

How the Church Gave—Acts 11:25-30—5/10/26

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Happy Mothers' Day! I thank God for you moms & grandmothers & other Christian women who are faithfully living God's design.

As I've said before, you are an endangered species in our time, a rare treasure that we want to protect & preserve.

The world cannot flourish without you & we pray for God to raise up many more ladies like you as nurturers for generations to come.

I realize Mothers' Day can present a mix of emotions, but I pray we can all praise God for His wise design for the family.

Every year in my Mothers' Day message, I love to praise God for biblical womanhood & the blessings of mothers & children.

This year, I want to connect Mothers' Day to our study of Acts as I finish Acts 11 today before my summer furlough.

Since **motherhood** requires much **giving**, it's fitting to **honor** mothers with today's text that displays **how the church gave**.

When we think of giving, we begin with God as the greatest Giver who so loved the world that He gave, as John 3:16 says.

Within the Trinity, God the Father gave God the Son, the highest valued gift possible in the greatest sacrifice imaginable.

God's gift of Jesus to become a man & die for sinners displays His gracious, sacrificial love for those who did not deserve it.

And God designed motherhood to display His love as moms **sacrifice** to care for their babies around the clock.

Paul even used motherhood as an analogy of sacrificial love in his ministry in his words in 1st Thessalonians 2:7-8.

2nd Thessalonians 2:7-8 says, "*we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to **impart to you** not only the gospel of God but **also our own lives**."*

As with moms, Paul's loving generosity included **his time & his wealth** channeled toward real needs & meaningful goals.

And that's also how the early church gave in Acts 11.

Last week we observed some key ingredients present when the church grows & that theme continues in today's section.

When the church is **growing**, the church is **also giving**.

So we need to consider **how** we give of **ourselves & our resources** as part of evaluating our influence in the world.

We need to examine **what** we invest in & **why & how** to see if we are thinking biblically & living strategically for the Gospel.

We have a model to help us in **Acts 11:25-30** today as we return to the church of new believers that began in Antioch.

We're going to outline **3 descriptions** of **how the church gave** that can help us evaluate & guide our giving today.

Even for you **mothers** who are seeking to give each day, these can be helpful reminders of how to give faithfully.

I pray these 3 descriptions can direct us all in our eternal investments.

Turn to **Acts 11:19-30** & let's read this passage that we began studying last week & follow along—Acts 11:19-30. [READ]

The persecution after Stephen's martyrdom had scattered believers & yet their speaking of Jesus could not be stopped.

Some were preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Greeks also & multitudes were brought to Jesus in Antioch.

So the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to disciple them.

His ministry led to more being saved so that opportunities & needs for teaching & discipleship abounded in Antioch.

Barnabas needed **help** & he knew who could help him because he had seen the evidence of **Saul's** conversion & ministry.

Barnabas knew Saul's testimony, likely including Jesus' words in Acts 9:15 that Saul was *a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles & kings & the sons of Israel.*

Acts 9:26 had told how disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul after his drastic conversion, not believing he was a disciple.

That was when Barnabas reappeared in the narrative after only being mentioned in Acts 4:36-37 for his example of giving.

In contrast to others' fear of Saul, Acts 9:27 said, "*Barnabas took hold of him [Saul] 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.*"

Since the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem wanted Saul dead after his bold speaking of Jesus, the believers brought him down to Caesarea & sent him away to Tarsus, as Acts 9:28-30 says.

So that's where Barnabas went as we read in Acts 11:25-26 where we pick up today—read verses 25-26 again. [READ]

Saul had returned to Tarsus where Acts 9:11 says he was from.

But he had not stayed silent about Jesus there as Acts 15:23, 41 later mention churches in the region of Cilicia where Tarsus was the capital.

The term in verse 25 about Barnabas searching for Saul implies that Saul was not easy to find.

Saul must have been moving about preaching Jesus for 8-10 years & perhaps he also had to stay mobile & watchful of threats to his life.

Philippians 3:8 may indicate he had lost his family inheritance.

But Barnabas knew he needed help & he knew some measure of Jesus' calling on the man we know as the Apostle Paul.

So he persisted in finding Saul & bringing him to Antioch for the regular gathering of the church body that was occurring.

Luke alludes to those gatherings as the church's meetings in Antioch where the purpose of Saul & Barnabas was to teach the large crowd.

They taught them—that's what the church's leaders did just as the Apostles established that priority back in Acts 6.

That was the pattern of Acts 2:32: *devoting themselves to the Apostles' teaching & to fellowship, to the breaking of bread & to prayer.*

Barnabas knew those priorities & secured help to teach these new Greek believers what it meant to follow Jesus the Christ.

