

# Antioch: A Healthy Church

Acts 13:1, “Now in the church that was at Antioch...”

*Introduction:* The apostles were called by Jesus to be “witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The apostles did this work and the church grew in all these places as Luke records in the book of Acts. One such congregation where the church really bloomed was in Antioch. Many think of Antioch as the church where “the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). However, there was so much more to this church we may be tempted to overlook. In fact, as we look at this congregation closer we find a blueprint for a growing and vibrant church. Let’s notice a few characteristics so we might imitate their work.

## I. Dedicated

- A. The congregation at Antioch began as a result of the persecution that hit the disciples in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4; Acts 11:19-21).
- B. This persecution did not stop them from being “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” 300 miles north of Jerusalem—in Antioch (1 Corinthians 15:58).

## II. Taught

- A. Many were being converted in the church at Antioch but they were in need of more teaching so Barnabas was sent and Saul was fetched (Acts 11:22-26).
- B. Healthy churches need good teachers so Christians are grounded in truth and mature beyond babes in Christ themselves (Hebrews 5:12-6:1).

## III. Generous

- A. When news came to the church at Antioch that a famine was headed for Jerusalem, the church was determined to send relief to help the brethren (Acts 11:27-30).
- B. Healthy churches are made up of generous people who are willing to share with others who are in need (1 Timothy 6:18; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

## IV. Inclusive

- A. The origins of the church at Antioch indicate it was made up of transients who all ended up working together in this locale after the persecution (Acts 11:20-21).
- B. The list of names in Acts 13:1 indicates the diverse and inclusive nature of the church—as it should be (cp. Galatians 3:28).
- C. When a church is culturally diverse it is proof of a church doing what it was called to do in the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

## V. Active

A. The church at Antioch was not just content with its own group—they were outward thinking and looked to send people other places when the need arose (Acts 13:1-4).

B. Look at the missionary journeys of Paul and we come across a common city—Antioch (Acts 13:1-4; 14:25; 15:40-41; 18:22; 18:23; cp. Mark 16:15-16).

## VI. Truth-Loving

A. The church at Antioch had its share of problems when Jews from Jerusalem attempted to come and bind circumcision upon the Gentile converts (Acts 15:1-3).

B. So, they sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to help determine the truth on this matter and they rejoiced when they came back to reveal it (Acts 15:30-31; cp. 17:11).

## VII. Forgiving

A. We have often heard of how Mark abandoned the journey with Paul and Barnabas and how Paul was upset with Mark over these circumstances (Acts 12:25; 13:4-5, 13; Acts 15:38-39).

B. Yet, we often do not note where Mark ended up after he had left the trip—Antioch (Acts 15:35).

C. Why was it Mark came back to Antioch? Could it be he knew they were a forgiving church who would give him a second chance in kingdom work?

Conclusion: The church at Antioch was a great church. It was growing and vibrant, not because of its building or programs, but because of its people who sought to live out their faith by being the very best they could be. We all would do well to build our congregations after their blueprints so that we too can be growing and vibrant churches.