

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 8 – Empowered to Welcome

Acts 10:1–48

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit continually stretches the Church beyond fear, assumptions, inherited boundaries, and limited understandings of who belongs within the reach of God's grace.

Participants will examine the encounter between Peter and Cornelius and reflect on how the Holy Spirit:

- challenges assumptions,
- produces humility,
- expands compassion,
- and teaches believers to recognize where God is already at work.

The goal of this session is not political debate or ideological conformity.

Instead, participants should begin understanding that Spirit-led living requires believers to hold together:

- truth and compassion,
- conviction and humility,
- discernment and openness,
- and faithfulness and hospitality.

This session also helps participants reflect honestly on:

- fear,
- assumptions,
- exclusion,
- and the ongoing challenge of becoming a Spirit-shaped community.

Acts 10 reminds believers that the Holy Spirit continually moves the Church outward toward people.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand how the Holy Spirit challenges assumptions and boundaries

- Reflect honestly on fear, exclusion, and unfamiliarity
 - Recognize the importance of humility in Spirit-led living
 - Explore how God often works ahead of the Church
 - Understand the difference between discernment and superiority
 - Identify ways Christians can remain both rooted in truth and open-hearted toward others
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 10:1–48

Supporting Passages:

- Isaiah 55:8–9
 - Psalm 139:23–24
 - John 3:8
 - Ephesians 2:8–10
 - Romans 15:7
 - Galatians 3:26–29
 - Revelation 7:9–10
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on group size and discussion depth.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
 - Participant Study Guide
 - Pen or journal
 - Comfortable discussion setting
 - Optional whiteboard or notepad for themes
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FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 10:1–48 slowly several times
- Reflect honestly on moments where your assumptions or understanding changed over time
- Prepare for participants carrying:
 - church hurt
 - fear of exclusion
 - difficult experiences with religion
 - strong convictions
 - or emotional reactions connected to belonging and acceptance

Important:

This session should NOT become:

- political debate,
- ideological argument,
- or emotionally reactive conflict.

The focus is:

- humility,
- discernment,
- attentiveness,
- hospitality,
- and Spirit-led openness.

Participants should feel invited into thoughtful reflection rather than pressured toward quick agreement.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit transforms lives. This week we explore how the Holy Spirit also stretches and reshapes the Church itself.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- humility
 - wisdom
 - compassion
 - discernment
 - and openness to the Holy Spirit.
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2. OPENING REFLECTION: BELONGING & ASSUMPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Invite calm and thoughtful discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do people naturally create categories of “insiders” and “outsiders”?
- What kinds of assumptions shape how people view others?
- Why are unfamiliar people or experiences sometimes uncomfortable?
- What helps people feel genuinely welcomed?

Facilitator Guidance:

Keep the tone reflective and relational.

Avoid:

- political arguments,
- culture-war language,
- or forcing personal disclosure.

The goal is helping participants recognize how assumptions and fear shape relationships and communities.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 10:1–48 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- Peter’s assumptions

- the movement of the Holy Spirit
- and how the story changes throughout the passage.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this story feels most important or surprising to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT OFTEN CHALLENGES ASSUMPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit stretches believers beyond inherited assumptions and familiar categories.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 10:9–16
- Isaiah 55:8–9
- Psalm 139:23–24

Key Truths:

- Peter’s assumptions were deeply shaped by culture and religion
- The Holy Spirit challenges Peter’s understanding
- Spiritual growth requires teachability and humility

Key Emphasis:

The Holy Spirit comforts believers,
but the Spirit also confronts assumptions that no longer align with the heart of God.

Facilitator Insight:

Many people assume spiritual maturity means certainty about everything.

Acts 10 reminds believers that growth often requires:

- humility,
- listening,
- and willingness to keep learning.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is it difficult to let go of assumptions?
 - What helps people remain teachable?
 - How can fear quietly shape the way believers see others?
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5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT OFTEN MOVES AHEAD OF THE CHURCH (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

God is often already at work in people's lives before believers recognize it.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 10:24–33
- John 3:8

Key Truths:

- Cornelius was already seeking God
- The Spirit was already preparing both Peter and Cornelius
- The mission of God begins with God, not human effort

Key Emphasis:

The Church does not initiate the work of God.

The Holy Spirit does.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section should encourage attentiveness and humility rather than fear or suspicion.

Avoid simplistic answers or ideological conclusions.

The emphasis is:

- listening,
- discernment,
- and awareness of God's activity.

Discussion Questions:

- Where have you seen evidence that God was already at work before you realized it?
- Why do Christians sometimes struggle to recognize God's work in unfamiliar places?
- How does humility affect spiritual discernment?

6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES HUMILITY, NOT SUPERIORITY (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit reminds believers that everyone stands in need of grace.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 10:34–48

- Ephesians 2:8–10
- Romans 15:7

Key Truths:

- Peter recognizes that God shows no favoritism
- Grace removes superiority and self-righteousness
- The Spirit forms humble and compassionate believers

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led living produces humility rather than spiritual arrogance.

Facilitator Insight:

Many people have experienced Christianity primarily through:

- judgment,
- fear,
- exclusion,
- or superiority.

Acts 10 presents a deeply different posture.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between conviction and superiority?
- How does remembering our own need for grace affect the way we treat others?
- Why is humility essential in Spirit-led living?

7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT EXPANDS THE CHURCH THROUGH WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit continually moves the Church outward toward people.

Read Scripture:

- Galatians 3:26–29
- Revelation 7:9–10

Key Truths:

- The Kingdom of God is broader than human assumptions
- Fear pushes communities inward
- The Holy Spirit continually moves believers toward welcome, compassion, and faithful presence

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led welcome is not:

- vague acceptance,
- loss of discernment,
- or abandoning conviction.

It is becoming a community shaped by:

- truth,
- grace,
- humility,
- and the love of Christ.

Facilitator Guidance:

Keep the discussion:

- calm,
- thoughtful,
- and Scripture-centered.

Do not allow:

- ideological polarization,
- vague abstraction,
- or emotionally reactive debate.

Discussion Questions:

- Why does fear often make communities more closed?
- What does healthy Christian welcome look like?
- How can believers remain both discerning and compassionate?

8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit continually stretches believers beyond:

- fear,
- assumptions,

- superiority,
- and limited understandings of belonging.

Spirit-led living requires:

- humility,
- attentiveness,
- compassion,
- discernment,
- and openness to where God is already at work.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit continually moves the Church outward toward people.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

Where might the Holy Spirit be inviting you toward greater humility, compassion, or openness?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 10:1–48 daily
- Pay attention to assumptions or quick judgments
- Practice intentional listening this week
- Pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me become more attentive to where You are already at work.”

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- humility
- wisdom
- compassion
- discernment
- and openness to the Holy Spirit

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to help participants remain rooted in Christ while becoming more attentive to people and responsive to the Spirit's leading.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

This session requires calm, grounded leadership.

Do not allow the discussion to become:

- political,
- reactive,
- or combative.

The goal is not ideological conformity.

The goal is helping participants recognize:

- the Holy Spirit continually stretches the Church,
- humility is essential to spiritual maturity,
- and Spirit-led living moves believers outward toward people with compassion and discernment.

If participants leave:

- more thoughtful,
- more attentive,
- and more open to Spirit-led humility and compassion,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the tone:

- reflective
 - pastoral
 - grounded
 - and centered on Spirit-dependent living.
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