

Acts 11:19-30

I Am A Christian!**Bible Study Guide**

November 7, 2021

NEW WORDS: Merriam-Webster Dictionary added 455 new words in October, 2021.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/new-words-in-the-dictionary>

How many of the following “new” words are familiar to you?

super-spreader	vaccine passport	copypasta	teraflop
flutternutter	dad bod	oobleck	air fryer
whataboutism	fourth trimester	amirite	deplatform

- Don't spend too much time looking these up!!

NEW WORD: “The disciples were called CHRISTIANS first at Antioch.” Acts 11:26

- Consider writing a one sentence definition of “Christian.”
- Consider “Christ” meaning ‘anointed one’ or ‘Messiah’
- Consider the suffix “ian” meaning “relating to, resembling, belonging to the party of.”
e.g. electrician, vegetarian, Canadian, etc.
- What do you think of Merriam-Webster’s definition:
“one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ”?
- According to these/your definitions, do you qualify as a Christian? Who doesn’t qualify?

READ Acts 11:19-30

The Jewish Christians in Acts had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah that they had been waiting so long for, but this wasn’t the popular opinion of the day. Most Jewish leaders had endorsed Jesus’ crucifixion and didn’t believe in the resurrection narrative. As a result, Christians experienced intense persecution. Stephen was stoned to death, so many believers escaped to safer places.

- Bible students don’t necessarily agree about who invented the name “Christian.” Considering the evidence, what do you think?
 - Early believers invented “Christian” to describe themselves positively.
 - They had a year of Christian education with Paul and Barnabas. (v.26)
 - As new groups grow, they naturally come to a point where they choose a name or identity.
 - ???
 - Persecutors invented “Christian” as a negative description to mock them.
 - Christians were seen as a radical, weird, religious minority and were therefore despised.
 - The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (v.26) It implies that the name was given to them from outside the group.
 - Persecution was a reality – Stephen had been killed.
 - ???

Three Experiences Christians Have In Common

1. They Have Believed

“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed.” (v.21)

“Some of them...began...telling the good news about the Lord Jesus.” (v.20)

“The Gentiles also had received the word of God.” (Acts 11:1)

- If someone were to ask you, “What do Christians believe?” how would you answer?
- What is the “good news about the Lord Jesus”?
- Is there a non-believer in your circle of influence who needs to hear the good news about the Lord Jesus this week?

Verse 21 tells us that one of the factors that prompted people in Acts to believe was that “the Lord’s hand was with them.”

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit (the Lord’s hand) in helping people believe in Jesus?
- If you are a Christian, what influences were at work in your life to help you believe in Jesus?
- What barriers are there to believing in Jesus? Consider 2 Corinthians 4:4 – “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- What role does a person’s level of intelligence play in their decision to believe or not believe?
- How effective is the “art of persuasion” or “debating” or “arguing” in evangelism?

2. **They Have Repented**

“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” (v.21)

“Turning to the Lord” is another way of describing repentance.

Repentance involves acknowledging mistakes/errors/sins and apologizing/saying sorry to God and others. Repentance requires sincere humility, remorse, and sorrow over wrongdoing. Repentant people give evidence of their repentance by changing their beliefs and behaviors.

- What form did repentance take when you became a believer?
- What do you think about the following thesis which Martin Luther nailed on the door of the Wittenberg church, “When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”
- What role has repentance played in your life in the last year? month? week?

Verse 21 tells us that one of the factors that prompted people in Acts to believe and to repent (turn to the Lord) was that “the Lord’s hand was with them.”

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit (the Lord’s hand) in helping people repent (turn to the Lord)?
*2 Timothy 2:25,26 – “Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.
*Romans 2:4 – “Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”
- What role does the Holy Spirit (hand of the Lord) has repentance played in your life in the last year? month? week?

3. **They Have Received the Holy Spirit**

“Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.” (v.24)

Barnabas had experienced, and was experiencing the life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit in his life. As a result, God used him to bring people to the Lord?

Romans 8:9 - “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then...the Spirit gives life.

God is **present** every way.

God is **resident** in believers by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ).

God is **president** when believers submit to the Holy Spirit’s instruction.

When people become Christians, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in their lives. He is constantly at work in a believer’s life urging and helping the person to mature and grow in the

Christian life. It's referred to as sanctification and it's a lifelong process. The Holy Spirit works to help us become more and more like Christ.

- When, and in what way, have you experienced the Holy Spirit at work in your life?
- How has the Holy Spirit made you a good person?
- How has the Holy Spirit used you to bring people to the Lord?

Four Reasons To Be A Grateful, Committed Christian

1. We Have Something Worth Suffering For

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch." (v.19)

- If you had witnessed the stoning of Stephen, how do you think you would have responded?
 - a. Stephen is my brother in Christ. I'm going to protect him. I don't care if they kill me.
 - b. Being a Christian isn't worth it. I'm not going to be a Christian anymore.
 - c. The people who threw stones are evil and I'm going to get my revenge.
 - d. I'm going to get out of here. I'm moving.
- How do you feel about these words of Jesus: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:11,12).
- In what way do Christians in Manitoba suffer "because of Jesus"?

2. We Have Something Worth Speaking About

"Those who were scattered by the persecution...traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message." (v.19)

"Some of them...began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus."

Even in the face of persecution, the early Christians weren't shy about their faith.

- How vocal are Christians in Winnipeg about their faith? How vocal are you? Why?

3. We Have Something Worth Studying

"Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 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." (v.25-26)

- What part of the Bible was available for them to study? Old Testament? New Testament?
- One of the teachers was Saul. He hadn't yet become Paul. What qualified him as a teacher?
- What forms of intensive Bible study are available these days?
- What role has intensive Bible study played in your life?

The Bible is an amazing resource of divine truth. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

4. We Have Something Worth Supporting

The early church supported God's work by sharing its teachers as well as its finances.

"A great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.: (v.21-22)

During the famine, "The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. They did this, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. (v.29,30)

Acts 11**The Church in Antioch**

¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen, traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to 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 ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, 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. ³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.