

5 Marks of an Active, Vibrant Church

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's take our Bibles, or you can take your devices, and turn to the book of Acts, chapter 11.
- If you're visiting with us and you need a Bible, there's a black Bible in the chair in front of you. You can go down, pull that out. Go towards the back of that Bible to find page 101.
101. That's where you'll find Acts 11. Acts 11. We're going to do verses 19 through 30. Acts 11, 19 through 30 this morning.
- Acts 11, 19 through 30 this morning. Again, page 101. 101 in that black Bible.
- I'll read the passage, and then we'll begin our study. Feeling much better from my cold.
- [1 : 1 1] Thank you for praying for me and my family. They're still not totally well. Some are. Some aren't. I'm feeling good. Just still kind of nasally, so I apologize for my raspiness.
- Verse 19. Verse 19. So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews only.
- But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and spoke to the Greeks, also preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them.
- And a large number who believed turned to the Lord. And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.
- And when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord. For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.
- [2 : 2 3] And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers.
- And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. 27. Now at this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world.
- And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in a proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.
- And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. It's called Vibrant Church.
- It's a church in Columbus, Mississippi. Right on the border of Mississippi and Alabama. Vibrant Church. An egalitarian, charismatic, prosperity, gospel-endorsing church.
- [3 : 3 5] It says, quote, We're passionate, united, and always progressing. Progressing in what was my question.
- Also said there in one of the stanzas, Don't be surprised if you can't stand still to the music. Now is this what it means to be a vibrant church?

Is it really about people having some type of religious experience on Sunday morning? Now some people think that. So if you're standing still to the music, does that mean we're not a vibrant church?

Do you know you gotta, yeah, right. Alright. Now we're vibrant. Does it mean that we need a band? What does it mean to be a vibrant church?

A cool band? A cool band? Lots of people at a service? Making sure people are having a great, joyful experience at the Sunday morning service?

[4 : 52] Is that what it means? Is that how you define being a vibrant church? A young, cool pastor? Well, that rules me out. What does it mean to be a vibrant church?

How do you become a vibrant church? When we come to this part in the book of Acts, just do it. Be who you are.

Let God use you to fulfill His mission. What we're going to see this morning, five marks of an active, vibrant church. Maybe more marks of a vibrant church.

As opposed to, possibly, I'll let you determine that, to vibrant church in Mississippi. From the text, we're going to see five marks of an active, vibrant church.

How to become a vibrant church. What is a vibrant church? How do you get there? What is it about? What is a vibrant church?

[6 : 03] How do you know you're a vibrant church? Let me put it to you in a statement. Listen. An active, vibrant church is a mature group of Jesus-centered, Bible-led, self-giving people who've been radically changed by the power of the gospel which continues to work in their lives.

That's a vibrant church. It's a group that, they're mature in the faith. They're centered on Jesus. They're led by the scriptures.

They're selfless. A selfless group of people. And the reason why they're like this is because they've been changed by the gospel. The power of the gospel has just radically changed them and the gospel continues to change them.

It doesn't stop. It continues. That's a vibrant church. That's an active, vibrant church. So I put all those five marks in that one statement for you. Let's close in prayer and go home.

No. Silly. Because the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has radically changed us, we have a passion for God's people and a passion to proclaim this truth to those around us.

[7 : 19] We display grace towards each other and we give grace to the unsaved so that they trust in God's grace which is they trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. another way to express an active, vibrant church.

We're going to see here the church continued to expand as a result of the persecution of Stephen. And then Saul comes back on the scene. A major church arises out of Jerusalem.

Outside of Jerusalem, excuse me. Jerusalem wasn't part of this anymore. And it arises outside of Jerusalem in a key Greek city.

We'll look at that in a moment. Things were changing. Things were changing fast. And for the first time, they were called Christians.

And for the first time, they had a Jewish and predominantly Gentile church. That's going to be the church in Antioch.

[8 : 24] Before you had mostly Jews, a few Gentiles. Or just Jews. Now it's switched. Mostly Gentiles, some Jews. Things were changing.

Antioch would become the base of operations for the gospel to spread throughout the Gentile world. And many churches in the Roman Empire would be planted by this sending church.

It was a strategic city. A strategic place. Well, how did it all get started? What's the story behind Antioch?

Our passage today. The mission to the Greeks was a huge success. Barnabas, he was sent from Jerusalem to look over this new work. He was excited about what was going on.

