

The Church at Antioch **Acts 11:19-26**

“The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.”

In the ancient world, the followers of a leader would often take the name of the one they followed. The Gospel of Mark speaks of the Herodians who were followers of Herod. Christians were followers of Christ.

Why? The early Christians spoke often of Jesus Christ. They lived according to the way or teaching of Jesus Christ. So much so that when the outsiders looked at the insiders they called them Christian. This presents a very challenging question:

Is your life becoming more and more influenced by the person of Jesus?

When the disciples in Antioch are called Christian it's not because something is missing in their lives, it's because something is present. This designation did not come from the inside but the outside. It was the outsiders who identified the insiders as Christians. The disciples at Antioch were called Christians because they were follower of Jesus Christ, they spoke of Jesus and they lived like Jesus.

I get the impression that our culture doesn't think of Jesus when they hear the term, Christian. There is another observation made about the Church at Antioch in this passage.

“When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he saw the grace of God and was glad.”

What did Barnabas see? The lost were being saved. Christians were sharing the gospel and people were being saved. A clear mark of God's grace is new birth. It is normal for a Christian Church to see God's grace in terms of conversions. You should expect that and see that.

What did Barnabas see? Jews and Gentiles had become brothers and sisters in Christ. In terms of a local Church, no one had ever seen this before on the face of the earth. Two groups of people who didn't like each other, didn't fellowship with each other, were suspicious of each other – had become family.

One of the evidences of the need for Jesus in our country is the presence of groups of people who don't like each other, don't fellowship with other and are suspicious of each other.

When Barnabas saw the grace of God in Antioch, that is not a situation where he walked into a meeting hall this big or bigger and it was filled with a group of people who were glad to be together. The local Church was a house Church. Maybe 20-30 people. Barnabas made the rounds. He saw those groups filled with Jews and Gentiles who had become family.

What did Barnabas see? When Barnabas saw the explosive growth in Antioch – Jews and Gentiles coming to Christ and becoming a discipleship family – he saw the need for intentional leadership. This was not an accident or chance, this was intentional on the part of Barnabas.

Barnabas searched for and found Paul 100 miles away in a city of 100,000 people.

Final Thought:

There is a connection between your willingness to embrace the authority of the Bible in your life AND your demonstration of being a Christian. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to renew your mind and to form your heart.

Home Group Questions:

1. Acts 11 refers to “Barnabas *saw* the grace of God and was glad.”

What do you think Barnabas actually saw?

- What would this look like at Hope?
- What would it take for a guy like Barnabas to walk in here and *see* the grace of God and be glad?

2. What evidence of Christianity do you see in your life?

- If you are married, what evidence of Christianity do you see in your spouse’s life?

3. Is there a person who has made a difference in your life as a result of intentionally investing in you?

- How has this person evidenced Christianity in his or her life?

4. Do you like the idea of being called a Christian?

- What do you think our culture thinks of when a person is identified as a Christian?

5. Do you have a personal plan for reading the Bible?