



ANTIOCH

- A prestigious city within the Roman Empire.
- Known for its beauty; a center for theater and sports.
- Crossroads for trade as well as many religions.
- Rivalled Corinth as a center for vice and political/economic corruption.

VOCABULARY (Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms by Donald McKim).

- **Evangelism** (From Gr. *euangelion*, “good news”). The sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ through a variety of means.
- **Laity** (From the Gr. *Laikos*, “belonging to the people”) A term for those persons who are not ordained as clergy. Biblically, it refers to the whole people of God (Gr. *Laos*, “people”).

In an article entitled, *The Church at Antioch: Crossing Racial, Cultural and Class Barriers*, Norman E. Thomas asserts that the church at Antioch provides a thought-provoking, biblical model for urban ministry. Using Acts 11-13, he outlines the transcendent qualities of that ancient church which resulted in creative and effective ministry.

EIGHT-PART MODEL OF URBAN MINISTRY

1. Evangelism through lay leadership

- When the first Jerusalem persecutions began, “*all except the apostles were scattered*” (8:1). It is possible that the lay leaders were targeted because they were seen as a more serious threat than the apostles. Stephen, the first martyr, was a lay person. Many unnamed Christians in Antioch helped to spread the gospel (11:20-21). When the church at Antioch was growing, the apostles sent a layperson, Barnabas. The church at Antioch was founded, lead and spread by lay people.

2. Every Member a Minister

- Barnabas is an example of an ordinary person who was fully trusted by the leadership with the ministry of the church. Known for his generosity, the apostles named him Barnabas which means “*son of encouragement* (4:36). He is described as “*a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith*” (11:23). The Antioch church grew quickly because many people like Barnabas contributed their gifts and talents to the mission.

3. Care for New Believers

- It takes more than encouragement and cheerleading to help others become strong in their faith. Barnabas recruited Saul of Tarsus to help with his efforts (11:25). Together, they did more than lead weekend retreats and five week leadership family classes; Barnabas and Paul met with the church “*for an entire year, teaching a great many people*” (11:26).

4. Witness to Oneness in Christ:

- It is in Antioch that the disciples were first called *Christians* (11:26). Throughout Acts, followers are known as disciples, brothers, believers and saints (6:1; 9:13; 10:45; 11:12). Despite their diversity, the



²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion.

Acts 11:23

I WOULD BE TRUE

Words: Howard A. Walter, 1906; Music: Joseph Y. Peck, 1911

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;

I would be pure, for there are those who care;

I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;

I would be brave, for there is much to dare;

I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;

I would be giving, and forget the gift;

I would be humble, for I know my weakness;

I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

I would be faithful through each passing moment;

I would be constantly in touch with God;

I would be strong to follow where He leads me;

I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod;

I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

church at Antioch was able to maintain unity and fellowship in a way that should challenge modern day denominationalism.

5. Compassion for the poor.

- A famine triggered great need throughout Judea and the eastern Mediterranean (11:28). In response, individuals at the Antioch church sent relief to the Judean believers according to their ability (11:29). *Believers were free to give as their consciences directed them* (recall 2:45; 4:35). Also, *the Jerusalem church did not have to beg their brothers and sisters for help*. The gift and the way in which was encouraging and enabled them to maintain their self-worth.

6. Balanced Leadership

- The Antioch church had both *prophets and teachers*. Prophets are gifted to speak God's truth, reaching both faithful Christians and non-believers. Teachers have the task of deepening the understandings of believers. It takes sensitivity and boldness to speak God's truth in love. Both prophets and teachers should be embraced in any model of leadership.

7. Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Barriers

- When Christ followers were scattered to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, they initially witnessed only to other Jews. However, at Antioch, the good news was embraced by Gentiles. The ministry team of the Antioch church consisted of Barnabas (landowner and Levite from Cyprus), Simeon (possibly from Africa), Lucius of Cyrene (present day Libya), Manaen (an aristocrat from the court of Herod), Saul/Paul (Pharisee from Tarsus).

8. Mission for Others

- The church at Antioch looked beyond itself. When confronted with the reality that numerous people had not heard the truth of the gospel, *they willingly sent their best leaders* (Saul and Barnabas). The church at Antioch consciously sent and received missionaries. *They responded to the needs of others, as well as recognized their own needs*.