

# Bro. Chad Shafer

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, good evening everybody. I'm happy to see everybody that has come here tonight. Got a few returning guests out here tonight too, and I'm so glad to see you all.

We're going to start in May of 1828 in the city of Nuremberg, Germany. In May, I believe it was May 26, 1828, walking around the streets of Nuremberg was a teenager.

He was confused. He seemed to have trouble reading and writing. He could only identify himself by the name of Casper Hauser. They found him wandering around the streets with two letters.

This was a tabloid sensation of its day, and the mystery still continues. Who was Casper Hauser?

There was a lot of speculation. Some people thought he had mental disabilities. He had stories of being neglected, of being locked in a small room, of not being around people.

Other people thought that he was a con artist, a liar. Despite that speculation, just that image of somebody walking around a city with some letters, not realizing fully who they are, who their parents are, that lack of love, that lack of education, that reaches us.

[ 1 : 18 ] I think even the secular world can realize the need in loving and encouraging and teaching children. I think the same is true of the church. When we come to faith, we're born again, we're babes again.

And those that are already there, we need to love, encourage, and teach as well. And that's what we're going to look at tonight. We're going to look at disciples making disciples, specifically at the church at Antioch.

Tonight's text is going to be from the book of Acts. It's going to be chapter 11, verses 19 through 30. So, if you'd like, turn with me to the book of Acts, chapter 11, verses 19 through 30.

Okay. Starting at verse 19.

So then, those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

[ 2 : 26 ] But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking 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.

The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.

For he was a good man, full of Holy Spirit and of faith, 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 for an entire year, met with the church and taught considerable numbers. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Now at this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

One of them, named Agabus, stood up and 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. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

[ 3 : 36 ] And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Father, I thank you for all that have come tonight to hear your message, Father.

Father, I pray that as we go through this text, that we can find the meaning that you have for us, the application for our lives. Father, be with us tonight.

Fill us with the Spirit. Fill us with understanding. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen. In looking at disciples, making disciples, particularly at the Church of

Antioch, there's a few different facets to that that are covered in the text tonight.

The first thing we see is the bold message of Jesus Christ being brought to the nations. We start at verse 19. We read, So then, those who are scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection to Stephen.

What this persecution refers to is covered, is mentioned in Acts 8.1. By the 8th chapter of Acts, the gospel and its presentation already led to the arrest of both Peter and John, but also led to the saving of 5,000 people.

[ 4 : 55 ] The preaching of the gospel continued. Stephen was also arrested, tried, and is stoned to death with Saul looking on. In verse, in chapter 8, verse 1, says, The apostles and disciples of that time in Judea had a bold and powerful message about Jesus Christ.

Not only was it going against what the Pharisees were teaching, the same Pharisees that Jesus Christ called out for their hypocrisy, but this message, in addition to being preached, had reached 5,000 people, had 5,000 people converted.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were not happy about this, and so we see here, persecution began in Jerusalem. The apostles stayed there, but many other disciples scattered throughout the region. They scattered to picking up where we left off. They made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except the Jews alone.

Initially, they were just speaking to the Jewish people. Verse 20, But we have an indication here of something different. There were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, suggesting this was something new.

[ 6 : 18 ] Now, I've read some commentary that looks at, well, the word here used, and it's the word that's in the Old Testament, if you've got that with that, Grecians, refers specifically to Hellenistic Jews. Jews that, during the diaspora that happened after the Babylonian occupation, had returned back home, but it brought with them their Greek values, the Greek language, the Greek culture.

When I read this text, it sounds like they're speaking beyond that. I've seen some scholars suggest that this is the first church that was built upon Gentiles. And when you look at Acts chapter 10, you're seeing the first Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit.

If you go to the beginning of this chapter, chapter 11, verses 1 through 18, Peter's making reports to Jerusalem about Gentiles coming to faith. Now, whether these are Gentiles in Antioch that are receiving the message, or they're Hellenistic Jews, it's a group that is separate from the other Jews that they've been preaching to, they are reaching a new nation.

Began speaking to Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. Again, there's that bold message, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them. They were not there of their own accord. They were not there on vacation.

They had a specific purpose. They were sent there by God. God was speaking to them, through them, and being with them, a large number who believed turned to the Lord. This was such a significant event, these people coming to Christ in Antioch, that news reached Jerusalem.

[ 7 : 45 ] In verse 22, the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. In the book of Acts, I think Barnabas is one of my favorite characters.

The name Barnabas, his name was actually, I think it was originally Simon. The name Barnabas was given to him by the apostles, and it means son of the encourager.

And we also see Barnabas mentioned prominently, first mentioned prominently, beginning in Acts chapter 9, verse 26.

