

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Telling the Good News

Devotional

The early church in Antioch gives us a powerful example of what it means to be a missionary church. When persecution scattered believers, they didn't hide their faith—they shared it! Some even took the bold step of crossing cultural boundaries to tell Greeks about Jesus.

This wasn't just a job for church leaders or those with special training. Ordinary believers, displaced from their homes, saw their circumstances as an opportunity to spread the message of Christ's love and salvation.

What made their evangelism effective? They shared from personal experience. They told others about the Jesus they knew—how He had transformed their lives, given them hope amid persecution, and offered salvation freely to all who would believe.

Today, we might feel intimidated by the thought of evangelism. We worry about saying the wrong thing or facing rejection. But the Antioch believers remind us that sharing our faith isn't about having perfect theological answers—it's about telling others what Jesus has done in our lives.

Whether it's with family members, neighbors, coworkers, or strangers, we all have opportunities to share the good news. And like those early believers, we might be surprised at how God uses our simple testimony to draw others to Himself.

Bible Verse

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 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." - Acts 11:19-20

Reflection Question

Think about your own journey with Christ. What specific experience or aspect of your relationship with Jesus might be meaningful to share with someone who doesn't know Him?

Quote

"A missionary church is a church that is busy telling the good news about the Lord Jesus to the people we know and to the people we don't know."

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the good news of your love and salvation. Give me courage like the early believers to share my faith naturally and authentically. Help me recognize opportunities to tell others about you, and give me the words to speak. May my life and my words point others to your grace. Amen.

Day 2: Committed to Christ

Devotional

When the believers in Antioch shared the gospel, something remarkable happened: "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." This wasn't just casual interest or intellectual agreement—these new believers made a genuine commitment to Christ.

True commitment to Jesus transforms everything. It changes our priorities, redirects our passions, and reshapes our identity. The new believers in Antioch didn't just add Jesus to their existing lives; they turned to Him, suggesting a complete reorientation.

Notice that this commitment wasn't produced by clever arguments or emotional manipulation. Scripture tells us "the Lord's hand was with them." God Himself was at work, drawing people to faith through the power of His Spirit.

This reminds us that authentic commitment to Christ is both our responsibility and God's work. We choose to follow Jesus daily, surrendering our will to His. Yet this commitment is only possible because God's grace enables us to respond to Him in faith.

As we consider our own commitment to Christ, we might ask: Is Jesus truly Lord of every area of my life? Am I growing in my devotion to Him? Do my daily choices reflect that I've turned to the Lord?

Bible Verse

"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." - Acts 11:21

Reflection Question

In what area of your life might God be calling you to deepen your commitment to Him? What would it look like to surrender that area more fully to Christ's lordship?

Quote

"The second mark of the Missionary church is commitment to Christ. In verse 21 we are told that the Lord's hand was with them. And a great number of the people believed and turned to the Lord. Many people were committing themselves to serve the Lord."

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for drawing me to yourself through your Spirit. Forgive me for the times I've held back parts of my life from your lordship. I recommit myself to you today. Help me to follow you wholeheartedly, not just in my words but in my actions and attitudes. May my life demonstrate that I have truly turned to you as Lord. Amen.

Day 3: The Power of Encouragement

Devotional

When the Jerusalem church heard about the growing number of believers in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to investigate. His response reveals the heart of a true spiritual leader: "When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts."

Barnabas lived up to his nickname, "son of encouragement." Rather than being suspicious of this new movement or imposing unnecessary rules, he recognized God's work and encouraged the believers to continue in their faith journey.

Encouragement is powerful. It can strengthen the weary, inspire the doubtful, and motivate the discouraged. In a world full of criticism and negativity, encouragement stands out as a life-giving force.

The kind of encouragement Barnabas offered wasn't shallow positivity. He specifically encouraged believers to "remain true to the Lord with all their hearts"—to maintain their devotion to Christ with wholehearted commitment. This is spiritual encouragement that points others toward deeper faith.

We all have opportunities to be encouragers. A timely word, a thoughtful note, or simply being present during someone's struggle can make a profound difference. When we encourage others in their faith, we participate in God's work of strengthening His church.

