



1. Has someone ever criticized your actions or your motives when you were obeying the Lord? Share what you can about this experience.
2. What can we glean about the influence of the circumcision party within the church from Acts 11:2-4 and Galatians 2:11-14? How have you dealt with pressure to behave in a hypocritical way from church-goers?
3. What did Peter “remember” in v. 16? How did that affect his interpretation & response to what he had witnessed before his eyes? Share an event where your “remembrance” enabled you to understand and act appropriately concerning something unexpected.
4. Contrast those from Jerusalem & Judea with those from Cyprus & Cyrene (vs. 19-20). What was the result in v. 21? What application can you draw for yourself from this?
5. In light of the reports from Antioch, Barnabas was sent to investigate. Why was Barnabas selected by the apostles *and* the Holy Spirit? (Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:22-25).
6. Why was Saul the right person to fill the need Barnabas identified in Antioch? (Acts 9:15-16, 22, 28-29; compare 22:3, 14-15, 21). Take a moment to inwardly explore what you are uniquely equipped and/or gifted by the Lord to do for Him, His church or the unchurched. How are you using your unique gift(s) or talent(s)?
7. Saul/Paul is usually remembered for reasoning and disputing for the faith during his missionary journeys. Here (v. 26) we see he spent a year teaching a great many others in the faith. How do you think this one-year post may have been beneficial for Saul?
8. The Holy Spirit will soon begin to use the church in Antioch as the headquarters for reaching the Gentile world. Why were its people better suited than those in Jerusalem and Judea for reaching the Gentiles?
9. Why do you think the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch and not in Jerusalem? (Note this was likely about 15 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection.)
10. The famine predicted by the prophet Agabus provided an opportunity for the Antioch church to minister to the church in Judea. It says in v. 29 the disciples *determined* and *gave according to each one’s ability*. What principles can you glean from this? How do you think observers may have been affected by this gesture? How does it affect you?



Testimony, Transition, and Training
Leader Notes for Acts 11:1-30

The first 15 verses of Acts 11 are a close recounting of what happened in Acts chapter 10 – so close, that much of the text is repeated verbatim. On some points this is the third rendering. The Lord would often draw attention to matters of special importance by saying “he who has ears to hear, let him hear.” In this case repetition is used to emphasize the importance of the message. What are we supposed to hear from this repetition of Peter’s account of the Holy Spirit anointing the Gentiles?

Peter gave his testimony here to a mixed audience, in which some were already openly critical of Peter consorting and eating with Gentiles. The Scriptures identify them as the “circumcision party.” This is the second account in the book of Acts of an event that could have led to internal division within the church (the first being the bias and neglect in the care of the Hellenistic widows in Chapter 6). Those critical of Peter fell silent (v. 18) after Peter’s account of the work of the Holy Spirit *and* the six witnesses that could attest to Peter’s claims. The bias and prejudice of the “circumcision party” would return in the future. They applied peer pressure within the church that negatively affected even Peter’s and Barnabas’ behavior toward the Gentiles, requiring a rebuke from Paul (see Gal. 2:11-14).

In verse 16 Peter tells us he “remembered” the words of the Lord regarding baptism by the Holy Spirit. Recognizing the Gentiles had the same baptism experience (a Gentile Pentecost), Peter could not stand in God’s way. The truth of what we hear may not have much impact on us until we have reason to apply it to what we are experiencing. Peter was able to “put two and two together” and discern God’s will, relying upon what he had heard and what was happening in front of his nose. This is an endorsement for memorizing the word of God to bring to remembrance what God said.

The scene transitions to Antioch, almost 500 miles north of Jerusalem. The book of Acts attributes the presence of believers there and in Phoenicia and Cyprus to the persecution after Stephen’s martyrdom. What follows is a reminder that God can take a great evil and turn it into a great good. We learn that a work of the Holy Spirit had begun in Antioch, and a great many Hellenists (Gentiles, non-Jews) turned to the Lord. This only happened because saints who were outsiders (residents outside of Jerusalem and Judea) began to share their faith with those who were not Jews. The Judean transplants had been sharing only with Jews.

When reports of those turning to the Lord began to circulate, Barnabas (introduced in 4:36-37) was sent by the brothers in Jerusalem to investigate. Barnabas was glad for God’s grace being extended to the Gentiles. After exhorting the new believers, he saw the people needed to be trained in the faith. Who better than Saul to train them? He had formal training in the Scriptures, and he could speak personally about the power of God to change lives through his own encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. So began a one-year systematic training program for a large number of new believers, who for the first time became known as Christians. The headquarters of the Gentile church was now firmly established in Antioch.

The church in Antioch acted upon their faith and gave back financially to the church in Jerusalem. Agabus the prophet foretold of a world-wide famine. This is the same Agabus who later prophesied Paul would be bound by the Jews and delivered to the Gentiles (Acts 21:10-11). The church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul with a gift to help relieve the suffering in Jerusalem. This period is date-stamped by noting the famine took place during the reign of emperor Claudius (41-54 AD). This famine likely took place in the mid-40s AD, which would be about 12-15 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the birth of the church at Pentecost.