You don't have to turn that to you. I just want to read this to you. I'm exploring the character of Barnabas right now, and setting up for what's going on here. He's already been named by the other apostles as a son of encouragement. And in Acts chapter 9, verse 26, what's gone on to this point is, this is after Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

He's just escaped the city of Damascus by being lowered out in a basket. He's come to Jerusalem. He wants to meet up with the other disciples. The other disciples in Jerusalem were afraid to see him. That's where we pick up at verse 26.

[ 8 : 56 ] When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples. They were afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple, that being Paul, or Saul at that time. They didn't believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and inscribed to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had talked to them and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

So we first see Barnabas, named a son of encourager. He sees Saul coming to town. The other disciples want to stay with him. He's like, no, this is a good guy. Let me tell you about this guy. Let me tell you. Have him share his testimony with you and you'll see.

And so that's who Barnabas is. And Barnabas comes into town and picking up at verse 23, then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, witnessed the grace of God.

What is he talking about? What is the grace of God? Grace, that unmerited favor. Witnessing the grace of God. He is witnessing the Hellenistic Jews, Gentiles, whoever they were. He is witnessing people who deserved hell.

Unrighteous people being saved, not by their own merit, but because of God. That's the grace of God. And what is his reaction to that? It's not, well, hey, I'm not nice to meet another believer.

[10:10] His reaction is rejoice. He rejoiced and he began to encourage them all with a resolute heart, a resolute standing firm, not backing down, full of confidence.

Encouraged them with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord. For he was a good man and full of Holy Spirit and faith. Several numbers were brought to the Lord. Barnabas is there. He's excited about what's going on.

He's encouraging them. He's exhorting. He's preaching. More and more people are being drawn in. It's getting to the point where there are a lot of people there and he needs backup. So at verse 25, he left for Tarsus to look for Saul.

Saul, the same man that he had defended in Jerusalem previously. And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year, they met with the church and taught considerable numbers.

And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. So Barnabas goes and gets Saul. Saul, we've got work to do. Saul drops what he's doing for a year. They go down to Antioch and they're just discipling the disciples there.

[11:14] Discipleship itself. Is this something that's important? I first want to say it's mandated. Going back to Matthew chapter 28, verses 18 and following, we see the Great Commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Jesus prefaces this by saying, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. That's a big statement.

He's getting ready to ask them to do something. And he says, This is under all authority. You don't have a choice here. This is what you're to do. You're to go out and disciple the nations, not just the Jews, the nations, and to teach them, disciple them, teach them.

And that's what we see happening here. Barnabas, Saul, the initial believers that went up there and spoke to the people of Antioch. That's what they're doing. They're engaging the nations.

[12:22] And they didn't just bring them to Christ and say, Okay, we're going back home. They stayed there. Specifically, it states that Saul and Barnabas stayed a year just discipling them, making sure that they were found in their faith.

You know, there's some... So we see a clear mandate for discipleship. And we see this illustrated here in this passage, the book of Acts. How necessary is it?

I want to share some statistics. Two years ago, two and a half years ago, Brother Scott and Billy Joe and I, we went to a discipleship conference. These are some statistics that range from 1980 to 2015.

And I'm just going to read through them. And statistics are what they are. You can make anything out of statistics. But I suggest that you see a bigger point in this. And at the end of the day, there's still that mandate for discipleship.

But among the Southern Baptist Convention, that's all the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, between 1980 and 2015, membership increased from 13.6 million to 15.3 million.

[13:27] A 1.7 million gain. That sounds great, doesn't it? Total baptisms during this time. During this time, where the church membership increased by 1.7 million? Total baptisms, 13.3 million.

Net loss of 11.6 million. There are Christians being baptized. Where did they go? Some of them may have left for other denominations. Some of them probably passed away.

That's a huge loss. All membership growth, during that time period, there was a total membership growth of 28.9 million. But the net effect between 1980 and 2015 was loss of 27.2 million people.

And you look at all the people who had joined. We can go more local with this Tennessee Baptist Convention. 912,392 members, 1980. By 2015, 1,101,583.

That's an additional 189,191 people. During that time, there was 867,228 baptisms. Net loss for baptisms only, 678,037.

[ 14 : 35 ] Within our own association, New Duck River Baptist Association, from 1980 to 2016, membership increased from 8,622 to 12,749.

An increase of 4,127. Total baptisms, 12,355. Net loss baptisms only, 8,228. Is there a disconnect here?

What's going on? We are going out and we're baptizing people, but there's an issue here. Are they leaving this church to go to another church? Are they leaving the association? Are they leaving the conference, the convention?

Are they leaving the denomination? Or are they just completely dropping out? And why are they dropping out? What we were studying at this conference was the issue that comes down to discipleship. Are we just baptizing and say they're baptized?

Okay, you've been saved. Go along with your life. Are we taking time to love on them, encourage them in their faith, sit down with them and disciple them? When you disciple a Christian, you give them the tools to go on and disciple another Christian.

[ 15 : 35 ] That's where church growth goes. That's where we are seeing here in the church at Antioch. And that brings me to my last point. The fruit of new believers when we pick up in the text after this year of discipleship with their first called Christians in verse 27.

