

THE FRUIT OF A DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH
ACTS 11:19-30
Notes

Many churches start out strong, but somewhere along the way something happens. The focus gets off Jesus and the mission and the plans get misplaced.

Once, where there was a healthy church focusing on glorifying God and making disciples, there is now a church more concerned about getting back to the “good old days” than they are reaching the next generation.

The church’s greatest spiritual gift is complaining about the current generation. 😊

The church ends up drowning itself and in doing so no one gets the blessings of enjoying the fruit from a healthy growing church.

In our text today, as we continue along in Acts, we see now for the first time, the gospel going to a major metropolitan city, in Antioch.

This text shows the birth of the church at Antioch and how the church begins with a healthy DNA. The healthy vibrant church produced much fruit for the glory of God.

It has been my prayer that as we walk through the text together this morning we will see, as individuals and as a body, the wonderful, glorious fruit of a healthy disciple-making church.

- Am I determined to be a healthy growing disciple, who makes disciples?
- Am I determined to help my church to be a disciple-making church?
- Do I desire to see my family, friends, and community come to Christ?
- What is keeping me from growing as a disciple and helping my church to be a disciple-making church?

The church flourishes as it exalts Christ, equips believers, and engages the lost.

May God encourage us and convict us that we would be a church more concerned about his glory than anything else.

May we come away from this message determined to do whatever it takes to be a church that is glorifying God through making disciples.

¹⁹ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem,

and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. ²⁵ And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. ²⁷ Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. ²⁹ And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. ³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

A. DON'T ALLOW HARDSHIPS TO LIMIT WHAT GOD CAN ACCOMPLISH THROUGH YOU (19-20)

¹⁹ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

Verses 19-20 refer back to Acts 8:1 in which the believers were scattered after Stephen's death. This was about 10-11 years earlier.

For 11 years believers have been on the run, moving from place to place, changing up jobs, severing relationships trying to stay alive and spread the message of Jesus.

Luke tells us these believers left Jerusalem and traveled 75 miles to Phoenicia, the island of Cyprus which is about 100 miles off the Syrian coast.

Still others travelled even further north, 300 miles to Antioch.

During their travels these Jews from Jerusalem spoke only to other Jews about Jesus.

Why? Were they prejudiced or racist against non-Jews? Not at all.

Their witnessing to other Jews first was natural as those were the people who they knew, the culture which they were familiar with, and people who they could begin relationships with the easiest.

The scattered believers stop in the great city of Antioch.

Antioch was an ancient city, the third largest city in the Roman empire with a population between 250,000-500,000.

The city had a Jewish population between 30-50 thousand.

The city lay in the fertile plain and was a major junction for those traveling East to West and North to South.

The city was home to a natural spring and a temple dedicated to the god Apollo.

Antioch was a very diverse, economically driven, and pagan city. Antioch had a horrible reputation for its morals.

Several people planted in Antioch and began spreading the message of Jesus to the non-Jewish citizens of the city.

The reason this is so amazing to me is these people were 300 miles from their home in a distant city, that was unfamiliar to them; a city steeped in sin; a city potentially hostile to them and what did they do?

They allowed a hardship, a very difficult time in their lives to be used for God's glory.

There was nothing better they could have done than to use their situation to tell others about Jesus.

Maybe you are experiencing a difficult time in your life right now.

And I am not trying to downplay your circumstance, nor limit the discomfort of what you are going through, but can I ask you a question:

Have you thought about asking God how he can use your particular situation for his glory?

The reason why I ask this is because...

B. GOD CAN USE YOUR DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES TO BRING OTHERS CLOSER TO JESUS (21)

²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

These scattered people were in a new town, living a new life and the one thing they decided to do was to tell people about Jesus.

Was it hard? Did they encounter resistance? I'm sure it was and I'm sure they did, but you know that they did not do?

They did not stop serving Christ; they did not stop living for Jesus; they did not stop drawing closer to Jesus just because life got hard.

What about you? Have you found yourself withdrawing from Christ? From intimacy with him? From serving him? From sharing him? Have you stopped to ask yourself why?

Can I encourage you this morning? God knows what you are going through. God knows your struggle.

