

# Back to the Future

discerning God's purpose for our life as His church

Every so often it's important to pause and take stock. How are we doing? What are we seeking to accomplish? Are we growing, making progress?

Such seasons of 'reflection' are as important in our communal life as a local church as they are in our individual lives.

This series of studies aims to provide a focus for such a season, a chance to let the Word of God inform our understanding of all that he calls us as His church to be and to be doing in these days of great turbulence and change.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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## 6. Well rounded believers

(Acts 11.25-30)

[w/b Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2020]

*“.. The disciples .. decided to provide help ..”*

When Barnabas brought Saul he ensured that the teaching of God’s Word became the central feature of the church’s life at Antioch: that teaching ministry shaped everything and, under the Holy Spirit, was the primary driver for the great missionary enterprise of this church.

If the last study focused more on the *nature* of that teaching ministry, this study looks more at the *impact* or *effect* it had.

*[Although there are 7 questions as ever, all of them important, your Community Group may choose to concentrate on just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 2, 5 and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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**1. Read Acts 11.19-30.** Much had already been effected by the grace of God when Barnabas first arrived: after a year of sustained teaching there were further evidences of God’s grace.

Reflect back on your own life over this past year or so: in what ways would you say you have grown in Christ?

What differences (if any) might a visitor to Gilcomston now be aware of, as compared with a year or two ago?

**2. Read Eph.4.11-16.** Paul highlights a range of 'Word'-related gifts in the life of the church to show their significance for the growth of the body of Christ.

What did Paul see as the effects of the ministry exercised by pastors/teachers? How is that being evidenced (if at all!) in the life of our (or your!) fellowship?

How does the teaching of the Word of God help bind God's people together as one?

**3. Read Acts 11.25-26.** This was the starting point for all that the church at Antioch would become as the launch-pad for the expansive missionary work which took the gospel to the world.

What would prompt your neighbours/colleagues/friends to think of, and describe, you as 'Jesus-centred'?

How does your being centred on Jesus affect your daily living?

**4. Read Acts 11.27-28.** The church at Antioch would have received instruction about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps some guidance, too, about the ministry of 'prophets'.

**Read 1 Cor.14.29-33:** what measures did Paul put in place to ensure that there was both space for, and controls over, 'prophetic' ministry?

What might this have looked like at Antioch when Agabus and other prophets arrived from Jerusalem?

5. **Read Romans 15.25-27.** Despite his calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, Paul was conscious of his responsibility to respond to material need, and to seek the good of the Jews.

What did Paul mean when he writes that the Gentile churches 'owe it to the Jews' (v.27)?

How might the principle Paul sets out in v.27 have application for ourselves as a fellowship?

6. **Read 2 Corinthians 9.6-11.** Over the course of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 Paul gives the church in Corinth important teaching in relation to the grace of giving.

What basic principles are set out here in vv.6-11 here?

How regularly should this sort of teaching be given in the life of a fellowship do you think?

What do you find helpful, and what do you find challenging about this teaching?

**7. Read Acts 11.29-30.** The disciples in Antioch had clearly been well taught and were glad to give as each was able to help those whom they viewed as their brothers and sisters.

**Read 2 Cor.8.1-5:** what did Paul mean when he said that 'the grace of God' lay behind the 'rich generosity' of the Macedonian churches?

In what sense would the Macedonian churches have seen their generous giving as a 'privilege' (2 Cor.8.4)?

Why do you think the believers at Antioch sent their gift by Barnabas and Saul, rather than by others?