



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 16
The week of February 7, 2016

Becoming a Sending Church
Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to **REACHING** and **TEACHING** people to become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ, **CONNECTING** them to one another and **SENDING** them to serve their families, communities and world.

MISSION:	Reaching	Teaching	Connecting	Sending
VALUE:	We value reaching people outside the faith with the gospel.	We value a clearly defined pathway to spiritual transformation and maturity based in the Word of God.	We value relationships where people are growing and serving together.	We value the welfare of our city and world by sending out ministers of mercy and disciple-makers.
PURPOSE:	To build bridges of spiritual influence to introduce people to Jesus Christ so that they can respond in repentance and faith.	To love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. (Great Commandment)	To pursue Jesus together in spiritually-focused, caring relationships.	To leave our building to impact our neighborhoods and nations for the sake of the gospel. (Great Commission)
RESULT:	Every member accepts the joyful privilege of reaching the outsider.	Every member continues to learn and grow into the image of Christ.	Every member participates in a unified community around Jesus Christ.	Every member is passionately committed to a life of service and mission for the sake of the body and the world.

Here are a few more things we'd like you to know about us:

- Our commitment to preach and teach the Bible is unwavering.
- We believe that a follower of Jesus Christ thrives best in a biblical community and is committed to becoming more and more like Jesus through obeying, serving and sharing life together.
- We want everyone at LCC to be equipped and ready to share their faith with the people God has placed around them.

This Week's Complementary Passage

Leviticus 19:1-4; 9-18 (ESV)

¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. ³Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. ⁴Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the Lord your God.

⁹“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. ¹¹“You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. ¹²You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. ¹³“You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. ¹⁴You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. ¹⁵“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord. ¹⁷“You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Marking Guide for Acts

(not all words occur in the passage)

- appointed
- baptized
- Caesar
- enemy/demons/Satan
- eternal life
- fathers & children [in one color different from Moses]
- Gentiles
- gospel
- grace
- Holy Spirit
- in the name of Jesus Christ
- Jesus
- Jews
- Law (of Moses)
- men of the council
- Moses [in different color from fathers & children]
- prayer
- repent (repentance)
- resurrection (raised up)
- salvation
- suffering
- the Way
- the promise of the Father
- witnesses
- word of God

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says

(Read it at least three times)

Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3 (ESV)

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.

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.

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

Commentary on Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3

11:19 - “Now those who were scattered because of the persecution.” We have several early examples of these persecutions in Acts. Stephen’s understanding of the radical implication of the gospel forced all the Jewish believers in Palestine to reassess their faith and the purpose of the gospel.

“Antioch.” Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. It was the capital of Syria and it had a large Jewish population. It was well known for its university life and its sexual immorality. It was also famous worldwide for its chariot racing. It would become a major center of Christianity.

“Speaking the word to no one except Jews.” This shows that the early church was not certain whether preaching to the Gentiles was appropriate. This theological issue will come to a head in Acts 15.

11:20 - “Men of Cyprus and Cyrene.” These are the same Greek-speaking Jewish believers as in Acts 6-8, who began to preach the universal implications of the Christian gospel in Jerusalem. Barnabas was from this geographical area.

“Spoke to the Hellenists.” Hellenists normally refers to Gentiles. In some passages, it refers to Gentiles who were connected to the synagogues, but not members (i.e. God-fearers). It is possible that the term refers to those who spoke Greek; some might be Jews of the Diaspora, and others full Gentiles.

11:21 - “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.” This is another summary statement of the great movement of God through evangelistic preaching.

11:22 - “Barnabas.” Barnabas is a major figure in the book of Acts. His name is used in the sense of encourager. The church in Jerusalem was still uncomfortable about Gentile inclusion.

11:23 - It is interesting to notice that when Barnabas saw the active presence of God’s grace through the Spirit, he encouraged all of them to remain in faith. This clearly shows the need for diligence on the part of God’s people for purposeful perseverance. The Jews and the church were very concerned about the immoral cultural context of paganism. The gospel was not only a free gift of salvation, but a call to godliness. God wants a people who reflect His character to a lost world. The goal of Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christ-likeness now so that others may come to faith in Christ.

