

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 14
Continuous Conversion
Acts 11:19 – 12:24, Week of Oct 15, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

What do you call people that are committed to joining Jesus' life, community and mission? Christians!

Christianos (Greek – Χριστιανός)
Christ = *the One, Messiah, Promised Deliverer.*
ianos (singular) or ianoi (plural) = *follower of, looks like, belongs to*

The term first appears in Acts 11:26 where Jewish and Gentile believers came together as one. From a law, traditions, rituals, cultural, linguistic, preferences and values point of view these believers were clearly different from each other and not a religious subset Judaism. What they did have in common was a commitment to joining Jesus' life, community and mission, ergo the name Christian. Salvation (by grace through faith in Jesus) leads to sanctification (a life long journey of becoming more like Christ). Sadly, North American Christianity has sometimes turned into a "salvation leads to status quo until you get to heaven" proposition. This is because we have spent more time focusing on the doctrine of security of salvation ("once saved always saved") at the expense of the biblical doctrine of sanctification as the life long ongoing fruit of salvation.

The book of Acts is a timely reminder that the grace of God is more than the gift of forgiveness of our sins, it's the very power of God at work in us to become more like Jesus – Christian!

1. Does the following quote resonate with you? How does it compare with your attitude and/or experience?

The Christian church is a society of sinners. It is the only society in the world in which membership is based upon the single qualification that the candidate shall be unworthy of membership.

~ Charles Clayton Morrison (*American magazine editor, 1874-1966*)

Read Acts 11:19-30

2. A. Finish one of the following sentences:
 - The verse that most stood out to me was . . .
 - My Acts 11 AHA is . . .B. The message they shared was *the good news about the Lord Jesus* (v 20). What is this message, in your own words, and in a few sentences?

As a leader your job is to ensure people have the freedom to express themselves without being forced by others into a one cookie cutter method or order of sharing the

Gospel. Some believe you have to start with Genesis, others with John etc. The beauty of the Bible and Acts 11:20 is that it leaves the door wide open to many ways.

One way to help people not worry so much about exact wording and order is to use "Jesus in my place" as the framework for sharing the gospel in various settings.

Have fun with this question – really!

3. Antioch of antiquity has been compared to the Las Vegas of today – *what happens in Antioch stays in Antioch!* Antioch, not Jerusalem or Rome:
 - Was where Jews and Gentiles first started worshipping together.
 - Was where the name “Christian” was first used.
 - Became the new base of operation for the Gospel going viral (cf Acts 13:1-3, 14:26, 15:1, 36, 18:22-23).

How does the story of Acts 11:19-30 impact your faith and outlook today?

Antioch was the 3rd largest Roman city & hovered around the ½ million mark. It was a melting pot of culture and a great place to do business. Sports also played an important role as they had a hippodrome for chariot racing that could seat 80 000.¹ On the outskirts of Antioch there was a place known for its great natural beauty called Daphne . . . (At Daphne there was) a temple dedicated to Apollo and Diana. It became a favourite retreat for the wealthy citizens of Antioch, and even Roman governors. Daphne was famous for her corps of temple prostitutes; and the phrase “Daphnici more’s became a synonym for immoral practices.² Money, sports and sex. It’s what led the Roman satirist Juvenal to say “The sewage of the Syrian Orontes has for long been discharged into the Tiber.” By this he meant that Antioch was so corrupt it was impacting Rome, more than 1,300 miles away.³ Think about it, it was the work of the Holy Spirit through courageous joy filled Christians that won the day, not the godly culture, the bible based laws, or the respectability of the citizens. It’s time we stop wining and withdrawing from our culture and start trusting the Holy Spirit to shine light even in the darkest places.

Check your time. It’s OK to end your study here, after the next question, or to skip to the last question! Better to end after some great discussion, leaving time for much needed prayer, than to press on just for the sake of saying you finished all the questions!

4. In 11:27-8 we read about *prophets* from Jerusalem coming to Antioch. Prophets were *inspired teachers, a class we shall afterwards frequently meet with, who sometimes, but not necessarily, foretold future events. They are classed next to*

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioch>

² George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Eerdmans Publishing, 1972, p 48

³ Toussaint, Walvoord & Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Wheaton, IL: Victor, p 383

*apostles (1 Co 12:28, 29; Eph 4:11).*⁴ In what ways does God continue to bring words of prophecy to his church today?

The very word prophecy causes many a Christian angst. Every now and then we hear of some “prophet” somewhere declaring that the world will end by this date. Wikipedia has a list of doomsday prophets that you can get someone to Google right in your meeting – the list is long!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events

But just because of abuses, we should not shy away from talking about the gift of prophecy, it’s place historically and currently. Some good resources:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sam-storms-what-does-scripture-teach-about-office-prophet-gift-prophecy>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-new-testament-gift-of-prophecy>

Read Acts 12:1-24

5. What do we learn about prayer in Acts 12?

- *v.5 tells us about prayer’s character — it must be earnest and corporate. The word for “earnestly” can be translated “agonized”. It is the strongest word possible — it means intensity of feeling, of thinking, and of will.*
- *v.6-11 tells us about prayer’s power over obstacles — Peter was a) chained, b) between two soldiers, c) then guarded by two sets of sentries, d) finally locked in behind an iron gate. Prayer cut through them all.*
- *v.12-17 tells us about how little we believe in the power of prayer. Even the people whose prayers were strong enough for God to work did not have enough faith to believe they were answered. Do we believe that intercessory prayer has this kind of power? Cf. II Cor.1:8-11; Eph.3:20,21).*⁵

6. Once again in Acts we see that salvation (by grace through faith in Jesus) leads to sanctification (a life long journey of becoming more like Christ). What are you doing to ensure the Holy Spirit has freedom to do a work of ongoing growth in your life? Where are you strongest? Weakest? How can you help each other?

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 188). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁵ Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the book of Acts*, (Redeemer, 2005) p 102