Bible Verse

"When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts." - Acts 11:23

Reflection Question

Who in your life might need spiritual encouragement right now? What specific words or actions could you offer to strengthen their faith?

Quote

"The third mark of the missionary church is the presence of leaders who encourage. And we see in verse 23, Barnabas encourages them all to remain true to the Lord with all their heart. Barnabas was a leader in the church who encouraged."

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the encouragers you've placed in my life. Help me to be like Barnabas—quick to recognize your work in others and ready to offer words that strengthen faith. Give me discernment to know who needs encouragement and what words would truly help them remain true to you. Use me as an instrument of your encouragement today. Amen.

Day 4: Growing Through Teaching

Devotional

After Barnabas witnessed the thriving faith community in Antioch, he recognized they needed more than just encouragement—they needed solid teaching to grow in their understanding of Christ. So he traveled to Tarsus to find Saul (later known as Paul), and together they spent an entire year teaching the believers.

This commitment to teaching demonstrates the fourth mark of a missionary church. While encouragement motivates believers, teaching equips them with the knowledge and wisdom to live out their faith effectively.

Notice that this wasn't casual instruction. Barnabas and Saul "met with the church and taught great numbers of people" for a whole year. This suggests systematic, intentional teaching that built a foundation of biblical understanding.

The result was significant—it was in Antioch that believers were first called "Christians." Their identity was so clearly shaped by Christ's teachings that others recognized them as followers of Jesus.

Today, we also need both encouragement and teaching to grow spiritually. Reading Scripture, attending Bible studies, listening to sermons, and discussing God's Word with other believers all contribute to our spiritual development. As we learn more about God's character and ways, we become better equipped to represent Christ in our daily lives.

Bible Verse

"Then 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. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." - Acts 11:26

Reflection Question

What spiritual truth or biblical teaching have you been learning recently? How is it changing the way you think or live as a follower of Christ?

Quote

"The fourth mark of the missionary church is the presence of leaders who teach. We see in verse 26 that Barnabas and Saul meet with the church and taught a great number of the people. Barnabas didn't just pat people on the back and say, hey, way to go. He and Saul also did a lot of teaching."

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for providing teachers who help me understand your Word more deeply. Open my mind and heart to receive your truth. Help me not just to accumulate knowledge but to be transformed by what I learn. May your teachings shape my identity so clearly that others recognize me as a follower of Christ. Give me a hunger to keep growing in my understanding of you. Amen.

Day 5: Faith in Action

Devotional

When the Antioch believers learned about an impending famine that would affect their fellow Christians in Judea, they didn't just offer thoughts and prayers—they took action. "The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea."

This practical compassion reveals the fifth mark of a missionary church. Their faith wasn't confined to spiritual matters; it extended to meeting physical needs. Each person gave according to their ability, demonstrating that everyone could participate in this ministry of generosity.

What's remarkable is that these Gentile believers were helping Jewish Christians—crossing cultural and historical boundaries to care for those they might previously have considered outsiders. The gospel had so transformed their hearts that they now saw these distant believers as family—brothers and sisters worth sacrificing for.

This example challenges us to consider how we respond to needs around us. Do we limit our faith to Sunday services and Bible studies, or does it overflow into practical acts of compassion? When we hear about natural disasters, economic hardships, or personal crises, do we look for ways to help?

True missionary churches and authentic Christians demonstrate their faith through tangible acts of love. As James reminds us, "Faith without works is dead." Our willingness to help others in practical ways authenticates our spiritual commitment.

Bible Verse

"The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea." - Acts 11:29

Reflection Question

What practical need in your community or in the broader world has God placed on your heart? What specific step could you take this week to help meet that need?

Quote

"The fifth mark of the missionary is helping the needy. In Acts chapter 11, verse 29 said that the disciple is according to this ability decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. There was concerns about the people's spirits and the physical need."

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for meeting my deepest needs through your sacrifice. Open my eyes to see the needs around me and give me a compassionate heart that responds with practical help. Show me how I can use my resources—whether time, money, skills, or influence—to make a difference in someone's life today. Help me to demonstrate my faith through actions that reflect your love. Amen.