

## Introduction

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Our text this week shows us the continued spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jerusalem church sends Barnabas—a key figure in the Gentile mission throughout *Acts*—to Antioch to investigate the response to the gospel by the Gentiles there. We learn that what identifies someone as a Christian is one's devotion to Jesus and not ethnicity or any other factor.

To get the most out of your group time, we invite you to look over the questions below and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group.

## Warm Up *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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Here are some suggestions to get your conversation started:

1. How do you like to be identified? By family name, nationality, political affiliation, occupation, title, or something else? Why is it important to you that people identify you in that way?
2. What is one thing you wish you would have invented? Why?

## Getting Started

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Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
  - 2) Invite someone to read the passage in the group.
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## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) In one or two sentences, how would you summarize the main idea of this week's sermon to someone who was not there?
- 2) After hearing about the large numbers of conversions among Gentiles in Antioch, the Jerusalem church sends Barnabas to investigate. **What do you think they wanted Barnabas to find out?**
- 3) **What convinced Barnabas that the conversions in Antioch were legitimate? What identified these new Gentile converts as followers of Jesus, or as Christians?**

If Barnabas was sent to Lincoln Berean Church, would he be convinced that we are followers of Jesus? If so, what would be the markers that would identify us as followers of Jesus?

Is it as clear to people that you are a Christian as it is that you are a Republican/Democrat, American/Mexican, teacher/attorney, etc.? Can you elaborate on your answer?

- 4) Too often we think church unity is grounded in politics, nationality, gender, or social status. Based on Barnabas's acceptance of the Gentile converts in Antioch as legitimate Christians like the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, **what does this passage tell us about what the basis is for unity in the church?**

How well do you live out the kind of unity expressed in *Acts 11* (give yourself a grade)? Do you find it hard to accept others as followers of Jesus who hold different theological views or political views than you do, or come from a different background or culture than you do? What causes you to struggle with this?

- 5) **What was the importance of Antioch sending famine relief to the church in Jerusalem?**

## Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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Prayer opens us up to the leading of the Holy Spirit which makes it an important part of the Christian life. We realize that everyone has their own comfort level with group prayer, and we want this to be a time of safety and care. You may verbalize your prayer or pray silently to yourself; that way everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Some things to consider during prayer time:

- What did the message or group discussion cause you to notice about your relationship with Jesus?
- How can you express gratitude for what God's teaching you?
- What questions are stirring that only God can answer?
- Are there troubling things in your life that need to be confessed to God?
- Is there an unmet need that only God can fulfill?

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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Each week we're suggesting a couple of spiritual exercises. These are not required, but they may help us to actively live our faith and grow as followers of Jesus. Feel free to practice one or both. If a certain exercise is helpful for you, we encourage you to find a way to incorporate it into your daily life.

**(Memorize)** This week memorize *Galatians* 3:26-29.

**(Pray)** Spend a few moments every day this week praying this prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace to take to heart the grave dangers we are in through our many divisions. Deliver your Church from all enmity and prejudice, and everything that hinders us from godly union. As there is one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so make us all to be of one heart and of one mind, united in the holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and love, that with one voice we may give you praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in everlasting glory. Amen.