

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

May 28, 2023

Day 1: Acts 11:19-20

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

Persecution never has the effect that those using it on others want it to have. The ones persecuted usually get stronger, not weaker. In the Church throughout the ages, when there has been persecution the church has grown stronger. God did not cause the persecution in the first century so that the Church might grow. What happened was that as Christians were forced to move out of Judea they brought with them the Good News. They knew that no force on earth could stop the message of Jesus from giving life.

Question: Can you think of a case in history when an idea was stopped by a group using force to stop it?

Challenge: What is the best way to stop prejudice from taking hold in a society?

Scripture: Galatians 3:19-29

Day 2: Acts 11:21

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Belief comes before turning. The language here implies that the people were going the wrong way in life and needed to make a turn in the correct direction. What happens is that after someone believes and does turn, then the act of turning and following verifies their belief. The proof of believing is not found in rational activity but in moving in the correct direction - the direction that follows Jesus.

Question: Do you get lost once in a while or often? Why do you get lost?

Challenge: How would you describe someone who was lost? Do you know someone like that?

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:7-16

Day 3: Acts 11:22-23

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Barnabas has seen the evidence of the Spirit and knows how to recognize it in other people. He goes not to give approval but to see how the Spirit has affected new people and to celebrate their new life in Christ. I believe he wanted to see if some new understanding of Jesus was present in the new believers.

Question: Have you ever been called upon to witness something for an official reason?

Challenge: How do you think the people demonstrated they were filled with the Spirit?

Scripture: John 14:4-11

Day 4: Acts 11:24

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

The best evangelistic tool we have is ourselves. People see how becoming a Christian has affected our life and they notice how we live out our faith. Our faith is seen not in doing all things correctly but by being honest and real. We will make mistakes but our mistakes come because we are not perfect, not because our intent is bad. Barnabas was a good man because he acted on his beliefs. He was a humble person and if he made a mistake he would ask for forgiveness, not try to cover it up.

Question: How many people do you think it would take to make a functioning Church?

Challenge: See how long you can go in a day without making mistakes. Now think about the concept of humility.

Scripture: James 3:13-18

Day 5: Acts 11:25

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

One of the gifts that Barnabas had was the gift of discernment. Barnabas could tell who could do what and when someone needed encouragement. His name means "son of encouragement." Barnabas also had a good sense of humility. He went for Saul because he knew that Saul could help the new believers with their questions. Many times our call to ministry comes from someone else asking us to be in ministry. Someone else sees in us skills and talents that we do not see.

Question: Have you ever done a job that you did not think you could do?

Challenge: Take a look at yourself and see if there is something you would like to do for God but think it is impossible right now. Go over the reasons you think it is not possible and see which ones are real.

Scripture: Genesis 15:2-6

Day 6: Acts 11:26

and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

God seems to like people working in pairs. God created a pair to continue creation. God used Moses and Aaron to convince the children of Israel to leave Egypt. Jesus told the Disciples to go out two by two. Here Barnabas seeks a coworker to help teach the new Christians. Maybe we ought to take a lesson and do our tasks in teams.

Question: Do you like working alone or with people?

Challenge: Why do you think the believers were called Christians and why do you think the name has stuck?

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-15