

A Church as a Church Should Be

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 March 2017

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0 : 00] Well, this month is missions month, right?

! I want to remind you of that. Over the past several years, we've always tried to have guest preachers come, sometimes even from overseas, and this year we don't have an overseas guest to preach, and I've been overseas a bunch, so I guess I'll be the overseas preacher.

Next week, of course, I will not be preaching. I'll still be your pastor for that one last Sunday, and I regret that on that final Sunday I will not be the preacher that morning, so this will be my last Sunday morning sermon as your pastor.

Chaplain Brad Johnson will be here next week. You probably have noticed the program, and he's been here before, good preacher, great preacher, so I'm looking forward to hearing from him.

He'll be here next week, and if I can manage it as far as the schedule goes with Lifeway, I plan on being here after next Sunday, not as your preacher or pastor, but as one of you sitting with my wife out there.

[1 : 36] And I certainly want to be here for the final Sunday of our missions month and be a part of the banquet and all of that, kind of the celebration.

But all that to say, this is missions month, and so I'm not going to be preaching out of 1 John. I can't finish my series on that book anyway, and I wanted to bring a message that is more connected to our subject for this month, missions, and really kind of looking at a passage of scripture that helps us understand, even better than we do, what a missions-minded church should look like, really beyond that, more than that, what the church should look like, what we should be, a church as a church should be.

And so I want you to take your Bibles and turn to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 11, and our text is going to come from chapter 11, starting with verse 19, and I'm going to read all the way to the end of that chapter, so Acts chapter 11, starting with verse 19.

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 25] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

Of course, you know that's Paul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people.

And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. And in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

[4 : 39] Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Marvelous story. We're first introduced to this church in Antioch. And it will not be, of course, the last time that we hear about Antioch. A number of chapters following this chapter will tell us some things about Antioch.

Antioch was a great, great church. A church, as a church should be. The great D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, and I'm sure most of you, if not all of you, have heard that name before. Great preacher. Great preacher who was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for quite a few years, back in the early 20th century. So we're talking about a preacher from yesteryear. Although for many of us here, we can remember the early, some of us can remember the early 20th century. It's safe to say that D. Martin Lloyd-Jones never was nor ever will be a poster child for the contemporary church movement.

[6 : 01] If you know anything about D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, you would know that. In fact, he was an outspoken critic, really. Against much of what the early church or the contemporary church movement was all about.

Criticized nearly every element of it. And you just have to know something about D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. He was, you know, maybe one of the last of the Puritans. He was certainly of that style and of that heartbeat. He also had some peculiarities, to say the least. One of them, by the way, was that he had an aversion against his preaching being recorded. Whether it just be the audio or audio and video and then reproduced or broadcast over TV and radio. He was against that. He had this idea that the Holy Spirit would work at the moment, live. And so he was against that. In fact, the story is told that he was scheduled to preach at a conference somewhere. And just before he was to preach, they informed him that he would be recorded.

[7 : 16] And he said no. In fact, he threatened not to preach at all. So some peculiarities about this guy, to say the least. And another peculiarity that kind of fits in with my story here.

Is that he always dressed with a suit and tie on. Always suit and tie. Everywhere he went, you'd find him dressed up in a suit and tie.

And tie never dressed any other way. In fact, in his biography, there's a picture of him at the beach with his little daughter. And they're sitting in the sand.

And he is wearing a suit and tie. At the beach. Can you imagine? In fact, it has been speculated that he was born wearing a suit and tie. In fact, I've kind of loosened up a little bit over the years.

I still wear the suit and tie on Sunday mornings. But you've seen me without one on. But I think in earlier days of my ministry, I think the people of my church thought that's how I dressed all the time.

[8 : 21] And so he would just always be dressed up in a suit and tie. Now with that in mind, on one occasion, Dr. Lloyd-Jones was meeting with some leaders in his church.

And he announced to them that he had thought of a surefire way that every seat in the church would be filled that next Sunday.

And they said, tell us. Tell us how. We'll do it. And he said, well, it's very simple. Just put a notice in the Saturday evening London edition of the London Post that Dr. Lloyd-Jones is going to appear that Sunday in the pulpit wearing a bathing suit.

Surefire way to get every seat filled in the church. Well, as his biographer went on to record, after a shocked silence on the part of the group, Dr. Lloyd-Jones went on to talk about the biblical basis for proper worship as opposed to the approach of using entertainment to entice people to come to church.

