

# Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.

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## RESOURCE #3

### THE MESSAGE OF ANTIOCH FOR TODAY

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS THERE IS A STORY ABOUT THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE CITY OF ANTIOCH (11:19-30). ANTIOCH WAS A LARGE, COSMOPOLITAN CITY IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA – AT THE CROSS-ROADS OF TRADING ROUTES ON LAND AND SEA. IT CONNECTED PEOPLE FROM LOCATIONS IN AFRICA, EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, ASIA AND CHINA.

INTO THIS CITY CAME A STRAGGLING GROUP OF JESUS-FOLLOWERS WHO HAD BEEN SCATTERED BY THE PERSECUTION BACK IN JERUSALEM. BUT THIS STRAGGLING GROUP HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED BY THEIR ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS – AND IT SHOWED! IN FACT, IT SAYS THEY WERE "TELLING THEM THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE LORD JESUS" (11:20). AND AS A RESULT, "A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE BELIEVED AND TURNED TO THE LORD."

AS WE READ THROUGH THIS STORY, WE NOTE SEVERAL FACTORS:

- THESE WERE COMMITTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS (IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION, THEY REMAINED TRUE TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS) (11:19)
- THEY WERE 'SPREADING THE WORD' (SPEAKING ABOUT JESUS SEEMED TO BE A NATURAL OVERFLOW OF THEIR EXPERIENCE) (11:19)
- THEY WERE SPREADING IT TO THOSE WHO MIGHT BE RECEPTIVE (WHATEVER THEIR BACKGROUND) (11:19-20)
- THERE WAS A GOD-DYNAMIC AT WORK ("THE LORD'S HAND WAS WITH THEM" (11:21); "WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD HAD DONE (11:23)")
- OBSERVERS WERE "GLAD" FOR THE SPIRITUAL DYNAMIC IN THE CONGREGATION (11:23)
- THE NEW BELIEVERS NEEDED TEACHING (11:26)
- THIS COMMUNITY OF JESUS-FOLLOWERS WERE NOTED FOR BEING "THE CHRIST-ONES" (11:26)
- THEY WERE A GENEROUS BUNCH OF PEOPLE (11:29)

TODAY MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED THE DYNAMIC OF SHARING THEIR OWN GOOD NEWS STORY AND SEEING SOMEONE 'TURN TO THE LORD' AS A RESULT. LET'S FACE IT, AT THE PRESENT MOMENT THERE IS A LEGACY OF "BAD NEWS" WHEN IT COMES TO CHRISTIANS SPEAKING OF THEIR FAITH TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS AND WORK COLLEAGUES. MANY NON-BELIEVERS HAVE PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND MANY CHRISTIANS DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JESUS-FOLLOWER. IMPASSE.