



Week 8

Acts 11: Church

Text: Acts 11

OPEN

This is our eighth week of our series in Acts called **"Unstoppable"** based on Acts 5:42 which says, "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, **they never stopped** teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah." The book of Acts is the story of the unstoppable movement of Jesus through the ministry of his Church that we are part of today as a **people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, to fulfill the mission of God, by sharing Jesus with others.** The conversion of the Ethiopian in Acts 8 may not have affected the policy of the church in Jerusalem because this person returned immediately to his homeland and did not have any further contact with the Jewish church in Jerusalem. This week we continue the story in Acts 11 where we see that **sometimes change is not always welcomed even if God is behind it.**

READ

Read Acts 11:1-18 (which takes place with the church in Jerusalem) and 11:19-30 (which takes place in Antioch).

- Compare and contrast the accounts of two almost simultaneous events in the growth of the church. *Antioch was the third largest city in the Empire at the time with about 500,000 people. Located approximately 300 miles from Jerusalem it had a very cosmopolitan population.*
 - How did the church in Jerusalem initially react to the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (11:1-3)? How did Peter respond?
 - How did the church in Antioch respond to the gospel reaching the Gentiles (11:20-21)?
- Both churches responded differently to the gospel reaching the gentiles. Have a time when you have experienced a different approach to worship or the teaching the Scriptures in your life as a believer. This could have been on a vacation or while visiting a friend's church.

REFLECT

In his commentary on the book of Acts, Ajith Fernando says, **"Criticism is something any creative person who leads the church into new areas of obedience and ministry will face."** (Compare Matthew 8:5-7 (NLT))

- Peter is initially criticized by the Jerusalem church for his ministry among the gentiles. Have you ever had to respond to criticism for stepping out into a new area? Share about that.
- Can you think of a present-day counterpart in western church, to the reluctance of the Jerusalem church, to welcome and include people like the gentiles, who were far from God? *Example: For years the theme at Billy Graham conferences was, "Come as you are!"*
 - How does Acts 11 provide help for how we can participate in the mission of God to others who are far from him? (see Acts 11:18).
- Does the church today let people come as they are? How do we create space for people to *belong* (attend our community) before they *believe*?

Acts 11:26 shared that it was in Antioch where believers were first called Christians.

- The surrounding culture came to view "Christians" as "adherents of Christ". How can we live out our faith in such a way that people see us as "followers of Christ"?
- In what ways have you reflected Jesus to those around you? How can you do this more intentionally?

APPLY/PRAY

- Think about your circle of influence. Who are 2-3 people has God placed in your life that you could begin praying for?
- What are some brief thoughts, or questions, that you might bring into your conversations with them this week that might provoke their thinking about faith in Jesus?
- What is one way that Wellspring could begin to create space for people to belong (attend our community) even before the believe? What could we do to encourage a community where people could investigate and discover Jesus?
- Continue to pray for our elders, staff, and leaders as they following the Spirit's leading in this time of transition for our church.

