Lesson 12
Breaking Barriers- Acts 10:1-23

Our lives are limited by many boundaries or parameters. Our nation has borders that set it apart from its neighboring countries. Our properties have boundary lines that separate our space from our neighbor's. In athletics, the playing fields have boundaries to determine what is "out of bounds," "foul," etc.

God had established boundaries for His people during the days of the Old Testament. Jews are children of Abraham to whom God promised that "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Salvation from sin would come from the Jews through Christ, the Messiah, and would be a blessing to all nations. When God later formed the Jews into a nation as His "holy people" at Mt Sinai, he set boundaries for them. You know some of these boundaries as the Ten Commandments. God gave other boundaries to define how His chosen people, the Jews, should live and worship. These boundaries would set the Jews apart from the pagan nations and separate them (make them holy) to God.

Clean and Unclean

When God set boundaries for His people at Mt. Sinai, He included parameters of what they could and couldn't eat. In Acts 10, Peter saw a vision of all sorts of animals descending from heaven. God commanded him to kill and eat. Peter replied that he would never eat "unclean" foods. His idea of some meat being "unclean" came from the rules given by God at the time of Moses.

The animals Peter saw included four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. These creatures were "unclean" according to the rules God had given in Leviticus 11. List two of each type of unclean animals below.

Unclean four-footed animals include: vv.4–7
Animals including the camel, rock badger, rabbit, pig. A four-footed animal needed to both have a divide hoof and chew its cud; otherwise it was unclean. Included in the food restrictions in Leviticus, but not mentioned in Peter's vision, were fish and other water creatures. The Jews were free to eat any animal living in the water provided it had fins and scales. Most fish were acceptable; shellfish and frogs are two examples of animals that were unclean--"detestable"--to the Jews.

Unclean birds include: vv.13–19
Eagle, vulture, buzzard, kite, falcon, raven, ostrich, owl, seagull, hawk, cormorant. pelican, stork, heron. Also unclean to the Jews: bats.

Unclean crawling creatures and insects include: vv.29-30
All insects besides locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers were unclean to the Jews.

Why did God want the Israelites to observe these rules about food? Leviticus 11:44–45
God wanted His people to be holy because He is holy. Although God's food restrictions seem random to us, God had a specific plan in mind for the Jews. He wanted the Jews to be separate from the other nationalities. He called on them to "be holy, for I am holy". God wanted the Jews to be separate and distinct from the pagan unbelieving nations surrounding it, and His food laws were one way the Jewish nation could show the world they were different from the other nations.

Through the centuries, the Jews became proud of who they were as God's chosen people and came to consider all other people (Gentiles) as worthless and unworthy of God's blessing. By the time of Christ, this separation of Jew and Gentile was firmly set in the Jewish mind. God had to show the Jews that both they and the Gentiles were unclean because of sin, and that both needed the Savior and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Into the Word: Acts 10:1-23

Acts 10 opens by introducing us to Cornelius, a Roman centurion and a Gentile.

1. How is Cornelius described in verse 2?
    *   *A devout man*
    *   *Feared God*
    *   *Gave alms to the Jews*
    *   *Prayed to God continually*

2. Read verses 3–6. Cornelius had a vision of an angel. What did the angel tell Cornelius to do?
    Send men to the city of Joppa to go get Peter.

3. How did Cornelius respond? vv.7–8
    He sent two of his servants and a soldier to do as God had told him.

As the men sent by Cornelius were nearing Joppa, Peter went up to the housetop to pray. It was noon and Peter became hungry. While lunch was being prepared, Peter fell into a trance. He saw a large sheet coming down from the sky, lowered by the four corners touching the ground. The sheet was full of all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.

4. A voice said, "*Get up*, Peter, *kill* and *eat!*" (v.13)

5. Peter objected because he had never eaten anything unholy and unclean. God answered Peter's objection in verse 15 by saying, "*What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.*"

This happened three times. Then the sheet was taken back up into the sky.

6. What was Peter's response to all this according to verse 17? *He was very confused!*

The men from Cornelius arrived just as Peter's vision had ended. Peter barely had time to think about it. He didn't even have a chance to come down from the roof before these men started asking for him.

7. How did Peter know that it was all right to go with these three strangers? vv.19–20
    The Spirit of God told him the men who were asking for him had been sent by God Himself.

Peter went down and introduced himself to the men. They explained why Cornelius had sent them. Peter invited them to stay for the night. The next day Peter would go to Caesarea and meet Cornelius. What was happening? What was God doing through all of this?
It is important for the students to understand that the Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) as "unclean" and the Jews did not associate with them. Peter, a Jew knew that these 2 people groups did not mix. Peter was looking only at the outward appearance of Cornelius but God knew what was in Cornelius' heart. God sent the dream of the clean and unclean animals to prepare Peter for his encounter with Cornelius and the vision to Cornelius to lead him to seek out Peter. They were brought together by God and Peter responded willingly to go with Cornelius' men even though he still did not clearly understand the complete picture. God worked in the hearts of these 2 men to accomplish His purpose, to begin to open the doors for the spread the Gospel to all.