I'm rather of that ilk. I must say to you and be honest with you. Now I understand that there are things that churches can do and perhaps need to do to encourage people to come and to be a part of the ministry.

[9 : 58] But the church will always be about, really about, the preaching of this book. The preaching of the truth.

And this just kind of gives you a flavor of what really we're going to learn about the church at Antioch. Over the years of my pastoral ministry and especially in recent times, I've been asked the question, what is the church?

I mean, what is it? What should the church look like? And recently I've even been asked, define Highland Park Baptist Church.

Define it. And, you know, who are we? And honestly, I don't always know what a person means by that question. But I suspect that it has less to do with what we believe and what we teach, our doctrinal position, our theological position.

There's less to do about that. And more to do with our approach to ministry, our programmed approach to ministry. That is, you know, if you are looking for such and such in a church, that's

Highland Park.

[11:18] Or that's not Highland Park. So, who are we? I think it's a good question to ask. And maybe you're thinking, what a strange question to ask on your last Sunday or last Sunday to preach.

I think we need to ask that question. Who are we? What are we? And perhaps the more pertinent question, and every church needs to ask this question and answer it.

The more pertinent way to ask the question is, are we who we should be as a church? And in keeping with the title of my sermon, are we a church as a church should be?

It's a good question. And the answer to that question, to answer that question, we should not really try to compare ourselves with some church down the road somewhere.

Though we can learn from other churches. Don't misunderstand me. That's really not the way to do it. Rather, we should compare ourselves with a church in the New Testament.

[12:34] Now, not every church that's mentioned in the New Testament. I'm thinking of the church at Corinth. I don't think we ought to compare ourselves with that church, try to learn from that church. But we can look at this church.

The Antiochian church. And we can compare ourselves with that church. And build from there.

Add to what we understand about this church. By the way, this is only the second church actually named in the New Testament. The first one being the church of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem church. Antioch is the second one that's even named. And so, here is what I would suggest that we do.

Let that church inform us. Let that church challenge us. As a church.

[13:35] This was a great church. The church of Antioch was a great church. Whose founding, by the way, is not credited to anyone. By name.

In fact, we could say it's credited to God only. That there's nothing here in the text that, about or even beyond this, outside of this text in the book of Acts.

Nothing here about an apostle coming and planting this church. And starting this church. There's nothing about Paul coming on one of his missionary journeys.

And planting this church. In fact, this church was started before Paul even went on his first missionary journey. And to jump ahead, it was this church that sent him on his first missionary journey.

There's nothing about that. Nothing here about a group of church growth experts coming and doing a demographic study of Antioch. Antioch or doing some kind of door-to-door surveying or, you know, some other kind of thing.

[14:38] Or having a big Christian concert. And then, you know, nothing about anything like that. Nothing about missionaries being commissioned by the church of Jerusalem to go to travel to Antioch.

And to preach the gospel and organize a new church there. Nothing in the text about anything like that. Now, I'm not suggesting that these things are wrong things to do.

But I'm suggesting that there's something else that took place there that doesn't fit the regular kind of church planting idea that we have in our day.

Or church planting principles of our day. Nothing regular about it. And so, how did this church come about? Well, looking at verse 19.

In the first place, the church of Antioch came about as a result of persecution in Jerusalem. There was intense persecution. It was kind of inaugurated, kicked off by the martyrdom of Stephen.

[15:46] Remember, that takes us all the way back to chapter 8 of the book of Acts. So, it started with persecution. And so, then in the second place, naturally, the church of Antioch came about as a result of Christians in Jerusalem fleeing because of the persecution.

And they were then scattered all over Palestine and beyond there. And then in the third place, many of these Jews, these Jewish Christians who fled from Jerusalem, they took the gospel with them.

They took the gospel with them. And so, they evangelized at first only the Jews. And then, of course, at Antioch, Gentiles as well, which we will talk about more here in just a minute.

And then I would say in the fourth place, and most importantly, verse 21 tells us that the hand of the Lord was with them. That's the most important part of this.

The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. And so, there you have it. God birthed this church in Antioch.

[17:01] And very quickly, in fact, if you read the book of Acts, it almost seems like this happened overnight. This church became the most significant church in the world of its time.

