

OPENING THE FLOODGATES

We hope this series of studies will issue in the floodgates of heaven being opened afresh! You'll find the background to the series [here](#).

Don't feel a pressure to answer every question in your Community Group!

There are deliberately 7 (sets of) questions simply to provide a set of daily study notes for those who find it helpful to work their way through the passage like that.

Almost certainly there's too much material for the time available when you meet: use what you find most helpful. Key questions this week are probably questions 4, 5 & 6.

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5. *"..great numbers of people .."* (Acts 11.19-30)

This short passage narrates the establishing of the church in Antioch. It marks a significant stage in the progress of the gospel, partly because Antioch was the third most important city in the Roman Empire at the time, and partly because this church became the platform from which the expansive mission to the Gentile world would subsequently flow. It became in many ways the archetypal 'sending' church.

In studying this passage, therefore, we'll be hoping to enjoy the encouragements and embrace the challenges of being a church which **Attracts, Consolidates, Trains, and Sends**.

1. **Read Acts 11.1-18.** Here we're given the 'backdrop' to the establishing of the church in Antioch. Some big 'mental blocks' had to be removed if the message was to be taken to non-Jews.

What were those 'mental blocks'? How were they removed? And what sort of 'mental blocks' may need to be removed in our case if we're genuinely to be that sort of 'ACTS' church?

2. **Read 11.19.** We've already seen how Stephen's ministry and martyrdom (6.8-8.3) was a catalyst for a persecution which resulted in the gospel travelling north (Samaria: 8.4-25), south (Ethiopia: 8.16-40), and into the very core of Judaism (Saul of Tarsus: 9.1-31).

When we know that speaking about Jesus will likely give rise to some fierce opposition, our every instinct presses us to say nothing: how do we 'over-ride' such instincts?

3. **Read 11.20.** These early disciples shared 'the good news about the Lord Jesus' with the people they met in Antioch. This was not a formal 'preaching' of the gospel, but rather an easy and natural speaking about Jesus to others.

After all they'd been through what would have made them so ready to speak about the good news? How do you think those opportunities to speak about Jesus arose?

What is it, by contrast, that can make us often reluctant or hesitant to share the gospel with others?

4. **Read 11.21.** This short verse is crucial to an understanding of what happened in Antioch.

What's meant by the phrase "*the hand of the Lord was with them*"? Read **Mark 5.22-24, 8.22-25** and **Luke 4.40** and consider what light they shed on the question.

If the 'hand of the Lord' being with us is so important to the progress of the gospel and people coming to faith, are there steps we can take to ensure that that is our experience as well?

Read **1 Thess.1.4-10** for a more detailed description of a people who "*.. believed and turned to the Lord*": from that passage what's involved in a person being converted?

5. **Read 11.22-24.** On hearing all that had happened at Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas there: and we're told that a further 'great number of people were brought to the Lord.'

From what's said about Barnabas here, what features of the ministry he exercised do you think were significant factors in a great number more people being brought to the Lord?

What lessons might there be for ourselves in that which, if well learned, might issue in people being brought to the Lord here?

6. **Read 11.25-26.** What Barnabas did here was surely a step of genius! It would prove to be another pivotal moment in the advance of the gospel.

What considerations do you think would have prompted Barnabas to go and bring Saul to Antioch?

The first use of the term 'Christian' was here in Antioch: and it was used in a *derogatory* way about these believers. Why would the teaching of Saul and Barnabas have given rise to this designation?

7. **Read 11.27-30.** These closing verses of the chapter provide a further glimpse into the life of the young church in Antioch.

In what respects (if any!) does the record of the church's giving here at Antioch stimulate you to think about your own giving?

Thinking back over the whole passage, what strike you as being the chief characteristics of this new church at Antioch?

What in the life of the church at Antioch should perhaps challenge us as a fellowship here at Gilcomston? And what should encourage us?