"The Church *GOD* Wants to Be a Part Of" // Acts 11:19–30; 13:1–3 // (Standalone, Nov 2026)[1]

Summit Collab Recap Video

Let's all stand, if you will, for the reading of God's Word: **Acts 11:19** Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose… 24 And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Pastor: *This is the Word of God for the people of God*
Congregation: ***Thanks be to God***

You may be seated.

(Well, this has been an eventful couple of weeks for me… 2 Sundays ago, after I was done preaching here--I went to bed that night and woke up with a severe pain in my abdomen that I at first thought was food poisoning. Told Veronica she finally got me … But eventually I went to the emergency room and to make a long story short, a few hours later they removed my gall bladder. Apparently I'm at the age now where you wake up with pain and go to the hospital and have random things removed from your body. It's all hevel, Amen. But I didn't tell you all about it because (a) it all happened so fast and (b) there was nothing you could do about it anyway. I know some of you found out, and you prayed for me, so thank you. The doctor told me I should avoid fatty foods for a while so naturally, I went to the fair the next weekend …)

But, anyway, I'm alive and well, and gall-bladder-less, and the next time I have a gall bladder it will be a glorified one in the new Jerusalem which will work perfectly, so I'm looking forward to that.

Acts 11 this weekend, if you haven't already found it. *Here's my question:* ***What kind of church do you want to be a part of?***

- Some want a **"Doctrinally-Rich Church"**, which means they want the pastor to preach long, theologically rich and precise sermons.
- Some want a "**Spirit-Filled Church"** with powerful worship and spiritual-gift manifestations and deliverance and lots of prayer.
- Others are looking for a "**Family Church"**: just a place where you belong and feel needed and known.

[1] Sources consulted: Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*; Vance Pitman, personal conversation (reflections on Acts 11). And others as noted throughout.

- Others are seeking a **"Felt Needs Church" -** I don't mean this one to be really negative, it's just you're looking for a church where the church meets all the spiritual needs you have--men's groups and women's fellowships and young adult programs and awesome kids or student programs, and the pastor's messages really speak to you.
- A lot of people want to be a part of a **"Missional Church,"** where you're constantly hearing about evangelism and community impact and reaching the nations.

All good things. ***Which of these best describes you?*** Which do you prioritize in a church? Which one of these is the most important to you? What if I told you that more important than "what kind of church *YOU* want to be a part of" is the question: **What kind of church does *GOD* want to be a part of**?

The church in Antioch gives us a picture of the kind of church *God* wants to be a part of.

The church at Antioch was one of the healthiest, fastest-growing churches in the 1st century. It became known as the missionary-sending hub of the early church--in fact, Antioch was so closely associated with sending that numerous mission organizations today have adopted the name "Antioch"—"the Antioch Movement," "the Antioch Network"--because they are seeking to emulate the impact of this church.[2]

But Antioch's secret wasn't its sending program, its leadership model, its organizational structure or even its strategy. Luke, the writer of Acts, gives us Antioch's secret in **vs 21**: "...the hand of the Lord was with them."

More than anything, Summit, I want this 👆🏼👆🏼 So often, we focus our efforts and our conversations on what ***OUR*** hands can accomplish:
- Money WE can raise
- Ministries WE can start
- Programs WE can run
- Problems WE can solve

All good things, **ultimately, we don't need better strategies, we need the hand of God.** So, I'm going to step out of our series in the Sermon on the Mount for one week and talk about**:**

The Church *GOD* Wants to Be a Part Of (Acts 11:19–30)

And here's why this is on my heart, and why I'm interrupting our series to talk about it: I've had an extraordinary few weeks where God has let me experience a few things, and I just haven't had much of a chance to catch up with you about them--having my gall bladder removed and whatnot.

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[2] The Antioch Movement; Antioch Partners; Antioch Network; Antioch Churches, etc.

First, at the beginning of October I got to take a handful of our Summit Collab pastors (our Collaborative is just all the churches that we've planted over the years) to Southeast Asia where Peter Park, our former Downtown Durham campus pastor, now leads a growing church in a global city there. The church is bilingual (English and the language there)--he's only been out there a couple of years but they are now several hundred people big, and they've already planted 2 churches out of themselves.

- Peter helped host a multiplying church conference over there, and through your generosity we are establishing a multiplying church hub there in the middle of a Muslim and Buddhist stronghold. It's amazing.

