

Introduction

Three years ago, as I was praying about the message series for the following year, I considered doing a series on the churches in the New Testament. Much of that series would have come from the book of Acts. After much thought and prayer, we ended up going through the Gospel of Luke, and now are following it up with the Acts of the Apostles. I love the book of Acts. It is so rich, and we can learn so much about church life. As a church, we want to follow the patterns and principles we find in the book of Acts. So far, we have been learning a lot from the church in Jerusalem. They were unified. They were of one mind. We want to be a church of one mind. And, they were of one mind continually devoting themselves to prayer. We are learning what it means to be devoted to prayer. Praying together as a church is not a popular thing today. It is not in the top ten things to do in a church growth manual. But, it is what the early church did. They were also devoted to the apostles' teaching. We want to be a church devoted to the Word of God. They were a church that was devoted to fellowship. They were not just members of Christ; they were members of one another. They had fellowship or *koinonia*, which means they had things in common. They shared with one another, and the needs of the saints were met. There is so much we can learn from the church at Jerusalem.

(Acts 1:14) "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

(Acts 2:42) "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

In our passage today, we see a continuation of the gospel spreading to other places. At Pentecost, three thousand were added to the church. Then, when the lame man got healed, five thousand men got healed. There were lots of people continually being added to the church. Then, with the stoning of Stephen, a fierce persecution against the church was launched. Believers were scattered everywhere. We saw in Acts 9 that Peter was traveling throughout the regions ministering to the sheep that had been scattered. Then, the Lord brought him to Cornelius' house so that he and his household could receive the gospel. They believed and were baptized in the Holy Spirit in the same way that the Jews were at Pentecost. The mystery of the Gentiles being part of God's plan was being revealed to the Peter and the rest of the church.

Some of those that were scattered because of the persecution went to the region of Phoenicia. Others went to the island of Cyprus, and others came to the city of Antioch. Some preached the gospel to the Jews, but there were others that also preached to the Greeks or Gentiles. God used the persecution to spread the gospel. God works all things together for good, and to accomplish His purposes. In our text today, we have the planting of the church at Antioch. First, the gospel is preached and a large number of people turned to the Lord. Second, the apostles in Jerusalem hear about it and send Barnabas. He forms a leadership team, and they taught considerable numbers. Third, the Antioch Church responds to a prophetic word about a future famine and they send a gift to the elders in Jerusalem.

The Church of Antioch

- A. The Gospel Reaches Antioch
- B. A Leadership Team is Formed
- C. The Antioch Church Responds to a Prophetic Word

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

As we go through our points today, I will identify twelve different characteristics of the Antioch Church. It is a wonderful church to learn from. We want to glean and learn as much as we can from these early churches. Let's read our text.

(Acts 11:19-30) "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. {20} But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. {21} And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. {22} The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. {23} Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; {24} for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. {25} And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. {27} Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. {28} One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. {29} And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. {30} And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders."

A. The Gospel Reaches Antioch

Our text begins with the word so, showing it is a continuation of the previous passages. Peter has received the vision of unclean animals and has been told to eat. Cornelius has an angelic visitation, and has been told to send for Peter so that he and his household can be saved. As Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles, just as He did at Pentecost. Peter understands that God has also extended repentance leading to salvation to the Gentiles. So, he has them all baptized.

(Acts 10:47-48) "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" {48} And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."

Then, the Jews in Jerusalem hear that Peter has gone to the Gentiles and eaten with them. They accuse, charge, and confront him about being with the Gentiles. He recounts to them in an orderly sequence what has happened. They concur that God has extended salvation to the Gentiles. Then, the gospel goes to the Gentiles in Antioch. The little word, "so," tells us that this is part three of the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. This is a continuation of God's plan to include every tribe, tongue, and nation in the kingdom of God. There is no partiality with God. Everyone who believes in Christ is welcome to enter the kingdom.

(Acts 11:18) "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

Luke takes us back in our text to the scattering of the saints in Jerusalem because of the persecution that occurred in connection with the stoning of Stephen. In chapter eight, we found that a great

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

persecution began against the church. With the exception of the apostles, the believers were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. God is sovereign, and He uses all things to accomplish His plans and purposes. His plans were for the church to preach the gospel message in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost places of the earth. The persecution scattered the gospel messengers and launched the preaching of the gospel message outside of Jerusalem.

(Acts 11:19) “So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.”