Even in your struggle, even in your sin, even in your fight, he wants to use you to accomplish great things for him.

Right where you are, right now in your life, God wants to use you to bring people close to him.

He wants to draw you close to him and in the process, he wants to you to bring others along.

C. WE CANNOT BUILD THE KINGDOM ALONE; WE NEED ONE ANOTHER TO ACCOMPLISH THE GREAT COMMISSION (25)

25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

Ok, so the church at Jerusalem, the mother church heard about the revival that was taking place in Antioch.

They were not upset, they were not trying to shut down the move of God, but they wanted to explore and support the move.

So, what did they do? They sent Barnabas, the son of encouragement to the church.

Barnabas arrives, sees what is going on and he is blessed by the work that is going on.

Barnabas himself joins in the work, but he soon realizes that the work is so great he cannot do it alone and he needs some help.

So, what does he do? Look at verse 25-he goes to Tarsus and gets Saul.

Tarsus is about 100 miles away, so the trip takes a while. But notice WHO Barnabas goes and gets.

Remember, way back in Chapter 9 when a Jewish Pharisee was headed from Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest Christians and Jesus showed up and rocked his world?

Well, this Saul has been in Tarsus for the past 10 years.

For 10 years we have not heard hide nor hair from Paul. He has been serving the Lord in obscurity for a decade, being faithful in what God called him to do.

And then, suddenly one day while he is ministering in the city, or maybe while he is making tents, he looks up and sees his old pal Barnabas, the same Barnabas who defended him to the apostles in Jerusalem.

Barnabas tells him about the great work taking place at the newly established church in Antioch and that he needs his help to sustain and grow the work.

Notice something. Barnabas was an extremely talented man of God in his own right. He did not have to go and get Paul. He could have worked his own fingers to the bone and did all he could to grow the church.

He could have; but Barnabas knew something many forget. We cannot build the kingdom alone. We need one another to accomplish the great commission.

Why is this important to know? We need one another, and by saying we need one another, you need to know we need you.

Two principles come from verse 26 that are important when we talk about the fruit of a disciple-making church.

D. A CHURCH THAT IS EQUIPPED IN CHRIST IS A CHURCH THAT MODELS CHRIST TO ITS COMMUNITY (26)

26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas goes and gets Saul and brings him to Antioch and for a solid year they invest in the church and equip them in Jesus Christ.

Luke says it was “considerable numbers.”

What was the result of this teaching? The disciples, these followers of Jesus were so equipped in Christ and their lives reflected Jesus so radically they were called “Christians.”

The second thing I want us to see, which is more of an insight from this verse is this:

A CHURCH THAT EFFECTIVELY ENGAGES ITS COMMUNITY WITH THE GOSPEL IS A CHURCH THAT CONTINUALLY STRETCHES PAST ITS COMFORT ZONE (26)

Churches who fail to expand beyond past ministry patterns of success end of being dead churches who fail to influence their community for Jesus.

Will we always do ministry the same? No. Does that mean we will change the gospel message? Absolutely not.

But the manner and means by which we engage the community with the gospel will change and that is ok.

Why is that ok? Because people are not the same as they were 10 years ago, much less 50 years ago.

Barnabas and Saul could have gone to Antioch and proceeded to minister to these non-Jews; these pagans who never heard about a coming Messiah; these idolaters who participated in rituals and festivals and all manner of sin just the way they witnessed to the Jews in Jerusalem.

You know what would have happened? Nothing, we would not know about it, because Luke would not have written about it.

No, Barnabas and Saul, along with the other disciples met the citizens of Antioch right where they were; they got dirty with them; they spent time with them; they fought alongside them; they struggled with family issues, education problems, addictions, and vices and during all of that they shared Jesus with them.

God has given us such a gracious and wonderful opportunity to be a light in the darkness here in De Soto and Jefferson County.

We are not going to take this appointment lightly.

We will use every tool at our disposal, every technique available, and every chance we must impress the love of Christ upon our town.

Our dream, our vision is that every person, every family, every home in De Soto hears about Jesus and his love for them.

And we will take every opportunity and use every method available to make this a reality.

