

## **Expanding Influence**

### **Acts 11:19-12:5**

**vs. 19**, Antioch (in Syria)

There are Greeks in the community that have shown a large amount of interest in the lives and practices of the Jews (monotheism).

**vs. 21-24**, The Lord's hand was with them. A large number who believed turned to the Lord.

Paradigm disruption

Is this what God wants? This seems out of control.

Barnabas observes big things happening in Antioch.

- He saw the grace of God.
- He encourages the new believers to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts.
- He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

**vs. 24**, Emotions shown in Luke's writing.

**Question:** How are you described by others? How can you be a person of encouragement? What does it look like for you to speak worth and hope into the lives of others? Are you a person full of the Holy Spirit and faith? If so, how do others know?

**vs. 25**, Barnabas goes to Tarsus and brings Saul to Antioch.

Barnabas' humility is an example of sacrificial love.

Barnabas knew what the people needed was the gifting of Saul. His ego didn't get in the way.

### **Tarsus**

**Philippians 3:8** More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ

Saul's time in Antioch was a time for mission clarity, preparation, and expansion.

**Question:** How is Jesus using this stage of your life for clarity, preparation, and expansion? What is different about you because of your time in Tucson, your current vocation, Second Mile, etc.?

- What is the new covenant? How does this alter everyone's worldview and way of life?

**vs. 26**, First called Christians at Antioch

Christ - Greek word for Messiah / Anointed one / God's anointed king

The king's people

The Antioch church was a mixed body of Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles.

Antioch was the birthplace of foreign missions (Acts 13:2)

This new label doesn't come without its problems for the church.

- The movement is at risk of losing protection of a recognized religion within the Roman Empire.
- Judaism was allowed to practice their religion. Rome viewed Jesus followers as sect within Judaism.
- Jesus followers are different than those in Judaism.

**vs. 27-30**,

### **Agabus / Prophecy**

Prophets are given as gifts to the church for the building up and equipping of the saints (Ephesians 4:11).

**Acts 2:17-18** And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. **18** I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy.

### **Famine**

Josephus tells of a particularly severe famine in Palestine about AD 45–47 which took place in Egypt.

- Egypt was the breadbasket for the region.
- Food shortages and price hikes created by a famine affected the poor the most..
- These types of ongoing problems in the region required the early church to adjust, serve, and be a people of generosity.

### **Generosity**

At the forefront of their thoughts was not, “How can we survive?”

Instead their thoughts were, “How do we help those who will be worse off than us?”

Notice the direction of the funds. From the new Jewish-Gentile church in Antioch to the more established predominantly Jewish community in Jerusalem.

Social and cultural boundaries are being crossed.

Attitudes are being confronted.

**Question:** How does your life demonstrate genuine care for your brothers and sisters in Christ? How is your life a proclamation of Jesus through the act of generosity? Is your generosity conditioned?

### **vs. 30, Elders**

- First use of the term elders in Acts.
- At this stage in early church life the pattern of elder is being carried over from Jewish synagogue practices.

### **Timing (Chronology)**

**Galatians 2:2, 9-10** I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain. **9** they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do.

Paul returning to Jerusalem, “according to a revelation” most likely is related to Agabus’ prophecy.

### **12:1-5, The Hornet’s nest**

Herod Agrippa I (41-44AD) - grandson of Herod the Great (37BC-4BC). The Herod of Matthew 2

Luke is purposely creating a link by utilizing the title, “Herod”.

Herod the Tetrach of Galilee (4BC-39AD) beheaded John the Baptist (Luke 3:19-20), conspired to have Jesus killed (Luke 23:6-12).

Agrippa enjoyed his seat of power and did what was necessary to keep his constituents happy.

- Shaping perception to gain the affections of the people. Genuine care is not part of the story. Self promotion is the name of the game.
- Political savvy served him well.
- Understanding his character leads us to understand his actions..

Perspective: Life is hard. The human experience always involves pain.

But...Jesus! He is our hope, he gives life, he brings joy, he connects love with purpose. He provides an opportunity to experience lasting change.