He goes to get Saul to help him. The believers were first called Christians. A relief effort for Jerusalem. All this stuff was happening. And Antioch ends up becoming this strategic city by which God was going to move the gospel throughout the Roman world.

[9 : 36] Antioch. A strategic city. Now, may I propose something to you this morning? We are also in a strategic city. Cottonwood.

Now, I know what you're saying. You've got to be joking me. If you go to Los Angeles, the middle of Hollywood, you walk up to some person and you say, Hey, where's Cottonwood, Arizona?

They look at you like, Is that a place? I thought that was a tree. Never mind. Right?

Granted, I understand that. But think with me. Humor my madness. I have my method. This is one of two ways to drive to Sedona.

Right? This is the way people go to go to Jerome, elsewhere. So literally, thousands of people come through the city, right?

[10 : 41] Cheaper to live here than to live in Sedona? By far. And what do we have that no one else has? My own mother, she gives a spiritual answer.

We'll try this again. Sandy and Chan-yoo answer the question because she knows. Sandy, what do we have that no one else has, Sandy? Walmart! Walmart! Walmart! If you build it, they will come.

I mean, think about it. People from Cornville, from Rimrock, from Camp Verde, from Jerome, from Sedona, from the whole area, obviously Cottonwood, Clarkdale, they're all going to come to Walmart.

I mean, that's the hub. There's so many people coming through here. Not to mention the other amenities that we have. So friends, when you think about it, this is a key place.

It's strategic. Now, are we going to listen to the standards of the world to become a vibrant church? Are we going to make a difference in this city by the standards of the world?

[12 : 03] Cool band. This and that. Blah, blah, blah. We want to become the Tonight Show, Jimmy Fallon. Look, I'm telling you, if you're going to try and compete with the Tonight Show of Jimmy Fallon, it's impossible.

You cannot keep up with them. You have to be bigger and better than them and you'll never do it. Because as soon as you stop doing that, they'll stop coming. Believe me, I used to do that.

I've tried it. And it works for a while, but you have to keep going or else it goes away. Because it's a standard from the world. So are we going to take advantage of the fact that we are in a key strategic city and listen to the standards of the world or will we follow the principles as laid out in God's word specifically in our passage today and be a vibrant church where we make an impact in this city, a strategic city in this area?

I mean, you're talking from Sedona to Jerome all the way out to Camp Verde, Rimrock, all the way out here to Clark. This area, are we going to be strategic and follow what it means to be a vibrant church?

Are we going to do that? Well, what are these marks then? How do we become a vibrant church? What does it mean to be a vibrant church?

[13 : 27] What are the specific marks of active, vibrant church? They, meaning the church, that local church, they. So it's going to start with they for all of them. They, dot, dot, dot, number one. They proclaim Jesus, number one.

You want to be a vibrant church? We proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ, verses 19 through 21. 19, there rose, excuse me, then there, those who were scattered because of the persecution that rose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, speaking the word to no one except the Jews.

Some, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, came to Antioch, spoke to the Greeks also, preaching to the Lord Jesus. Notice there's two groups here. First group, speaking only to Jews.

So, from the persecution of Stephen, people scattered. The gospel came as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Now, where are those places? Phoenicia, Mediterranean sea coast area of Syria.

Cyprus, an island south of Asia Minor. This, this was Barnabas' home. This was his crib. This, he knew the area. There were a lot of Jews in Cyprus too, by the way. And then to Antioch.

[14 : 45] Now, I'm going to get to Antioch in just a second about what kind of place this was, but I want you to notice something. those who were scattered. Verse 20, some of them.

Notice, they're not named. You don't see their names there, do you? Places where churches had not existed before were now springing up due to these unnamed faithful proclaimers.

By the power and grace of God, new churches were being planted. a bunch of Jesus' disciples just living and proclaiming the gospel. Just no-name people. Like us.

One writer says this, quote, Some of the most significant work for the kingdom has been done by unknown witnesses who are obedient to Christ right where they are at and where they do not attract much attention.

Will that be you, Christian? Will that be you, disciple of Jesus? Will that be you, member of Common Bible Church? Will you be obedient, obedient to Christ right where you are and where you don't attract much attention?

[16 : 07] Are you going to do that? That's a vibrant church. That's a vibrant disciple of Jesus. So, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch.

Let's talk about Antioch. How strategic was this city? Located in what's now southeastern Turkey. It was the third largest city in the Greco-Roman world.

