

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](#).

No pressure!

Don't feel a pressure to answer every question in your Community Group! Again I've deliberately given 7 (sets of) questions, not with a view to their all being answered necessarily, but simply to provide a set of daily study notes for those who find it helpful to work their way through the passage like that.

Priorities!

Almost certainly there's too much material for the time available when you meet: use what you find most helpful. Key questions for us all as a fellowship this week are questions 3, 4 & 6: please feed back any insights which would seem to be of benefit to us all!

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6. *".. The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me ..'"* (Acts 13.1-12)

This week's passage is again relatively short, but it provides a helpful second 'snapshot' of the church in Antioch. If the first glimpse of their life (Acts 11.19-30) showed them to be **Attracting** people to Jesus and **Consolidating** new believers in the faith through clear Bible teaching, this fresh window onto their life points to the priority of **Training** their people for ministry, and to their passion for **Sending** their people out in the cause of the gospel.

There's much in this passage for us to reflect on together as we seek to ensure that our life here in the 3rd city of Scotland is characterized similarly to that of the church in Antioch, the 3rd city of the Roman Empire.

1. **Read Acts 11.19-30** again to remind yourself how the church at Antioch came into being and how it was characterized.

What do you find appealing about the life of the church at Antioch as it's described here?

2. **Look at 13.1.** Within a relatively short period of time the church at Antioch evidenced a range of different individuals exercising some sort of 'Word' ministry.

How would you describe the difference between 'prophets' and 'teachers'?

Given that back in those days there were no 'church' buildings as such, how might these prophets and teachers have exercised their ministries?

What parallels to this should we look for in our life here at Gilcomston Church?

3. **Consider 13.1-2.** These verses have to do with the corporate worship of the church at Antioch: always an important area in the life of any church – and clearly one in which there was a real

immediacy in their experience of the presence of the Lord and of His speaking with them. It will be good for us to spend some time together thinking through our own corporate worship.

Read **1 Cor.14.24-25**. The immediacy of God's presence and of His speaking with His people as they gather for worship seems to have been 'the norm': in what ways (if any!) have you known a similar sense of the immediacy of God's presence and of His speaking with us in our corporate worship?

Are there ways in which such an experience of the immediacy of God's presence could be better fostered in our times of shared worship?

When we're told that "*.. the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me..' ..*" how do you envisage that happened? Should we come to our shared times of worship with a similar expectancy?

This would prove to be a pivotal moment in the progress of the gospel: the reference to their 'fasting' (vv.2 & 3) suggests that there may have been an awareness on their part that they were at just such a significant point in God's dealings with them. Should we countenance such times of 'fasting'? And if so, in what circumstances? And what might that look like?

4. **Read 13.1-3**. Remember the acronym we use to keep our 'purpose' clearly before us – ACTS: the church at Antioch was, from the outset, a '**Sending**' church.

Read **Acts 11.22-26** again and put yourself in the shoes of Antioch believers: how would you have felt at the prospect of Barnabas and Saul being called away like this to a new sphere of ministry?

The reference to 'prophets' and 'teachers' suggests that there was already in place a number of people deliberately **Trained** up to carry on the 'Word' ministry exercised by Barnabas and Saul. Should something similar be developed in our fellowship here at Gilcomston, and if so how might that best be done?

5. Read 13.3-4. The sending out of Barnabas and Saul provides a 'high definition' picture of how our own shared worship ends Sunday by Sunday, as we are each 'sent out' by the Holy Spirit into a new week of service in the cause of the gospel.

How might this 'sending out' be best communicated as a part of, and the conclusion to, our shared worship

6. Read 13.4-5. It seems to have been a deliberate part of Paul's strategy to take a younger man along as an 'apprentice' on such missionary ventures: here it's John (Mark), later (Acts 16.1-3) it's Timothy. A number of our own 'young adults' have said they would really value some such 'mentoring'; it will be helpful, therefore, for us to think and talk this through together.

How might this sort of 'apprenticing' of younger Christians be given expression in our life as a fellowship here?

7. Read 13.6-12. The recurring theme of these verses narrating the start of their 'missionary journey' is the preaching of the message – '*proclaimed the word of God*' (v.5), '*wanted to hear the word of God*' (v.7), '*turn .. from the faith*' (v.8), and '*the teaching about the Lord*' (v.12).

The message was preached in the 'formal' context of the synagogue (v.5), and in the relational context of the one-to-one engagement with the proconsul (v.7): what might parallel the 'confrontational' encounter with Elymas?

In a Scotland increasingly removed from her Christian roots should we anticipate more of these 'confrontational' encounters?