

## READ

Acts 11:19-30

## CONSIDER

What is the significance of the church at Antioch being firstly called Christians (Acts 11:26), and what impact has it played as a model of a *missional church*?

Firstly: It was absolutely the wonderful work of God that shaped them at Antioch when started by Paul and Barnabas, led and taught by the Holy Spirit.

*“Meanwhile, the believers who had scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord. When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this evidence of God’s he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.” (NLT. Acts 11:19-24)*

Paul and Barnabas stayed at Antioch for a full year, teaching the new believers, recognizing the importance of follow-through discipleship and training and walking alongside them in their growth. The young church at Antioch was a curious mixture of Jews (who spoke Greek or Aramaic) and Gentiles. The believers were first called Christians (or “Christ-ones”) here because all they had was Christ, not race, culture or even language. Christ’s love crosses all boundaries and can unify all types of people.

Secondly: The church at Antioch took action in obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit in seeing to the need of the church in Judea by sending them the relief for the famine (v.27-30). The daughter church in Antioch had enough to be able to help the established church in Jerusalem. We are reminded here that God wants unity among believers within individual churches and supportive relationships between fellow churches too. The Holy Spirit binds them all together, causing them to care about the needs of others. “We are God’s fellow workers; God’s field; God’s building.” (1 Cor.3:9). Are we prepared to be ready for action when God calls us to help and build up one another; committing and serving others?

The church at Antioch sets an excellent example of being one having a vision of devoting itself entirely to the lead and guidance of the Holy Spirit, established by God through His faithful servants Paul and Barnabas. Reflect on the following related areas:

- 1) How do we know the vision from God to establish a new church? Where?
- 2) How do we build up one another as a tool for growth? What are the essentials?
- 3) What are the characteristics of a mature church? How do we lay down the ground work for reaching the goals?

Deacon Sam Chan

## **P R A Y**

Dear Lord Jesus, guide me today that as a follower of you, the pathways to be a mature Christian in Christ in my deeds and speech; help me see what would be the most essential characteristics I should practise in my life-time in how to listen to you and others, and practice it in order to be a spiritually mature Christian. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **D I V I N G   D E E P E R**

The church at Antioch sets an excellent example of being one having a vision of devoting itself entirely to the lead and guidance of the Holy Spirit, established by God through His faithful servants Paul and Barnabas. Discuss amongst yourselves the following related areas:

- 1) How do we know the vision from God to establish a new church? Where?
- 2) How do we build up one another as a tool for growth? What are the essentials?
- 3) What are the characteristics of a mature church? How do we lay down the ground work for reaching the goals?

Matt.5:24-27 says that hearing Jesus' words and practice them is just like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. The person who does this is a hearing and responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. Carrying out His words in obedience would form a solid foundation in faith, helping us to stand the storms of life. Do you hear God's words when help is needed and follow Him for guidance, rather than feeling helpless with fear and anxiety?

People without God's words would feel life without purpose, just like building a house on loose sand, heading for destruction. Can you help others who are without life purpose, in seeing where their lives are headed? Can you help pointing out the consequences of ignorance of ignoring Jesus' message and help them see the goodness of following Him?