

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of February 18th-24th

Getting Started

1. Having begun our study in June of 2023, we are just over one third of our way through the book of Acts. What are you learning? Scan back through Acts 1:1-11:30. Which texts in particular have been impactful for you? Allow for each person in the group to share.

Digging Deeper

2. Now take a moment to page through the rest of the story (Acts 12:1-28:30). Which passages are you most looking forward to exploring together? Are there any favorite portions of this book for you that we have yet to study? If so, please share that with the group as well.

Open Your Bible to Acts 11:19-30...

3. Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8 that: "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, *and to the end of the earth.*" If anything, Acts 10:1-11:18 is a crystal clear affirmation that the Gentile mission has indeed begun. In fact, Acts 11:18 is emphatic along these lines as Peter recounts the occasion of the conversion of Cornelius: "When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life'." Bearing this in mind, what does Luke tell us in the very next verse (Acts 11:19)? What is the catalyst for the church's evangelism? Who are the recipients of the church's evangelism? Though the text doesn't tell us for certain, what do you think Luke is doing with the contrast between Acts 11:18 and 11:19? Any lessons for us here? If so, what are they?

4. Read Acts 11:20-21. Once again we have a contrast. What's the difference between 11:19 and 11:20-21? Isn't it fascinating that these verses don't mention a word about the apostles? In other words, this evangelistic initiative was almost certainly taken by ordinary believers who lived in Cyprus and Cyrene. Why is it critical that our missional outreach in the community include lay members of the church and not just clergy or other leaders?

5. Now take a look at Acts 11:22-24. What did Barnabas *see* (v.23a)? What did Barnabas *feel* (v.23b)? What did Barnabas *say* (v.23c)? Why did Barnabas do what he did (v.24a)? What was the result (v.24b)? Don't you just love this guy? In what specific ways would you like to come to better reflect the life of Barnabas? Are there any particular challenges for you in getting there? What are they? Take some time to share together as a group.

6. Luke goes on to describe the next steps that Barnabas takes in Acts 11:25-26. Why do you think he went to Tarsus to look for Saul? While the text implies the answer, it doesn't explicitly tell us. In 11:26, we learn that: "For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people." What do you imagine it might have been like to be one of Saul and Barnabas's pupils? If you could ask the Apostle Paul a handful of questions during a small group meeting, what would you ask him?

7. There's actually a fair amount to notice in these two brief verses (vv.25-26), not the least of which is that toward the end of verse 26 Luke tells us that: "...in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians." Notice: the disciples didn't *claim* to be Christians... they were actually *called* Christians. In other words, this name *Christian* more than likely was applied to them by their surrounding community. Can you even fathom? Is that what your family, neighbors, broader community, co-workers, or classmates would conclude of you based on your life? If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to find you guilty as charged? Explain.

8. In Galatians 6:10, Paul commands us: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Acts 11:27-30 are an outstanding illustration of one way this was applied in the early church. What are the circumstances? How well do you know the other Evangelical Free Churches in our North Central District (<https://ncdefca.org/infographic/>)? Can you think of another church in our EFCA North Central District with some need that might be uniquely blessed by a nomination for a grant from our NCD Foundation (<https://ncdefca.org/foundation/>)? If so, why not commit them to prayer and perhaps even complete the nomination form at the link above? If you have any questions or are looking for suggestions, please feel free to speak with Pastor Dave or Pastor Aaron.