(Acts 8:1) “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

The Greek word for scattered is diaspeiro (Strong’s G1289), which is an agricultural word. It means to sow throughout, or to scatter abroad. If you picture a farmer taking seed in his hands and casting the seed, you have a picture of what God did. He used the persecution to cast the seed of the gospel throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

Notice that the apostles or leaders of the Jerusalem church were not scattered. That is an important point, because the evangelism that took place was not primarily through the leaders of the church. The spreading of the gospel that led to many people being saved in Antioch was through lay people who were on fire for the Lord and shared the gospel everywhere they went. It was started by people who went out preaching Jesus. **(1) The Antioch Church was an evangelistic church.** Today, we have churches where very few preach Jesus. This was not a problem at Antioch; it was started by people preaching Jesus.

Luke wrote that they made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch. They first scattered to Judea and Samaria. Now, they continued scattering and went to the region of Phoenicia. It is like a ripple in a lake. The rings kept going out from Jerusalem. Eventually, the gospel was going to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. God’s plan was for every tribe, tongue, and nation to be saved. Some of them scattered to the island of Cyprus. Others went up into Syria to the city of Antioch.

Antioch was the third most important city of the Roman Empire. Rome was the capital, and Alexandria was the second leading city. Antioch was the third. It was located in Syria, three hundred miles north of Jerusalem and fifteen miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. It was located on the Orontes River. The ancient ruins of Antioch are in Antakya, Turkey.

Alexander the Great camped along the Orontes river and dedicated an altar to Zeus. Later, after the death of Alexander, his generals divided up the territory he had conquered and Seleucus Nicator was given the territory of Syria. He had four sons and he built a four-city metropolis, with each of the four cities named after his sons. Antioch was the name of one of his sons. Eventually, the city of Antioch rose above the other three cities, and the metropolex was called Antioch. It is no surprise that Antioch is a military word. Seleucus was a General and he gave this particular son a military word that was used for those that drove chariots. It literally means driven against, but the loose interpretation was “speedy as a chariot.”

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

Some of the people spread the gospel to Jews, but there were others that began speaking to the Greeks also. These men were from Cyprus and Cyrene. Cyprus is a fairly large island west of the Syrian coast. We do not have the names of those from Cyprus, but when the apostles looked for someone to send, they chose Barnabas, who also was from Cyprus.

(Acts 11:20) “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.”

We also do not know the names of those from Cyrene, which was a city in Northern Libya, about ten miles from the Mediterranean Sea. It was named after a spring, and the area has kept the classical name of Cyrenaica to this day. It was a part of the Roman Empire. There was a school of philosophy there, which was started by one of Socrates’ disciples. Because of that, it was nicknamed the “Athens of Africa.” There was also a small population of Jews living there. As we look back, Simon, who carried the cross of Jesus, was from Cyrene. He may have been one of those who went to Antioch. We do not know that for sure.

(Mark 15:21) “They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.”

At the feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church, there were Jews from all over the world. Luke records that there were people from the districts of Libya around Cyrene that also were hearing the mighty deeds of God in their own tongues. It is likely that some of these believers were part of the scattering, and went to Antioch.

(Acts 2:8-11) “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? {9} Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, {10} Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, {11} Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

Even more likely is that a man named Lucius was one of the Cyrenians who shared the gospel. If we fast forward to Acts 13, there were five men on the Leadership Team, and Lucius of Cyrene is part of that team. It would make sense that Lucius shared the gospel and led people to Christ. Then, he began to make disciples of these new converts. He became their spiritual leader. There was a calling on his life to be a pastor, and he became part of the Leadership Team at Antioch.

(Acts 13:1) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

In the account of Cornelius, we do not have a record of a church being planted. We know that Cornelius and his household received the gospel. We know that Peter stayed a few days and taught them, but we have no record of a church plant. At Antioch, we have the planting of a church. This is the first time that both Jews and Gentiles will be part of the same church. **(2) The Antioch Church was a multicultural church.** This is radical for their time. There was so much division and hatred between the Jews and Gentiles. They did not associate with one another, but now God is calling them to be in the same family. They are going to be brothers or brethren.

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

In the book of Revelations, the elders are singing a new song. In it, Jesus has purchased with His blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God. All of these tribes and nations will reign upon the earth. God's kingdom is not a racially divided place. There is no partiality with God in heaven. He has one church. The kingdom of God is made up of everyone.