And the end of verse 26 is not a mere historical footnote.

It's structurally connected to the gathering & teaching as the result of the regular instruction.

That result was *the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

The disciples—that's what they often were called initially & that emphasizes that they were **learning** as **followers** of Jesus.

They were receiving **instruction** & putting it into **practice**.

And after a year of regular gathering for teaching, the fruit of that emphasis was that they were called Christians.

That may have been a putdown from outsiders, naming disciples as persecuted like their leader the Christ was.

But the idea was that they ***took the name***, ***bore the title***, went ***under the name*** of, & ***actively identified*** as Christians.

It was **their choice & their testimony** as they spoke of **Christ** & served **Christ** & followed **Christ** & sought to be like **Christ**.

So they were **labeled for Christ** kind of like the Herodians were labeled as loyal to Herod in Mark 3:6 & 12:13.

The **large number** of them from **different backgrounds** had created a need to distinguish the church as this newly unified group.

They were different from proselytes of Judaism & other Jews who did not trust Jesus as the Christ.

If you think of the Apostle Paul's later writings, you know how he repeated the phrase "**in Christ**" as the **identity** of believers.

The term **Christian** is like that—it's little Christs, lesser people who are **in Christ** & seeking to be **like** Christ.

That characterization at Antioch came for the disciples who gathered regularly for a whole year to be taught.

Do you see the connection?—**the church gave purposefully of their time** to be **taught** so that they could become **like Christ**.

And that's a **1st way** to note how the church gave—a **1st description** about their **giving** is about them giving **their time**.

Point #1 today—the church gave purposefully of their time.

We don't want to pass over the need that Barnabas saw for teaching & how he aided that with Saul.

We don't want to miss the **regular gathering** of the church & their emphasis on **teaching** & the **result** of being **like Christ**.

They were committed to meeting to be **discipled**—which means **instructed & trained** as followers.

As they grew in response to teaching, their lives aligned under the name of Christ & began to look like followers of Christ.

So point #1—the church gave purposefully of their time.

And this is helpful before a description of their **financial** giving because we often forget that **giving also includes time**.

So we want to notice the priority of giving **time** to **meet regularly** for the purpose of **training** toward **Christlikeness**.

The gift of time is helpful to recall & honor on Mothers' Day.

If you ask people about their relationship with their parents, you will often find greater emphasis on **time** than on money.

And faithful moms give a lot of time to their children.

Both training & relationships take **time** & giving **time** is often harder.

Uninvolved, distracted parents may lavish money & gifts on their kids, but the kids know they don't have time for them.

And parents with grown children share similar lessons as I **rarely** hear of those who wish they had spent **less** time with their kids.

And similarly, I **rarely** hear anyone look back on the seasons of life & wish they would have spent **less** time with God's people.

As my own life has increased in busyness, I've felt my failures & pondered how to better emphasize training & discipleship.

As is often said—**time is money**—time is a *currency* of giving.

People can often tell if we don't have time for them & sometimes that's unavoidable because we are all finite people.

But the power of **the ministry of presence** is underestimated.

And by that I mean the ministry of simply being here & being available to train toward Christlikeness alongside others.

I know I underestimate such ministry of presence & fail at times & I'm always helped when I'm reminded of it.

So it's fitting to think about **time** as we think of how the church gave.

It's also fitting to **honor** how **mothers** give hours & days & weeks & months & years for their kids.

But as we note this, we must note it was time invested **purposefully**.

This was time devoted to the **priority of the local church** public **instruction** & personal **discipleship**.

As Paul said in Acts 20:20 of his ministry in Ephesus, *"I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and **teaching you publicly and from house to house**."*

Investment in training in public & private was a commitment by Saul & Barnabas as leaders & also by the whole church & it's something we ever need to recommit to & grow in.

As Hebrews 10:25 later warns, they **did not forsake the assembling** of themselves together because they **knew encouragement was necessary**.

Hebrews 3:13 highlights that need in saying to, **encourage one another day after day**, *as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

We want to be kept from drifting from the pursuit of being like Christ.

And more than merely guarding us, regular meetings stoke the heat of our little coals of fire of faith to burn hotter together.

So again **#1**, we note that **the church gave purposefully of their time** & we want to respond similarly as we plan our calendars.

We must protect & prioritize regular instruction & relationship in the church as what God uses to make us like Christ & to show the world our distinctive love as the body of Christ.

As we talk about giving, we start with this emphasis on our time.

But then we also know that giving must include our money.