About 600,000 people lived there. Maybe about 20,000, 25,000 Jews. Known for its horrible, horrible, horrible immorality.

Horrible immorality. They had cult prostitution. And you had such an eclectic group of people from the Orient and then Greeks.

You had Greeks, Syrians, Phoenicians, Jews, Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, and even people from India were coming to Antioch. That's how strategic it was.

[17 : 21] In the Roman Empire, obviously Rome was number one. Number two was Alexandria there in Egypt. But third was what? Antioch. Because of the Mediterranean trade.

So many people lived in Antioch but thousands came through the city. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands came through the city. Full of city idols.

What it was. Immorality, commercial hub, business, wealth, a strategic center for God to save people because from Antioch, the gospel would go to the Gentiles.

Now notice that first group though. At first they spoke to the Jews, the gospel, only to Jews. But then the second group, some from Cyprus and Cyrene, when they came to Antioch, they began to speak the gospel to the Greeks.

Literally it says, from your Bible it says, preaching the Lord Jesus, it's euangelion, preaching the good news, proclaiming the good news of the Lord Jesus. And instead of being a predominantly Jewish church, the church at Antioch would be primarily Gentiles because of these faithful, obedient speakers, proclaimers of Jesus.

[18 : 43] Again, these are unnamed, ordinary people who had a heart for Gentiles by giving them the gospel of the Lord Jesus. And as they did this, God was certainly behind it because people responded and results were happening.

they spoke the gospel to these pagan Greeks in Antioch and notice it says, verse 21, and the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

A mission not backed by Jerusalem was happening and the results were staggering. Significant numbers were responding.

Those who believed turned to the Lord Jesus which would have been huge, huge in this wicked, idolatrous city. Friends, we have a responsibility.

We have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel to others and then we leave the results up to the Lord. The Lord who is the one who will open hearts to the gospel for people to believe and turn to Him.

[19 : 50] We call them to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We call them, we speak to them about who God is, a just and righteous God who must judge sinners. All of us deserve hell.

All of us deserve His judgment. God is gracious and merciful and kind. He's compassionate to sinners. He sent Jesus, His eternal Son, who was perfect.

You and I, we sent Jesus, was perfect. He lived a perfect life. He was crucified on the cross for sinners. He physically resurrected from the dead. And now He calls all sinners, come, repent, turn away from your sins, and put all your trust in Jesus.

It's not what you do, it's what Jesus has done. And if you're here today, you're not a follower of Jesus, this is for you. Turn away from your sin, put your trust in Jesus. This is the gospel.

And we proclaim this gospel because He's been so kind and gracious to save us. Let us share with you the grace of God. It's motivating us, God's grace.

[20 : 53] So a vibrant church, which is motivated by the grace of God because God's been so gracious to us, a vibrant church, number one, proclaims Jesus.

If we want to be an active, vibrant church, then we need to be a people who are passionate about proclaiming the Lord Jesus. And what's driving that, what's motivating that passion, is the fact that God's been so gracious to me.

I'm a sinner, I've failed him, I'm going to fail him today, and I'm going to fail him every single day, and yet God pours his grace upon me, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have forgiven us of my sins. That's what's motivating us to do that.

It's motivating us to proclaim the gospel to others. You want to be a vibrant church? Let's be a people who proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. Number one. Number two, and number three actually go together.

Two and three go together. number two, a vibrant church receives leadership. Number three, they welcome maturity. They receive leadership, and they welcome maturity, or they receive leadership and they want to grow.

[22 : 04] That way. They receive leadership, and they welcome maturity, or they want to grow. 22 to 24.

Those are neat sounds. At least not in the middle of the night for you, huh, Matt? And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, verse 22. And they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

So the church in Jerusalem, they heard what's going on. This is what's going down in Antioch. So they wanted to send someone whom they could trust. So they sent Barnabas.

Why Barnabas? He was a Jew. That's true. He was Jewish. But, his hometown, where he grew up, was Cyprus.

So he's used to being around Gentiles. He's used to that. the perfect guy for the job. The perfect guy for the job. Not to mention, Barnabas' character as one who was a great encourager to other believers, dropping down to verse 24, for he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

[23 : 30] You want to know something? In the book of Acts, no one is called a good man except Barnabas. Barnabas is the only one who's called a good man in the book of Acts.

He was a good man. He was full of the Spirit. He was full of faith. He just encouraged people. This is the type of guy he was. So the Jerusalem church, they send Barnabas as a leader and the church in Antioch, these believers, they welcome, they receive, they welcome, they come, they want leadership.

