



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V28 N24

June 14, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

“A Church for the Nations”

Acts 11:19-30

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Church

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today.

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Ephesians 4:15-16



How did the gospel reach Gentiles as such?

The book of Acts describes the spread of the gospel message about Jesus “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Ac 1:8). At first, all of those who believed were Jews, and at first, all of those who believed remained members of the Jewish community and continued to live like other members of that community. Jews residing in the city could visit the temple grounds as often as daily. They might go to pray at set times during the day (3:1), to offer a personal sacrifice, or to participate in purification rituals. Regular, weekly worship and Torah study for most Jews—especially those living far from the city—took place at local synagogues. The first Jewish believers continued to attend synagogue and observe Jewish traditions—especially the dietary laws pertaining to clean and unclean food (Lev 11).

As the gospel spread, the face of the Christian community changed; it became more diverse. By the time readers get to Acts 6:1, “Hellenists” are numbered in the community of “Hebrews.” Here, the “Hellenists” are Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. They are contrasted with the “Hebrews,” who were native, Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians. A cultural friction arose when the Hellenists complained that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food by the Hebrew majority. This led the apostles to appoint seven Greek-named leaders, that is, Hellenists, (including Stephen and Philip) to manage the food distribution fairly.

Following the death of Stephen (7:54-60), “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (8:3), which resulted in the disciples—including Philip—being scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. The gospel spread like wildfire throughout Samaria as a result of Philip’s ministry and the follow-up ministry of

Peter and John. Afterward, Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch—a high-ranking royal official and treasurer for Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia (ancient Nubia)—who believed in Jesus after Philip explained the meaning of Isaiah 53:7-8 to him. He had traveled a massive distance to worship at the Jewish Temple. Because he was a eunuch and restricted from fully converting to Judaism, he was likely a “God-fearer” (a Gentile who revered the God of Israel), like Cornelius (10:1-2). One commentator writes: “Philip’s witness to the eunuch may be considered the first conversion of a Gentile and in many ways parallels the story of Cornelius in chap. 10” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 222).

The face of the Christian community continued to change with the conversion of more God-fearing Gentiles, namely, the household of Cornelius, whom Luke describes as “a devout man who feared God with all his household” (10:2). When Peter fully recognized that the distinction between “clean” and “unclean” food (Lev 11:1-47) had been rescinded, he realized by implication that he “should not call any person common or unclean” (v 28). Consequently: “Because God has declared that no person can any longer be called unclean, Jewish Christians can freely associate with Gentiles . . . It opens up the possibility of Jewish Christians conducting a mission among Gentiles” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke – Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 136). And reflecting on the fact that Jesus is “Lord of all,” Peter immediately recognized that *all* should hear the “good news of peace through Jesus Christ” (v. 36).

Finally, the gospel was carried to Greeks in Antioch—that is, to Gentiles, who were not “God-fearers”—by some of the disciples who fled Jerusalem as a result of persecution (11:20). And so, the gospel spread from Jerusalem Jews to Gentiles in Antioch from where it would spread to the end of the earth.

Read Acts 11:19-30

19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

27 Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). 29 So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. 30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "those who were scattered" in v. 19.
- Underline "Phoenicia," "Cyprus," and "Antioch" in v. 19; "Cyrene" in v. 20; and "Tarsus" in v. 25.
- Bracket "no one except Jews" in v. 19.
- Circle "Hellenists" in v. 20.
- Highlight "Barnabas" in vv. 22, 30.
- Box "So" indicating *result* in v. 25.
- Highlight "Saul" in vv. 25, 30.
- Bracket "days of Claudius" in v. 28.
- Circle "relief" in v. 29.
- Circle "brothers" in v. 29.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Identify who was scattered, when, and why (v. 19; cf. 8:1, 4-5).
2. To what does “the word” refer (cf. 10:36-44)?
3. Why were they “speaking the word to no one except Jews” if Peter had already opened the door of inclusion to Gentiles? Explain the chronology (v. 19a; cf. 8:4); think “flashback.”
4. Identify the “Hellenists” (see note) and explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 20.
5. Explain why the church in Jerusalem sent “Barnabas” to Antioch and why him in particular.
6. Describe his reaction to the situation he found there.
7. Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Paul to help disciple the great number of Gentiles who believed and turned to the Lord in Antioch. How did Paul wind up in Tarsus (cf. 9:26-30)?
8. What do you infer from the fact that disciples were first called Christians at this time in Antioch?

Describe the response of believers in Antioch to the prophecy of Agabus.

10. **Discussion.** What does Luke want his readers to *know, do, and/or become*? Put differently, why did he include this narrative in his history of the Acts of the Apostles? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

Acts 11:19-30 flashes back to the period beginning in 8:4 with the scattering of disciples from Jerusalem due to Saul's persecution of the church. One commentator explains the chronology: "Luke opens his account of the gospel's proclamation at Antioch of Syria with the same words with which he began the story of the mission to Samaria in 8:4—a fact that suggests he wanted to reach behind his accounts of Peter's ministries at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea and start a new strand of history beginning with the death of Stephen. From such an opening we should probably understand that the Hellenistic Christians' [i.e., Greek speaking Jewish Christians] outreach to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch was (1) logically parallel to that in Samaria and not a continuation of Peter's outreach at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea and (2) chronologically parallel, at least in its early stages, to the accounts in 8:4-11:18" (Richard N. Longnecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 400).

