that even faithful believers have. The Spirit is not only poured out on the Gentiles; it is given to the Jewish Christians, enabling them to see with new eyes and capture a new vision of the kingdom of God. This is an important text for the church today. Not only do the wounds of exclusion run deep in our culture and in the church; the realities of uncrossed boundaries still exist.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara K. Lundblad

“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (v. 47). Peter echoes the question the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip back in chapter 8: “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” Those who heard that story could have shouted, “Everything prevents you! You’re a different race, you are from a far-off country, you are a sexual misfit, and you have had very little instruction.” In both stories, there were good reasons to withhold the water of baptism. Yet the Holy Spirit surprised Philip on a desert road and surprised Peter in Cornelius’s house. The Holy Spirit can be disruptive.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Acts 10:44–48

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- gold or yellow streamers or ribbons
- Christ candle, matches
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Color Pack 20, 32, 33
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pencils
- copier paper
- markers
- scissors, tape

For Responding

- option 1: Resource Sheet 2, 10' rope or cord, copier paper, marker
- option 2: Internet-connected device
- option 3: Color Pack 22, permanent marker, drawing paper, colored pencils or fine-tipped markers

Alleluia! Allelu!

Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!
Alleluia! Allelu! Let his name be praised!
The angel at the break of day
Rolled the giant stone away.
Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens know what it feels like to be left out. They are keenly aware of who is in which group. Tweens can also feel strongly about unfairness and equality, but they may not always realize how they are leaving others out or how they can act to be inclusive of others. Help tweens discover how to practice crossing boundaries that divide God's people. In small or large ways they can be like the early apostles, witnessing by their actions to God's inclusive care and concern for all people.

Encompassing God, open my eyes to the boundaries that separate and hurt your people. Guide me as I explore with these tweens how to practice your way of embracing all people. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut a piece of copier paper that covers only the sign on Color Pack 20. If you are using option 1 in Responding, make three signs on copier paper: I Will; I Will Not; I'm Not Sure. If you are using option 2, ask your pastor or church educator if your denomination or congregation has connections with churches in other nations. If so, search online for information about one of these churches.

Welcome tweens by name. Ask volunteers to spread the white cloth in the center of your meeting space, arrange gold or yellow streamers or ribbons on it, and place the Christ candle on it. Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Announce that this is the sixth Sunday of the Easter season, and invite learners to tell why Easter is important to them. Sing "Alleluia! Allelu!" (Color Pack 33; track 1 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Review the "All" response, and then lead the following litany:

Leader: Jesus Christ was dead, but he now lives forever and ever!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Because Jesus lives, we also will live abundantly and eternally!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, and help us to welcome everyone who comes to learn about you.

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Extinguish the candle.

Show Color Pack 20 and invite tweens to tell about times they have encountered signs with this kind of message. Discuss:

- ✧ What kind of boundary does this sign create?
- ✧ How does it feel to be in the group of people that is being excluded?
- ✧ When does it make sense to exclude certain people from certain activities?
- ✧ When does excluding others seem like the wrong thing to do?

Say that today's Bible reading is about excluding and including.

EXPLORING

Distribute Bibles, copies of Resource Sheet 1 (No Boundaries!), and pencils. Ask tweens to turn to Acts 10. Review that an apostle is a person sent out on a mission to tell others about Jesus Christ. Jesus' first disciples are often called apostles. The Acts of the Apostles is the book in the New Testament that contains stories about these first apostles.

Ask volunteers to read aloud the first two paragraphs on the resource sheet. Answer any questions the learners have about this information.

Form pairs to read the remainder of the resource sheet to one another and fill in the blanks. After all have finished, invite pairs to compare responses. Discuss:

- ✧ What do you find surprising about this story?
- ✧ In what ways was God's love at work through the Spirit in this story?
- ✧ Why do you think the writer of Acts thought it was important to tell this story?
- ✧ According to this story, who can be blessed by God's Spirit?
- ✧ What kind of boundary did Peter cross in baptizing Cornelius?
- ✧ What fell on everyone? Why did this make a difference?
- ✧ Why is this story important for Christians today?

If learners ask about the reference to speaking in tongues, explain that when the church first began, God sent the Spirit to Jesus' followers. Sometimes the Spirit helped them to speak in languages they didn't know.

Look again at Color Pack 20. Invite tweens to imagine this is a sign at the door of your church. Discuss how you might change it to reflect the way God's Spirit welcomes people. Decide on one new sign as a group and ask volunteers to write or draw this new sign on the copier paper you cut. Tape it over the sign on the Poster. Ask:

- ✧ How might God's Spirit be working in us to make sure no one is excluded from our community of faith and everyone feels welcome?

