



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Encounter | *September 28-October 4* | *Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3*

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder. The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Acts 11 introduces us to a church that understood the gospel was not meant to stop with them. As believers were scattered because of persecution, they carried the message of Jesus with them and began reaching people who were different from them. The church in Antioch became a picture of what happens when ordinary believers take the gospel seriously: people hear the good news of Jesus, lives are changed, disciples are made, and sending is celebrated.

But the story didn't stop with them. Barnabas arrives and sees the grace of God at work. He encourages the believers to remain faithful, then goes to find Paul (Saul) and brings him to Antioch. Together, they spend a year teaching and discipling the church. The result is significant: the disciples are called Christians for the first time.

A healthy church doesn't simply gather people, it reaches one more, makes disciples, surrenders everything, and sends people out.

Read

Read Acts 11:19-26 and 13:1-3 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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Scripture

Acts 11:19-30

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 11:19-30

[19] Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. [20] But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. [21] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. [22] The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. [23] When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, [24] for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. [25] So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, [26] and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

[27] Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). [29] So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. [30] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. (ESV)

Acts 13:1-3

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (ESV)

Living on Mission In Community

Living on mission means refusing to believe that the gospel is only for the people who are already in the room. The believers in Antioch were willing to reach people who were different from them, speak the truth with grace, invest deeply in discipleship, give generously to meet needs, and ultimately send their own people to take the gospel somewhere else.

As a group, ask: **Who is the “one more” God may be putting in front of us?** Who needs to hear the gospel from us? Who needs someone to patiently help them follow Jesus? And what might God be asking us to surrender so that someone else can encounter Christ?

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

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Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources- September 28- October 4

Small Group Curriculum - Acts 11:19-30 and 13:1-3

1. Session Overview

Acts 11 gives us a picture of a church shaped by the mission of Jesus. The church wasn't content simply to gather believers. The gospel moved them outward. The gospel always moves people toward those who needed to hear, to people who needed to be discipled, to people in need, and eventually to the nations.

The passage gives us five movements, what we call Upstate Church Distinctives, that help us understand the posture of a church on mission:

We Reach One More.

We Speak Truth in Grace.

We Make Disciple-Makers.

We Surrender Everything.

We Celebrate Sending.

The emphasis isn't simply on what the Antioch church accomplished. It's on the kind of people they became because of the gospel. They were willing to cross cultural barriers, encourage new believers, invest in spiritual maturity, sacrifice for others, and release their best people for the sake of Christ's mission.

2. Opening

Ask:

Who was the person who first helped you understand what it meant to follow Jesus?

What did they do that made such an impact on you?

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Acts 11:19-30 and 13:1-3 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

Reach One More - Acts 11:19-21

The believers who were scattered because of persecution didn't stop being witnesses. Wherever they went, they spoke about Jesus. Some initially shared only with Jews, but others began speaking to Greeks as well. Luke tells us that "the hand of the Lord was with them," and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. The mission of the church begins with a willingness to see the people around us as people who need Jesus. The gospel was never meant to remain within the walls of the church; it moves outward through ordinary believers who are willing to speak about Christ wherever God has placed them.

For us, reaching one more begins with recognizing the people God has already placed around us. Our workplaces, neighborhoods, families, friendships, and everyday routines are opportunities for gospel conversations. We don't have to wait for a special opportunity or a particular ministry event. Like these early believers, we can simply tell people about Jesus and trust God to work through our obedience.

Speak Truth in Grace - Acts 11:22-24

When the church in Jerusalem hears about what is happening in Antioch, they send Barnabas. When Barnabas arrives, he sees the grace of God and rejoices. Rather than simply celebrating the numerical growth of the church, he encourages the believers to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. Barnabas demonstrates an important part of discipleship: we don't simply tell people what is true; we help them live faithfully in light of what is true.

Luke describes Barnabas as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." His ministry was marked by both conviction and encouragement. Speaking truth in grace means we care enough about people to tell them the truth while caring enough about them to walk alongside them as they respond to it. Our goal isn't to win arguments or correct people for the sake of correction. Our goal is to help people take another step toward faithfulness to Jesus.

Make Disciple-Makers - Acts 11:25-26

Barnabas doesn't try to do everything himself. He goes to Tarsus to look for Saul and brings him to Antioch. For an entire year, they meet with the church and teach a great many people. This shows us that discipleship requires intentional investment. The goal isn't simply to gather people into a church service or get them to agree with Christian beliefs. The goal is to help people increasingly know Jesus, follow Jesus, and help others follow Jesus.

The result of this discipleship is striking: "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Their identity had become recognizable because their lives were increasingly identified with Christ. A

disciple is not simply someone who attends church; a disciple is someone whose life is being shaped by Jesus. And as disciples mature, they should increasingly become people who help others follow Jesus as well.

Surrender Everything - Acts 11:27-30

When a famine is prophesied and the believers in Judea face a significant need, the disciples respond with generosity. Luke says they determined to send relief, "everyone according to his ability." They didn't view what they possessed as exclusively their own. They saw the needs of other believers and responded with what God had entrusted to them. Their commitment to Jesus affected not only what they believed but also how they viewed their resources.

Following Jesus will eventually require us to surrender something. That may be our money, our time, our comfort, our plans, our preferences, or even our people. The Antioch church demonstrates that mission requires an open-handed posture. We don't ask, "How much can I keep?" but "How does God want me to use what He has entrusted to me?" Everything we have ultimately belongs to Him, and our response is to faithfully steward whatever He places in our hands.

Celebrate Sending - Acts 13:1-3

The story reaches an awesome moment in Acts 13. The church at Antioch has leaders, teachers, and people actively serving, yet when the Holy Spirit says, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul," the church doesn't hold tightly to its best leaders. Instead, they fast, pray, lay hands on them, and send them out. The church understood that their leaders ultimately belonged to Jesus and that the mission of God was bigger than their local congregation.

This gives us a picture of a healthy sending culture. We don't measure success only by how many people we can gather; we also celebrate when people are equipped and sent. Sending can be costly because it means releasing people we love and value. But when we understand that the mission belongs to Jesus, we can celebrate when He calls people to go. **The goal isn't simply to build a bigger church; it's to build a church that sends people to take the gospel wherever Jesus calls them.**

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in Acts 11:19-30 and Acts 13:1-3?
2. Which of these five Upstate Church Commitments most challenges you right now? Why?
3. Why do you think it can be difficult to share the gospel with people who are lost?
4. Who is one person God has placed in your life who needs to hear the gospel?
5. How can we speak truth to someone without losing grace?
6. What's the difference between helping someone attend church and helping someone follow Jesus?
7. Who are you intentionally discipling?
8. What makes surrender difficult for you?
9. Why would sending out some of their key leaders require faith?

10. What is one specific step God is asking you to take this week?

6. Application

This week, identify one person you can intentionally reach, encourage, or disciple. Ask God, what do You want me to surrender so that someone else can encounter Jesus?

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the people You have used to bring us to Jesus. Give us the courage to reach one more, the wisdom to speak truth with grace, and the faithfulness to make disciples. Teach us to hold our time, resources, comfort, and even our people with open hands. And when You call us to go, give us the faith to obey and the joy to celebrate what You are doing through Your church. In Jesus' name, amen.

8. Memory Verse

"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."

Acts 11:26