E. HEALTHY CHURCHES CARE ABOUT OTHER CHURCHES (22;29-30)

²² The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. 30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

We see this in verse 22.

The Jerusalem church cared about what was going on in Antioch and sent Barnabas as a helper to the work.

Then in verse 28, we are introduced to a prophet named Agabus who prophesied a famine coming to the entire Roman world.

The famine had not come yet, but to prepare for the famine, the believers in Antioch took up a collection and sent the money to the Jerusalem church for the members in Judea by Barnabas and Saul.

During the reign of Emperor Claudius there were 3 recorded famines and the famine which Luke refers to hitting Judea was in 46 AD.

The believers knew they benefited from the church in Jerusalem pouring into them, so they in turn poured in them in their time of need.

As a church, Antioch which was the new up and coming kid on the block church wise, reached out and ministered to another church in need.

They did not view Jerusalem as competition, but as a companion in the work of the Lord.

As we begin to close this morning, I want to make a few more observations about the fruit of a disciple-making church.

F. WE ARE CALLED TO BUILD ONE ANOTHER UP IN DEVOTION TO JESUS (22-24)

22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

The church in Jerusalem heard about what was going on in Antioch and they sent Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement.

Now notice what Barnabas did when he got there.

- He saw what God was doing
- He rejoiced
- He began to encourage others in their walk individually
- He began to encourage the church corporately

What was his encouragement? The text says he encouraged them with a “resolute heart” to remain true to the Lord.

The term “resolute” in Greek is “prothesis” and means “a deliberate intention.”

Barnabas was intentional in his building up of others. He set out with a determined purpose to be a man who builds up others in the Lord.

Notice again, what he was building them up in. He was encouraging them in their faithfulness to Christ.

Too often we look for ways to tear others down.

We find the smallest defect and begin to pick and pick at it. We do this with individuals and with the church in general.

"Encouragement is perhaps one of the greatest gifts friends can ever give. An encouraging friend is a lifeline to steady a floundering heart, to bring sunshine to a cloudy day, and to deliver a blessing just looking for a place to land."-Anonymous

It is easy, so easy to tear down. It doesn't take much time or effort. It takes a strong person, a person who is confident in God's grace to be an encourager.

Every one of us need encouragement in our walk with Jesus.

What about you?

Are you someone who builds up or tears down?

Every one of us need someone like Barnabas to come alongside us and encourage when we fall in sin; to encourage us to take the next step; to encourage us to stand firm in our faith; to encourage us to serve; to encourage us in our life.

So, take time this week to encourage someone. Reach out to someone in church or in your Sunday school class and encourage them.

Reach out to someone who you may have not seen in a while and encourage them to come back.

And in being an encourager you can be an example to others.

G. OUR WALK WITH JESUS CAN AND SHOULD BE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS (24)

*²⁴for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.
And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.*

Luke tells us about Barnabas. He was a good man. Full of the Holy Spirit. Full of faith.

And notice. The life he led, the way he served the Lord, the way he conducted himself led many people to faith in Jesus.

Yes, and God can use you the same way.

God wants to use you the same way. God desires to use you to bring sinners to saving faith in Jesus.

Barnabas was described as a good man, full of the Spirit, and full of faith.

How would you be described?

May our walk with Christ follow him so closely that our lives lead others to Jesus.

Why are we to lead others to Jesus?

What is your life an example of?

**H. AS WE DEVOTE OURSELVES TO JESUS AND SHARE HIM WITH OTHERS OUR CHURCH
WILL GROW FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

The fruit of a disciple-making church is ultimately the glory of God.

We desire for God to be glorified in all we do, from the preaching and teaching; to the worship to the small groups; from the benevolence ministries to local outreach, to world missions.

This only happens as we devote ourselves to Jesus.

The more we devote ourselves to Christ the more we will:

- Want to know him more
- Want to make him known

What about you?

We saw how a church focused on Christ grows and flourishes.

It only did so as its members focused on Christ and shared him with others?

May we focus on Christ and share him with others in De Soto.

I want to encourage you to ask yourself these three questions:

- How am I modeling Jesus to others?
- Am I taking full advantage of being equipped in Christ?
- Is my life bearing the fruit of being a disciple?