(Rev 5:9-10) "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

However, the church is said to be the most racially divided places in society. It is difficult to overcome some of the cultural and social barriers in our society. At the church I pastored in Atlanta, we reached out to the black community. We held outreaches in the black community. We partnered with black churches. We had joint services and God did some neat things. But, at the end of the day, we only had a few black people attend our church, and they had very few white people in their churches. The music was different. They played songs in different keys. Their style of music was different. Their participation in the service was different. White church services were boring. Their services were interactive and the congregation got into it. The organ played the whole service. It got louder when the preacher got fired up and made his exclamation points. The organ got softer in the tender parts of the message. It was hard to bring two radically different cultures together to worship together. The church at Antioch was a model for all of us in all generations. It was a multi-cultural church from the very beginning.

I mentioned the leadership team that is given in Acts 13. It was a multi-cultural leadership team. Simeon was called Niger. Niger means black. He was probably a black man. Lucius was from Cyrene. Cyrene is in Libya, which is in North Africa. Churches have a far better chance to become multi-cultural when their leadership team is multi-cultural, which is what Antioch had.

(Acts 13:1) "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

(3) The Antioch Church was a powerful church. Luke records that the hand of the Lord was with them. The hand of the Lord represents many things in Scripture. Very often, it represents power, dominion, rule, and authority. Sometimes, it means support. I believe that God's favor, support, authority, and power was with them as they preached the gospel to the Greeks. It says that a large number of people who believed turned to the Lord.

(Acts 11:21) "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord."

Do you want the hand of the Lord to be with our church? Do you want the hand of the Lord to be upon your life? Here are a few thoughts on how we can have the hand of the Lord. In Isaiah 41, God calls them His servants. Then, He said that His righteous right hand will support them. Church, God supports His servants. Be faithful to serve God with your whole heart. If it is serving in the children's ministry, serve Him with all your heart. If it is serving on the Media Team, do it with all your heart.

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

If you are not serving, find a place to serve in the body. God supports His servants. Second, we see in that passage that we are not to look anxiously about us. That speaks of trust. God supports those who place their trust in Him. Step out in faith and trust God. He will uphold you with His righteous right hand.

(Isa 41:9-10) “You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. {10} 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'”

In 2 Chronicles 16:9, we find that the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. God is looking for people throughout the earth to strongly support. He is not looking for just anyone. He is looking to support those whose heart is completely His. He wants to support those who are serving Him, and are doing His will on earth. Seek God first in your life. Love Him with all of your heart. Put Him before everything else in your life. Give Him the first time of each day. Spend time worshipping Him. Spend time listening to Him. Spend time in His word. Honor Him with your wealth and from the first of all your produce. He will strongly support you with His righteous right hand. If we want to be a church that the hand of the Lord is with us, we must put Him first and honor Him above all things. We must be found doing His will and His work. He will strongly support us.

(2 Chron 16:9) “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His....”

Let me give you one quick example. At the North Florida PGA championship, I was near the lead going into the final day. On the back side, I sensed an opportunity to share the gospel with a playing companion, Robbie Gilmore. As I shared the gospel with him, the hairs on my arm stood up. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit was upon me. I made several long putts in a row, surging ahead, and won the tournament by four shots. I did not share the gospel to win the tournament. I shared the gospel because I am God’s servant, and I am always looking for a way to do His work. God’s hand was with me, and His hand will be on all of us as we do His work.

B. A Leadership Team is Formed

When the news that the gospel had gone to the Gentiles reached Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. He was from Cyprus, and was well respected and trusted by the apostles. It was Barnabas that vouched for Paul when he came to Jerusalem and was not able to move about freely. Based on his word, Paul was able to join the church in Jerusalem and freely move about. Barnabas was also a prophet. Prophets encourage people, and new believers would need encouragement. Prophets also have discernment and insight into things, and this is something that the apostles trusted Barnabas to do. Furthermore, prophets also give direction, and this new work in Antioch needed direction.

(Acts 11:22) “The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.”

(Acts 4:36) “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),”

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

(Acts 9:27-28) “But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. {28} And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.”

The office of prophet is one of the ministry gifts in Ephesians 4. These five ministry gifts are called to equip the saints for the work of service. These considerable numbers of new believers needed to be equipped and disciplined. Therefore, Barnabas was a great selection to go lead the new work. He was also a great leader of leaders.