11:24 - “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” This description is very similar to the Greek-speaking disciples mentioned in Acts 6:3, 5. The early church was full of men like this. May the same be true of our day, our culture, and our church.

11:25 - “So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul.” This verb implies that Saul was not easy to find. These silent years are apparently referred to in Galatians 1:21. The exact time

frame is uncertain, but it was approximately ten years.

11:26 - “And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” At first “Christian” was a derogatory reference to believers coined by pagans. Surprisingly this is a rare term. Its use in this Hellenistic environment shows how the title for Messiah (Christ) in Hebrew has become a name for Jesus’ followers (Christians). In this Hellenistic setting, it is possible that the term was given by governmental officials to differentiate Jews from believers.

11:27 - “Prophets.” Prophets are mentioned several times in the New Testament. It is not always certain whether their function is primarily foretelling, as here, or forth-telling.

11:28 - “There would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).” This geographical phrase refers to the Roman Empire. Claudius reigned from 41-54 A.D. He followed Caligula and preceded Nero. There were several severe famines during his reign. The worst famine for Palestine was sometime 44-48 A.D.

11:29 - “So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.” This is one of the major strategies of the Gentile churches, to promote fellowship with their sister church in Jerusalem. This would set a pattern in Paul’s churches.

11:30 - “Sending it to the elders.” This is the first mention of church elders. The term “elders” is synonymous with the terms “overseers,” “bishops,” and “pastors.” The term elder apparently refers to a specific group of leaders in the Jerusalem church. The more Jewish portions of the New Testament, like James and Hebrews, still use the Jewish understanding of older, local leaders, but not necessarily pastors.

13:2 - “While they were worshipping the Lord.” This is the Greek term *leitourgia* (a compound from “public” and “work”) from which we get the English term liturgy. Originally it referred to someone who did public service at their own expense. This implies a period of seeking God’s will during a worship service.

“And fasting.” In the Old Testament there is only one fast day a year, the Day of Atonement. However, during the first century, rabbinical Judaism had developed two fasts a week. Fasting, though never commanded in the New Testament, was expected at the appropriate time for Jesus’ disciples. Jesus set the precedent Himself. The early church fasted. The motive and manner are crucial; the length and frequency are optional. Fasting is not a way of showing off one’s spirituality, but of drawing closer to God and seeking His guidance. It can be spiritually helpful.

“The Holy Spirit said.” This is another biblical evidence for the personal nature of the Holy Spirit. Whether what was said was audible or intuitive is uncertain. However, it is obvious that the Spirit gave a very specific message.

13:3 - "They laid their hands on them." The New Testament background for this practice is quite varied. Sometimes the laying on of hands involved healing, other times it signified dedication or commissioning to a task, sometimes it was connected with receiving the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts, and still it served as a reference back to the basic teachings of Judaism or the church. This laying on of hands served as recognition that these men were already called, gifted, and functioning leaders in the Church. It was not a new ministry they were called to, but an expansion of what they were already doing. All believers are gifted for ministry to the body of Christ.

STEP FIVE . . .

SUMMARIZING the message

In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit acts like a great river, cutting fresh channels, and the church needs to be ready to move wherever He leads. We may not always like the way the Holy Spirit moves. Sometimes we try to control the Spirit's flow or even build dams to block His activity but He doesn't work that way. The Holy Spirit is always doing a new thing.

As the book of Acts makes clear, God acts this way all the time. In recent weeks we have watched the Holy Spirit reach the first African for Christ. We have watched Him apprehend Saul of Tarsus. We have seen Him break down the centuries-old barrier that has existed between Jew and Gentile with the conversion of Cornelius. Now beginning in Acts 11:19 we have a fascinating account of the Holy Spirit building the first Gentile-based church.

As the gospel moved into the Gentile world as a result of persecution, it was communicated mostly by unknown men and women. Some were Hebrew-speaking Jews who preached only to the Jews. Others were Greek-speaking Jews from around the Mediterranean or located on the north coast of Africa. When they came to Antioch they began to preach to the Greek-speaking Gentiles living there.