[TM not: The Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) as "unclean" or at least not to be associated with. Once the student realizes the significance of Cornelius (being a Gentile) and Peter (being a Jew) and that the two people groups rarely mixed, then it's easier for them to understand Peter's perplexity and also his willingness to accompany Cornelius' men "without misgivings" (vv.17-20).]

Memory Verse

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one
and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.
Ephesians 2:14

Extra Memory Challenge
Galatians 3:28-29
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

New Ideas:
Promise Fulfilled

On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the prophet Joel, where God says, "I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind" (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17). In the story of Cornelius, we see that God wants all people—Jew and Gentile—to be saved (I Timothy 2:4–6) through faith in Jesus.

The Gentile Cornelius is called a devout man who fears God. Since he had lived among the Jews, Cornelius would have heard God's promise to send a Messiah who would save people from their sin. Cornelius believed that promise, and through faith he was righteous and devout. [TM note: Genesis 15:6] Since Jesus the promised Messiah had come, God sent Peter to proclaim that Jesus fulfilled God's promise.

Gentiles becoming believers was not unheard of. Several individuals in the Old Testament who were not descended from Abraham were saved through faith including Rahab, Ruth, and Naaman. [TM note: other examples: Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17–20); Jethro (Exodus 18:10–11); Rahab (Joshua 2:11, Hebrews 11:31, James 2:24); Ruth; and Naaman (2 Kings 5:1–15, esp. v.15)] God had promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. Jesus brings this to fulfillment in Matthew 28:19, where He instructs His apostles to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching.

All who believe in Jesus, Jew or Gentile, are God's chosen people. "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Discussion Questions
Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. The Jews had created a division or barrier between themselves and the Gentiles, but God broke down the barrier. Discuss the plan of salvation and how God was bringing the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile through the promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

    Consider Acts 1:8, Jesus did not say to go only to the Jews but "to the ends of the earth. Discuss the following verses when talking about the plan of salvation, Romans 3:10 and 23, I John1:9, John 3:16, Eph 2:8-9 I John 5:11-13

2. Think about the rules and boundaries in your own life.

    a. What rules or boundaries in your home, school, and community do you consider restrictive? How can these benefit you?

    Answers will vary but may include curfew, who they spend time with, where they may go and not go, dating rules, rules in classrooms, Many times these things will keep us from trouble, from being faced with peer pressure, temptation and possibly even safety.

    b. Think about some of the commandments God has given. Discuss some ways that you think of them as limiting your freedom and other ways in which they are meant to protect you.

    Answers will very. Commandment #4 would mean honoring our parents' rules for you, #6 dating rules, age limits, where you can go, curfew to keep you from compromising your personal boundaries but also keep you from pregnancy or rape, #5 may protect you from being consumed with hate and turning your personality ugly#7 will keep you from taking things that are not yours, keep you from trouble with the law, will keep you trustworthy to an employer, #8 will encourage

honesty which is an important ethical value, if you compromise this value your life can become difficult because others can't trust you, teachers may not believe you, employers may not hire you but on the other hand if you are honest, doors may open for you, others will respect you and may turn to you for assistance if they are having problems.

Daily Devotions

Sunday: Romans 3:21-26
Monday: Romans 6:4-14
Tuesday: Romans 6:15-18
Wednesday: Romans 8:1-8
Thursday: Romans 8:12-18
Friday: II Corinthians 3:12-18
Saturday: Galatians 5:1-15

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CONFESSIONS, CREED, AND CATECHISM

* Lesson 12: Luther's Small Catechism – Teaching the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments

The third section of the Catechism is the Lord's Prayer. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught what we have come to know as "The Lord's Prayer." In this prayer, Jesus tells us exactly how to pray and summarizes for what we should pray.

1. First John 5:14 reminds us of what petition in the Lord's Prayer?
The third petition – "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The final sections of the Catechism focus on the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, two timeless gifts from the Lord to the Christian Church. In Baptism, the Triune God adopts us into His family as His redeemed children. In the Lord's Supper, we receive the body and blood of Christ in and with the bread and cup. Through this Sacrament, God strengthens our faith and our love for one another.

2. How does Titus 3:5 describe Baptism?
Baptism is God's work, where He gives us the washing of regeneration through the Holy Spirit

3. What does Jesus give us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Matthew 26:26–28
His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins