

Acts 11



A New Tribe Birthed

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 11:1-18

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 11:1-3

You would expect the Church to be thrilled at Peter's missionary success. However, the first response is not joy but rather hostility. Many of the early Jewish Christians believed that Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism and become circumcised before they could be saved by the Jewish Messiah. Although salvation had come to the Jews, they still had prejudice and many man-made traditions in their hearts.

This continued to be a problem throughout the early church and church history. Many people take their old worldview and mix it with the Gospel rather than allow the Gospel to renew every part of their mind. No matter how sincere we are, this will be a process for each of us as we come to the Gospel. We need to be intentional about letting God into every area of our mind and thinking in order to see His will clearly.



Question: Is there an old area of your life or old beliefs that continue to impact how you see others, the world, and the Gospel? If you have not thought about this before, take some time this week to evaluate possible false beliefs that you have tried to make part of the Gospel.

Acts 11:4-18

Peter defended his ministry with three key elements.

- A The Intervention of God:** God miraculously intervened in Peter's life through a vision. However, God also gave Cornelius a vision. This was not just Peter having a dream; God confirmed that the dream was from Him by also speaking to Cornelius and Cornelius sending his servants to Peter. The vision was further confirmed as the Spirit led Peter. It ended with the fruit of salvation, and it all aligned with the Words of Christ.
- B The Leading of the Spirit by Faith:** After Peter received the vision, he needed to follow the leading of God's Spirit, which required faith. Had Peter been aware, he would have known that what God was doing was in alignment with the New Covenant promises found in Scripture.

Matthew 15:11, Isaiah 56

C **The Word of God:** Finally, Peter referenced the words of Christ from Acts 1:5 as He promised the outpouring of His Spirit. Peter knew that Jesus had given the same Spirit to the Gentiles. The interesting thing is that the Scripture Peter quoted at Pentecost also spoke about the Spirit being poured out on the Gentiles in Joel 2. He should have known!

Peter's testimony was not just based upon his experience or what he said the Spirit was telling him. Rather, the fruit, the experience, the Spirit, and the Word of God were all in harmony to provide a testimony that was rooted in the truth of Jesus. In this, the Church was convinced and began to renew its mind.

! As we turn from our sins, the Scripture says we experience life—not only eternal life but life now! Repentance is also part of renewing our mind; repentance is not just for salvation, but rather a part of walking out our salvation. Here the Jews “repented” of believing that the Gentiles could not receive the Gospel without being circumcised. Acts 3:19-21

? **Question: As you renew your mind, do you see all of these elements at work in your life? For example, it may be easy to read the Bible, but do you put it into practice by faith and the Spirit's leading? Or perhaps you are eager to follow what you believe God is leading you to, but you do not take the time to know if it is grounded in God's Word.**

Read Aloud Acts 11:19-30

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 11:19-21

The Church began to fulfill the commission of Christ. They went beyond Judea and Samaria and began to reach “the ends of the earth.” Phoenicia was just north of Judea, Antioch was about 200 miles north of Phoenicia, and this is where the first Gentile Church was born.

At this time, most of the Jewish Believers continued to seek only to reach other Jews. They had not heard of Peter's testimony. Yet God used some of the Jews of Cyprus and Cyrene to reach the Greek-speaking Jews. Those from Cyprus and Cyrene were more comfortable preaching to the Gentiles than native Palestinian Jews. God blessed this evangelistic effort, and many came to faith in Christ.

Acts 11:22-26

1 The revival in Antioch reached the home church in Jerusalem. The church sent Barnabas as a leader to validate what was happening. Barnabas saw that indeed God was moving. There are some key points to the character and ministry of Barnabas.

A **A good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith** - Barnabas had the proper qualities to discern what was from the Lord and what was not. This is not an automatic quality for believers. Hebrews 5:11-14 tells us that discernment comes from practice and the meat of Scripture.

? **Question: As you read Hebrews 5:11-6:3, do you see yourself as a discerning person? Everyone wants to be discerning and can even be offended to consider that they are not. Hebrews 5:11-6:3 gives us a good template to consider if we are discerning. Are we practicing righteousness through the foundation of Christ?**

A Exhorted - Barnabas exhorted the church. This means that he encouraged them, but he also called them higher to achieve their purpose. Exhortation is a combination of encouragement and challenge. This is a gift that the body of Christ needs!

C Faithful to the Lord - Barnabas called the church not just to receive the Gospel to remain true to following Christ. This was a call to consistently know, obey, and follow the Word of God.

D Steadfast Purpose - Finally, Barnabas called the church to have determination. Steadfast purpose is in reference to the grit and determination that would be required to follow Christ. Barnabas was reminding them that following Christ was not about an easy life but would require them to deny themselves and pick up their cross daily.

E Found Saul - Barnabas was a team player. He knew he could not do the work all by himself. Therefore he found a man who had gifts that he did not that could help him shepherd and lead the new church at Antioch. This man was none other than the converted Saul!

F Stayed a Whole Year - Barnabas and Saul did not simply lead a fun event or revival. Rather they stayed the entire year helping ground the church in the Word of God.

2 Antioch is the first time that the term “Christian” was used. Most Bible scholars agree that this was first used as a term of derision. The term meant “of the party of Christ.” It was a way to categorize a group of people following “a dead criminal.” However, the world would soon find that Christ was very much alive and living through His Church!

Acts 11:27-30

1 The Church not only suffered from persecution and hatred from the world, but God was preparing them for economic hardship through famine. The Church received this news through prophets.

A There were prophets in the early Church who preached the Word of God and at times had insight into the future by the Spirit of God. For the purpose of this study, we will not comprehensively break down prophecy. However, you can check out our MBU class on spiritual gifts.

B There are several ancient writers who attest to this famine such as Tacitus, Josephus, and Suetonius.

2 The Church showed their love and commitment to the Lord and one another in how they responded to the conflict. Each person responded according to their ability. For some, maybe this was physical aid, a small donation, while others were able to give more significant amounts of financial help. God is not concerned with the amount of what we can give but the heart with which we give. God is seeking sacrificial giving done in faith.

2 Samuel 24:24, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Philippians 4:17

Q **Question: What does it mean for you to sacrificially give of your time, talents and treasure? You do not need to give numbers out loud, but discuss the hindrances you have experienced when it comes to sacrificially giving towards the Kingdom of God.**

Weekly Challenge

The Church became more and more unified as they focused on the mission of Christ. When we are not on mission, we can tend to become disgruntled, judgmental and divisive. What is your current mission within the Church? One of the healthiest things we can do at MBC is ensure that each part of the MBC family feels a sense of purpose and importance within the Body of Christ. Pray about what this looks like for you and share your findings with someone on the Shepherding Team.

Memory Verse

Acts 9:31 ESV

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.