So note **2ndly** that **the church gave proportionately of their wealth**.

Point #2—the church gave proportionately of their wealth.

And kids, **proportionately** means according to their ability as **2nd** **Corinthians 8** spoke of the churches who gave *"according to their ability, and beyond their ability, ... of their own accord."*

In verse 29 here, it refers to their ability or means, their wealth.

Let's read verse 29 & we'll come back to verses 27-28 later. [READ]

To the extent that anyone of the disciples was prospering, they determined, each of them for the ministry, to send.

First these disciples recognized the ongoing provision of God in their lives & the extent of that showed their ability to give.

So they set the amount for their giving—each of them did so personally & individually—to support the service or ministry.

Their decision was to send to the brothers dwelling in Judea, meaning the fellow believers in that region.

Their giving was not coerced or compulsory or begrudging.

It was voluntary in response to a need & ministry opportunity.

It was giving back to those who sent their teacher Barnabas.

It was a response of love for brothers in partnership in Christ.

It was a recognition of unity under Jesus as the one true Lord.

This was not normal—Gentiles & Jews did not send gifts to one another nor have genuine concern to meet needs in other regions.

This was new believers who had become like Christ in their generosity & willingness to sacrifice to serve others.

They must have understand Jesus' investment strategy in Matthew 6:19-20 when He said: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, & where thieves break in & steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”*

They must have learned how generosity is being like Jesus as summed up in 2nd Corinthians 8:9.

2nd Corinthians 8:9 says, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”*

Think of that—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—the loving generosity of God the Son who owned & ruled everything.

He had it all in fellowship with the Father eternally in the glories of heaven in the fullest sense of being completely rich.

And *“though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”*

He became poor by becoming a man who was often mistreated & was not wealthy in the ways of this world.

Yet in the greatest poverty imaginable, He took on the debt of sin's penalty, the infinite wrath owed for justice to be satisfied.

And He fully paid that debt so that all who trust Him may become rich in reconciliation with God & fellowship with God forever.

That's what it is to be truly & lastingly rich—to know God in a relationship of His secure love that can never be taken away.

God so loved that He gave Himself & He calls us to love like He loved by giving of ourselves & resources like He gave.

Such giving was a regular pattern in 1st Corinthians 16:1-2.

In 1st Corinthians 16:1-2, Paul said: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.”*

So even though this historical situation in the narrative of Acts was unique, the pattern of proportionate giving remained.

It's interesting that they became known as Christians here as their love expanded to reach back to Jerusalem with generosity.

Jesus had said that the world would know His disciples by their love for one another & that began to overflow in Antioch.

Such regular generosity remains a characteristic of Christlikeness.

It flows in proportion to what God provides & we can always remember that **we can never outgive God.**

We can never give more than God as He continually supplies for our needs so that we can enjoy giving more.

Listen to how Paul taught that in 2nd Corinthians 9:6-11.

He first mentioned the principle that glad generosity is blessed by God.

2nd Corinthians 9:6-8 says, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

God is able to graciously & abundantly supply enough for everything we need, including our need to give gladly to Him.

To remove doubt, Paul restated that in 2nd Corinthians 9:10-11.

Verses 10-11 say, Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all generosity, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

All that to say, we should not underestimate the proportion we can give because God always provides enough.

He provides & then abounds thankfulness in us as we enjoy giving.

And all such investments are vital expressions of our love.

So although we started with the importance of giving time, I don't want to minimize the importance of giving financially.

Giving financially is the opposite of stealing & it frees us from being controlled by coveting & craving for more.

And as with time, kids & adults can often tell if we don't want to give or if we are giving a bare minimum to keep up an appearance.

Giving is a demonstration of love for the Lord & others & we should pray for our hearts to overflow with that Christlike love.

And that's true for moms & dads also, isn't it?

Even if your budget is tight, your gifts can show God's love.

And that is another opportunity to honor mothers for their daily gifts of so many things that add up over time.

For Christian moms & for all who follow Christ, regular, joyful, sacrificial giving has untold spiritual impact.

We can all take lessons from the church at Antioch in Acts 11 to give **(1) purposefully of our time & (2) proportionately of our wealth.**

The church gave (1) purposefully of their time & (2) proportionately of their wealth & then (3rdly) & lastly today, **the church gave prudently in their management.**

Point #3 today—**the church gave prudently in their management.**

By prudently, I mean carefully & wisely with clarity to meet real needs & caution to use trustworthy stewardship.

Their giving was informed to be practically productive in proper ways.

They had faithful accountability with reasonable goals.

Their giving was not wasteful or worldly or ignorant or irresponsible.