They receive him. Vibrant churches receive leadership that God gives to them. And then what happens? What does he see?

Notice, verse 23. He received the leadership when he come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.

As one in leadership, he observed God's grace, he was excited, he rejoiced in what God was doing with these Gentiles. He was just stoked, wow, this is great. And then what does he do? He encouraged the community to be steadfast in purpose of heart and to remain true to the Lord.

[24 : 47] Continue on, guys, continue on, yeah. The phrases here, steadfast, means have a purpose or resolve in their heart. Remaining or abiding that they will remain true to the Lord.

The New English translation has this, quote, remained true to the Lord with devoted hearts. That's a great way to sum it up. That's what he was doing. This is a type of guy Barnabas was.

This was a type of leader he was. Barnabas was a mature leader who helped to promote maturity in others, as well as unity in the church.

So as one who's in leadership, he helped to facilitate maturity and then the church will grow. they welcomed that. They wanted to grow.

They wanted to mature. Barnabas was the type of guy who could discern God's grace at work with a generous and encouraging spirit. That's why lots of people have talked about how really Barnabas was such a model deacon.

[25 : 52] That's what a deacon's like. Someone who's a deacon, they're just cheerleaders, they're encouragers, they just have a way. I'll put it up here on the screen. The church does well with people like Barnabas. Those who can do delicate, touchy jobs, reconciling and amending relationships, who can really connect with others and say the right things and encourage others.

You meet people like that? You met somebody like that? They're awesome. They're just great. Now I'm not saying, they're not schmoozers. They're not flattering. I'm not talking about that.

They have a good word. true words, gracious words. And what it does is it helps facilitate maturity so then the church becomes a place where not only do they receive leadership, but they welcome maturity.

They just want to grow. And not only was the Lord using Barnabas to bring about maturity and encouragement within God's community, the church was growing as a sizable crowd.

Notice it says the end of verse 24, and considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. More and more were coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 11] the Lord was adding to his church, using Barnabas as a person in leadership who's helping to facilitate growth and maturity within the church, and it's just growing.

And so the result of strengthening the body, it's not going to be a lack of missions, friends. Instead, it's going to be a fervency for more missions. When you strengthen the body, it doesn't bring about a lack of missions, it actually brings out a fervency for missions.

And notice the great results in evangelism that's taking place here in Antioch. So this tells us something, this tells us that growth in size is directly related to growth and maturity.

That's what this tells us. So if we are, our church is not receiving leadership, and doesn't want to welcome, doesn't want to welcome or embrace maturity within our lives, you don't want to grow in Christ, well then that's going to affect your evangelism.

That's going to affect the growth, the spiritual growth in this church and the numerical growth in this church. Look, there's a way to grow churches numerically.

[28 : 23] I know how to do it. If you want to do it the right way, it takes maturity, it takes a church not simply having an outreach program, it takes a church that's committed and receives this leadership and says, we want to grow, we want to mature, and this is hard, it's difficult, it's hard to grow because it means we got to be shaped and conflict happens and things like that, but that's just not only going to bring about maturity and spiritual growth in our own personal lives, but it's going to bring about numerical growth within God's church.

That's what you see. So for us, for us to be an active, vibrant church, we must receive the leadership that God has given and welcome leaders to speak into our lives, bring about mature thinking and living in the gospel.

Growth and maturity can be hard. It's hard for us to mature. I mean, who likes to grow? You hit those growing pains, right? It's hard sometimes.

But that's a mark of a vibrant, active church. Number four, embrace instruction. Embrace instruction 25, 26.

Embrace instruction. Vibrant churches proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. They receive the leadership that God gives them and they welcome maturity, growing, and the faith.

[30 : 02] And number four, they embrace instruction. Notice how these all go together. They're not separately distinct from each other. They're all connected. Notice how Barnabas realizing his need for help.

Maybe he's remembering God's calling upon Saul's life, that he's supposed to be ministering to Gentiles. Who knows? 25, he left for Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him to Antioch.

For a whole year, they met with the church and they taught considerable numbers. There's an important point that we see from the text here, a principle that we see.

An essential aspect of good evangelism is good solid teaching. Friends, a church that has poor teaching will have poor ineffective evangelism. A church that does not embrace good teaching will have weak sterile evangelism.

You see that, you get that. If there's not poor teaching happening in the church, there's going to be poor evangelism. If a church does not embrace the good teaching that they're getting, their evangelism is going to be weak.