Now at this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 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. This took place at the reign of Claudius.

In proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren in Judea. By taking that time to encourage and love on and disciple those believers in Antioch, they not only grew the church in Antioch, they're able to send money back to the church in Judea to help their brothers there.

What we saw here is the beginning of a shift of the center of Christianity in that early Christian world. The city of Antioch would go on to be the city that would commission, or the church in Antioch would go on to commission Barnabas, Saul, and Mark and go on the first missionary expedition.

This would be a town that Paul would return to and leave again on his other missionary trips. It was a huge church within the missionary process. These disciples, they took the time to encourage and sit down and disciple with, worship with, instruct, went on to help out the other churches and to spread the message.

[ 17 : 02 ] If you think about it, Paul left Antioch for his other missionary trips, how many churches did Paul end up planting that we're now have the benefit of seeing his letters for because of those churches.

Those churches went on and created other churches. We see the spread of Christianity, just how crucial this first church in Antioch was. In conclusion, we're looking at a disciple-making church, a church-making disciples who disciple others.

There's a few things I saw in this passage. It began with the attracting of new believers. We had believers, existing believers, who went out of the area, who found people, another nation group. They shared the gospel with them. They brought them to Jesus Christ. Then we had Barnabas going up and encouraging them. Then Barnabas and Saul together teaching them. And then finally, we see the fruits of this. in terms of application, I see this not as a message for any of us individually.

I don't see this as a message just for our church. I see this as a message for the church of the big C. Let's look at our church. Let's look at other churches around us, other denominations.

[ 18 : 20 ] I say this rhetorically. Are we discipling? Are we drawing in new believers? Are we encouraging the new believers? Are we discipling the new believers? If we are, can we do more?

If we're not, should we do more? The other thing in looking at this in our role in bringing in new believers, encouraging them, discipling them, our spiritual gifts.

Our pastor, most recently in his series, is talking about our roles within the church. The church body is the bride of Christ. Each part of the church body just like the human body has a different role.

We have fingers for certain purposes, eyes for certain purposes. Each member of the church is there for a certain reason. The Holy Spirit indwelling within you gifts you with different gifts. Some people may have more than one gift even.

In this passage, we see a gift for evangelism, a gift of encouragement, a gift of teaching, a gift of prophecy. We don't hear a lot about the gift of prophecy anymore, but there are several other gifts that are not on this list. A gift of knowledge, a gift of administration.

[ 19 : 22 ] What I just encourage is that we continue to look at and think about and question what our gifts are, how we can use that within our church body.

If we're all working together, I believe that we'll see the church acting as a church. We'll be bringing in, we'll have people with gifts of evangelism that are bringing in believers. We will have encouragers that are going to encourage these new believers.

We will have teachers to teach these new believers. And we'll see the fruits of this. We'll be sending out missionaries in the field, but if it all comes down to, you know, we all have to play our roles in that and look at what our gifts are and go forward.

At the end of the day, the question of disciples, discipling other disciples, as I said earlier, when we become Christians, we are born again. Are we glorifying God or advancing his kingdom?

When we send out a brand new believer who had just been baptized without discipling him, so he's just like that Casper Hauser character I mentioned, just a young man wandering around the streets with some letters that he doesn't understand.

[ 20 : 30 ] We want to avoid that. God is glorified. The kingdom is grown. When we teach our new Christians what this means so that they can go out and teach other people what this means.

So, that's my conclusion. And I'd like to end this in prayer here. Dear Heavenly Father, Father, I pray that this was the message that you want us to hear tonight, Father.

Father, I pray that we take this message to heart and that the application is there. Father, I pray that each one of us finds their spiritual gift if we haven't already.

And Father, I pray that we continue to grow, grow closer to you in our sanctification and development of our gifts so we can serve you for your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen. Amen. If you're able, would you stand and turn to page 407, Because He Lives.

We'll sing all three verses. God sent His Son.

[ 21 : 53 ] They called Him Jesus. He came to love. He lived for gift.

He lived and died To buy my pardon An empty grave is there To prove my Savior lives Because He lives I can't face tomorrow Because He lives All fear is gone Because I know Oh, He holds the future And life is worth the living Just because He lives

How sweet to hold A newborn baby And feel the pride And joy He gives But greater still The calm assurance This child can face In certain days Because He lives Because He lives Because He lives I can face tomorrow Because He lives All fear is gone

Because I know Because I know He holds the future And life is worth the living Just because He lives And then one day I'll cross the river I'll fight life's God No war with pain And then as death And then as death Gives way to victory I'll see the lights of glory And I'll know He lives

Because He lives Because He lives Because He lives I can face tomorrow Because He lives Because He lives All fear is gone Because I know He holds the future And life is worth the living Just because He lives Amen God bless

[ 26 : 11 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 28 : 41 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.