

The Church in Antioch



Ice-Breaker

What is the farthest from home you have ever been? Why were you there?



Scripture Passage

Acts 11:19-30

19Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

22News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

25Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

27During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.



Bible Study

1. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman empire. What might the apostles feel as they hear the Gospel is taking root there (v. 23)?

2. Write a character reference for Barnabas based on verses 22-26 (also 4:36-37). From this profile, why did Barnabas recruit Saul (9:27-28)?



Reference Notes

11:19 Since there were Jewish communities through the Roman Empire, it is not at all unusual that the Jewish believers would have spread throughout such a large area. **Phoenicia**. Modern Lebanon. **Antioch**. Located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, this was the Roman capital of the province of Syria. It was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria), with a population estimated at 750,000, including a Jewish community of 25,000. A well-developed road system and access to a seaport made Antioch an important transportation and communication center. An early tradition teaches that Antioch was Luke's home.

11:20-21 These disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene were Jews who lived away from Judea and were used to interaction with Gentiles. This broader mission does not necessarily represent a conscious

decision to challenge accepted practice. The synagogues in Antioch were undoubtedly attended by Gentile God-fearers (like Cornelius) who were attracted to the ethics and values of Judaism while not accepting its customs regarding food, circumcision and Sabbath regulations. It is probably with these Gentiles that the believers shared the Gospel.

11:23-24 Barnabas did not require the Gentile converts to submit to Jewish traditions, but only encouraged them to maintain a heartfelt loyalty to Jesus as Lord. This is the essence of Christian discipleship. His message, coupled with his character, drew many to faith.

11:26 *The disciples were called Christians.* By the time of Luke's writing, this Latin term was a widespread name for the believers. As the Herodians were people loyal to Herod, so this name points out that the believers professed loyalty to Christ. Since the only other places in the New Testament where this term is used are situations of ridicule and persecution (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), it may have been originally a name used to mock the believers.

11:27-30 While the church in Antioch differed greatly from that in Jerusalem, they were linked by prophets and teachers who operated in both circles and by a common concern for the welfare of each other.

11:27 *some prophets.* The Christian prophets were people who, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke the message of Jesus to the contemporary situation facing the church, warning it of dangers and comforting it in trial (see Acts 21:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:1-5).

11:28 There was no single widespread famine during Claudius' reign (A.D. 41-54), but there were at least five localized famines during this period, including one that affected Judea around A.D. 46.

11:29 Luke shows that the expanding, diverse church continued to demonstrate the same spirit of sharing and love that characterized it when it was a relatively small, homogeneous group in Jerusalem (Acts 2:45; 4:32-35).

11:30 Whether Galatians 2:1-10 refers to this visit or the one Paul makes in Acts 15 is debated. Luke's point is to show the care of the church for its members and the emerging role of Paul as a recognized leader. There is probably a two to three year interval between the prophecy (v. 28) and the actual delivery of the gift.

Caring Time

1. With whom do you associate that no minister would normally contact? How do you share the Gospel with those people?
2. Would these people be comfortable in your church?
3. What is the most unusual thing the Holy Spirit has done in your life?