

**Conversations on
Acts 10:44–48**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch together the clips from “The Sue Sylvester Shuffle” episode of *Glee* where student groups are first brought together and the closing scene where they perform a mashup. Discuss: How were the two groups able to break down barriers and what results came from crossing those barriers?

WHAT is important to know?

As our passage begins, Peter has just given testimony concerning Jesus’ healing ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection. Peter summarizes: “To this all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (v. 43). The word “everyone” apparently functions as a dramatic cue for the Holy Spirit to fall upon Cornelius and upon his companions, fulfilling the prophecies Peter has just mentioned and demonstrating beyond a doubt that these Gentile believers in Jesus have also received forgiveness of sins in his name. (A. Katherine Grieb)

- ✪ What was the difference between the circumcised believers and the Gentiles?
- ✪ Why do you think Peter took some believers from Joppa (most likely Jews) with him?
- ✪ For the Jews present, what was astounding about the gift of the Holy Spirit falling “even on the Gentiles”?

WHERE is God in these words?

The intervention of the Spirit in Peter’s meditation indicates that God in the Spirit often goes before to plead the case of those on the margins, those who are excluded. In Peter’s case the Spirit interrupts his meditation and orders him to engage strangers at his door. Peter is presented with another opportunity to learn something new concerning the divine persistence on behalf of persons in need. It is interesting that an apostle as devout as Peter has something fresh to learn about the divine character. (Noel Leo Erskine)

- ✪ As a faithful Jew, what would be surprising about this experience to Peter?
- ✪ What was significant about Peter baptizing Cornelius and his household?
- ✪ What can we learn about God from this Scripture passage?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

While Peter and Cornelius have central roles in this narrative, it is not a story about them. Rather, it is a story about the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit’s purposes are accomplished in spite of the boundaries constructed by humans. The witness of the text is that neither Peter nor Cornelius was able to cross the boundaries on their own. But the outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowered each of them to move from their segregated places. The Holy Spirit broke the barriers and propelled the witness of the resurrection beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and Galilee. (Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis)

- ✪ What are some examples of boundaries that humans construct that hinder the work of the Holy Spirit?
- ✪ How is the Holy Spirit at work in your life, empowering you to cross boundaries in order to serve as a follower of Jesus Christ?

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

The Holy Spirit can be disruptive. Church historian Rosemary Radford Ruether says that the church must be organized to do two things: to pass on the tradition from one generation to another and to be open to the winds of the Holy Spirit by which the tradition comes alive in each generation. Sometimes the Holy Spirit has a hard time getting through our stubborn desire to stay the way we are. Where is the Holy Spirit trying to break through traditions that have become rock hard? How do we continue to pass on the traditions from one generation to another while also being open to the Spirit that brings the tradition alive? (Barbara K. Lundblad)

- ✪ In what ways is the Holy Spirit disruptive?
- ✪ Where is the Holy Spirit trying to break through rock-hard patterns in your life or the life of your congregation?
- ✪ What are some specific ways in which traditions can be passed between generations while remaining open to the Holy Spirit?

Thank God for personal brokenness that has been restored and for those who have helped the healing process.