

TABLE TALK

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE for August 7-13, 2022

ACTS IN 30 Chapter 11: *A Tale of Two Cities: Jerusalem and Antioch*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW: Acts 11 reveals a subtle yet significant shift in the thirty-year revival that was taking place at this time. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples that while this revival must START in Jerusalem, it would not be contained there. Once the Holy Spirit filled Gentile believers in Acts 10, the epicenter of Christianity begins to shift from Jerusalem to a city called **Antioch**. Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the known world at that time and was a multi-ethnic “melting pot” of people from all over the world. Antioch is the very first place where followers of Jesus were called, “**Christians**” (Acts 11:26) and became the launching pad for Paul’s missionary journeys (Acts 13:2). **Jerusalem** will be the seat of Jesus’ Kingdom authority when He returns one day (Zechariah 14:4). However, past **religious** rulers of Jerusalem **rejected** Jesus as their Messiah (Luke 13:34) and often **resisted** the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). As believers today, we are called to pray for peace in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), and for the Jewish people to see & receive Jesus as their Messiah (II Corinthians 3:13-18).

DAY 1: Peter is Criticized in Jerusalem for Not Making Gentile “Christians” Become More “Jewish”

READ: Acts 11:1-17

REFLECT: Peter returns to Jerusalem to share the good news that Gentiles had now received Jesus and were baptized in the Holy Spirit, the same as the Jews were in Acts 2. However, certain religious people (“*the circumcision party*” vs. 2-3) criticized him. Peter clarified that he was simply following the Lord’s command to not call “*common*” (unholy) what God has now made “*clean*” (holy) in vs. 9. This basically meant that Gentile believers are accepted by God too. Finally, Peter humbly states, “*Who am I to stand in God’s way?*” (vs 17).

DISCUSS:

Context Question: Jesus – like Peter – was often criticized by religious people when God didn’t meet their expectations in some way. Why do you think “religious” people can often become so critical of how God is working in their time?

Application Question: Like Peter, how can you humbly not “*stand in God’s way*” when He tries to grow you or stretch you in new ways?

DAY 2: The Church of Jerusalem Agrees with the Expanded Work of God’s Spirit to the Gentiles

READ: Acts 11:18

REFLECT: After hearing the eye-witness reports from Peter about God’s commands and the fruit of the ministry that the Lord had done among the Gentiles, the church leaders in Jerusalem, “*fell silent*” (vs. 18). This basically meant that they let go of their former arguments, stopped raising objections to what Peter was saying and began listening with their hearts what the Spirit was saying and doing. After this pause, they came into agreement with Peter and praised God together that the Gentiles found “*repentance*” and “*life*” in Jesus!

DISCUSS:

Context Question: Why is it important for church leaders to pause and recognize when a work of God’s Spirit is taking place?

Application Question: The church leaders finally agreed that the Gentiles had received two gifts from God: “*repentance*” and “*life*” in Jesus. What does “*repentance*” and “*life*” in Jesus mean for you and your loved ones today?

DAY 3: The Expansive Work of the Holy Spirit Shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria (modern day Antakya, Turkey)

READ: Acts 11:19-25

REFLECT: This passage of Scripture sets the tone for the rest of the Book of Acts. Antioch becomes more of the focal point of the revival (instead of Jerusalem) and Paul becomes its leader/advocate (instead of Peter). Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the known world at that time and becomes the very first church made up of BOTH Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. The focus of Acts now becomes more of the 4th phase of Jesus’ command to expand as witnessing extends primarily from Antioch, “*to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

DISCUSS:

Context Question: How does knowing that Christianity - as a religion - began primarily as a Messianic Jewish movement oriented in a large, Eastern multi-ethnic city in Syria shape or inform the way you read the Bible today?

Application Question: The overarching theme for the Book of Acts is the Holy Spirit’s leadership in the lives of the believers. What are some ways that you see the leadership of the Holy Spirit in your life, in your home, and/or in your church today?

DAY 4: The Followers of Jesus Receive a New Name

READ: Acts 11:26

REFLECT: This is the first time in history that followers of Jesus are referred to as, “Christians” and that term is only mentioned here and in I Peter 4:16 to describe followers of Jesus. It essentially means, “belonging to Christ.” It identified Gentiles who had left behind their old pagan lifestyle to follow Jesus and Jews who were now loyal to Jesus as their Messiah. One unified -yet distinct- body of Christ!

Context Question: Why do you think it was important for the followers of Jesus to have a unique and distinct name in Antioch?

Application Question: If you are a Christian, what does that name mean to you? What do you think that name means to others today?