

Barnabas Encourages Christians

Acts 11:19-26



Reason to Praise

In the chapters leading up to today's passage, God revealed to Peter that the message of Christ is not only for Jews but for non-Jews as well. Peter then took that message to the household of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and God poured out the Holy Spirit on these non-Jews who then came to faith in Christ. The Jerusalem church had a hard time accepting that non-Jews could become believers in Christ, but after Peter explained everything that had happened, they praised God that he had granted even the Gentiles eternal life through Jesus (Acts 10:1–11:18).

Reason to Scatter

In today's passage, we see that the early followers of Christ had been scattered from Jerusalem because of the persecution that began after Stephen was killed. The Jews had stoned him after he accused them of killing the Messiah, Jesus. But everywhere the scattered followers went, they told people about Jesus (Acts 7:1–8:4).

Spreading the News

The believers who were scattered to Antioch, at that time the third largest city in the Roman Empire, began sharing the message of Christ not only with the many Jews who lived there, but also with the non-Jews. When Jerusalem's church heard that a great number of people had turned to the Lord, they were ready to accept these non-Jewish believers, and they sent Barnabas (whose name means "Son of Encouragement") to see what was happening and to contribute to the spreading of the gospel message.

Barnabas invited Saul (whom we know as the Apostle Paul) to Antioch for a year to help teach because the church was expanding so quickly. Barnabas had befriended Saul and defended him before the apostles

in Jerusalem after Saul had met Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-30).

What happened in Antioch was significant because it was, apparently, the first time Jewish and non-Jewish Christians joined together in fellowship. People there were accustomed to rubbing shoulders with people of different backgrounds and of different ethnic groups. The church in Antioch set a wonderful example for churches to follow in centuries to come.

The Jesus Connection

As the text tells us, Jesus' followers were first called Christians in Antioch. It's significant that in Antioch this diverse group of followers took on a name that means "like Christ." As they lived out Jesus' example and encouraged others in the faith, people noticed. What a compliment it would be for others to consider us to be like Jesus!

Pray about how your life can reflect Jesus in a way

that would help draw others to God. You can write

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a nursing home or visit someone from your church shut in. Have your

who's shut in. Have your child take a game, and encourage him or her to tell about Jesus.



Bible Time: In the Bible passage this week (Acts 10:1-44). Peter leaves his own city and goes to a foreign land to share Jesus' message with Cornelius, a centurion. This was a big change for Peter, who had shared the gospel with Jews only. After a vision from God, though, Peter desired to share the good news about Jesus with everyone—including Gentiles. Most children love to talk about things that are special to them—a special person, toy, or event. During the week, encourage your child to share Jesus by talking about him with everyone he or she meets.

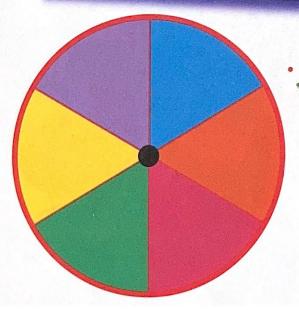
Key Verse: The Holy Spirit will teach you (adapted from John 14:26).



This week, your child learned to tell everyone about

Jesus. Your child committed to one of the following challenges to tell others about Jesus. Help your child weave faith into life this week and follow through on the challenge!

- Look at a globe with a parent and talk about how God wants us to tell everyone about Jesus.
- Use your My Bible Hugs page to play the Jesus Is for Everyone game with a friend. Then tell your friend that Jesus loves him or her.





Take a family walk, and use this time to repeat the Bible

Point to the rhythm of your walking steps. Try marching to "tell everyone about Jesus." Or try running, hopping on one foot, or skipping as you say the Bible Point. Not only will you and your child know the Bible Point by the time you return, you'll also both be ready for a nap!