Antioch was a strategic city, the third largest in the Roman Empire. It was a major sports center featuring famous chariot races. It was a religious center boasting the temple of Daphne. It was also a corrupt city. But the natural consequence of preaching the gospel in an urban center like Antioch was the start of a new church.

Since many Gentiles were beginning to believe in Jesus, it was all a bit unsettling to some of the disciples in Jerusalem. Could these believing Gentiles be considered real Christians? In order to investigate, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas had one of the biggest hearts in the New Testament. He did not come to control this new channel of the Holy Spirit. He simply wanted to see what God was doing. Since he was from Cyprus himself, he could identify with those from Cyprus and Cyrene who helped preach the gospel. There were three reasons Barnabas was chosen as their representative: (1) he was a good man; (2) he was full of the Spirit; (3) he was full of faith.

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch he saw the grace of God. How do you *see* the grace of God? He found a group of people who had clearly believed. He also saw a church doing life together. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were present and the believers were functioning as a church. To this new church Barnabas said two things: (1) he exhorted them to remain faithful to the Lord; (2) he told them to do it intentionally. The Greek word means, "according to a set plan." This plan involved reading the Scriptures and praying.

The next thing Barnabas did was to find someone to help him. There were so many new people to disciple he knew he needed assistance. So what does Barnabas do? He traveled to Tarsus looking for Saul. It had been approximately ten years since Saul left Jerusalem and returned to his hometown. Saul was not entirely idle during this decade. In his letter to the Galatians he said he spent this time preaching in the area around Tarsus. So when Barnabas found him he brought him to Antioch, where they began to teach together. Saul's ministry in Antioch was the beginning of a ministry that changed the world.

Luke tells us that in Antioch the disciples were called Christians for the very first time (v. 26). The people of Antioch gave them that name. It means, "those belonging to Christ." It was probably meant as a term of reproach but the disciples adopted it and began to use it.

The last scene in chapter 11 was about a Jerusalem prophet named Agabus who came to Antioch, stood up, and predicted a worldwide famine. This famine would be especially severe in Judea. Two Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, both mention this great famine during the days of Claudius around A. D. 44-45. The disciples listened to Agabus and immediately began to prepare for it. They sent a gift to Judean believers to help the church when the famine struck. Here is a beautiful picture of the whole body caring for one another. The body in Antioch sent to the body in Jerusalem exactly what it needed.

Finally, in Acts 13 we find that the church at Antioch had a very interesting leadership team consisting of prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen—a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Here is a diverse, yet united team of leaders (two Africans, a Cyprian, Barnabas; a man from the ruling class, and Saul). While this team was busy serving, praying and fasting the Holy Spirit carved a new channel. He told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for a new work. These leaders were deeply concerned about what God wanted so after fasting and praying they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them off. The Antioch church had become a sending church! And the whole church was behind what the Holy Spirit was doing, acting together, and supporting Barnabas and Saul in their new ministry.

STEP SIX . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Two churches are prominent in the book Acts – the Jerusalem church and the church in Antioch. What are some of the characteristics of each church? What does our church have in common - or not in common - with both?

2. Why did the Jerusalem church send Barnabas to Antioch? How does this illustrate the way churches functioned with one another?

3. Why was Barnabas an outstanding person to send to Antioch? What characterizes someone with the gift of encouragement?

4. Luke says that Barnabas saw the grace of God in action. What should we expect to see when God's grace becomes visible?

5. What does a "Christian" look like? How does that portrait describe you?

6. In Acts 11:28 Agabus predicts a severe famine. How does God use such hard times to develop a new work?

7. The Antioch church was a multi-ethnic church. Haddon Robinson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary says that the church of the future must become a multi-ethnic church or become a dying church. What do you think? What would be the implications of LCC becoming increasingly multi-ethnic?

8. How can our church develop the instinct to be more alert to what God is doing? How do you typically respond to new ideas or adjust to new changes?

9. When did the Holy Spirit call Barnabas and Saul? What role does prayer, Bible study, and fasting have in us being open to new ministry directions?

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

OT in 52
(52 weeks through the Old Testament)

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING IN A YEAR

Monday, February 8 thru Saturday, February 13
Exodus 31-33, 34-35, 36-37, 38-39, 40-Lev 3, 4-6

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