[31 : 24] Teaching is needed for a church to continue to grow in maturity and to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the connection with point number four with point number two and three.

Teaching is needed for a church to continue to grow in maturity and to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, especially for this new church in Antioch. Former pagan idol worshippers.

This was new for them. Very new. The church in Antioch became, though, this vibrant, active community of believers.

How active were they? How different and distinct were they? So distinct. Look at what it says at the end of verse 26. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

The testimony to Jesus as to Christ was so strong that the disciples were being called Christians for the first time.

[32 : 41] Christian, what does it mean? It means belonging to Christ. Or people who habitually name the name of Christ. It doesn't mean little Christ. It doesn't mean that. Maybe you read that somewhere.

That's not what it means. It means belonging to Christ. Or one who habitually names the name of Christ. The term Christian only appears three times in the New Testament.

Interesting. This is one of the three. One. The significance is that the name identifies Jesus as the Messiah. He's the Christ.

So followers of Jesus are now becoming this distinct group separate from Jews. They're called Christians. Now, who started calling them this? It wasn't Jews.

Because do Jews think Jesus was the Christ? Uh-uh. So Jews weren't calling them Christians?

[33 : 47] Were believers calling themselves Christians? No. They called themselves brethren. They called themselves disciples. Brothers, sisters, that's how they classify themselves.

Saints, believers, that's how they classify themselves. Who was calling them this then? seems that the name came from non-believers.

Gentiles. They used this name to mark them out. Maybe it was a derogatory term. Oh, there goes those Christians again.

Maybe that's how they were getting it. I don't know. Interesting. that's how non-believers, the Gentiles, that's how they view, remember, predominantly 600,000 Gentiles.

A few number of Jews, predominantly Gentiles. They're calling these people Christians in Antioch. Here's a question. Does the city of Cottonwood see this in us?

[34 : 59] Oh, there goes those Christians. There goes those people who name the name of Christ all the time. They talk about Cottonwood Bible Church like that? They talk about us like that?

They talk about you like that? It's clear the mission in Antioch was a major success bringing major results in a Gentile dominated city.

And so for them, so passionate were they about the gospel, they were called Christians. Friends, they were so passionate, they were so into being instructed from God's word, that people just said, oh, those people, they name the Christ all the time.

They name the name of Christ all the time. So, pull it all together. With this point, active, vibrant churches want to be taught, instructed from God's word.

They want the meat of the scriptures, not just a light sermon, a light preaching, or light lessons. They don't want the superficiality stuff. They want the real stuff, they want the real deal.

[36 : 09] Because they're committed to growth, the maturity, and they want leadership to teach us the word. We want it, man. There's desire for growth.

Because they are embracing instruction. They want to go farther and farther, and farther into God's word. It's like they can't get enough of the gospel. They can't get enough of God's word. Are we like that?

Number five. You got active, vibrant churches. They proclaim the gospel. They receive leadership. They welcome leadership.

They receive the leadership. They welcome authority that's coming into their lives. They embrace the instruction. Number five. They give generously. Doesn't surprise me that Luke puts this in here.

Luke is so much about giving generously. It's all over his gospel. 27 to 30. More contacts with Jerusalem came through the prophets. Some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

[37 : 19] One of them named Agabus stood up. It began to indicate by the spirit there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. For the first time we see prophets in the book of Acts.

Prophets of the New Testament are equivalent to prophets of the Old Testament. prophets of the Old Testament.

They spoke God's word and foretold the future. Prophets would foretell and foretell. They did both. Just like the prophets of the Old Testament.

They would speak God's word and they predict the future. How do you know if a prophet was true? If what he said came true. If what he predicted came about. If it didn't come about you chuck a bunch of stones at his head.

Pretty simple. That's how you knew he was a true prophet or he was a false prophet. They would foretell and foretell. So Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets were equivalent.

[38 : 27] Now the apostles were above that. They were prophets but they were above that because they walked and talked with Jesus. You know that little thing. They walked and talked with the son of God. So they're above that.

So these prophets, they came down from Jerusalem. One of them, named Agabus, he predicted a major famine would affect the whole empire. That's what it means by the world.

The known Roman world. Now there's many different famines that happened during Claudius' reign. One specifically though that really hit Judea, hit the whole area but really hit Judea was somewhere between 44 and 48, about 46 A.D.

And actually his prediction here, what was going to take place, it preceded Herod's death. Chapter 12 is going to kind of look back. Luke's looking forward and chapter 12 is going to look back.

