

OPENING UP: Think about the value of diversity amongst believers within a local congregation. What are some of the reasons it should be treasured? How does it display God's grace and plan to reach the nations? How is this a foreshadowing of all eternity? (Ephesians 3:10, Revelation 5:9, Revelation 7:9)

♥ *How have you seen God use that diversity in your own sanctification journey?*

1 In Acts 11, the gospel advances and begins overcoming long-held distinctions and divisions among people groups, but Peter was initially criticized for being a part of it (Acts 11:1-2). What are some expectations, prejudices, and/or traditions that can get in the way of a proper perspective on how God works?

⚙️ *What specifically convinced Peter that God was working in the Gentiles and that Cornelius was now a true believer? (See Acts 11:16-17)*

⚙️ *How do the following passages describe the uniting work of the Spirit: Acts 15:8-9, John 3:8, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 8:9, Galatians 3:14, Ephesians 1:13-14, Titus 3:5?*

2 What similarities do you see between the early church at Jerusalem (Acts 2:37-47) and the early church at Antioch (Acts 11:21-30)?

♥ *Assess your community group together after the patterns and examples of these two model churches. What specific areas of growth can you pursue and pray for in the days ahead?*

- 3 **Discuss Barnabas, as he is described in Acts 11.** What stands out most to you about him? You may not know this, but Barnabas was not his given name (Acts 4:36). It was a nickname that followed him throughout Acts (and most of church history). What does this teach about Barnabas and his influence?

🗨️ *When have you been most encouraged by someone like Barnabas? What were they like and how were you strengthened in your walk with Christ?*

⚙️ *Notice Barnabas & Saul working together in verse 25 & 26. How do you think Barnabas' encouragement contributed to His ministry alongside Paul? (See also Acts 9:26–28, Acts 13:2–3, Acts 15:39)*

♥️ *What would growth in encouragement look like for you? See also Romans 12:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 10:24–25, Ephesians 4:29, Galatians 6:2, 1 John 3:18*

- 4 **When God speaks by His word and through His Spirit, we need to respond.** Discuss the following ways to Biblically respond and why they were important for the early church. Then discuss why they are still important for Christians today.

✍️ *A Mindset of Humble Submission - Whether it was repenting of sin, accepting new believers (such as Gentiles), or following a specific call to ministry, the early church needed hearts that were ready to bow to God's will. Pride would have hindered the church's growth and mission, but humble submission fueled obedience.*

A Heart overflowing with Regenerate Praise - True inner transformation brought by the Spirit creates a vibrant witness to God's grace. The early church's praise testified to the watching world that Jesus had indeed risen and poured out His Spirit. It unified the church and served as a profound witness, even under persecution.

Hands taking Faith-fueled Risk - Persecution was real, and stepping out in faith often meant potential loss of reputation, freedom, or life. Yet the early believers risked much because they believed in God's sovereign power to save and sustain (Acts 5:29).