

In the final week of our Nation Changers series, Steve spoke about the five signs of a “base” church. In the first few chapters of Acts, most of the action happens in Jerusalem - a base church which impacted the whole world. However, in Acts 11 the action moved to Antioch, where the church became a major base for church plants etc. This should inspire us to be a base church - a church that doesn't settle for impacting the local neighbourhood, but that has a heart to change the world.

*Stephen was stoned to death in Jerusalem for preaching the Gospel, and tremendous persecution followed. Christ-followers scattered, but they continued to preach the Gospel wherever they went. Up until the point of Stephen's death, Christ-followers had only preached to fellow Jews. However, with them being scattered following the persecution, some of them settled in Antioch and began to preach to the Greeks: Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, **men from Cyprus and Cyrene**, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, **telling them** the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:19-21.*



The church of Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch and he brought in Saul to teach the new Christ-followers. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and **encouraged them** all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

*During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to **provide help** for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:23-30*

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and

fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:1-3

From the Church in Antioch, we can see five signs of a base church:

1. A 'telling' church

Some of them... went to Antioch and began... telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. Acts 11:20. Sometimes we envisage “working for God” to include really great/big things, but more often than not, it's in the telling others of Him where the biggest work happens. This is why we have a “culture of invitation” at CityHill, why we focus on “each one reach one”. Because it's in reaching out that the church grows. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:21.

2. A multicultural church

In Acts we read of men from Cyprus and Cyrene who went to Antioch, speaking to both Jews and Greeks: *Some of them, however... began to speak to Greeks also...* Acts 11:20. In Acts 13:1, Luke lists a group of men which shows that the church made up of people from different language and cultural backgrounds: *Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch) and Saul.*

- Barnabas came from Cyprus
- Simeon called Niger (which comes from a Latin word for dark) was most probably a man of dark skin colour!
- Lucius was from Cyrene, a town in Libya
- Manaen was raised in the palace with Herod (the king)
- Saul came from Tarsus (modern day Turkey)

The world today is full of cultural divides and hostility, but when the Gospel gets into our hearts, Jesus uses people from all backgrounds. The church should be a supernatural sign to everyone that Christ is our peace and that He destroys the barriers! *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. Ephesians 2:14.*

3. An encouraging church

Barnabas was a nickname (meaning ‘son of encouragement’) - his real name was Joseph: *Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’)... Acts 4:36.* The question we need to ask ourselves is: are we sons/daughters of encouragement? Are others filled with joy and courage when they spend time with us, or does it leave them feeling like they need a time of prayer to recover?

When he [Barnabas] arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. Acts 11:23.

It's easy to become half-hearted. We need to pursue Christ wholeheartedly!

4. A generous church

One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 11:28-30. They took up an offering for the famine that hadn't even happened yet and sent it to Judea (Jerusalem)! This was big thinking from a big-hearted church. Through CityHope Disaster Relief, we have been able to help with disasters (famines and floods) in Malawi. Bible poverty in Africa is being addressed through Bibles Beyond Borders. SBCI (Satellite Bible College International) resource material is used by many countries in Africa. Through local giving at CityHill in Hillcrest, we have been able to contribute USD 10,000 to the building of classrooms in Burkina Faso, and purchase a tent for a church in Mozambique. There are also building projects on the go in Lesotho, and a borehole has gone in to a village in Swaziland. And locally, all 50 of our Nation Changers projects for 2019 have been adopted.

5. A sending church

...the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:2-3. It might have been a tough goodbye, but it was a catalyst for spreading the Gospel!

In addition to the short term mission trips going out often

from our local church, we also have the amazing privilege of funding Peter and Karen Rasmussen's apostolic work. Several churches have planted out of CityHill in Hillcrest over the years:

- Ross and El-Mari Kolbe planted CityHill Church in Waterfall and then CityHill Church in Pinetown. Recently they have moved to Wellington in New Zealand, and they plan to start a church there too
- Steve and Bronwyn Rothquel now lead One City Church in Westville
- Tim and Paula Petersen went from CityHill in Hillcrest to support the One City Church plant, and then later planted CityHill Church in Amanzimtoti
- Connie & Cathy Hallowell planted CityHill Church in Umkomaas
- Henriques and Sanel Moises went to support a church plant in Maputo
- Mark & Rose Paimipundu planted a Church in Gaborone and then one in Leicester

What can we do as a church to continue spreading the Gospel around the world? Are you feeling the finger of God on your heart to do something, sometime?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Icebreaker (Choose 1)

- What are some of the interesting nicknames you've encountered over the years?
- People have come to CityHill from many different places, and CityHill has sent people out to locations all over the world. How did you end up at CityHill?

Questions For Groups (Choose 2 or 3 questions)

1. Reread Acts 11:19-30 out loud with your group. What stood out from Sunday's message (or now, from reading this text)? What 'lightbulb' moments did you experience? Was there anything that was confusing and needs clarity?
2. The establishment of the church in Antioch came about as a result of the persecution of Christ-followers in Jerusalem. If you were arrested for being a follower of Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you?
3. One of the signs of the church in Antioch is that it was multicultural. How good are you at making connections with people of different cultures? What are some of your internal barriers that hinder you from making better cross-cultural connections? [*Note to leaders: We believe that this is really on God's heart for our church. Please guide this discussion away from any unhelpful stereotyping and towards the need to have godly love in our hearts for all people.*]
4. Barnabas was a man who encouraged others. Can you name one or two people who have been a huge encouragement to you in your spiritual journey? In what way have they encouraged you? Have you ever taken the time to thank them?
5. In Acts 11:29-30 we read how the disciples provided to generously for those they had probably not even met: *The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.* What motivates you to give financially to others in need?
6. We have been using the phrase "each one reach one" to encourage each person at CityHill to reach out to at least one other person this year. How is that going for you so far? Who have you had the opportunity of inviting to church or sharing the Gospel with?

PRAYER POINT

Pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to the opportunities you'll have to encourage others this week. Pray for the courage needed to take advantage of those opportunities when they come.

ACTION POINT

The Bible tells us to encourage one another, to remind each other of the truth that God loves us, that God equips us, and that He is with us in our struggles. Who can you encourage this week? Share some words of encouragement with that person.