Second experience: Last week, we hosted right here, at the Capital Hills campus, more than 1,100 staff from churches we've planted around the world in our annual Collaborative Movement Conference.

In both of these events, I sat a little dumbstruck at what God has let us be a part of, Summit Church. God has taken the smallest seeds of faith and multiplied them beyond our wildest imagination. This past Easter we had over 120,000 people in Summit Collab churches just in the United States and have baptized close to 1,000 in those churches in the last year.

And it's made me ask the question--what kind of churches are we building? And is God pleased to be a part of them? And what do your and my roles in that kind of church look like?

At one of these events, one of our church planters, Corbin Hobbs at The Heights Church in Denver, preached a message from Acts 11 that I thought was so compelling that I wanted to share some of it with you. I've taken Pastor Corbin's basic framework from Acts 11 and reworked it for our context here at Summit Church, but I want to give Pastor Corbin credit for helping me see some things in this passage that I hadn't seen quite the same way before.

*Think of this as the profile of the church that **GOD** wants to be a part of, or the church God's hand is on:*

1. A church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission (vv. 19–21)

First, notice from vs 19 *that these church planters* didn't end up in Antioch because of some carefully thought out plan where the church in Jerusalem identified the most strategic place to plant a church and then trained up and sent out the best of the best in their congregation to do it. No, **vs 19** says an unexpected persecution ***"scattered"*** the believers in Jerusalem--that means it wasn't planned; that means nobody had a meeting about it; they didn't have a core group meeting; they didn't raise money; persecution happened and bam, they had to flee—ordinary believers, not official church planters--and some of them randomly ended up in Antioch and so they started a church there.

- The only name this group of believers are ever given is ***"those"*** in vs 19 and later ***"them"*** in vs 21.
- Luke never tells you their names because these were nobodies in the early church.
- If you made a movie about Acts, these would be "crowd members #'s 3, 4 and 5" in the credits. No names. Nobodies.
- And yet, these anonymous, unnamed believers planted one of the most if not *the* most fruitful, growing, sending churches in the NT.

In Stephen Neill's classic book, *The History of Christian Missions*, it's almost a hundred years old, Dr. Neill says, "Nothing is more notable than the anonymity of these early missionaries. … Luke does not turn aside to mention the name of a single one of those pioneers who laid the foundation. Few, if any, of the great Churches were really founded by apostles."[3]

- It was simply ordinary, anonymous, un-seminary-trained Christians upon whom God's hand rested.

Does God's hand rest on you this way?

Francis Chan said, "Long gone are the days when we should be content with a bunch of people who sing out loud, don't divorce, and give to missions. I now want to know I can drop off any member of my church in a city, and that person could grow in Jesus, make disciples, and help start a church."

This was *literally* true of the church at Antioch. The kind of church God wants to be a part of is a church where the members, not just the apostolic leaders, see themselves as the instruments of God's mission.

- For 25 years here, Summit, this is what I've preached to you: You did not call me to be your pastor so I could do the ministry *for you.* **Ephesians 4:11–12** says that God gave to the church pastors to *"(God) gave pastors… to equip the saints for the work of the ministry."* Look at that phrase. Who does the ministry? You, the saints. And what do I do? I equip you.
- Which is why I say, according to that verse, when I became a pastor, I *left* the ministry. I took a spot mostly in the background to help you do the ministry.

This community isn't going to be reached by a great pastor, but by Spirit-filled members with God's hand on them. In fact, let me tell you one of my favorite **Summit baptism stories**…

> A few years ago, a young lady stood in my kitchen talking with Veronica and me. I'd never met her—or at least, I thought I hadn't. She was one of my daughters' new small group leaders, and they were hosting an event at our house.
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> So I introduced myself to her, and when I did she smiled and said, "We've actually met before. You probably don't remember this, but a couple of years ago we were both at RDU at Gate C1 waiting for a 6 a.m. flight to Atlanta."
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> She said, "You walked past me in the gate area and noticed I was reading a book by Richard Dawkins—I think it was *The God Delusion*—he's a very famous atheist and wrote *The God Delusion*, talking about why belief in God is stupid—and you said something like, 'Well, that's some really heavy reading for this early in the morning!' And then you asked if I was trying to figure out if God really existed. She said, "I muttered something about having a lot of questions and you considered that in invitation to tell me the story of how you came to know Jesus."

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[3] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1986), 22.

