

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 13
Breaking Boundaries and Rules with Jesus
Acts 10, Week of Oct 8, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups – Participant Guide

A bit of background is needed to truly appreciate why the story of Peter (a Jesus believing Jew) and Cornelius (a pagan Roman Centurion) takes up so much ink in Acts. To this day, orthodox Jews continue to observe only Old Testament purity laws as well as a host of additional purity rules that have been added since. Purity laws are all about distinguishing between what is proper versus improper; in it's place versus out of place. *Rich soil in a farm field is considered clean until it has been transferred to the kitchen floor – where it is dirt. In Israel, purity and impurity, clean and unclean, holy and profane were all determined by whether things, persons, and places were “in place” or “out of place.”*¹ At this point you're probably wondering, why? As a fallen, broken, rebellion bent human race, purity laws function as a code of how to approach a perfect and holy God – what is proper and what is out of place?

The Good News of the Gospel is that relationship with God is not based on what we do (purity by separation) but on “Jesus in my place” (purity by imputation – Christ's righteousness covers us by grace through faith). The story of Peter and Cornelius is a timeless reminder that in our brokenness, the temptation is always to revert back to salvation by our good rules and works versus salvation by God's great grace. May God's scandalous grace do a great work in us as we dig into his word together.

1. When the Church was born, it was initially made up of Jesus believing Jews. Though Gentiles coming to faith was not a total shock, the miracle of God bringing all nations together in one family (aka the church) was. Fill in the sentence: It would take a real miracle for ___ to become part of the family of God today.

Read Acts 10:1-8

2. One of the most common perceptions among Canadians today is that there is a “god” and that he/she/it accepts and blesses us based on how good we are. Luke carefully underlines the fact that if anybody deserved the title “good” it was Cornelius. What then do we learn about God and good people?

Read 10:9-35

3. What is the meaning of the vision Peter had and what principals and application can we draw?

¹ Nguyen vanThanh, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XL, no. 4 Oct 2012, pp 458-459

Read 10:36-48

4. Respecting others that don't look or live like us is a widely held value these days. Is the biblical call to Gospel inclusivity the same as the inclusivity Canadians desire and value? In what way are the foundations and outcomes the same or different?

5. *I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right (10:34).* Are we doing enough to be diverse as church?

6. What trends, traditions, prejudices or preferences work against the radical unity and diversity God so wants for the church today? Where have you grown personally? Still struggle? Like Peter, how is God challenging you and to what end?