

# WHAT GOD EXPECTS IN A CHURCH – ANTIOCH

CONFERENCE SESSION 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Everybody have a good dinner  
Full now

*Are you tired?*

*It's a hot day*

*Take a nap?*

This morning we talked about God's plan through the ages  
The time we live in is the church  
We have the privilege of telling the story  
We have the privilege of leading a church and telling about this

There are many different kinds of churches today  
Each one thinks they are doing what God want done  
How do we know for sure what God want a church to be?  
When He looks at our church what does He look for?  
We need to look into His word to find the answer

There is one church that is special and sets an example for us  
It was the first church started outside Jerusalem  
Also it was first gentle church  
They sent out missionaries that took the gospel to Europe and America  
They also sent workers to start the church in India  
This was the church in Antioch

Antioch is 500 kilometers north of Jerusalem  
It was the third largest city in the world  
It had 700,000 people  
There were many, many different cultures and groups that lived there  
There were more Jews that lived there than anywhere except Jerusalem  
Many gentiles lived there and became Jews  
But it was also one of the most evil, corrupt cities of its day  
It wouldn't seem like a place for a church but that is the place that needs a church the most

## TRANSITION

What the did the church in Antioch do that made it so special?  
Let's look at 6 things  
Write them down and see if your church does these

### MAGIC & AV

1. change bag – seeds to plants
2. frog lizard pics
3. 4 color rope
4. Button flip – green Grow
5. India map

# I. FAITHFULLY SHARE THE GOSPEL Acts 11:19-21

First, they faithfully shared the gospel

Turn to Acts 11 in your Bibles

Can someone please read verse 19, 20 and 21

**SOMEONE READ:** *Acts 11:19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 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. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*

God allowed persecution to come to the church in Jerusalem

So, to escape that they left Jerusalem and went other places

Jesus told them to scatter and take the gospel everywhere

They weren't doing that, so the persecution came

*Sometimes God has to force us to do things also*

The Christians who went to Antioch shared the Gospel with Jews and Gentiles

These were common men not pastors

They talked about Jesus to their neighbors and those they worked with

All Christians are required to share their faith – not just pastors

***Train the people in your church so they can talk to people about Jesus***

***Help them understand His plan of salvation***

People saw the change in their lives and wanted to know why

The best way for the Gospel to spread is for one to tell others

The Bible said it's like sowing seeds

## **CHANGE BAG – seed to plant**

**When we talk to people about the Gospel it is like planting seeds in their hearts**

**We don't see what God does in people's hearts, but we see the change**

It was happening in Antioch

That's what God will do with seeds we plant

Jews and gentiles from many backgrounds were becoming Christians

In 250 years the church grew so that 1 out of 4 persons in Antioch were Christians

It was because people told their neighbors

## **PICS OF FROG & LIZARD**

**What is this?**

**How does a frog catch insects?**

**It just sits there and waits for an insect to come**

**Then it sticks out its tongue**

It is fat and it is lazy

What is this

How does a lizard find insects?

It runs everywhere – quickly running everywhere

Looking everywhere to find insects

*Which are the people in your church most like?*

*Do they sit and wait for people to come to them or do they look for others?*

*God wants us to be like the lizards*

*That's what God expects from a healthy church*

*You need to teach the people how to share their faith*

*And you need to set an example*

### TRANSITION

People in Antioch heard them talking about Jesus

They also saw a change in their lives

They were reflecting God's grace

That's the second thing God expects in a Godly church

## **II. REFLECT GOD'S GRACE Acts 11:22-24**

Read Acts 11:22, 23, 24

***SOMEONE READ: Acts 11:22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 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. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.***

It was very new to have gentiles come into the church

This was the first time it was happening, and many were coming

When the Jews in Jerusalem heard this, they were interested in learning more

They wanted to make sure this was from God so they sent **Barnabas** to check it out

He was a good man full of faith in the Holy Spirit and a servant of the people

When Barnabas got to Antioch, he saw the people full of God's grace

Their lives had been changed – joy filled their hearts

God's **grace** changes people's lives

Some churches make their people live for God out of legalism

If they don't do what the leaders say, others talk about them and look down on them

That is wrong and that is dangerous

Here God's grace was changing lives

All the people were getting along with each other

Gentiles and Jews were getting along  
Men and women were equal  
Rich and poor different casts they were all accepted  
These people were all getting along as Christians  
That is how God wants us to be  
He doesn't want differences in the Church, He wants us all to be one

## **ROPE, 4 COLOR different but one in Christ**

That's what the church at Antioch was doing  
Because of that they were called **Christians**  
That was the first time that term was used  
The people outside saw them and said they are acting like Christ  
That's because they were living by grace not by the law