By way of summary, 8:4-40 describes the ministry of Philip, 9:1-31 describes the conversion of Saul (vv. 1-19a), his early ministry in Damascus (vv. 19b-25), as well as in Jerusalem, before returning to Tarsus (vv. 26-31), and 10:1-11:18 describes the ministry of Peter in Lydda, Joppa, and to Cornelius in Caesarea. In 11:19-30, Luke describes the ministry of other scattered disciples from Jerusalem as they carried the gospel north along the coast as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. These verses might be divided as follows: the gospel is brought to Gentiles in Antioch (vv. 19-20); Barnabas is sent by the church in Jerusalem to investigate the overwhelming response (vv. 21-22); when he sees the grace of God, he rejoices and encourages the new believers (vv. 23-24); then he retrieves Paul from Tarsus and they minister together in Antioch for a year (vv. 25-26); finally, the believers send relief to their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (vv. 27-30).

At the same time that Philip takes the gospel to Samaria, other disciples take the gospel to Antioch. One commentator explains: "Whereas Philip went to Samaria, other Christian refugees went to the country of 'Phoenicia' north of Caesarea, the island of 'Cyprus' (cf. 4:36; 21:16), and the city of 'Antioch.' Those disciples, who were Jews, were evangelizing other Jews exclusively ('alone')" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2026 ed., 237, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)—perhaps Peter had not yet taken the gospel to Cornelius (10:1-48) or they had not heard he did. Some of the refugees, however (cf. "but" v. 20), spoke to Greeks in the city, that is, Gentiles rather than Hellenistic Jews (see note), "preaching the

Lord Jesus" (v. 20). They did not preach Jesus as "Messiah" but rather as "Lord"—cf. "he is Lord of all" (10:36)—a title far more meaningful to Gentiles. As a result of their ministry, the congregation in Antioch turned out to be a mixed one made up of Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles meeting together in common allegiance to Jesus.

When word of the overwhelming Gentile response to the gospel reached Jerusalem, the church sent Barnabas to investigate. Leaders there could hardly have selected a better person for the job. When the "the son of encouragement" saw the grace of God (v. 23), as to be expected, "he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts" (NIV). On the importance of his assessment, one commentator writes: "Here was a crisis point in the history of the early church, for much depended on Barnabas's reaction, counsel, and report—not only in Antioch itself, but also at Jerusalem and in the later advance of the gospel through Paul's missions. . . . As a result of his response, the work that was started at Antioch was enabled to go on, with many being brought to Christ" (Longnecker, 401-402).

With the growing success of the ministry in Antioch, Barnabas needed help, and Paul, who had returned to his native Cilicia (9:30), immediately came to mind. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul (A.D. 43), nearly a decade following his conversion (A.D. 35). The two subsequently ministered together for nearly a year in Antioch, where the believers were first called "Christians," implying they were *not* Jews of a different kind. "Christianity was beginning to have an identity of its own and no longer was viewed a totally Jewish entity" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 273).

Finally, when Agabus prophesied that a great famine was coming, affecting the entire Roman empire, the Gentile Christians in Antioch decided to send relief to their Jewish brothers and sisters in Judea. The collection was eventually sent to the elders of the church in Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul (cf. 12:25). "We are not given details as to how the relief was collected, how it was administered, or when it was delivered. All we know from the text is that it was an expression of Christian concern by the Antioch church" (Longnecker, 404)—concern that reflected the unity of the body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

All this was the result of disciples who dared to share the gospel with Gentile unbelievers.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 19 *who were scattered* Cf. Ac 8:1-2. If the stoning of Stephen occurred in April A.D. 35 (according to Harold W. Hoehner), the disciples were scattered shortly afterward, perhaps, early in the summer of the same year (E. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 129).

vv. 19-20, 25 *Phoenicia* “Phoenicia was the Mediterranean seacoast area of Syria, with Tyre and Sidon as its main cities. It was one hundred miles long and normally fifteen miles wide . . . Cyprus, an island to the south of Asia Minor, was one hundred miles west of northwestern Syria (13:4-12. It was the original home of Barnabas (4:36) and had a large Jewish colony . . . Antioch is on the Orontes River and located in what is now southeastern Turkey. It was the seat of Syria during the Seleucid reign and was the third largest city in the Greco-Roman world, with as high as six hundred thousand inhabitants (of which perhaps twenty-five thousand were Jews) . . . Cyrene was the capital of the Roman province of Cyrenaica (= Libya) in North Africa . . . All of these locales (Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch plus Cyrene) were heavily Hellenistic in character” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 412-13, 414). Tarsus is located in southeast Turkey (ancient Asia Minor), about 12 miles inland from the Mediterranean coast. It historically served as the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, situated on a fertile plain at the southern foot of the Taurus Mountains. “Paul had gone to his native Tarsus (v. 25) after his conversion (9:30). As a Diaspora Jew, he was particularly suited for the Gentile outreach” (*ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 11:26).

