

Marks of a Growing Church

In Acts 11 we are introduced to the church in Antioch. Initially Christians shared the gospel only with Jews until some men from Cyprus and Cyrene decided to broaden the target and began sharing the gospel with “the Greeks.” *The hand of the Lord was with them and a large number believed and turned to the Lord.* When good things happen - news spreads. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to find out what was going on. How were they doing it? What could they learn from what the church in Antioch was doing? In this passage we discover 5 marks of a growing church. What are they?

I. Aggressive Outreach to the Lost

- A. Acts 11.20b: ...*proclaiming the good news about the Lord **Jesus**.*
- B. Acts 11.26b: ...*For over a **year** they taught large numbers.*
- C. Acts 11.20b: ...they are proclaiming the **good news**.
- D. Acts 11.21b: ...this resulted in a **large number** who believed turned to the Lord.
- E. This was Jesus’ mission: Luke 19.10: *The Son of Man has come to **seek** and to save the lost.*
- F. It was His final command: Matthew 28.19-20: **Go**, therefore....

II. Grace Focused, Spirit Filled, God-Praising Worship Assemblies

- A. Acts 11.26: Barnabas and Saul *met with the church.*
 - 1. They made it their priority to be in the presence of other believers.
 - 2. The early church made assembling together a priority.
- B. For them, worship was such a priority, that they referred to Sunday as the Lord’s Day.

III. Warm, Inclusive Fellowship

- A. Acts 11.18, 21: See the progression? First, *to no one except **Jews***. Then finally to everyone!
- B. Acts 11.26: All of them share the same identity - Christian.
- C. Imagine the scene: devout Jews, Hellenists, and Gentiles/Ex-Pagan idolators.

IV. Committed Christians Growing in Discipleship

- A. Acts 11.26: Focus on “**disciples**.” These Christians were:
 - 1. Being trained in the word to be like Jesus; learning and growing.
 - 2. Growing thriving congregations are committed to discipleship and transformation.
- B. This is leadership driven: Ephesians 4:12–13: Leaders *equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, for the purpose of growing into **maturity** with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.*

V. Benevolent Church Serving the Needs of Others

- A. Acts 11:29: **Each** of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea.
- B. They were not self-focused - but realized they were part of a larger family of God.

VI. What Can Cornerstone Learn from Antioch?

- A. We need to be praying for and expect growth! Growth is good!
- B. Going forward, let it be our goal to: aggressively reach the lost by preaching Jesus; engaging in God praising worship; having warm, inclusive fellowship; be characterized by committed disciples; and move in benevolent service to others.

VII. As We Close..

- A. We haven’t arrived. We’re not finished yet. There is more work to do.
- B. Now, what about you? Do you believe?