*Do the people in your church all get along – accept each other?*

*Do some think they are more important than others?*

*Do they talk gossip about each other?*

*Do they make everybody that comes to church feel welcome?*

*Do they treat everyone as Jesus would treat them?*

*That is important to be a healthy church like Antioch*

### TRANSITION

God accepts all people by grace  
He expects us to be like him and accept others the same way  
The church in Antioch faithfully shared the gospel  
They reflected God's grace  
Because of that many came to Jesus  
As so the third thing they did was teach and train the new believers

### **III. TEACH & DISCIPLE BELIEVERS Acts 11:25-26**

Can somebody read Acts 11:25-26

***SOMEONE READ: Acts 11:25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 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.***

After they came to Jesus for salvation, they taught them how to be **disciples**  
They trained them so they would know how to live for Jesus  
Salvation is a free gift  
That is when we are born into God's family  
Being a disciple means we learn to live like Jesus every day

## **BUTTONS FLIP – Green grow esp**

There are many that accept God's gift of salvation that never go on living for Him  
The Antioch church taught the people how to live for Jesus  
They taught the Bible so they would know how to teach it  
This church trained people of all ages and all casts  
Men and women, adults and children – all were trained

**Barnabas** was an encourager not a teacher

**Paul** was a great teacher

Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus a few years before

He was learning but had not started to serve yet

So Barnabas looked everywhere for Paul until he found him and brought him to Antioch

Barnabas was humble enough to know he needed help

It is a wise pastor who knows he needs help

There are people in our church who have different spiritual gifts than we have

We need to let them use their spiritual gifts and let them serve

For a year they taught the new believers

It takes a lifetime to learn the Bible

You cannot have just one class and think you know all

Pastors are shepherds and are required to feed the people

***That is one of the main responsibilities God gives us***

***A healthy church trains the people***

***A healthy church uses the Bible in their services, messages and Bible studies***

***People cannot grow not knowing the Bible***

***You can grow a big church without teaching the Bible***

***But you cannot have a healthy church like God wants without teaching the Bible***

***It is an important thing God wants us to do***

### TRANSITION

Our churches must faithfully share the gospel

We must reflect God's grace

We must teach and disciple believers

And as they grow, they will help others

That is an important thing God expects that our church will help others in need

## **IV. HELP OTHERS IN NEED Acts 11:27-30**

**SOMEONE READ:** Acts 11:27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 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.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

These men were **prophets**

A prophet in the Bible is somebody who speaks for God

He proclaims God's word as the Holy Spirit directs him to speak

We would call a person like that today a *preacher*

God gave some of those men the ability to receive new information and pass it on

The New Testament had not yet been written

This was God's way of revealing His truth of the Bible

But when all the books were written then all this new information stopped

The Bible says the gift of prophesy would stop when the New Testament was complete

Before the New Testament was written this was God's way revealing His truth

God used these prophets to warn that a terrible **famine** was to come

And that many, many people would starve

When the Christians in Antioch heard this, they became concerned

They know the Christians in Jerusalem were very, very poor

When they became Christians their families would have nothing to do with them

They lost their jobs, heritage and homes

The Christian Jews in Antioch took up a collection to send to those in Jerusalem

Nobody told them they had to do it, It was their own idea

They could have kept the money to help themselves through the famine

But because they were growing and living by faith God's Spirit put this in their hearts

History tells us that two years later a terrible famine came

Thousands of Jews in Jerusalem died

But the Christians were able to get food because of the Christians in Antioch.

***God blesses a church that helps others in need***

***Do your people help other people that are in need?***

***Do they give their time and money to help?***

***No matter the cast, rich or poor – will they help anybody that needs help?***

***God wants our churches to do that***

### **TRANSITION**

Jesus did that and He wants us to be like Him

It's very important for a church to share in that way

The people did this because they had godly leaders

## **V. HAVE GODLY LEADERS Acts 13:1**

***Acts 13:1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers:***

The church in Antioch was not this one big church building

They did not have a building - they met in homes

They were small groups that met in many homes throughout the city

Each church had its own leader – their pastor

He oversaw the sheep of his church

When new people came and there was not enough room for them – they would start another church in a different home

