

A GROWING CHURCH (THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH)

Acts 11:19–26

Acts 11:21

BIBLICAL PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSE

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. **Acts 11:21**

We're living in a new day where missions are concerned. The Internet and air travel have opened up access to places we only dreamed of going before. It's not just appointed missionaries who do mission work. Entire congregations are awakening to their responsibility to share Christ at home, in their state, out of state, and around the world. We're rediscovering what Christ's Great Commission means to each of us as followers of Christ.

Read Acts 11:19–26. Because of Pentecost, the dispersion of the Church after Stephen's death, and Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian, God provided amazing ways for the message of Christ to spread rapidly throughout a broad circle around the Mediterranean Sea. At first, people might have thought this movement known as "the Way" was coming to an end. God had different plans. He

knew what it would take for the gospel to reach the four corners of the earth. Today we join hands across the centuries to unite with those early believers in carrying the good news to every nation.

In ancient times, God used the Greco-Roman world as a vehicle for the news to travel rapidly and easily. God continues to use marvelous means in order to spread His message widely across the face of the earth. He continues to use people and circumstances, but He also uses technology and an increasingly "shrinking" world as a part of His plan. He uses men and women of influence as well as those who might seem insignificant. But most of all, He uses those who are willing to be used by Him.

FAMILY DEVOTION TIME

Connect . . .

First, family members share how they came to know Christ, committing their lives to Him. Next, the family begins to piece together a spiritual family tree, indicating how the good news spread and whom the key players were in spreading the news that ultimately reached them. The family carries the spiritual family tree as far back as possible. The family may wish to draw their spiritual family tree on a sheet of paper or poster board.

Explore . . .

A family member reads Acts 11:19–26. The family uses a map from the New Testament and locates each of the places mentioned in these verses. The family discusses: **Why do you think it was necessary for the believers in Jerusalem to be as far spread as they were during persecution? What was the end result? What do you think God had in mind when believers were forced to spread out?**

Transform . . .

The family discusses: **How do you think God uses travel, technology, and circumstances to spread the gospel around the world today? How might you become a key player in sharing God's message elsewhere?**

Pray together that God will make your family aware of how He chooses to use His people in spreading the gospel. Pray that He would open opportunities for you to share your faith locally, and away.