



"This is the Story..."

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## **Week 49: Beyond the Boundaries of God's Family**

Acts 10

### **Intro Video: COMING SOON!**

**Review the big story:** God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. All of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family to be a blessing to the whole earth. Like the humans before them, the generations of this family often missed the mark, but God was faithful.

When the people became slaves, God raised up Moses to be their leader and delivered them. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God's provision, living out God's commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the shema, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God brought the people into the promised land. They continued to miss the mark, and God sent judges to guide them.

God raised up prophets, but the people demanded a king. Kings continued to miss the mark. The kingdom divided into the north and south. God stuck with the people through leaders and prophets, and continued to call the people back to God, even as first the northern, and then the southern kingdom fell to invading powers. Some of the people were sent into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the kingdom. Through prophets and everyday people, God continued to stick with the scattered people and to reveal that God is so much bigger than they imagined. The people were finally able to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.

The people of God began to wait for a Messiah. This Messiah was announced through an angel to Mary. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, and there, Jesus was born, proclaimed by angels, visited by shepherds, blessed by Simeon and Anna, and sought by magi. When Jesus's life was in danger, his parents fled with him to Egypt, where they remained as refugees until it was safe for them to return and settle in Nazareth. When he was ready to begin his ministry, Jesus was baptized by his cousin John. Jesus called a community of people to follow him.

Jesus showed people what life inside the blessing looks like. He fulfilled the scriptures, walked on water, fed people, welcomed children, told stories, and showed us what was most important.

Jesus entered Jerusalem and was proclaimed as the Messiah. He angered people with his teachings. He was arrested and killed. The people had really missed the mark. But God stuck with them. God's love is stronger than death. Jesus rose again. He walked, ate and talked with his friends. Then he ascended to heaven and told his disciples that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost. They told people about Jesus, and many people believed and were baptized. They lived in shalom community and followed Jesus, even when that meant persecution. One of the people who persecuted the people of the Way, Saul, had a dramatic experience and began to share the good news of Jesus.

**Key verse:** Acts 10:15, Acts 10:47

**Tell the story:** The early community of believers began as people who were part of the covenanted Jewish faith. But God didn't mean for life inside the blessing to be limited to a small group of people. God meant it for everyone! Over and over in the Bible, God pushes people to expand their idea of what it means to belong to God, and this story is key in that expansion. Through visions and relationships, the community of Jesus-followers opened up to include Gentiles.

- Read Acts 10 (read the whole thing if you can; it's an intriguing story!)
- Read page 295 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

**Prime the pump:**

- **Things to notice:**
  - Numbers usually have some meaning, so notice the numbers here and see if you can find their connections. For example, 3:00 in the afternoon reflects back to Acts 3:1. 3:00 was the time for afternoon prayer.
  - Read 10:12. What Genesis story does this remind you of?
  - Divine encounters are prominent in this story. Find each one and notice the ways God shows up to Cornelius, Peter, and "all who heard the word" (10:44).
  - Notice the difference in language between 10:15 and 10:28. How did Peter interpret his vision?
  - Read 10:44-48. What story from a few weeks ago does this remind you of? What are the key differences?
- **Background information:**
  - The "centurion of the Italian cohort" means that Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army who led several hundred soldiers. (*Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds, 2017. The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, pg 243.*)
  - Find Caesarea and Joppa on a map and trace the travel in the story. It's about a 30 mile journey.
  - The phrase "Lord of all" (10:36) was a title used for Roman emperors and pagan gods.
  - Read vs 28. This isn't strictly true - most Jews associated regularly with Gentiles.
- **Conversation starters:**
  - Cornelius is described as a man who fits all the characteristics of a devout Jew, but is missing a key detail - complete conversion would have meant being circumcised. This personal story of a relationship has a ripple effect on what it means to be part of the covenant community of Christians. Cornelius doesn't have to convert to Judaism to be baptized into the community. It's another broadening of the story of the people of God. Reflect on this in our times. How do personal stories continue to broaden our ideas of the community of believers?
  - In Peter's dream, he's being told to do something he has been taught he must not do. How must this have felt to him? We know he was hungry, so maybe he thought he was supposed to resist temptation? We think of this as "just food," but it was definitely not just food to him. This vision demanded that Peter change practices and beliefs that were a core part of his faith. Imagine that and see if you can relate to it

**Microsong:** "Beyond the Boundaries of God's Family" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/MLrBhIPgHvU>)

Peter is praying. The sky is opened and a sheet comes down with unclean food. Peter's wondering what all this means when an invitation comes. God's Spirit is poured out beyond the boundaries of God's family.

