

Acts for today**'The Growing Church in the Acts of the Apostles'**

No. 6: Antioch

'The task of every generation is to discover in which direction the sovereign redeemer is moving and then move in that direction' (Jonathan Edwards). These words are just as applicable for us as they are for the church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3). Here Jews and Gentiles shared fellowship together for the first time, and it is a model of church in which people of different background, race, sex, and culture come together.

Dynamic Worship

In their worship they met and engaged with God (lit: 'holding liturgy', 13:2), allowing the Holy Spirit to speak, and acting upon his word by sending off their key leaders (13:3)! They also responded positively to Agabus' prophesy about a famine in Jerusalem (11:28). Is our worship expectant and life changing?

Genuine Community

God's grace (11:23) was evident in the way they accepted each other, the diversity of their leadership (13:1), and the way they were encouraged to 'remain true to the Lord'. Where is the evidence of God's grace in our church community?

Effective Outreach

The church was planted by Jewish Christians fleeing persecution, and so pushed out of their comfort zones. They shared the gospel with Greeks who spoke the same language and shared the same culture (11:20).

To what extent are we equipping people to gossip the gospel with others?

Obviously Antioch was an exciting place to be! Not only was the church growing, as the 'Lord's hand was with them' (11:21), but here the disciples were first called 'Christians'. This nickname meant 'those who belong to Christ', because their lives spoke powerfully of their faith in Christ. As Christians today will our message be simply dismissed as irrelevant, or can we offer a challenging alternative lifestyle to those around us?

*The Rev Paul Hardingham
continues his series on the early Church.*

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