

Acts 11:1-30

September 28, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

The gospel is for everyone.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What have you been learning in our study of Acts? What have been your takeaways so far?

How have you seen God work through difficult circumstances in our society today? What about in your life personally?

In our study today, we'll check in with the growing church and see how God worked through unfortunate and unusual circumstances.



UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 11:1-18.

Think back on the events of Acts 10. What context does that add to Peter's actions in these verses? Why was this such an important moment?

How did those listening respond? Why was this equally important?

What did these things mean for the church moving forward?

This passage gives a recap of Peter's dining meeting in Joppa and Caesarea that we studied last week.

The "circumcision party" (v.2) refers to a vocal, problematic group in the early church. They advocated that, to become a Christian, you must first become a Jew and follow Jewish laws (which, for men, would involve circumcision). The Jerusalem Council would later make a ruling on this matter (Acts 15), but for now, suffice to say the stance of the circumcision party was wrong. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus, not because of any good works we do (like following Old Testament law).

Their objection to Jewish tradition prompted Peter to explain what happened. Peter learned that the good news of Jesus was for everyone, including Gentiles, and that Jesus was building something new in the emerging Christian church. This was a radical shift in worldview for the Jews!

In the face of criticism, the working of the Holy Spirit in Peter's story spoke volumes. The gospel really had come to the Gentiles, with God's endorsement. Note their beautiful response: "they glorified God" (v.18). Learning that the gospel was spreading wider than they originally expected was good news for all involved.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 11:19-26.

How did God work in unexpected ways through difficult circumstances in this passage?

Why do you think Luke noted the differences in audiences here (Jews v. Greeks)? Why would this be significant?

This passage gives us a peek into the spread of the gospel in the first century. Remember that persecution in Jerusalem (once led by Saul) caused the people to scatter, taking the gospel message with them and sharing as they went. God worked a



bad situation for good. God wastes nothing. He can work any situation out for His glory and our good. We see evidence of that in this passage.

Note how the gospel was brought to different groups here. God worked through different people in different ways to spread the good news.

In verse 20, we learn that some men began to share the good news with Gentiles (the Greeks in Antioch). And thus, the gospel spread not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, too. Luke noted that “the Lord’s hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord” (v.21).

Word of the Lord working through these men in Antioch reached Barnabas the encourager, who Himself was encouraged by how God was working in and through the people there. God extended His grace through the gift of salvation not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles (the Greeks). Again, we are reminded: The gospel is for everyone.

Having witnessed the genuine work of the Spirit among the believers in Antioch, Barnabas encouraged them by giving them advice to live by: “remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts” (v.23). This encouragement is just as needed for believers today!

Barnabas sought out Paul and brought him to Antioch where they evangelized and disciplined the people, and the church there grew. Notably, this is the first place they were given the name Christians.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 11:27-30.

What do the actions of the disciples in this passage teach us about the way the gospel impacts all areas of life?

How has God called us to care for others today?

Chapter 11 ends with a beautiful display of Christian community. When the Holy Spirit spoke through a prophet predicting severe famine, the disciples acted, sending aid to their brothers and sisters in Christ who needed it.

Just as Jesus modeled, they saw a need they could meet and met it. Note that everyone gave “according to his ability” (v.29). We all bring different gifts to the table. Some of us can offer money, some skills, but all have things God has blessed us with that He will use for His glory and the good of others.



APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do we learn about God's love for people from every background in this passage?

How has God worked a bad situation out for good in your life?

What are some ways we can care for our community using the gifts God has given us?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for making the gift of the gospel available to everyone. Ask for His help as you seek to share the gospel message and the gifts He has given you in your community.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we discuss our role, God's strategy, and the goal of missions.

October 5, 2025 --- Matthew 28:18-20 / Acts 1:8 / Revelation 7:9-10 / Romans 10:13-15

COMMENTARY

Acts 11

Endorsement of the Witness to the Gentiles (11:1–18). The final scene takes place in Jerusalem, where Peter was questioned by some of the more conservative Jewish Christians about his having dined with Gentiles. Peter related the whole incident to them. Both visions are given in detail for the third time. The reader cannot miss the importance of the event. Peter's critics could not deny the Spirit's work, so they had to agree with Peter that God was including the Gentiles in Christ. Not all the details had been settled. The issue would arise again in the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15. But the general principle of the Gentile mission had been agreed upon. The door was now open for the mission of the Antioch church.



Antioch's Witness (11:19–30). The church of Antioch in Syria was established by some of Stephen's fellow Hellenists who had fled the persecution in Jerusalem. Antioch was a city of Greek culture and language. The Christian Hellenists witnessed to the Jews of the city first but eventually turned to the Gentiles. They were the first Christian congregation to undertake a Gentile mission. That is probably why the name Christian was first used there. "Christian" is a Latinized formation and was undoubtedly used first by the Gentiles whose attention had been drawn by the Christian outreach.

Antioch's Gentile mission came to the attention of the Jerusalem church, which sent Barnabas to check it out. Barnabas quickly determined its authenticity and joined in the outreach himself. He remembered Paul, who was himself a Greek-speaking Jew of the Dispersion, one who would be particularly suited for a ministry to Gentiles. Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. There the two witnessed for a whole year. The Antioch outreach prepared the two for their own mission to the Gentiles, which they would soon undertake.

Verses 27–30 relate a special project undertaken by the Antioch church. Agabus, a Christian prophet from Jerusalem, predicted that a severe famine would soon occur throughout the Roman Empire. A major famine did indeed occur at that time, during the reign of Claudius. The Antioch Christians saved up and assisted the Judean churches when the famine struck. Paul and Barnabas administered the offering. It served as a pattern for Paul, who would later undertake a major collection from his Gentile congregations for the Judean Christians.

