



Sermon Series: Acts  
Sermon Title: From Here to There  
Date: 5/24/2026

**Big Idea: A healthy church sees where God is working and responds.**

God's people were never meant to simply receive - they were designed to respond. In **Acts 11:19-30**, we see exactly that kind of church. God is moving, his people are recognizing it, and they are responding. Three distinct patterns emerge from this passage. In each one, God initiates. The church's job is to see what he is doing and join him in it.

**Pattern 1. God works through ordinary people in unlikely places.**

Antioch was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire and one of the most morally corrupt - not where you would expect God to plant a church that would help launch Christianity across the known world. But that is exactly what he did. It started with believers scattered from Jerusalem after Stephen was killed. They were refugees running for their lives. Most were still only speaking to other Jewish people as they went.

But some men from Cyprus and Cyrene made it to Antioch and began speaking to Greeks. They shaped the message for the people in front of them, calling Jesus not Messiah - a Jewish title - but Lord Jesus. **Acts 11:21** says the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. That is the whole explanation - not their strategy or boldness, but God. As **1 Corinthians 3:6** puts it, one plants, one waters, but God makes it grow. We don't even know the names of these men. They were more interested in people hearing the name of Jesus than in anyone knowing their own. That is the kind of ordinary, unnamed faithfulness God uses to change the world.

**Pattern 2. God's grace produces visible growth.**

When news reached Jerusalem, the church sent Barnabas - not an apostle, but a deeply trusted congregation member whose nickname meant son of encouragement. He made the 300-mile journey to Antioch, and when he

arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (**Acts 11:23**).

He walked in looking for what God was already doing, not what he could produce himself. As the church kept growing, Barnabas went and tracked down Paul rather than trying to handle it alone - the mission mattered more than his role. For a full year they taught the church together.

And then came a telling detail: the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. The name came from outsiders, likely not as a compliment. But these people were so recognizably like Jesus in how they lived and loved that the surrounding culture had to come up with a word for it. That is what God's grace produces when it actually takes root in people.

### **Pattern 3. God reveals what's needed and moves his people to respond.**

In **Acts 11:27-28**, a prophet named Agabus predicted through the Spirit that a severe famine would spread across the Roman world. God revealed the need before it arrived - he didn't wait for the crisis and hope his people figured out a response. He moved ahead of it. History confirms the famine under Claudius, recorded by Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, and Judea was hit especially hard.

The response from Antioch is remarkable. This church - just a few years old, still growing, still learning - took up a collection and sent famine relief back to Jerusalem, the very church that had first invested in them. Each person gave as each one was able (**Acts 11:29**). Not someone else's ability - what they actually had. The whole passage is bookended by Jerusalem sending Barnabas to pour into Antioch, and Antioch sending Barnabas back to give to Jerusalem. That is a church that grew up. Grace received leads to grace extended.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1. The men who started the church in Antioch are never named in Scripture. What does it say about God's kingdom that some of the most significant work is done by people history never records?**
- 2. Barnabas walked into Antioch looking first for what God was already doing - not what he could produce. How does that posture change the way you engage with your church, your workplace, or your neighborhood?**
- 3. The disciples in Antioch were called Christians by outsiders because of how visibly different they were. Would the people around you - coworkers, neighbors, family - be able to tell you belong to Jesus by how you live? What would they point to?**
- 4. Barnabas went and found Paul rather than trying to handle the growing church alone. Is there someone God might be asking you to go get - someone you could bring alongside you in what He's already doing in your life?**
- 5. The Antioch church gave famine relief out of what they actually had - not what they wished they had. What do you have right now - time, skill, resources, encouragement - that God might be asking you to put into motion?**