Far surpassing the ministry, the significance of the church of Jerusalem even. The Antiochian church was a church as a church should be.

So, what is a church as a church should be? Well, four things, basically. Four things. And I would say to you that these four things must define a New Testament church.

Now, these four things are not exhaustive. There are other things that were part of the Antiochian church that are implied. But these are four main things, and these four things must be true of any New Testament church.

And any church can build upon these things. And any church can and should develop ways to support these four things.

[18:10] And any church can and should employ methods and programs designed to engage its membership in these four things.

But no church should be lacking in any one of these four things. So, what are they? Number one, a church as a church should be is committed personally to the cause of Christ.

And when I say personally, I mean every person in the church. You've heard me say this before, and I've doggedly committed to this.

I believe it to be true that evangelism, church evangelism, personal evangelism is not a program of the church. It's not a program. That's why, you know, over the years, many programs have been developed.

And, you know, sometimes they get real hot among all the Baptist churches. I'm thinking all the way back to EE, and if some of you have been through that.

[19:22] And not so far back, the faith ministry, which you've done here as well, and I've done in churches. And it's a program, and they seem to be good for a while, and then they just kind of wane, fall by the wayside.

And in order, we think, to keep this going in the church, we've got to come up with a new program. Now, I'm not against a program. But church evangelism is something every member of the church is involved in, should be involved in, just in the normal course of life.

That's what was happening here at Antioch. I mean, you can see it in verse 19. Now, those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen. This, again, connects us with chapter 8.

They traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, all that kind of north of Judea. And they did what? Preaching.

Or they weren't vocational pastors, okay? They were just proclaiming. Proclaiming the Word. That means the Gospel. They were gospeling to no one but Jews only.

[20:38] That's what it says at the beginning. Now, why is that? Why to Jews only? Well, these people, these Jewish Christians that had been scattered out of, forced out of Jerusalem because they were fleeing persecution, they could not have known some of the events that had just taken place with Peter, recorded in chapter 10 and the first part of chapter 11, where Peter shares the Gospel with Cornelius.

You remember the dream, vision Peter had and everything. And God said, don't call something unclean that I've made clean. And then he traveled and visited with Cornelius, shared the Gospel with Cornelius, the Gentile.

And he was saved and his whole household was saved and they were baptized. And so they could not have known those events that had taken place. And so, because they were ignorant of that, they were continuing to do what the Church of Jerusalem had been doing.

And that is sharing the Gospel with Jews only. But God, of course, had other plans. And for us Gentiles, aren't you glad? He had another plan.

And so verse 20 says, But some of them were men from Cyprus, island about 60 miles off the coast there out into the Mediterranean.

[22:00] And Cyrene, Cyrene is on the coast of North Africa, today modern Libya. So these men of Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch.

That's in Syria. To Antioch, some 300 miles north of Jerusalem. So these believers, these Jews, they went to Antioch.

And what did they do? They spoke to the Hellenists. Now, what's a Hellenist? Some of your versions might, if you have King James, says Greeks or Grecians. Other versions say Gentiles, and that's what they were.

Now, Hellenists were Greek-speaking people. Jews and Gentiles, by the way. But a Hellenist was someone who had been immersed in the Greek culture as well as using the Greek language. But in the context here, we're talking about Greek-speaking Gentiles. And so they're preaching the gospel to Gentiles. Lo and behold, they didn't know anything about what had happened with Peter. [23 : 17] They didn't know about some of the turmoil within the Jerusalem church, the early Christians, about this whole issue of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. They were just simply carrying out the ultimate conclusion of their faith and following the Lord.

And they were preaching the gospel to Gentiles. Now, these men were not preachers in any professional sense or vocational sense.

They were not trained speakers. And this activity was not going on in formal settings like the synagogues or churches because there weren't any churches.

Or any informal Christian groups that had met down by the river like Paul experienced a number of times. That's not what happened here. In fact, the Greek word translated spoke, spoke to the Hellenists, is a word that just simply refers to normal conversation.

That's something, isn't it? Think about that. Just normal conversation. Which means that they spoke of Jesus in everyday contacts with people.

[24 : 27] Some have even speculated that Luke, the author of this book, the book of Acts, as well as the gospel of Luke. That Luke was perhaps one of those Gentiles who had been led to faith in Christ.

