

SIGNS OF A DYNAMIC CHURCH

Acts 11:26

Introduction: "The Reputation of a Church" (G.Avery Lee) points to the Antioch Church as a good example of a thriving and dynamic group of Christians. Is it a wonder that the members of Antioch were the first to be called "Christians" considering their faith? Three things stand out in the development of those early Christians at Antioch. With these three things a church is effective today. Without them a church withers away. Those three things are: Evangelism, Missions, and Benevolent Stewardship. None of those sound new to us today, but something startling will happen if those three are practiced today.

I. EVANGELISM

1. Antioch refused to bow to Judiasm (traditions, legal laws, etc.).
2. Jerusalem insisted on circumcision for Gentile converts.
3. New Testament principles were established. "Salvation is by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ alone."
4. No external, man-made rites, creeds, pledges, sacraments are necessary.
5. Antioch was free then to proclaim the gospel of repentance and faith - and they did.
6. Evangelism at Antioch was largely by the members. There is no difference in the commission. Clergy and laity have the same obligations. Take a look at some fanatical "religions" and organizations of today. Who is spreading their beliefs and propaganda? By dedicated, loyal members guided by their leaders.

II. MISSIONARY EMPHASIS

1. When Saul was converted he was told to carry the gospel to the Gentile world. The time had come for the Gentiles to know about Jesus.
2. Saul and Barnabas were set apart by the Antioch Church. (*Acts 13:2, 3*)
3. The great missionary enterprise was launched that carried the gospel across the Roman Empire and in 300 years Christianity was to be declared the official religion of that Empire.
4. While Jerusalem was sending out investigating committees, Antioch was sending out missionaries!

III. BENEVOLENT STEWARDSHIP

1. They shared spiritual blessings but also shared their material possessions as well with Jerusalem.
2. Jerusalem shared all things in common with each other, but Antioch shared or portioned out to everyone according to ability, taking an offering each week.
3. Antioch was not a wealthy church and the same famine that was hitting Jerusalem was also plaguing Antioch. But it was Antioch who was the first body of Christians to attempt to help other Christians outside their membership.

CONCLUSION:

1. It is hard to get Missions and Stewardship (aid) in proper relation.
2. A church cannot keep to itself, either spiritual or material. Any church that does this is in danger. Both must be shared equally if the church is to function properly.
3. Evangelization by the members (total participation)
4. Mission efforts by the representative church, not just talk.
5. Sharing-type of Stewardship. A church that is willing to do more than pray is one that will put "feet to it's prayers."
6. What kind of church do you want ours to be? Are you willing to do what the Antioch Church did?