(BTW, when she said that, I suddenly remembered the conversation, because I remembered seeing the book and sensing the Spirit prompting me to say something to her.)

She said, "I thought this was all a little random, but I actually had been wrestling with questions about God, so I listened."

"Then we got on the plane, and I ended up sitting about two rows behind you. And you struck up a conversation with the guy next to you and you started sharing your story of coming to know Jesus with him, too except this time you went a lot deeper because you had more time" and then she said, "Now, I don't know if you know this, but you don't really have what you'd call an INSIDE VOICE. Which means you were basically sharing the gospel with the entire Comfort-Plus section of the plane."

She said, "Honestly, I was a little annoyed. It was 6 a.m. And all I wanted to do was sleep. But… I'd forgotten my headphones, so I had no choice but to sit there and listen to you!"

"Finally," she said, "we landed in Atlanta. I was exhausted and just wanted a cup of coffee and a bagel, so I walked to the other end of the terminal and got in line at Atlanta Bread Company. And suddenly I heard this voice ahead of me. I looked up and thought, YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME. IT'S THAT GUY AGAIN!... Except this time you were helping a woman with 2 kids--the woman was at the register struggling to find her money, and trying to manage her 2 kids, and you told her not to worry about it and you paid for her breakfast. So I thought, 'Well, this guy doesn't know how to use an inside voice, but at least he's not a total jerk.'"

Fast forward 6 months. She's talking with a coworker at Duke about some of her questions about God and the coworker keeps praying for her and inviting her to come visit her church. Eventually she agrees to come, mainly, she said, to get her coworker to stop inviting her. And so one Sunday morning she walks into Summit, sits down, and out onto the stage walks…ME.

And she said, "My jaw hit the floor. And I turned to my friend and said, 'THAT'S HIM! THAT'S THE GUY I was telling you about in the airport!'" I'd never told her I was a pastor, of course. People get really weird when you tell them that.

OK, fast forward another 6 months. She's been coming regularly with her friend, and one Sunday she receives Christ, gets baptized, and eventually joins our high school ministry team. And I meet her standing in my kitchen as one of my daughter's small group leaders, and that's the first time I've heard anything about this.

Here's what I love about that story: I'm not the hero of that story. I had one conversation with this lady and completely forgot about it. Never thought of or prayed for her again. But there was another believer, a coworker at Duke, whose name you wouldn't recognize, who kept praying, kept inviting, and kept loving this lady until she came to faith in Christ. And God used both of us in his plan to bring her to himself.

Summit, that's how the gospel advances. Ordinary believers, each doing their part, with the extraordinary hand of God upon them. You don't have

to be a pastor--in fact, being a pastor in those situations is usually a liability (people find out you're a pastor and they start scrambling for their headphones and faking phone calls!). You don't have to be a pastor, and you don't have to have all the answers. You just have to open your mouth in obedience to the Holy Spirit and see what God does.

God didn't build the church at Antioch through celebrity apostles or famous preachers. He built it through ordinary believers obeying the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Summit, that's the kind of church I want us to be.

So, first, God's hand was on this church because it was a church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission. Second, God's hand was on them because the church at Antioch was…

2. A church that grows wide and deep (vv. 21–26)

- **First, notice in vs 21 how Luke celebrates the *wide*** part of their growth. It says that because the hand of the Lord was with them and ***"…a great number turned to the Lord."*** Notice the connection: The Lord's hand is on them, and a great number turned to the Lord.
- I'm just going to say this as plainly as I can: One of the evidences of God's hand being on us is people turning to the Lord. Large numbers. The NT celebrates large numbers. You have this in vs 21, and then **vs 24**, 3 verses later: Luke celebrates a second time, "A great many people were added to the Lord." And then **vs 26**, just two verses after that, Luke celebrates that Barnabas and Saul *"taught a great many people."*
- That's 3 times in 5 verses! I do not understand churches that are skeptical or derogatory or self-righteous against growth. I mean, I get it, that just because something is not growing large does not mean God's hand is not on it--God uses lots of small churches; I also get that there's a lot of artificial, smoke-machine, advertising-driven, fleshly ways to grow a church. The haze of a smoke machine is not evidence of God's hand, I get that.
- But Luke here clearly connects God's hand being on them and them growing like crazy, and I don't understand it when Christians or Christian leaders are cynical about growth. Y'alll, Jesus didn't come to shrink his church but to grow it.
  - And again, I get it: Numerical growth isn't the only measure of spiritual health, but we shouldn't apologize for people coming to faith.
  - We celebrate every number here, because large numbers represent lots of individual people being rescued from eternal separation from God, lots of people coming home to Jesus. They represent large amounts of marriages being restored, large amounts of drug addicts being delivered and lots of prodigals coming back to the Father. Lots of prisoners being saved and then restored to society.
- The question isn't whether you prefer big churches or small churches (Who cares what you prefer). The question is whether we love seeing lost people come to Jesus.
  - Listen, there's always been detractors and cynics: Always! Even in Acts! In Acts 2 the Spirit of God falls on a church and 3000 people get saved and baptized in one day and there's a bunch of theological critics off to the side going, "Well, I bet these people are drunk." Don't be that person.
- *And yes, growth creates inconvenience*. New service times. When you figure them out, we're gonna change them, so get ready for it. Cramped parking lots. New campuses. Giving campaigns because we need new buildings.
  - So, let me just go ahead and acknowledge this: I'll tell you if what you're looking for in a church is a place where you can come and park in your favorite parking spot every week; and sit in your standard spot; and see basically the same people every week… this church is going to