We'll look at that next week. But notice what happens in verse 29. And the proportionate of the disciples that means each of them determined to send for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

[39 : 33] The Gentile church moved to help their Jewish brethren. They sent support or aid according to those who had the means to give. East decided as he saw fit what he would give to the Jewish brothers.

To the brethren. This was a great way for them to express their gratitude to their Jewish brothers for bringing them the gospel. What a great way.

How can we okay they might have a problem sitting down and eating with us because we like octopus and sushi and they don't want to do that. Why not? I mean this is awesome. Pop sushi in your mouth.

Don't you want sushi? Octopus sushi? It's great. Eat it. Okay. They don't want to have table fellowship with us but here symbolically they're sharing table fellowship with them by expressing their gratitude.

We're going to pull together some funds and send it to them. Because they're hurting in the famine so we're going to put all this money together and send it to them because we love them.

[40 : 39] And they sent the relief notice it says in verse 30 this they did sending it in charge of Barnabas and sold to the elders. Just a little side note here about elders. The first time elders is mentioned in Acts it seems that they would function alongside the apostles elders.

They would be administrators, guides, being authority figures and as we go deeper into the book of Acts we'll see how elders would function as administrators, shepherds and guides with authority within the church.

Elders would pastor God's church. So just a little side note here about elders. And by the way this is the time that Paul described in Galatians chapter 2 when he went to Jerusalem.

So they gathered this money, the predominantly Gentile, some Jews, predominantly Gentile church, they gathered this money, they gathered this money, okay let's show how much we love them, we care for them, let's send them the money, Saul Barnabas, you guys take the money, send it, give it to the elders so they can distribute to our Jewish brethren.

What's the principle? This action on the part of the church angelic was a huge sign of unity, grace, reconciliation, oneness with their Jewish brethren.

[42 : 01] It portrayed they truly loved and cared for them. Here is another important sign of a vibrant church which comes from the teaching of God's word, generosity and giving to Christians.

There's generosity. Now this, I mentioned this earlier a few moments ago, how Luke brings this up in his gospel. Jesus taught this in many places as seen in Luke's gospel where Jesus says invest in the lives of other people, give generously.

People are so consumed with the business, with the stock market, they invest in here, they invest money there so they can make money here, they can make money there and do this and that, right? They're doing all this stuff. Well then, Jesus says invest in people, invest in the lives of people.

Give generously. Followers of Jesus focus on investing in people, not this world. God has been so giving of himself to us that we give to others.

See, there's that motivation again, right? God has given himself so much of himself to us and his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is the very thing that motivates us to give generously to others.

[43 : 24] God has been so generous to us, let's be so generous to others. Let's be generous to each other. That's a mark of a vibrant church. They were taught God's word, they lived out God's word.

An active, vibrant passion for other believers, church, and for other people. For other people to know about Christ. It was a solid church, a gracious church, a church filled with joy.

It's not about being a somebody. It's simply about being a faithful servant to our Savior.

A church with exemplary, vibrant, obedient people who have a passion for the gospel. They love to give to each other, to other Christians.

They love to be taught. They love leadership. They love maturity. They love to speak about the gospel and the gospel. All those people talk about is the gospel. Yeah, exactly. God's grace is just overwhelming us.

[44 : 35] And you see people like Barnabas who helped facilitate that, who encouraged God's grace to be manifest in others. Those of high character, of a way of bringing others on board, serving others.

No trace of jealousy, no trace of self-service. Just a selfless group of people that are just so committed to Christ. That's a vibrant church. That's an active church.

I'll give it to you one more time. An active, vibrant church is a mature group of Jesus-centered, Bible-led, self-giving people who have been radically changed by the power of the gospel, which continues to work in their lives.

That's a vibrant church. church. That's really a vibrant church from our text. So I'll give you a few moments, if you would. Take some time.

Ponder what we've seen here in Acts chapter 11. We'll have a few moments of silence for you to be able to ponder and to think what we've seen in God's word. And then we'll do our time of giving, singing our last two songs, and then we'll have our closing prayer.

[45 : 44] But at this time, sit, ponder, think, pray through the texts, and pray through these marks. Maybe pray that we as a church, Cottonwood Bible Church, become this.

We would focus on these things and focus on the gospel and God's grace. Take a few moments and do that. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus Santo Juan sieque, pray their couldn't ■■■ happen today. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[46 : 41] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.