He was from Antioch, native of Antioch. He was by profession a doctor. So we can maybe imagine that he is treating a patient. And that patient is a Christian.

And that Christian is talking about Jesus. Introduces Jesus to Luke. And Luke is ultimately saved.

Now, we don't know that for sure. Could be. But what I'm saying is that it's just a part of their natural conversation about Jesus.

And so this is amazing. This church in Antioch of Syria was not started by apostles. Not started by trained missionaries or church planters.

This church was started by a group of unnamed Jews, Jewish Christians, common people, everyday people. Who were driven out of Jerusalem because of persecution.

[25 : 35] And who came to Antioch telling everyone, Jews and Gentiles, about Jesus Christ. And what happened? Well, verse 21, a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Which, by the way, tells us a little bit about their approach to sharing the gospel. It included repentance. Not just believe, but turn.

Repent. Turn from sin. Turn to the Lord. And so what did this great number who turned to the Lord, what did they do after they believed and were added to the church?

They continued to do the same thing. To share their faith. To share the gospel. And that is, I think, why there are three references to the growing numbers of converts there in Antioch.

Verse 21 says, as I read, a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Verse 23 says, and a great many people were added to the Lord. And verse 26 says, and a great many people were taught.

[26 : 45] Discipled. Discipled. And so the church grew exponentially. And why is that? Because this church was a church as a church should be.

Committed personally to the cause of Christ. And we don't really have to be told just what that cause is, right? Jesus himself defined it in Luke 19, verse 10.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. And then in John chapter 20, verse 21, Jesus gave to every one of us that same cause. His cause.

He said, his cause. As the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you. Now, let me say this though.

Personal commitment to the cause of Christ. I mean personal commitment. Like the kind of commitment these Gentile believers had. They just shared Jesus in normal conversation.

[27 : 50] Everywhere they went. They were little evangelists. That kind of commitment is not what grows the church. God grows the church.

God does that. We share the gospel. God saves the souls. I want you to look closely at verse 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them.

And a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Notice the order there. Pretty important. So let me ask you something. When do we know that the hand of the Lord is with us?

When do we know that? Do we know that before we obediently go out and share our faith? Or do we know that after we do that? Or as we do that?

You see, notice the order of things here. These men did not speak of Jesus because they first sensed that the hand of the Lord was on them.

[28 : 57] These men spoke of Jesus. Then they observed and realized that the hand of the Lord was with them. And it's an important point.

Because we don't wait to share the gospel until we sense that God's hand is on us. You know, whether it's urging us.

Actually, I think with most of it, it's his boot, not his hand. To get us doing it. No, no. We realize it as we go.

As we share the gospel. In fact, remember the great commission. Jesus said, go. Jesus said, go. Make disciples. He said, go. Then he said, lo.

I will be with you. And so this is, number one. A church as a church should be is committed personally to the cause of Christ. Every person.

[29 : 52] And I might add that kind of commitment extends beyond just our community. It has to.

It did with the Antiochian church. In fact, we can go a couple of chapters ahead. In chapter 13 of the book of Acts. And we discover that the Antiochian church was the first missionary sending church. And they laid hands on and sent out a couple of pretty famous people. One very famous. Paul and Barnabas.

Sent them out from this church. Can you imagine how different our world would look today? I mean, we just speculate how different things would have been if this church had not been committed to the cause of Christ globally.

And really, from chapter 13 on, we have it detailed about what happened as a result of the church at Antioch sending out missionaries, being globally minded in their evangelism.

[31 : 07] There's a second thing about this church. A church as a church should be. They were continuing progressively from the conversion of Christ.

Their conversion of Christ. They were continuing progressively. Someone has asked the question, is conversion the end of the salvation experience? And the answer to that question is yes.

It's the front end. It's the front end. Conversion to Christ is the beginning point. Not the ending point. It's the beginning point of our ongoing progressive salvation experience.

And the church at Antioch was a testimony to that. They were continuing progressively from their conversion to Christ. And this is evidenced in two ways.

First of all, they were showing it. It was something very visible. They weren't secret saints. If there is such a thing.

[32 : 14] You know, I've met quite a number of secret saints, haven't you? They weren't secret saints. They were showing it. Showing their conversion.

Their conversion to Christ was highly visible. And people were talking about it. In fact, news got back to the church at Jerusalem. That these Gentiles, they'd been converted to Christ.