frustrate you. We are a family and we give you lots of ways to get connected and know people--things like small groups and volunteer teams and prayer meetings--but if you love a nice, cohesive, contained, controlled experience, this place will frustrate you.

- But… if you love to see people saved; lives changed; seeing these baptismal waters stirring often, you'll probably put up with some of the inconvenience for the joy of seeing that.
- Based on what I read here in Acts 11, that's the kind of church God wants. Always making room for one more.
  - Someone posed the question to me once, "Who are the 100 most important people in Summit Church?" I thought for a moment--Our 100 biggest donors? 100 of our small group leaders? Our 100 longest-tenured members?
  - Those are all important, but the 100 most important people in our church are the next 100 we need to reach. The 100 most important people aren't even here yet.
  - Jesus said that the good shepherd in his story leaves the 99 to go after the 1 and says, get this, "There is more joy in heaven over the lost one found than over 99 that are already his."
  - *That's Jesus' heart, and he wants to be a part of a church that has that heart too.*

- So, that's ***wide*** growth. But notice the church that God's hand is on also grows ***deep***:
  - Vs 25: "So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians."
  - Barnabas and Saul/Paul spent an entire year teaching this church.
  - Why? Because God's plan is not just to get lost people into heaven, but to put heaven into them so that they would represent him and glorify him on earth.
- Notice the little detail Luke tucks in at the end of **vs 26**, ***"…And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians."*** That's the first time that word is used.
  - After a year of Barnabas' and Paul's discipleship, these new believers were called "Christians." And here's the thing, this was a made-up term. Scholars say it was probably meant as an insult. It was like saying, "***The Jesus-y people***."[4] But these believers in Antioch were *so like Jesus* that people identified them by him.
  - That's what discipleship does. It transforms you from being someone who looks like the world into someone who looks like Jesus.
- God delights in a church where people aren't just getting saved and baptized, but where they're moving on into Christlikeness.
- At the beginning of the year, I challenged some of you that were checking out Christianity, because we always have lots of visitors come at Christmas, and I said, "Don't just come once, at Christmas and then come back at Easter, and then Mother's Day, and then Christmas again next year." I said, "Give us a year… come consistently to weekend service." And some of you have done that, and some of you have even been saved and baptized now, or you're in the process of that.
- Now it's time to take the next step, which is to start growing--you've gotta start acquainting yourself with the teaching of the apostles—getting into a discipleship group--either a small group or one of our men's and women's groups or serving on one of our volunteer teams. Any of those is a good place to start.

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[4]This is a term only used 3x in the entire Bible: Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16

God doesn't want us choosing between a church that's a mile wide and an inch deep or a church that's a mile deep and an inch wide. He wants a church that grows both deep and wide. That's our goal here at Summit Church.