v. 19 *no one except Jews* The Hellenistic Jewish Christians from Jerusalem spoke about Jesus to “no one except Jews,” that is, other Hellenistic Jews in particular.

v. 20 *Hellenists* Cf. “Greeks” (NIV, NET, NASB1995; GNT; NLT). “Some MSS read *Hellēnas* (‘Greeks’) while others read *Hellēnistas* (probably Grecian Jews’ [or Hellenistic Jews]) . . . But while the textual evidence may be somewhat indeterminate, certainly the contrast drawn between the ‘Jews’ of v.19 and those who receive the gospel here in v.20 makes it all but impossible to understand those referred to in v.20 as anything other than Gentiles” (Richard N. Longnecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 400).

vv. 22, 30 *Barnabas* “He participated in exemplary fashion in the church’s practice of sharing (4:36f.). He introduced Paul into the circle of apostles (9:27). He was chosen as their delegate to Antioch [11:22]. Barnabas was a ‘bridge-builder,’ one who was able to see the positive aspects in both sides of an issue and to mediate between perspectives. That was the sort of person needed now to investigate the new mission of the more adventurous Hellenists of Antioch and allay the concerns of the more conservative ‘circumcision’ group in Jerusalem (cf. 11:2)” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 272). Luke indicates that Barnabas was a “good man” (v. 24; cf. Lk 23:50), “full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (v. 24; cf. 6:5), who recognized the grace of God at work in all the Gentile conversions and was glad, exhorting the new converts to “remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose” (v. 23).

vv. 25, 30 *Saul* Paul’s movements following his conversion on the way to Damascus (A.D. 35; cf. 9:1-19a): He stays in Damascus for a short time (9:19b) before leaving for Arabia (Gal 1:17; Ac 9:8-25) and then returning to Damascus; three years later he goes up to Jerusalem (A.D. 37; cf. Gal 1:18; Ac 9:26-30). After visiting Jerusalem for the first time, he ministers around Tarsus in Syria/Cilicia (A.D. 37-43; cf. Ac 9:30; Gal 1:21). Barnabas finds him and brings him to Antioch (A.D. 43), where he ministers with Barnabas until going to Jerusalem a second time, i.e., “the famine visit” (A.D. 47; cf. Ac 11:30; Gal 2:1-10) (see House, 129; cf. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 476-77, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

v. 28 *days of Claudius* “The reign of Claudius [A.D. 41-54] was in fact marked by a long series of crop failures in various parts of the empire—in Judea, in Rome, in Egypt, and in Greece . . . The most likely time for the Judean famine would seem to have been around A.D. 46” (Polhill, 275).

v. 29 *relief* “The famine relief indicates a complete reconciliation as needs are met across geographical and ethnic boundaries. The relief portrays the oneness and caring of the community, as did Acts 4 in Jerusalem, where goods were shared. Racial harmony and caring are possible. The church is one despite being in different locales” (Bock, 415).

v. 29 *brothers* Cf. “brothers and sisters” (NIV; ESV footnote); “fellow believers” (GNT); “Christians” (NLV).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Take the gospel to those who do not believe, because the gospel only advances when those who believe take it to those who don't and because that's what the church does.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?

2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?

3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

As a parent, one thing I always forget is that my kids don't know what I know. For example, I forget they don't know how to do simple chores the way that I have done them for decades. In my head I expect the end result that would come from my handiwork. But they don't know how to do what I have done for years. That's why the towels folded by a six-year-old look remarkably different from the towels folded by an adult. Often, rather than take the time to explain and discover the ways of the world with my younger children, I'd get frustrated. Similarly, I often forget that they don't know what I know about the Bible, and that's a real shame. I remember in my early days of Christianity being absolutely amazed as the puzzle pieces began to fit together and I realized that the Bible is one big story, not a collection of chance happenings. Understanding the familial line throughout history from Abraham to David to Jesus is mind-blowing for a spiritually immature person. I know this, but do my kids? This week's passage is a recounting of what God has done. Have I steadily shared what God has done with my kids? Have I helped weave a story of God's faithfulness and love for His people from creation to today? Have I read the Bible with them or helped them understand where things fit on the timeline? Take a moment today to share a Bible story with your kids. Mention how it fits into the metanarrative and watch as the puzzle pieces begin to fall into place. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 11:11-30.

1. After Stephen's death, where did the believers travel?
2. What was the result of the preaching?
3. Who did Barnabas go get for help?

What Do You Think?

Why did Barnabas go get Saul?
What help could he provide?

What Do You Do?

How do you see the church growing from this passage?
Draw a young sapling and a large tree to illustrate this growth of people, geography and spiritual maturity.

CORE COMPETENCY: Church

I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 16:9

"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.