**Sing the big song:** (Listen: <https://youtu.be/hWxvPv4S7Pq>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.  
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and  
a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,  
*And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, oh ohhhh*  
A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is  
saved from famine.  
God's family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.  
*Ten strange signs say "Please release them!" By the sea God saves them. Oh ohhh.*  
The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.  
Five sisters come and ask for land. God says "Yes, amend the law!"  
*Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your  
being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"*  
Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.  
God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.  
Ruth's worth more than seven sons; Redeem the lost with steadfast love.  
Corruption in the temple then God sends Samuel.  
God gives them a prophet, they ask for a king. Does God need a temple? A wise king forgets. And  
when a bully rules the land, the nation tears apart and loses David's heart...  
A widow's gift and a prophet's cry. God brings life in desperate times.  
Josiah reads this misplaced scroll. He turns to God wholeheartedly like David did. In his time.  
God gives Jeremiah a picture of God's ruined family...  
Is there any hope left, is there any hope left, is there any hope left for you, Jerusalem?  
Any hope? Any hope left? Is there any hope left for you?  
By the streams of Babylon, how can we sing when you are gone, Jerusalem...  
I'm in a valley of human bones. These bones are Israel, God's breath is hope.  
Haman plans death for Esther's exiles. She risks her life so they might survive.  
Finally God's family rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem. God plunges them into a sea of joy and  
celebration of Only God. God is One, Only God.  
Comfort to Jerusalem, your warfare finally ceases.  
Matthew lists these generations, Abraham to Jesus  
The angel says, "You'll have a son and God will give him David's throne." Mary says, "God looked at  
me, now I'm the luckiest person around.  
Mary, now pregnant fiancé, makes a grueling journey.  
She has her baby, shepherds see angels declaring God's glory and peace among people.  
The Spirit sends shepherds and elders and prophets to tell those who wait their Messiah has come.  
Herod gets nervous, the Magi find Jesus. They hide their discovery and hurry back home...  
Once again an angel comes to Joseph -- so they make good their escape, ooh.  
Jesus in the temple, astonishing the crowd. Jesus with his parents. Jesus growing up.  
Down by the Jordan with the prophet John, Jesus asks to be baptized. And the skies are opened. A  
dove descends. A voice from heaven says, "This is my son, the son I love. I'm pleased with him."  
Jesus calls disciples to be with him in the work he's doing. Ohhh oohhh.  
Jesus teaches the disciples "This is life inside the blessing: You're blessed, you who are empty.  
You're blessed all you who mourn. You're blessed, you who ache for God, whose inner life is  
pure. This is life inside the blessing."  
Jesus walks on the water. Peter tries and begins to sink. Jesus grabs his hand and the wind dies  
down.  
Jesus sees the crowds with compassion. So he teaches them for days and days. The people are  
hungry. There's baskets left over and no one left out.  
People bring their children to Jesus. Jesus blesses them and says, "You must accept God's good  
government like a little child would or you won't get in at all" This is life inside the blessing. Ooh  
ooh.

What's most important? Love God with everything and love your neighbor, whoever that may be.

Jesus tells Martha, "You're upset about many things; Just one thing's essential; it's what Mary's choosing here." (Life inside the blessing. Life inside the blessing.)

Save now, David's son rides on a donkey. He will judge nations, separate the sheep from goats. In the garden Jesus prays, "Yes, father, if there's no other way." Jesus dies. The veil rips. . . "Surely this was God's kid."

Mary is crying, the tomb is empty. Jesus meets her and speaks her name. Jesus appears to many of his close friends, breaks bread with them, shows them his scarred hands. While he blesses them he's carried up to heaven after he asks them to wait in Jerusalem.

Together in one place, sound of wind and tongues of fire. The place where they're praying's shaken and everyone's filled with God's breath. They have one heart and soul and no one claims for themselves alone what they own.

Stephen sees Jesus and asks him not to charge his killers with their sin, with their sin.

Saul is traveling. A light shines all around, he hears a voice calling his name. In a vision God tells Ananias to go and pray for Saul. When he prays something like scales fall and Saul's no longer blind.

Peter is praying. The sky is opened and a sheet comes down with unclean food. Peter is wondering what all this means when an invitation comes. God's Spirit is poured out beyond the boundaries of God's family.

*God loves every one of us, it's true. And God loves the universe.*

**Go do your household project!**