Our 3rd characteristic of the church God wants to be a part of:

3. A church that turns grace into generosity (vv. 27–30)

Look with me at vs [27]: Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). [29] So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. [30] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

The church in Antioch got word about a famine that was coming all over the world, but they knew Jerusalem was going to be especially hard hit because the church was so persecuted up there, so they opened up their pocketbooks and gave.
BTW, there's a beautiful reversal taking place here. Remember, the believers from Jerusalem had been the ones to bring the gospel to Antioch. But now they have a need and the Antioch church, who was saved through Jerusalem's generosity, is sending financial relief back to Jerusalem. (I'm tempted to use this, btw, to tell our big, successful church plants that they need to start sending some of their budget back to us--you hearing me, Two Cities? And Mercy Hill?) (Teenagers)

But the *REAL* point of what we're seeing here is this: ***The recipients of spiritual generosity became agents of material generosity.***

Pastor Bryan always says this: Generosity is like an ***indicator light*** that shows you've encountered the gospel. And that's because those who truly believe the gospel always become *like* the gospel.

And notice it wasn't just the rich people who gave. *Everybody* in the church gave. Every member gave ***"according to his ability."***

The rich people gave a lot because they had a lot; the poor gave a little because they had a little, but everybody gave. It doesn't matter how much money you have. If you've been saved, you are the recipient of the greatest generosity gift in the world--and there's something inside you that has to show that! Of course you give your first 10 percent back to the kingdom of God, that's just the baseline. But if you've been impacted by the generosity of Christ, you find yourself wanting to give more!

I was talking with a guy in our church; he was a very wealthy man, he'd been saved here. One Sunday he heard me preach the story in the Bible about the really poor woman who had the two mites, which basically means an eighth of a penny, and she puts it in the offering. And he comes up to me and he says (it was great because this guy had no church background), "That story you told, is that like a real story, or is that one of Jesus'

made-up stories, like a parable?" I was like, "Well, it's a real story; it wasn't a parable." He said, "So I'm going to be in heaven with this woman?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "I'm gonna meet her?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "I do not want her to be able to look at me and say, 'I gave more than you.'" Because Jesus, remember, used the woman with two mites and said, you know, she gave more than all the rich people. He said, "He isn't going to be able to say that about me. Whatever it is that she was giving, I'm going to give that amount; I just have a lot more because I'm very wealthy." That's what Paul is saying—it has nothing to do with the amount they're giving; it's what it represented about their heart.

Forget about the amount. Forget about how it compares to others. Does what you give to God make a statement to God about the value of his salvation in your life? Is the amount you gave a worthy 'thank you' for what he's done for you?

Did he throw pocket change at you when you needed to be saved? Based on some of your giving, that's what you think he did.

A church where God's hand dwells overflows with generosity.

- Summit, **I hold here in my hands a copy of a translation we just finished** through a group called ***Illuminations***… It cost a few hundred thousand dollars to produce (any translation, really, if you're starting from scratch like they were) and this particular translation was started at the behest of one of our church planting teams in East Africa…
  - They had moved there to work in one PG there and found out about a neighboring one full of Muslims that had no believers in it and no copy of the Bible.
  - And so, through your generosity, we produced THIS: This is the first translation of the NT in this language. This group has never, in history, had a copy of the Bible in their language.
  - **And I'm HAPPY TO REPORT TO YOU that** there are now 300 believers in that people group that previously had none. (You 300 who started with me 25 years ago--you! You did this.)
  - BTW, sadly, the government forced our people a few years ago to flee the area, so contact with them is much more difficult, but ***they left THIS***
  - **Our church planter over there told me that every one of those 300 believers who takes a copy of one of these, actually take *two***--because among those 300 they've made a commitment with each other: that whoever takes one Bible will take a second to give to a Muslim neighbor.
- ***Y'all, think about the chain of generosity represented here (hold up Bible)*:**
  - There's the generosity of these Summit members in going to live in a strange place.
  - There's *your* generosity in giving sacrificially not only so we could send them, but so we could produce this.
  - There is the generosity of these new believers in this group, who are now literally putting their lives on the line to distribute it.
  - And it all goes back to the radical story of generosity contained in this book, JESUS' extravagant generosity toward us.
- Those who have received great grace instinctively show it in response. Generosity is the #1 indicator light that you've experienced the gospel.

- ***And so, heads up:*** Over the next few weeks, as we do every November, you're going to have a chance to hear about what God is inviting us into as a church and you're going to have a chance to recommit yourself to the mission of God that he's doing through our church.

The hand of God was on this church because they didn't just receive grace, but became conduits of it.

One more, real quick, because it's so important to us…

4. A church where Christ matters more than culture (11:19–20)

Vs 19 says that when the first Jewish Christians got to Antioch, they basically only preached to fellow Jews. That was just the easiest thing for them. It wasn't that they were racist. They spoke the same language; had the same customs, liked the same things. See **vs** 19? Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word *to no one except Jews*.