And it was visible. It was obvious. It was something to be reported on. And it says there in verse 22, Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem.

They heard about it. But the conversion was not a secret thing. And their conversion also was not a flash in the pan either. It was just kind of an event, you know, that happened.

And then, you know, they went back to their normal way of life. I can't tell you how many times I've seen people walk an aisle in the church and professed conversion to Christ as Lord and Savior.

[33 : 22] And yet, from that point on, demonstrate no evidence, no evidence whatsoever of being converted. And far too many churches today filled with people like that.

But not the Antiochian church. Their conversion, they were showing it. It was something observable. Something very visible.

I don't know if you've noticed, but with these two things, these first two things, these two things are not programs at all. They're just simply believers being believers.

Not just on Sunday during the corporate worship time, but Monday through Saturday at their jobs and with families and wherever they are.

And this is what they were doing. They were, you know, just sharing about Jesus with everyone they came in contact with. And they were showing the reality of their conversion to Him.

[34 : 37] Showing it. It was visible. You didn't have to wonder, you know, if that person was a true believer or not. It was obvious.

They didn't have to wear a little badge, you know, or a certain kind of t-shirt. Let people know that I'm a believer in Christ.

It was just part of their conversations, part of their life. That's what describes a church as a church should be. But I would say a second thing.

They were not only showing it, but they were growing in it. Growing in their conversion. Verse 25 says, Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

That's Paul. And verse 26, And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. Brought him to Antioch. For what reason? Well, the church at Antioch, those new believers needed discipleship.

[35 : 42] They needed to learn. This reminds me so much, by the way, of the church in China. Because many of those believers are brand new believers. In fact, there are churches all over Shenzhen and other places that just got started, and maybe they just started with two or three people, and now they're 10 or 20.

They don't really have any pastor. Nobody's really, really had any kind of training or have studied the Word of God. And so, consequently, there is always that danger of some outside influence. Maybe some denominational worker from some cult in the United States or something going and being influential and leading them in the wrong way doctrinally.

And I think Barnabas could see this great need there in the church among these new believers. In fact, he said to them, he said, you know, with purpose of heart, continue with the Lord.

And I think it became very evident to him that what they needed was not just to continue showing their conversion to Christ, but growing in it. It's the whole issue of discipleship.

[36 : 50] And so, in verse 26, and when he had found him, he found Paul, brought him to Antioch. Antioch, Antioch, Antioch, they wanted to grow, wanted to learn, wanted to mature.

Barnabas could see the hunger for the Word of God and who better than Paul to disciple them. In fact, verse 26 says, and so it was that for a whole year, they, that's Paul and Barnabas, assembled with the church and taught a great many people.

Can you imagine being a part of that discipleship program for a year, sitting at the feet of Paul, the Apostle Paul, letting him be your discipler, the one whom God inspired to hammer out all the doctrines of the faith in the New Testament, to be your discipler.

This is what Barnabas did. The Antiochian congregation flocked by the thousands. You know, if Sunday morning sermon is all the Word of God you get into your life, then you're starving yourself to death.

You're kind of like the guy who decided he was just going to eat one time a week. It's just one time a week. And then he couldn't understand why he was so weak all the time and tired all the time and sick all the time.

[38 : 25] He was starving himself to death. A lot of believers are in that same boat. Discipleship, crucial mark of a church as a church should be.

And from my heart, believe me, I hope your next pastor will lead you much further in opportunities for discipleship.

So, committed personally to the cause of Christ, continuing progressively from conversion to Christ. And then number three, communicating publicly the character of Christ.

Communicating publicly to everyone the very character of Christ. Verse 26 is really an amazing verse of Scripture in this whole story.

Verse 26 says, And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. You say, well, that doesn't sound exciting to me. But you have to understand what this meant.

[39 : 38] I mean, today, the term Christian, Christian just means so many different things. And most of them wrong things. Where the term Christian has become so diluted that it really, actually doesn't mean anything.

But this really means something. They were first called Christians in Antioch. And really, three questions come to mind. Who called them Christians? Well, they didn't call themselves Christians.

It says specifically, they were first called that. So they didn't come up with that name on their own. They didn't have a little contest in the church.

You know, and everybody wrote down their idea for what our movement should be called. And then drew it out of a hat or maybe had some panel of judges to decide which one was the best.