EASY
PREP

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. What Would You Do?** Learners will imagine ways to cross boundaries that human beings try to place around God's love and care. Follow the directions on Resource Sheet 2 (What Would You Do?) to lead this activity. After completing the exercise, ask learners to describe similar situations in which they might find themselves. Discuss how rejoicing in the Spirit's welcome for them might strengthen them to cross boundaries on behalf of others.
- 2. Companion Church** Connecting with a church in another part of the world can help learners realize the expanse of the Spirit's embrace. Tell learners about a church or denomination in another nation and how it is linked with yours. Look together at Web sites with information about this group of Christians and find their location on a map. Wonder together how you might reach out and extend a greeting to the members in this church. Think about what you would like to learn from them. If it is possible, contact them through e-mail. If this is not possible, lift the companion church in prayer and ask the Spirit to join your hearts and minds in Christ.
- 3. Editorial Cartoons** Learners will use humor to express their joy in God's love that knows no boundaries. Show Color Pack 22 and invite tweens to imagine this is an editorial cartoon about the story of Peter and Cornelius. As is necessary, explain that an editorial cartoon expresses a person's idea or opinion about something that has happened in the community or world. The drawing is usually the focus of the editorial cartoon, and captions are usually quite short. Give learners a few moments to consider how this cartoon might be offering an opinion on the story of Peter and Cornelius. Invite learners to brainstorm ideas for a caption for this cartoon. Have the group choose the caption they like best and write it under the drawing with permanent marker. Form pairs to draw their own editorial cartoons based on the story in Acts 10 or based on the idea of the importance of breaking down boundaries between people. Have pairs show their finished editorial cartoons. Display these for others in the church to see.

Give Me Joy in My Heart

Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart,
I pray—hallelujah!
Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Keep me singing till the
break of day.

Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the king.

Repeat three times

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the Christ candle and light it. Invite learners to tell why the Spirit's way of welcoming everyone is good news to them. Sing "Give Me Joy in My Heart" (Color Pack 32; track 5 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Offer a call-and-response blessing. Begin by saying to the person on your right: "(Name), you are blessed by the Spirit as God's child." The group responds: "(Name), remember to welcome others." Repeat until each person has received the blessing.

Invite learners to exchange gestures and words of peace with one another. Say good-bye to each learner by name, saying you will pray for them this week. Ask them to pray for you.

May 9, 2021
No Boundaries

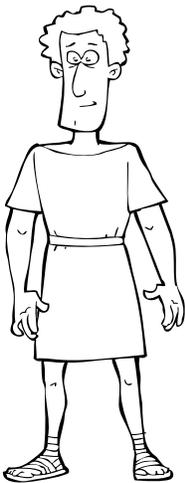
Tweens
Resource Sheet 1

No Boundaries! (Based on Acts 10:1–48)

Jesus' and the first apostles were Jewish. Back in the time of Moses, God gave the Jewish people a set of rules called the Law of Moses. These laws told the people how to live as God's people. People believed that if they broke these laws, they would be outside God's circle of love. Anyone who was not Jewish was called a Gentile. The Law of Moses said that Jewish people were not allowed to have anything to do with Gentiles.

Right after Jesus returned to heaven to live with God, the apostles began to tell other people about Jesus Christ and to invite them to be part of the new church. There was disagreement among some of the apostles about who could be baptized. Some, like Peter, thought only people who were Jewish could be baptized. Then something happened.

Use your Bible to find the words you need to complete the story:



Cornelius was a _____ (Acts. 10:1). He was a Gentile, but Cornelius and everyone who lived with him worshiped and prayed to God. Cornelius was also generous in helping people who were poor.

One afternoon, Cornelius had a vision. An angel told him to _____ (Acts 10:5–6). After the vision, Cornelius _____ (Acts 10:7–8).

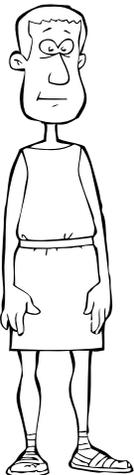
Peter also had a vision. In his vision, he saw _____ (Acts 10:11–16).

Peter didn't understand the vision. While he was wondering, the men sent by Cornelius arrived. The Spirit told Peter to _____ (Acts 10:20).

So Peter went to Cornelius's house. Peter and Cornelius told each other about their visions. And Peter suddenly understood that _____ (Acts 10:34–35).

Peter began to teach about Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 10:44–48 to find out what happened next.



What Would You Do?

I will

I'm not
sure

I will not

Directions: Stretch out a 10' rope or cord on the floor. At one end of the rope, place a sign that says "I will." At the other end place a sign that says "I will not." Place a sign that says "I'm not sure" in the center.

Tell learners you will read aloud some short stories. After each story they will be asked to decide what they would do and stand by the sign that best describes their answer. Take a moment after learners are in place to invite them to explain why they chose to stand where they did. Ask two follow-up questions each time: What seems to be causing a boundary here? What could you do to cross this boundary?

- 1** The new boy in your class at school moved here from a different nation. His English is not very good, and it's hard to understand what he's saying. The teacher asked you and your friends to do more to help this boy feel welcome. However, every time you try to talk to him or invite him to join you in an activity, he just stares at you. He doesn't smile or even try to talk to you. Will you continue to try to make him feel welcome?
- 2** When you get on the city bus with your friends, there is only one open seat. It is next to an older woman with wild-looking hair. She's wearing shabby clothes. You've seen her before. Some of your friends are making fun of her. She smiles at you. You really want to sit down. Will you sit next to her?
- 3** You are on a soccer team with some of your friends. There is one girl who doesn't play very well. Other players on the team openly harass her and make fun of her. You like being a part of the team and want to hang out with your friends, but you know what they're doing isn't right. You are worried that if you stand up for this girl, your friends might turn on you next. Will you stand up for this girl?
- 4** A boy in your class who is considered one of the "popular kids" is having a party. You are not part of this group, but sometimes you wish you were, even though they can be mean to everyone else. You are surprised when you get an invitation to the party! However, your best friend does not get invited. Will you go to the party?