(Eph 4:11-12) “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”

Barnabas was a prophet. His nickname meant “son of prophecy” or “son of encouragement.” **(4) The Antioch Church was a prophetic church.** In addition to Barnabas, there were others on the leadership team that were prophets. The last part of our passage today is about how Antioch responded to a prophetic word. They operated in prophetic ministry, and they received prophetic ministry from others.

(Acts 13:1) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

Barnabas also “rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.” That is what a prophet does. He encourages others. We are told to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that we would prophesy. Prophecy builds up and encourages the body. That is what Barnabas did, and that is what we should do. Find ways to encourage and build up the others in the body. If you want the church to grow, find ways to encourage those who come. Guess what, people will want to come to a church that encourages them.

(Acts 11:23) “Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;”

(1 Cor 14:1-4) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy....{3} But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. {4} One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”

I am not a big Joel Osteen fan. I prefer to listen to an expositor rather than a story-teller. But, Joel is considered one of the top ten most influential people in America. His Sunday services average almost 50,000 people. In addition to that, his television audience is in the millions. Why do people listen to Joel? What is it that attracts people to Joel? It is because he gives positive and encouraging words. People are edified. That is very attractive to people. We get beat up and discouraged out in the work place. We get dry and thirsty and we need to be watered. Joel gives water to the thirsty and encouragement to the discouraged. That is what a prophetic church does. It encourages one another. Find someone and encourage them in their walk. Encourage them to stay resolute to the Lord.

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

When Barnabas arrived, he witnessed the grace of God. **(5) The Antioch Church was a grace-filled church.** We want to be a grace-filled church. Barnabas witnessed the grace of God, because it is by the grace of God that we are saved. It is not by works of the Law, but by grace that we are saved. These Gentiles were not trying to earn their way by works; they simply believed in Jesus and were saved. The grace of God was very evident.

(Eph 2:8-9) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Two weeks ago I was in Fort Worth all week at a conference. We cancelled our Monday morning Bible study since I would not be there that morning. James was not there on the prior week, and I neglected to tell him that we were not meeting. On Monday morning, James went to our office at 5:45 and nobody was there. He texted me and asked if we were meeting. I told him that I was just getting ready to leave for Fort Worth. I asked him to forgive me for not letting him know in advance. James texted me back, “Not a problem brother; it’s called GRACE!!!!” I texted him back, “Thanks.” Grace is more than just unmerited favor with God. Grace is something that we must extend to one another. I am going to mess up. I will miss it at times. Please extend grace to me. And guess what, all of you are going to mess up at times. All of you will need some grace at times. We want to be a grace-filled church.

While I was in Fort Worth, Laura, who is our Marketing Director, was telling me that their pastor said something awful. She said that if people were going to leave a church every time someone said something wrong, or said something right, but at the wrong time or in the wrong way, there would be nobody in church. She said we must learn to give grace to one another. We can’t be getting offended at one another. We must give grace and forgiveness to one another. We can learn from the church at Antioch.

Luke goes on to say that Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. What should you look for in a leader of a church. You want someone who is trustworthy. You want someone who is an encourager. You also want someone who is a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith. Character is important when you look at a leader. But, character alone is not what is necessary to be a leader. You want your leaders to be full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith. When you put all the things that you want to see in a spiritual leader on a check list, Barnabas gets check marks on everything.

(Acts 11:24) “for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”

Generally, a church takes on the characteristics of its leaders. If the leader is a teacher, the church will have a tendency of being very teaching oriented. If a church is led by a prophet, it will lean more towards being a prophetic church. If the leader has the gift of serving, the church will tend to be more service oriented. Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit. **(6) The Antioch Church was a spirit-filled church.** One evidence of this is that the saints were first called Christians in Antioch. Christian means a little Christ or a follower of Christ. Christ means anointed one. These believers were very anointed and full of the Holy Spirit, so much so that they were called little anointed ones or Christians.

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

(Acts 11:25-26) “And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

Luke records that Barnabas was also full of faith. **(7) The Antioch Church was also a faith-filled church.** We see an example of this in the last portion of our text. The church was given a prophetic word about a famine that would be coming. They took an offering and sent it to Jerusalem for the relief of the saints in Judea. The famine had not even happened. This was something that they did in faith. The Antioch Church was a faith-filled church, led by a man who was full of faith.