They didn't call themselves that. And also, it was not the Jews who called them that. The Jews would never do that.

[40 : 41] I'm talking about the unbelieving Jews. They would never, ever, ever, ever connect the name Christ or the title Christ with these blasphemers.

It was not the Jews who called them that. Who then? The Gentiles. The unbelieving Gentiles.

They called them Christians. Now, then, the second question is, what did they mean when they called them Christians? Well, very simply, technically, the term really means of the party of Christ. Like, and you've probably heard the term in the New Testament, the Herodians. Same kind of idea, of the party of Herod. That is, those who were loyal to the Herods, the Herod family.

Loyal to him. So, that's what they meant by that. You're loyal to Christ. But why did they call them Christians? Well, because that is all these Gentile believers ever talked about.

[41 : 50] That's all they ever talked about. About Jesus Christ. Or about the Christ. And urging people to follow Christ.

That's all they ever talked about. And so, they would tell people about this man, Jesus Christ, who he was, how he lived, what he taught, what he preached, the principles they expect us to live by, and why he died, what all that was about.

And these believers lived just like the man they were always talking about. So, they called them Christians. That's the mark of a church as a church should be.

Here's the third thing, and it really gets down to individual believers. The church corporately, and the leadership of the church, they are tasked with the duty of connecting people with that, and supporting that, and finding ways to enhance that, and so forth, and encourage that, and teach, and disciple, and all that, but really, these three things, other than big part of discipleship, are not programs.

They're believers being believers, as they were intended to be. It's a church, as a church should be. One more, and we barely have time to mention it, contributing purposefully to the compassion of Christ.

[43 : 36] Contributing purposefully to the compassion of Christ. Verse 27, and in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch, then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

So it's kind of pinpointing the historical proof of this. In verse 29, then the disciples, and that's a word that means all the followers of Christ there at Antioch, that's the church, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea, all around the region of Judea. And so this they also did, says in verse 30, and sent it to the elders, this contribution to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

You know, I've been, as long as I can remember, a conservative Christian. When I say conservative, I don't mean that I, you know, pinch pennies.

I mean conservative in my view of scripture and of doctrine. I just believe all the Bible. But, sadly, many conservative Christians are known for their lack of compassion for people.

[45 : 04] Honestly. They don't really care about that. But not so with the Antiochian church, and should not be so of us. They heard of this need.

And they did not say, well, we don't need to give them food. They just need Jesus. Just need Jesus, so give them Jesus. And they did not also say, we should help the people in our own community here.

I mean, there are people here who need things. things. You know, why should we send our hard-earned money 300 miles away? And nor did they say, you know, that's the Jerusalem, that's the responsibility of the Jerusalem church.

They've got a church down there, let that church take care of it. They didn't say that either. Antioch, the Antiochian church, the giving church.

You know, really, all four of those things exist here. I'm very happy to say that. Can we do more in these things?

[46 : 23] Yes. And we should. We must. We must. we must. But this is a church as a church should be.

And I'm just so blessed to have been a part of it. But let's take those four things and take them all to the next level.

That's my encouragement to you. Committed personally to the cause of Christ. There isn't a single person in here. Including this knucklehead behind the pulpit.

We cannot do far more with that. And continuing progressively from our conversion to Christ. Always showing it. Never leaving anyone in doubt about our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is something so visible, so obvious.

[47 : 31] We're showing it but also growing in it. Communicating publicly the character of Christ. That others see Jesus in me.

That should be our motto. And believe me, they're looking. There are people watching. Everywhere you go. If they know who you are and if they know you profess to be a Christian, then they are watching your every move.

They're taking note of things you say and taking note of how you react to certain things in life, hard things even. They're watching to see what your reaction is to some off-color joke that somebody's telling.

They're listening as you converse about the things you love to do in life and movies you have watched and enjoy. I mean, it's just the whole thing.

They're watching, they're listening, they're trying to decide, are you the real thing? As best they understand what the real thing is. And then contributing purposefully to the compassion of Christ and you know, first couple of pages in our missions brochure is about specific things that we give our money to Highland Park and some things that some of you are involved directly in.

[49 : 12] Those ministries to people in need. And we've been a part of that and hope you'll continue to be a part of that as well as part of providing needs in Jesus' name to the people of Malawi and so many other things.

A church is a church should be.
you