

Foundation Series

Week 6 – Better Together - Multiplying

Engage:

- While you were growing up, did you ever move? How many times and why?
- Would you describe childhood as stable/unstable transient or rooted?
- Has this affected or impacted you as an adult? How?
- Have you ever had to let go of something that you valued?
 - examples - moving/friendships, sending kids off to college, leaving a job
- What words would you use to describe that experience?

Transition: One of the characteristics of a healthy Care Group is that at some point in time, it multiplies. There comes a point in time when it is both healthy and necessary to form 2 groups out of the one. The group has grown, leaders have been raised up and now it is time to separate. The challenge is, the healthier the group, the closer the community, the harder it is to go.

Explore: Acts 11:19-29 Acts 13: 1-3 Genesis 12:1-3

The Church in Antioch

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. **20** 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. **21** The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. **24** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. **25** Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, **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.**

27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) **29** The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+11%3A19-2>

Acts 11:19-29 describes the church in Antioch.

What are some of the characteristics of this congregation that jump out at you?

- vs 20,21 - It is an inclusive group of people. This is the first church where Jews and Gentiles worshipped together.

What would need to happen for that to become a reality (being inclusive of all people)?

- Give or ask the group an example of a modern context of two opposing groups
- willingness to set aside prejudices, to learn from each other

- to honor each other's traditions and to appreciate the differences in each other.
- strong leadership - having Paul and Barnabas as teachers
- "first called Christians here" they focused on the things they had in common, not the things that could potentially divide them
- vs 29- willingness to share what they had. They were Generous and caring. They saw their possessions as resources that could be used to meet the needs of others in need.

How would you describe a healthy group? They had all of the characteristics of a healthy care group were on display in this congregation

- Healthy debate
- Not being bullied for your view
- Safe - acceptance
- Freedom to make mistakes
- It is ok to disagree

What is an outward sign of healthy group

- A natural comfort with each other
- Laughter
- Coming together in a crisis

So what happens? Acts 13:1-3

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with 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** So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+13%3A1-3&version=NIV>

Why do you think it is significant that Luke points out that this congregation becomes the very first "sending" congregation in the NT?

- in many ways this church/congregation becomes the prototype or model for all the other churches that would be planted across the Roman Empire by Paul and the other first century church planters. This church served as the model for the other congregations. The very best of that church would be reproduced in the other churches. It was part of their spiritual DNA- a healthy church that planted healthy churches

Lead

Lead together

Leave to lead

vs 2,3 - Why is it significant that the calling to send Paul and Barnabas comes during a season of prayer and fasting?

- -not an easy "ask". There is a sense that the leaders in the church were asking "What's next Lord? We want to align ourselves with your mission"
- There was a time of mediation. When you fast, and pray you expect to hear from the holy spirit. You are relying on the lord.

What were the immediate implications for the Antioch congregation?

- they lost their two best leaders. They were asked to send off their teaching pastor (Paul) and their shepherding pastor (Barnabas).
- Modern day equivalent would be for the Elders of Summit View hearing the Lord say "I am calling you to commission Pastor Michael and Pastor Bruce to go and plant a church in Seattle. They were required to give up their very best.

What were the upside Big Picture implications and outcomes for the early church?

- more churches were planted, thousands of people came to faith
- more leaders were raised up
- In many ways everything that happens in the book of Acts from that point forward is a result of this decision to “release Paul and Barnabas to the work for which I have called them”

Apply

Have you ever been a part of or witnessed such a time when a leader need to move on for the good of the cause?

Read Genesis 12:1-3 “the call of Abram”

The Lord had said to Abram, “**Go** from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

2 “I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+12%3A1-3&version=NIV>

What was Abram instructed to do?

- leave everything that is safe, secure and familiar. Have you ever experienced this in your life?
- More times than not, the life of faith requires that we be willing to step outside of our comfort zone and relinquish control of that which is secure. Have you ever done this?
- Faith, by definition, is living a life where risk is real, and all we know for sure is that the Lord promises to bless us as we obey.

There will come a time when we are called to leave the security of this group (or be part of a remnant that stays and re-constitutes).

In the meantime, can you think of one or two areas of where you sense the Lord calling and challenging you to step out into the “great unknown”?

Where is he calling you to trust him in ways that might be “scary” but where obedience will lead to even greater blessing?

Keep your eyes and ears open and listen for the Holy Spirit prompting you.