

Antioch | WHERE EVERYONE SHARES THE GOSPEL

INTRO

The church in Antioch is an exemplary church from what we read in Scripture. This is also the group of believers that see [Acts 1:8](#) begin to be fulfilled in regard to reaching the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8 ESV

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Antioch church doesn't begin with fanfare or major apostolic presence. It actually begins in a really dark place as a product of really hard times.

Acts 11:19-26 ESV

¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

1: Dark Place & Hard Times (V19)

Dark Place: Antioch

- Diverse city with at least a Greek, Roman, Syrian and Jewish presence
- Population estimate of 500k
 - Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the Roman Empire (behind Rome and Alexandria)
 - Jewish population somewhere between 25-50k
- Located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem
- Was a great trade center and the capitol city of the Roman province of Syria
- It was known as "Rome of the East" – Highly significant
- Was steeped in the worship of false gods
 - Particularly the goddess Daphne–Astarte cult with its cultic prostitution
- The city was known for it's vices and immorality and not its virtues.

*Doesn't sound like the ideal place for a work of God to begin... or maybe it does?

Hard Times: Persecution

- The persecution led by Saul that began with Stephen's martyrdom has chased many of the Christians out of Jerusalem.
- The farthest north these Jewish Christians fled were to the cities of Phoenicia (north on the coast), Cyprus (250 miles by sea), and Antioch (300 miles north, 15 days walking)
 - With Antioch being the furthest.
- Note: there doesn't seem to be any planned missions trip or 'spirit led initiative' to get to Antioch.
 - Its the byproduct of men and women fleeing persecution.
 - BUT GOD had other plans!

2: New Method For A New Day (V20)

Old Method: Speak To Jews Only

- The church at this point is almost entirely Jewish
- They are preaching the Messiah to the Jews
- Jesus had called them to 'be his witnesses' to the ends of the earth, but the church was slow to take the gospel to the gentiles.
 - In fact in [Acts 10](#) - Peter had to receive a vision from the Lord to go to Cornelius' house in Caesarea.
 - Later he was grilled for eating with and staying with 'uncircumcised men'
 - When he told them about the vision from God and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the men eventually reply:
Acts 11:18 ESV
¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."
- Point being: they are slow, very slow to take the gospel to the gentiles.
 - They definitely weren't thinking about the greek speaking gentiles 300 miles north in that nasty town of Antioch.

New Method: Speak To The Greeks Too!

- When a particular group gets to Antioch (we'll talk about who in a moment) – they decide to go off course – break with the standard way and methods.
- They go and share the gospel outside of the Jewish quarter of the city.

Speaking and Preaching:

- The emphasis seems to be on 'speaking' first and later preaching.
- The word 'spoke' used in v20 is the Gk word 'laleo'
 - Used 296 times in the NT
 - Only 1 time is it used for preaching
 - Most often its used, as here for 'speaking'
- Big idea: they simply spoke to their neighbors about Jesus

- Told these people in this dark city of Antioch about the savior!
- Told them about his works
- Told them about his words
- Told them about how he's changed their lives
- Told them about the Gospel and eternal life!

Preaching the LORD Jesus:

- This is how we know that it was a definite change of methodology
 - To the Jews, the church preached Jesus as the Christ or Messiah
 - To the Gentiles, the church spoke and preached about the LORD Jesus.
 - Seems like a small difference, but in fact was huge
 - (both aspects are true btw – just one is more relatable initially than the other)
- They are taking the same message – gospel truth – and introducing it through different avenues
 - One packaged for the Jews
 - Other packaged for the Gentiles (non Jews)

Big idea:

- **Mission never changes**

Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Acts 1:8 ESV

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- **Message never changes**

- We preach Christ and Christ crucified
- No other gospel

- **Methodology HAS to**

- When we speak from one culture to another
- When we cross generations

3: Your Everyday, Ordinary Joes (V20, 22, 25)

Q: Who does this innovative, cross-cultural, demonic stronghold breaking ministry? The apostles or... the average Joes?

V20: Men of Cyprus & Cyrene

- Unnamed heroes
 - But I looked it up. Joseph and Joses were the second most common Jewish names in those cities in the 1st century (2nd only to Simon or Simeon)
- Jewish Christians who had settled in Gentile cities
 - They grew up with a gentile context, rather than a Jerusalem context
 - You could imagine that they had a 'heart for lost people'
 - No wonder that it's not the scattered Jerusalem Christians who first break the barriers, but the Jewish Christians from gentile cities that do.
- God used their background and upbringing - their context for the mission he had for them.
- The church needs leaders (as we'll consider Barnabas and Saul for a moment), but it's the everyday members in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that make it grow!

V22-23: Church Leaders Send Barnabas

- His role is to encourage the church
 - remain faithful to the Lord
 - with steadfast purpose - keep on mission
- Note: Barnabas too, wasn't an apostle
 - He was just a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.
 - He had spiritual giftings (later) and talents...
 - but he too wasn't a 'big name', didn't have a title
 - He did have a nickname: Barnabas

- His real name was... JOSEPH!

V25-26: Barnabas Seeks Out Saul

- Barnabas, recognizes he needs help and he seeks out Saul
 - The very same guy that sent all these Jerusalem Christians running to Antioch. Imagine their surprise!
- Seek out
 - The greek word used here implies to seek with difficulty.
 - He had trouble finding him, and after a great search he found him and brought him back.
- Again, I bring this up because Saul's real name was.... Saul (not Joseph or Joses)
 - But he was on the fringe. An outsider. Lacked a title.
 - The name he had wasn't great (yet)

Big Idea:

- The Antioch church is a great model because it wasn't built on titles or big names, just your everyday average Joes speaking to their neighbors (no matter how impossibly lost or far from God they seem).
- And God worked wonders!
 - Prior to this, it seemed to be wonder working power was with the apostles
 - In Antioch... its the Joes, the Barney's, and the dude with a crazy past that no one trusts yet!

4: Holy Spirit Anointing & Power (V21, 23)

V21: The Hand Of The Lord Was With Them

- The everyday Joe's – not the apostles (which has been the prior recording in Acts)
- The wording, 'hand of the Lord' implies:
 - His presence
 - His anointing (he helped them say what needed to be said)

- His power
- They didn't just 'speak' to their gentile neighbors... they were vessels for the Lord's message and power.

V21: A Great Number Believe And Turn To The Lord

- The results were miraculous.

V22-23: They Heard, He Saw the Grace of God

- The apostles and church leaders 300 miles south in Jerusalem hear about it.
- They sent Barnabas to investigate it and make sure it stays on track.
- When he gets there.. he sees the grace of God.
 - He sees the great number of gentiles believing in and worshiping Jesus as Lord.
 - He sees the lives changed and transformed
 - He sees the gospel at work and he rejoiced.

5: So What!? What Happened?

Antioch Becomes A Diverse Church—Jew & Gentile

- It crosses boundaries that had been uncrossable
- It broke down barriers and cultural divides that seemed impossible
- It was led by spirit-filled average christians (Christ followers) rather than Jerusalem's apostles
 - But there's connection maintained between the two. Don't mixup what i'm saying.

Antioch Becomes The Missions Center

- As Acts unfolds... the missionary activity shifts to Antioch.
- The church that was started by everyday missionaries... becomes a missions focused church!

RESPONSE: WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?

- 1: A church where everyone can be used by the Lord
- 2: A church where MISSION is priority over METHODOLOGY
- 3: A church that is UNITED in Christ and His gospel, not divided by manmade boundaries