

LIFE OF PAUL - WEEK 7
8-16-26

Paul's life was dramatically changed when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. The man who once persecuted followers of Christ became a passionate preacher of the Gospel:

- Paul went from **persecuting Christians to proclaiming Christ**.
- His preaching resulted in opposition and attempts on his life.
- Peter received a vision showing that the Gospel was not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles.
- The Gospel began spreading into places and people groups beyond its original Jewish context.

Key thought: God's plan was bigger than the boundaries people had placed around the Gospel.

1. God Was Working In Antioch: Acts 11:19–21 - The believers who had been scattered because of persecution continued preaching the Word. Some began speaking to Greeks and Gentiles about Jesus.

Acts 11:21 - "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."

Antioch was a large, influential city known for commerce—but it was also known for its corruption and immorality.

Yet this is where God was moving.

Important truth: God can bring transformation in the middle of a spiritually dark culture. The church in Jerusalem heard about what was happening and sent Barnabas to investigate.

Consider: Do I tend to celebrate when I hear about God moving, or do I immediately question whether it is genuine?

2. Barnabas Looked For God's Grace: Acts 11:22–24 Barnabas arrived in Antioch and "**saw what the grace of God had done.**"

Instead of looking for everything that was wrong, Barnabas looked for what **God was doing**. He didn't criticize the new believers because they weren't doing everything the way Jerusalem did it. He recognized God's work and **rejoiced**.

Acts 4:36–37 - Barnabas was known as the "**son of encouragement.**"

A Challenge for Us – It is easy to walk into a church, ministry, or situation and immediately notice:

- What we don't like, What we would change, What isn't our preference, What seems different from what we're accustomed to
- What we think someone is doing wrong

Barnabas gives us another approach: **Look for God's grace.**

Ask yourself: "**Where do I see God working?**"

God was changing lives in Antioch, and Barnabas gave the glory to God rather than himself or the people involved.

3. Encouragement Is Part Of Our Ministry: Barnabas didn't simply recognize what God was doing.

He encouraged the people to remain faithful to the Lord.

His message wasn't: Become successful. Become popular. Become comfortable.

His encouragement was to **remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. The Antioch believers needed encouragement.** They were living in a corrupt culture.

They would face the following challenges as we do today:

- Opposition, Backlash, Temptation, Pressure to compromise, The challenge of living differently

Scripture to Remember:

1 Thessalonians 5:11- "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..."

Hebrews 10:24–25 reminds believers to spur one another toward love and good deeds and to continue encouraging one another.

Proverbs 18:21 teaches that the tongue has the power of life and death.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Someone around you may need encouragement today.

A simple: Text, Phone call, Note, Conversation, Prayer, or Words of affirmation

can speak life into someone who is struggling.

Ask yourself: Who is one person God may be putting on my heart to encourage this week?

4. Barnabas Was Willing To Share The Work - Acts 11:25–26 Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul. He could have stayed in Antioch and continued receiving recognition for what was happening.

Instead, he recognized that the work was bigger than himself. He went looking for Paul so they could minister together.

Barnabas demonstrated discipleship – He:

- Recognized the need for help. Invested in another person. Mentored Paul. Created an opportunity for Paul to grow. Helped develop someone who would eventually take the Gospel farther than he could.

Discipleship means investing in people so they can become who God has called them to be.

Consider: Am I only doing ministry myself, or am I intentionally investing in someone else? **Who am I encouraging, mentoring, teaching, or developing?**

5. They Were First Called Christians - Acts 11:26 "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." This happened in **Antioch**, not Jerusalem. That is significant. Antioch was known for its immorality and worship of other gods, yet it was there that followers of Jesus became known as **Christians**. The name identified them as people associated with Christ—**Christ-ones** or people belonging to Jesus.

Their surroundings did not determine their identity. Their relationship with Christ did. They lived in a culture that did not look like Jesus, yet their lives looked so much like Jesus that people noticed.

6. Christ Should Be Visible In Our Lives - Anyone can claim the name **Christian**.

Anyone can: Wear a cross. Put a Christian symbol on something. Attend church. Say they believe in Jesus. Put "Christian" on a church sign.

But the believers in Antioch were identified as Christians because their **lives reflected Christ**.

The Big Question: If you never told anyone you were a Christian, would people still know you belong to Jesus?

Would they see Jesus in your: Character? Marriage? Workplace? Conversations? Treatment of other people? Generosity? Forgiveness? Private life? Decisions when nobody is watching?

The goal isn't simply to **claim the name Christian**. The goal is to **live like someone who belongs to Christ**.

This Week:

1. **Look for God's grace.** Instead of immediately looking for what is wrong, look for where God is working.
 2. **Encourage people.** Our words have the power to bring life and strength to someone who is struggling.
 3. **Invest in others.** Like Barnabas invested in Paul, we should intentionally help others grow in Christ.
 4. **Give God the glory.** When God does something great, recognize His work and celebrate what He is doing.
 5. **Live visibly for Christ.** Being a Christian is more than carrying the name. Our lives should make the name make sense.
- Personal Reflection:** Where is God asking me to grow? Who can I encourage this week? Who can I intentionally invest in or disciple? Do the people around me see Jesus in the way I live?

Challenge for the Week: Don't just tell people you belong to Jesus—live in such a way that they can see that you do. "When Christ becomes the center of our lives, people should be able to see whose we are."



**PRAYER
& PRAISE**

8/31 @ 6pm in the Sanctuary

Going Beyond

VIRTUAL EVENT

PRISCILLA SHIRER

Worship with Anthony Evans

Scan the QR Code to Register



Saturday, September 19th
9am-3:30pm

**CUMBERLAND FELLOWSHIP
CFLIFE.CHURCH**

**BACK TO SCHOOL
APPRECIATION**
August Love Your Neighbor

- *Pray for school employees
- *Send an encouraging card
- *Bake cookies for a school
- *Give your favorite school employee a gift card
- *Drop off school supplies
- *Volunteer at a school of your choice
- *Stock the teacher's lounge with treat

CF Men

**Men's coffee
Thursdays @
6am in the
Terrace**



LOVE. GROW. GO