But then **vs 20** says that others came, and "...on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

The Hellenists were Jews who had adopted Greek, or "Hellenistic" culture (that's what that word "Hellenistic" means--not that they were hellians, real partiers, just that they were Jews who had adopted Hellenistic, or Greek, culture)

Y'all, it would have been SO easy for the earliest Christians in Antioch to have gotten siloed into 3 different churches: 1st Baptist Jew; 1st Baptist Gentile; and then 1st Baptist Hellenized Jew. Instead, they formed *one* church, even though it meant that everybody had to mingle and rub shoulders with people not like them, and that created some friction.

But don't miss, it's right after Luke tells us they did this, vs 21, that we see the phrase: **v** 21: And the hand of the Lord was with them.

Think that's an accident that these two things are connected? The immediate context for the hand of the Lord being on them is their pursuit of unity beyond cultural and ethnic divisions.

In fact, **jump ahead to chapter 13**, because the story of the Antioch church continues there. Ch 13 vs 1, Luke lists out for us the leaders of the church at Antioch, and, catch this--he *makes a point of telling us their nationalities*.[5] Let me put all this in a chart so you see it:

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[5] Craig Keener, in Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, volume 2, discussing Acts 13:1, writes: "Luke's mention of their geographic diversity is undoubtedly deliberate." Grace to You, May 23, 1982: "The Pivotal Leaders." MacArthur walks through the five leaders of the Antioch church, identifying their different backgrounds. When discussing Simeon, called Niger, he writes: "There was certainly no race distinction in Antioch." He then identifies Lucius as an African Gentile and discusses Manaen's possible royal upbringing.

Leader	Background
Barnabas	Hellenistic Jewish believer
Simeon called Niger	African background
Lucius	From North Africa
Manaen	Roman--Served in Herod's household
Saul	Jewish Pharisee, highly educated

What do all these people have in common? Nothing. Is this some kind of DEI checklist? No, Luke is just showing you that the believers at Antioch chose the harder, more challenging road and the result was the hand of God was on them. Rather than starting 3 separate churches where Christians of various backgrounds stay clustered in cultural ghettos, they founded one church--the *church* in Antioch--where everyone pursued unity in Christ.

Here's why I didn't want to skip this point: It's election weekend. And nothing brings out our cultural divisions quite like an election, right?

And I want to say two things about this, so buckle up. First, Christians have a responsibility to think biblically about the issues at stake in an election. Particularly now, a lot of the questions at stake aren't just matters of personal preference, simply Republican versus Democrat. Some of the questions we're facing are profoundly moral questions. Questions about the sanctity of human life. About the nature of marriage and family. About what a man or woman is. About religious liberty and justice and the kind of society we're leaving to our children.

Those things matter. A lot. And we can't just shrug our shoulders and say, "Well, politics doesn't matter because Jesus is King." Don't you dare say that. Jesus being King is precisely WHY we should care about justice, truth, and the well-being of our neighbors.

So, I want to urge every one of you, in the strongest of terms, to vote. Not because your ultimate hope is in an election—it isn't—but because loving your neighbor means caring about the society your neighbor has to live in.

But here's the second thing I want to say: Even when we agree on biblical moral principles, there are times that we won't agree on the best political strategies for implementing them.. I'm not saying there's not wiser choices, or that whatever you do is fine (listen: you can make some profoundly bad decisions in an election)--I'm just saying that I know people from different backgrounds sometimes prioritize different political questions in an election.

Which brings us back to Antioch. These Christians WERE from different backgrounds, with different customs, different histories, and different perspectives, and they saw some of the questions about things in the Roman Empire differently. But, they had something that transcended all of that:

JESUS.

The church at Antioch wasn't united because they shared a culture, they were united because they shared Christ. Their differences were real, but their Savior was greater. Summit, I want us to be a church where our convictions are deeply biblical, and our consciences are informed by the Word of God, but where our commitment to Jesus Christ is greater than any cultural identity,

There. I've pointed out 4 things that God loved about the church at Antioch; 4 things that resulted in his hand being upon them. They were: 1. A church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission; 2. a church committed to growing both deep and wide; 3. A church that turns grace into generosity, and 4. A church where Christ matters more than culture.