(Acts 11:27-30) “Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. {28} One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. {29} And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. {30} And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”

After Barnabas assesses the situation and needs of the church, he leaves Antioch to look for Saul. After finding him, he brings him back to Antioch. Then, for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers. There are two things that we see about Barnabas and the church. First, Barnabas believed in team ministry. He was not a one-man show. He did not have a CEO type of leadership, which is very prevalent in the church today. **(8) The Antioch Church was a team-led church.** He had a shared ministry. He and Paul taught the church. Today, many lead pastors teach about 80% or more of the time. I happen to think that Paul did more of the teaching. I say this because in Acts 14 when Barnabas and Paul were in Lystra, they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. In Greek mythology, Zeus was the lead god. Barnabas was the team leader and so they called him Zeus. Hermes was the chief spokesperson for Zeus, which is why they called Paul Hermes. This arrangement of Paul doing most of the teaching certainly goes against the model in the American church. It does though take full advantage of the giftings on the leadership team. Paul was a gifted teacher and preacher.

(Acts 14:12) “And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.”

We also see evidence of this team-led church in Acts 13:1. The Leadership Team was made up of prophets and teachers. After one year, there were five men on this leadership team. Barnabas and Paul effectively raised up and trained a team of leaders to shepherd the church. They were so effective that when the Holy Spirit said to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the apostolic work that He had for them, they were able to send them off and carry on without them.

(Acts 13:1) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

We believe in team ministry. We believe in the plurality of leaders. We believe in training our leaders. We believe in developing assistant leaders in our Life Groups so that the groups can grow and multiply. Not every leader that we raise up is going to stay in our church. When Karen came

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

back from IHOP, she told me how many thousands of interns that they had used. Very few of the interns are still there. Most had been trained and released to serve in other places around the world.

The second thing that we see in this verse is that they taught the believers for a year. **(9) The Antioch Church was a teaching church.** Even though they had prophetic ministry and evangelism, they had solid teaching. Paul was the primary teacher, and he wrote at least half of the New Testament. As a church, having sound doctrine is very important to me. I greatly appreciate those of you who check out the things that are taught. I believe we should be like the Bereans who make sure that the things they are taught line up with God's word.

(Acts 17:11) "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

(10) The Antioch Church was also a disciple-making church. Notice that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. A church can have good teaching, but not make disciples. Making disciples requires an investment of time into people. It requires someone who is willing to receive input and training from someone else. It also requires someone who is willing to invest the life of another person. I have been listening to a number of prophets in the body of Christ to see what they are seeing for 2016. Rick Joyner, the leader of Morningstar Ministries, spoke about how God wants to raise up sons and daughters. He gave five levels of relationships with Christ. The first level is believers. Believers have received Christ into their life. They are saved and eternally secure. Rick believes that 90% of the church goers in America are at this level.

(Acts 11:26b) "and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

The second level is a disciple. Disciples take up their cross, and follow Christ. They have a much higher commitment to Christ. The Greek word for disciple is mathetes, which means learner. Disciples are those who are learning to be like Christ. The Antioch Church was a disciple-making church. Our mission at EMVC is to be a church that preaches the gospel and makes disciples.

(Luke 14:27) "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The third level of relationship is a bond-servant. A bond-servant has come to the place of complete service to the Lord. They live to serve Christ. Whatever needs to be done, they will do it. They know that they belong to Christ, and everything they have belongs to Christ. They recognize the goodness of God and have voluntarily given their life to serve Christ.

The fourth level of relationship with Christ is a friend. Friends have fellowship with Christ. They serve God, but more importantly, they fellowship with God. In John 15, Jesus said, "no longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." They like to sit at His feet and listen to Him. They like to worship Him. They can't spend enough time with Christ; they just want more and more. Karen is a great example of this. She can't spend enough time with Him. She fasts on Friday evenings and gets up at three on Saturday mornings, just to spend extra time with the Lord. Recently, she said she needs to add another day to this and get up twice a week at three to spend more time with the Lord. She is a friend of God.

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

(John 15:15) “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

The fifth level of relationship is a son or daughter. Rick believes that when we have more sons and daughters, we will see a great release of miracles in the church.

C. The Antioch Church Responds to a Prophetic Word

We have already seen that Antioch is a prophetic church. Barnabas and other leaders in the church were prophets. While most prophecy is to be encouraging, some give glimpses of the future. At this time some prophets came from Jerusalem. Agabus was one of them, and he gave a word that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. The disciples in Antioch took a collection and sent money to the brethren living in Judea.

