

## Introduction:

A little background to understand the obstacles faced by the brethren at Antioch. Gambling was big here, so was prostitution, and homosexuality. This was probably due to the idolatry and practices of the occult in this city. Who would have guessed this was great and fertile ground for the gospel? Yet, Antioch is one of the most faithful and productive churches in the New Testament. Why? How can we be like Antioch? What did they do that we can do today?

### I) Antioch

A) Christians were scattered from Jerusalem and went everywhere preaching the Gospel, [Acts 1.8](#); [8.1](#); [11.19](#).

1. This resulted in the first heathen, Gentile, congregation. Foretold by Peter in [Acts 2.39](#).
2. Since the Gospel is intended for all mankind, we can expect people from various backgrounds and cultures to become Christians.

B) Barnabas and Saul taught there for a whole year, [Matthew 28.18-20](#)

1. Babes in Christ need to be taught in order to grow.
2. Mature Christians need more teaching but they also need to be nurturing the younger Christians.

### II) Antioch and their growth [spiritual growth leads to physical growth]

A) Growth is a product of doing the right things

1. Growth can be hard, the result of tireless workers, sacrifice by members.
2. The business cycle is used to explain why and how companies grow. Growth is almost never on a straight line upward. Usually there is the beginning phase when everything is good, then the establishment phase where you no longer have the struggles of a small company, then the stagnation phase where competitors come in, then there is either

adjustments and more growth or a downward spiral.

B) Antioch was not willing to just settle for mediocrity. They were not the lukewarm church of Laodicea in [Revelation 3.14ff](#).

1. Past struggles often lead to future success. [James 1.2-ff](#)
2. Is the church here dead or alive? This is meant to make us think about where we are at now not to think of where we used to be or where we want to be but where we are at now.
3. Read Dead or Alive
4. Why was Antioch growing?

C) Reasons churches grow

1. They were new Christians and had not grown up in the church. This may seem like a contradiction because we often talk about the value of older Christians and Christian parents that bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But the problem is that each succeeding generation is tempted to take their religion for granted.
  - a. It is one thing to teach our children about God it is another to teach them to love, fear, and respect God.
  - b. Conviction is often replaced by convenience
2. Antioch had an organized teaching program
  - a. Prophets -- foretold the word of God.
  - b. Teachers -- took the revealed word and taught others, [Ephesians 4.11-13](#).
    - i. How important are our Bible Classes to the growth of this congregation? How important are they to you?
    - ii. How many members either miss altogether or routinely show up late?

3. Antioch had diversity and unity.
  - a. Simeon -- some believe was the Simeon in [Luke 23.26](#).
  - b. Lucius of Cyrene - probably a gentile.
  - c. Manaen "had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch". He would have been a man of rank, education, and ties with the ruling family. The Herod family long opposed the cause of Christ. This man would be going against his family.
  - d. Saul -- a Jew, brought up a Pharisee, the household of Benjamin.
  - e. Barnabas -- a Levite, son of encouragement.
    - i. Their diversity in backgrounds was replaced by their unity in the Spirit. Personal differences and preferences should never be a problem in the Lord's work.
  
4. Antioch understood the idea of minister, servant, bond servant, slave, [1 Peter 4.10](#)
  - a. In our world the "minister" is a special class of Christian; in the denominational world there is the clergy/laity system, but not in Christ.
  - b. Who are the ministers? Do we think of "our minister or the minister"?
  - c. No one can minister for you, each member must do their part, [Romans 12.3-8](#)
  - d. How many will be lost because they did not minister?
  - e. The work at Antioch had to continue after Paul and Barnabas left on the missionary journey, others had to step forward to keep the work going.
  - f. What would happen if no one preached, there were no elders, no

Bible Class teachers, no one seeking the lost, no one aiding those in need? Nothing

g. What can I do to serve God?

Conclusion:

As I said earlier this lesson is intended to make us examine ourselves but also to focus in the future. Each congregation faces challenges, opportunities, and threats. The difference is what they do with those things.

### **Dead Or Alive**

Live churches have space problems -- parking, classrooms, etc; Dead churches have no worry about space.

Live churches are always changing things; Dead churches don't have to-- they just stay the same.

Live churches have noisy children and young people; Dead churches