Read verses 27-30 again to ponder all that. [READ]

As we consider the giving in verse 29, we need to note that their giving met a need that was predicted by a NT prophet named Agabus.

Recall from Acts 2 that more than just the Apostles spoke the mighty deeds of God in miraculous languages.

Peter quoted Joel 2 about the Spirit indwelling & speaking through all kinds of people to introduce that the last days had begun.

Before the NT was written, God moved through the Apostles & other prophets to speak His Word to prove His new work.

That was transitional & temporary as we've explained before.

We don't have time to unpack that today, but like OT prophets, God also used some NT prophets to predict the future.

And that's what we find here with Agabus predicting a need to come.

Agabus had come from Jerusalem with other prophets to a regular church gathering in Antioch & he stood up to speak.

Agabus made known this sign of a future famine on the entire empire.

As confirmation, Luke noted that this occurred under Claudius, in his time as emperor, likely around 45-47 AD.

Luke gave the fulfillment as he reported this pivotal opportunity.

This giving responded to real needs & fostered unity among these formerly estranged groups.

Although Hellenistic Jews had led prior persecution, the Hellenistic Gentile converts led with love for their new spiritual family.

It was fitting was for Gentiles to help the saints in Jerusalem.

As Paul noted in Romans 15:27, *“they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”*

Galatians 6:6 similarly says, *“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.”*

With that in mind on Mothers' Day—listen kids—it's appropriate to share gratitude & gifts with moms for all they have done to teach us.

But back in Acts 11, note the powerful timing of this gift as diverse believers were being united in Christ when they could have remained divided by ethnicity & geography & nationality.

The church gave attention to this opportunity under the leadership of Barnabas who had been marked by generosity in Acts 4:36-37.

This was **prudent giving** in response to what God showed them & it was **also prudent** in how it was managed carefully.

In wise stewardship, they entrusted the gifts to their **church leaders**, Barnabas & Saul, who then passed it on to the **church's elders**.

Luke must have meant the elders in Jerusalem although Acts 14:23 is clear that every church was established with elders.

So the church managed these funds through the **proven leadership** of those who had taught them & through **the elders** in Jerusalem.

Their stewardship included **accountability** in how it was handled even when it reached those who would need it.

Money was not indiscriminately handed out with no assurance that it was meeting real needs & accompanied by church relationships.

This was not some religious form of socialism or communism or a promotion of public panhandling.

This giving was **not** required as **taxes** or as some pursuit of equity for everyone to have the same level of outcomes or rations.

Contrary to what some think, the church is not a giveaway station where no questions are asked & no structure is required.

Giving should **not** help people disobey biblical commands for work like 2nd Thessalonians 3:10 that says “***if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat.***”

The church does not need to proliferate more fraud schemes or government programs or excuses for laziness.

All our stuff—our money & wealth—is God’s—and we need to manage it in ways that uphold & promote what He says.

We need to learn from how the church gave prudently in their management so that we practice similarly wise stewardship.

And by the way, we should also learn from how they followed through in obedience in Acts 11:30 as the first words indicate.

And this they did—meaning they did not merely think the idea was good or the need was legitimate—they acted on it.

They did not merely determine to give—they followed through & gave from their means to the elders by the hands of Barnabas & Saul.

Think about that—how many times has God brought some need to our attention & we failed to consider giving to it?

Or even if we examined & affirmed it as a wise investment, how many times have we failed to act on it?

We must consider how to give to & then take the step to give.

We must give more than a nice thought & a heartfelt prayer.

So listen—make sure the thoughts & prayers that have come to **your** mind this morning are not forgotten & never fulfilled.

Write them down now so you can evaluate & pursue them later.

That may include ways you’ve thought to honor mothers.

And it may include other ways to give as God has given to you.

As I said to begin, God has given us His greatest gift in the Person & work of Jesus the Son of God.

Jesus has given His life as the righteousness we could never achieve & as the redemptive payment for sin that we would pay forever in Hell.

He has given assurance of His victory over sin & death & He has given opportunity to hear His precious promises.

Praise God for all the wondrous gifts He has given in Jesus Christ.

If you do not know God’s love & forgiveness & freedom in Jesus Christ, come to Him today in faith & find new life.

And if you do know Christ, then recommit today to be like Him in the ways that you give of yourself & all that you have.

(#1) Give purposefully of your time, (#2) give proportionately of your wealth, & (#3) give prudently in your management.

I pray those thoughts from our study of Acts are timely encouragement not only for Mothers’ Day, but also for every day ahead of us.

Pray with me for our response to God & His Word as we close.