(Acts 11:27-30) “Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. {28} One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. {29} And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. {30} And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”

We glean two more things from this. First, **(11) The Antioch Church was a giving church.** There was no pressure to give. They gave according to the proportion that they had means. They gave from their heart. These were not tithes that they gave. This was an offering for the relief of the brethren in Judea.

The second thing that we can glean from their offering is one of the most important things that we see in the early church. **(12) The Antioch Church was a unified church.** They gave to the relief of the brethren living in Judea. Note, that these are both Jewish and Gentile believers in one church. They are giving to the brethren in Judea. These Gentiles considered the Jews in Judea to be their brethren. The Greek word for brethren is adelphos. The root is delphus, which means womb. Adelphos means from the same womb. These Gentile believers saw the Jewish believers in Judea as their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were family members. They had the same concern for them as they would a family member.

In Paul’s instructions to Timothy about taking care of widows, he exhorts family members to take care of the widows in their own families so that the church is not burdened with the care of them. He concludes by saying that “if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” These Gentile believers in Antioch saw the believers in Jerusalem as family members from the same womb, and they sent relief to help provide for the members of their own household.

(1 Tim 5:8) “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

23 The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

We saw in Acts 2 that the saints were devoted to fellowship or koinonia. They had all things in common. The word, “common,” is koinos, from which we get koinonia. They were devoted to fellowship, and part of that is sharing with one another. They had tremendous unity, and consequently, there was great power in the church. There were signs and wonders taking place.

(Acts 2:42-45) “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. {43} Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. {44} And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; {45} and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

We also saw this in Acts 4. The congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. They had great unity, which was evidenced by the sharing with those that had need. We also see that there was great power in the church at that time. There is a correlation between the unity, evidenced by taking care of one another, and the power in the church.

(Acts 4:32-35) “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. {33} And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. {34} For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales {35} and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

The same principle of taking care of one another in the family is clearly evident in Antioch. As we come to a close, I want to finish with the last few verses of Acts 4. The church in Jerusalem were selling land and houses and bringing the proceeds of the sales and laying them at the apostles' feet, and the proceeds would be distributed to those in need. Luke records the example of Barnabas. He owned a tract of land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. This is the leader of the Antioch Church. He brought that same concern for one another and unity to Antioch.

(Acts 4:36-37) “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), {37} and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

Conclusion

As we come to a close, I would like to have the Leadership Team come forward. God is calling us to unity. There has been a spiritual attack on our church. It is a spirit that accuses the brethren. It is a spirit that is seeking to break the unity and divide the church. I want to share a few things about our leadership team.

Finally, I want us to defend and protect one another. We must have each other's back. We cannot allow gossip, slander, or accusations. We must lock arms with one another and create a wall around our body. We must stand in unity. Let's join arms and pray.

Introduction (Acts 1:14, 2:42, 11:19-30)**A. The Gospel Reaches Antioch** (Acts 10:47-48, 11:18-19, 8:1)

1. The Antioch Church was an _____ church.
(Acts 2:8-11, 11:20, 13:1, Mark 15:21)
2. The Antioch Church was a _____ church.
(Rev 5:9-10, Acts 13:1)
3. The Antioch Church was a _____ church. (Acts 11:21, Isa 41:9-10, 2 Chron 16:9)

B. A Leadership Team is Formed (Acts 4:36, 9:27-28, 11:22, Eph 4:11-12)

4. The Antioch Church was a _____ church. (Acts 11:23, 13:1, 1 Cor 14:1-4)
5. The Antioch Church was a _____ - _____ church.
(Eph 2:8-9, Acts 11:24)
6. The Antioch Church was a _____ - _____ church.
(Acts 11:25-26)
7. The Antioch Church was a _____ - _____ church.
(Acts 11:27-30)
8. The Antioch Church was a _____ - _____ church.
(Acts 13:1, 14:12)
9. The Antioch Church was a _____ church. (Acts 17:11)
10. The Antioch Church was a _____ - _____ church. (Acts 11:26b, Luke 14:27, John 15:15)

C. The Church Responds to a Prophetic Word (Acts 11:27-30)

11. The Antioch Church was a _____ church.
12. The Antioch Church was a _____ church. (1 Tim 5:8, Acts 2:42-45, 4:32-37)

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