There's so much more I could pull out of this passage,[6] but I'll stop there. These were the reasons, and the evidence, that **"the Lord's hand was with them."**

My question, Summit. Is he with us? Does Jesus love being a part of the church here?

One more thing. Look at the result of God's hand being on them. Ch 13 vs [2]: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

[6] Namely, that the church in Antioch was known for its diversity. One of the characteristics of the church God's hand stays on is that it pursues diversity!

What happened as a result of God's hand being on them? They multiplied. I wanted to make this the 5th point of the kind of church God loves, but I really think this one is the result of God's hand being on them.

Because God's hand was on them, they multiplied.

Dayton Hartman, who is one of our Summit Collab pastors who planted Redeemer Church up in Rocky Mount, said this past week at our Collab Conference. He said, "In the biological world, something is not mature until it can reproduce. Maturity is marked by an organism's ability to reproduce. But even though the church is a living organism, we don't apply that standard to it. Why? Spiritual maturation is demonstrated not by the accumulation of information, but by your abilities in multiplication."[7]

How do you define maturity? By how much Bible you know? By how consistently you come to church? Maturity is not measured by the *accumulation of information, but your abilities in multiplication*. Who are you multiplying into? Who can you point to and say, they're there because of me. They're there because I invited them. I shared Christ with them; I did a terrible job, because every time I share Christ with somebody I feel like I do a terrible job. It wasn't eloquent; it wasn't pretty, but I shared Christ and I prayed with them, and they're here because of that. Has that happened with you yet? God never puts his hand on a church, Summit, merely to bless that church. He puts his hand on a church to bless the world through that church.

VAMP So, as I close, let me encourage you where I've seen that in the last few weeks happening with us**, Summit. I mentioned visiting our new hub church in a global city in SE Asia.** I met 3 Summit members out there (actually 4), **and I thought they provided a perfect picture of the ways you are multiplying.**

Let me tell you about…

1. Jordan

Jordan was an executive recruiter in Durham who moved to Dubai to launch a redemptive recruiting business; his wife, Tina, is a pediatrician practicing in the only pediatric hospital in the UAE who just got promoted to run their residency program. Jordan serves as an elder at the church plant there, and he is leading our faith and work network in Dubai.

2. Peter

Peter was a campus pastor here at Summit whom God called to leave his very comfortable, thriving position here and move overseas. After completing our Collab church planting residency, he and his wife, Grace, moved to Southeast Asia to lead and develop Garden City Church. As I

[7] Dayton Hartman from Redeemer Church in Rocky Mount, NC, at the 2026 National Collab Movement Conference.

noted, they have already planted 2 churches and are launching our first church-planting Collaborative overseas. He says it's the hardest thing he's ever done but the most rewarding.

3. Bailey and Madison (I've changed their names for privacy)

Two young ladies that were part of our Summit College students at UNC who felt called overseas. They found out that Kingdom Refugee Center, a ministry we started over there in SE Asia through the church to work with refugee children, needed teachers and staff, and their degrees in math and communication made them perfect fits for the work. They are also now helping to start the young adults ministry at Garden City Church.

All people who sat here, like Barnabas and Paul, who are now out as part of the work. That's what a healthy church looks like. BTW, some of you should join this number! If you're interested, go to our ***Next Steps area*** at every campus and meet your sending coordinator there. They'll get you signed up for trips or show how you can support and care for missionaries or join our next Mission of God class. They can show you how you can get connected with what's going on overseas, whether short-term or long-term.

And Summit, It's what your giving goes to support, which you'll hear about in the next few weeks.

Summit, 25 years ago, I could never have imagined what God would do through this church. And when I look at the thousands of people who have come to Christ here--we've baptized over 11,000 people-- and the churches we've planted, and the missionaries we've sent, I know one thing: We didn't do this. The hand of the Lord was with us.

My prayer is that 25 years from now, if Jesus hasn't returned yet, people will look back at what God did through this church in these next 2 decades and say the same thing.

Not, 'What an extraordinary pastor.' No, 25 years from now I'll be 58 years old, so no one will be talking about the pastor then. They'll say not "what an extraordinary pastor," or "what an extraordinary church," but, "the hand of the Lord was with them" and "*what an extraordinary God*."

Can I leave you to ponder these 4 things, and listen to the Holy Spirit for a few moments? What's he telling you to do? To give? Maybe to put yourself forward to go? Maybe to reach out and share Christ with a neighbor? Our worship leaders will give you a few moments before we worship together…