All these home churches worked together

They didn't compete or try to be better

They had some leaders in the city that would oversee all the churches

The leaders brought cooperation among all the groups

These men are listed in Acts 13 verse 1

***Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.***

You learn things about these men from their names

Some were rich and educated and some were poor and not educated

They came from different nationalities and different casts

They had different skin color and different occupations

But they all worked together

***Christians in India must include the rich & poor, the educated & uneducated***

***Leaders can be rich or poor, educated or uneducated***

***What is important is that they are godly men living for Jesus***

***They must be men who study their Bible and pray***

***They need to be humble servants***

***They cannot be proud thinking they are better than others***

***And they needed to be like Jesus***

### **TRANSITION**

That is what these leaders were like

They are the ones that helped the church live by grace

They taught and trained the new believers

They led by helping those in need

They led in worship and prayer

That is the sixth sign of a Godly church

A church that worshiped and prayed

## **VI. WORSHIP & PRAY Acts 13:2-3**

Read Acts 13 verses 2-3

**SOMEONE READ:** *Acts 13:2 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.*

The Christians in Antioch would **get together** with other Christians

Some Christians think they don't need to attend a church

*But we need to get together to learn and help each other grow*

*We get together so we can encourage each other*

*We share our money and possessions to help others in need*

*We use the spiritual gifts God has given us to help others*

This church gathered to **worship**

Their focus was on God when they got together

It wasn't about the pastor or the church, just Jesus

The church in Antioch spent much time in **prayer**

The early church was a church that prayed

Sometimes they were so busy worshipping and praying that they didn't stop to eat

They **fasted** so that they could focus on worship

One time when they were doing this God said, “**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul**”

God was calling them to a special ministry

They were two of the best leaders of the church of Antioch

But the church was willing to give two of its best men to start new churches

*Healthy churches today are churches that pray*

*Sometimes pastors are too busy, so they don't pray much during the day*

*God expects us to spend time every day praying to Him*

*We need to lead our churches in time of prayer*

*We need to teach our people how to pray and how to worship*

That is what the church at Antioch did

They prayed for Paul and Barnabas, they **put hands on them** and then sent them off

They went on their first missionary journey

Antioch was Paul's home church

They prayed for him and they supported him

When the journey was over, they came back and spoke to the church

Then they sent them off again

For all three missionary journeys

This church made a **powerful impact** for Jesus for many years

For hundreds of years some of the **most important** men of the church came from Antioch

They had important church **meetings** there



This church was a **healthy church**

When all the small groups got together it was a **big church**

But each home church was a **small church**

Sometimes we think a big church is healthier than a small church

But you cannot tell if a church is healthy or not by its size

The Bible mentions many churches, but it never gives any indication of their size

It might be important to us, but it is not important to Jesus

He wants healthy, growing churches no matter the size

Jesus said, "I will build my church"

## **REST OF THE STORY ABOUT ANTIOCH**

The Church of Antioch went on to make a powerful impact for Christ.

Some very prominent church leaders came from Antioch

Several church councils to make important decisions about doctrine were held there

Within 300 years three 1 out of 4 people in Antioch Christians

The church at Antioch moved to the **west** starting churches in Europe and America

But it also worked to the **east** starting churches there and in India

### **IF DOING THOMAS TALK**

Thomas will be here tomorrow/later and he will tell you how Antioch helped the church in India

### **IF NOT DOING THOMAS TALK**

#### **MAP OF INDIA**

Here is a map of India

Jews were coming to India during the time of **Solomon**

They came to trade

Then when the **temple fell** the Jews moved everywhere

Many came to southern India

They settled there and they lived there

That is why **Thomas** came – to share the gospel with them

For 1500 years the small church existed that was started by Thomas

They suffered much persecution

The church at Antioch provided leaders and help

Some people from Antioch moved there to keep the church alive when it got too small.

When the **Muslims** started taking over the world it became very hard for the church

In 650 AD the Muslims destroyed all the churches and Christians in Antioch

And they greatly persecuted the Christians in India

In the 1500's **Roman Catholic** priests started churches for the traders who came  
They hired lower cast Indians to work for them  
Many low cast Indians joined the church for food and for protection  
The Catholics said the Indians could stay Hindu and still be Christian  
Many of the Christians in Thomas's church joined them

It wasn't until the 1700's that **Protestant missionaries** started coming  
They came to help the people and to build churches

The church stayed very small and very weak  
The church had leaders from Europe  
They looked and acted like the churches of Europe

Then about 140 years ago a very bad **famine** came in Andhra Pradesh & Telegana  
Missionaries came and brought much food and aid for them  
Thousands of Indians started going to their churches  
I don't know how many just wanted the free food or how many trusted in Jesus  
It was almost all poor families that came  
The upper cast didn't want anything to do with the lower casts or with foreign Christians  
The missionaries started schools, hospitals, orphanages, and leprosy work  
They tried to make churches that would have Indian leaders and not depend on foreigners  
But that didn't work for many

## **CONCLUSION**

***India needs healthy, growing churches***

***They need churches that faithfully share the gospel***

***The church in India needs to reach all casts of people***

***They need to reflect God's grace***

***They need to teach and disciple believers***

***They need to help others in need***

***They must have Godly leaders***

***And must be a church that worships and prays***

***Pray God will show you how to do this in the Indian church***

***Don't try to be like a foreign church – make it like God wants it for India***

***See what God has for you – don't try to copy anyone else***

Jesus promises, ***"I will build my church & the gates of hell will not prevail against it"***

That is true in India

Praise the LORD!!

Thank you

## **CLOSING PRAYER**