



Week #4: The Diversity of the Church

The diverse and surprising invitees into the church:

1. Persecuting _____ . (Acts 6:7)
2. Hated _____ and a _____. (Acts 8:1-25)
3. An Ethiopian _____. (Acts 8:26-40)
4. A sworn _____ named Saul. (Acts 9:1-31)
5. A _____ named Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-48)

Today's Big Idea: The Gospel of Jesus is the ultimate _____.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Acts 10:1-2 (NIV)

He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for."

Acts 10:11-21 (NIV)

You know I am a Jew. We Jews consider it a breach of divine law to associate, much less share hospitality, with outsiders. But God has shown me something in recent days: I should no longer consider any human beneath me or unclean. ²⁹ That's why I made no objection when you invited me; rather, I came willingly. Now let me hear the story of why you invited me here.

Acts 10: 28-29 (VOICE)

It is clear to me now that God plays no favorites, ³⁵ that God accepts every person whatever his or her culture or ethnic background, that God welcomes all who revere Him and do right.

Acts 10:34-35 (VOICE)

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:43-48 (NIV)

The Gospel Breaks:

- _____ and _____ barriers. (Acts 15, James 2:8-9, 1 John 4:20)
- _____ barriers. (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35)
- _____ barriers. (Acts 16:13-15, Acts 18, Acts 21:8-9)
- The _____ barrier. (Acts 10:43, Galatians 3:26-28)

Discussion Questions

1. How does Peter's transformation in Acts 10 challenge our own cultural or spiritual biases today? Reflect on how Peter's resistance to eating "unclean" foods parallels the ways we might resist engaging with people or cultures outside our comfort zone.
2. Who in your life or community might be the "unexpected invitee" to God's table? Consider those whom society—or even the church—often overlooks. How might the Spirit be nudging you to welcome them?
3. What social, racial, gender, or personal "barriers" have you experienced or upheld, perhaps unconsciously? How does the gospel invite you to cross those boundaries in love and humility?
4. How does the story of Cornelius affirm the presence of God in people and cultures outside our own? What would it look like to listen more deeply to the stories and faith expressions of others, especially those different from us?

Recommended Resources

- [How to Heal Our Racial Divide: What the Bible Says, and the First Christians Knew about Racial Reconciliation, by Derwin Gray](#)
- [One Blood, by John Perkins](#)
- [Emboldened: A Vision for Empowering Women in Ministry, by Tara Beth Leach](#)
- [Confronting Christianity, by Rebecca McLaughlin](#)

(NIV) New International Version

(VOICE) The Voice

Week #4: The Diversity of the Church - **FILL**

The diverse and surprising invitees into the church:

1. Persecuting Priests. (Acts 6:7)
2. Hated Samaritans and a Sorcerer. (Acts 8:1-25)
3. An Ethiopian Eunuch. (Acts 8:26-40)
4. A sworn enemy named Saul. (Acts 9:1-31)
5. A Gentile named Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-48)

Today's Big Idea: The Gospel of Jesus is the ultimate barrier breaker.

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

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He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

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Acts 10:43-48 (NIV)

The Gospel Breaks:

- Race and ethnic barriers. (Acts 15, James 2:8-9, 1 John 4:20)
- Social barriers. (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35)
- Gender barriers. (Acts 16:13-15, Acts 18, Acts 21:8-9)
- The sin barrier. (Acts 10:43, Galatians 3:26-28)

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