

Subject	Lessons from Acts Series	4411
		Acts 11
Title	7 Lessons from Acts 11	
Proposition	To study Acts 11.	
Objective	To consider seven lessons which Acts 11 helps me to consider and appreciate and apply in my own life.	

7 Lessons from Acts 11

Introduction:

1. Of chapter 11 William Barclay writes...

- 1) The importance that Luke attached to this incident of Peter preaching the gospel to Cornelius is shown by the amount of space he devoted to it.
- 2) In ancient times a writer had **BY NO MEANS** unlimited space.
 - 1- The book form had not come into use.
 - 2- Writers used rolls of a material called **PAPYRUS**.
 - 3- Papyrus was the forerunner of paper and was made of the pith of the papyrus plant—a kind of bulrush.
 - 4- Now a roll is an unwieldy thing and the longest roll that was used was about 35 feet long, which would be almost precisely the length required to hold the Book of Acts.
- 3) Into that space, Luke had almost endless material to fit.
 - 1- He must have selected with the greatest care what he was going to set down.
 - 2- Of course, the Holy Spirit was guiding him in the process.
 - 3- Yet, he finds the account of Peter and Cornelius of such importance that he twice relates it in full.
- 4) Of course, Luke was right to emphasize this account of conversion.

2. It was God's plan for the Jews to hear the gospel first.

- 1) It seems that many Christians of a Jewish background had a tendency to think that the Gentiles were not worthy to become Christians—God's people.
- 2) Sadly, there developed a sect of Judaizing teachers who insisted that Gentiles must first be circumcised (become Jews) before obeying the gospel.
- 3) The conversion of Cornelius shows that conclusion to be totally false and without the support of the Lord.

3. Chapter 11 is an interesting and helpful chapter!

DISCUSSION: Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

- I. Shows that Peter **CLEARLY** was **NOT** regarded as **POPE** in the **1st Century** (11.2 + Gal 2.11-14).

Acts 11:2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

1. **Let me mention one other related Bible text: Galatians 2:11-14** But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (12) For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (13) And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (14) But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?
2. **NOW, who can imagine any priest, or bishop, or cardinal doing to the current pope at the Vatican what took place in Acts 11 and Galatians 2?**
 - 1) **Jorge Mario Bergoglio is the current pope.**
 - 2) **He was born 17 December 1936.**
 - 3) **He is the 266th pope of the RCC.**
 - 4) **He chose the name: FRANCIS to honor “St. Francis of Assisi.”**
3. **PAPAL INFALIBILITY [from: Henry Edward Manning]...** *“is a dogma of the Catholic Church that states that, in virtue of the promise of Jesus to Peter, the Pope is preserved from the possibility of error ‘when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church.’ ”*
4. **The practice of the pope DICTATING what the whole church is to believe is when he “speaks EX CATHEDRA.”**
5. **That doctrine was defined at the FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL of the Vatican in 1869-1870.**
6. **It is quite obvious that the other apostles and brethren did NOT regard the Apostle Peter as a Pope or Head of the church.**
 - 1) **He was certainly respected as one of the apostles of the Lord.**
 - 2) **The Lord had promised to guide ALL of the apostles into ALL TRUTH (John 16.13).**
 - 3) **The teaching of the apostles was accepted as FINAL at the meeting recorded in Acts 15 to settle the matter of requiring circumcision of the Gentiles.**
 - 4) **But it is quite obvious that the matter of being HEAD over all other inspired apostles was NOT something that was any part of NT Christianity!**
 - 5) **It was ADDED by the councils of MEN much later in history!**

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

II. Gives me a MODEL of how to respond to UNJUST criticism (11.3-4).

Acts 11:3-4 **Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. (4) But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,**

1. **As we read this verse we are impressed with the remarkable RESTRAINT Peter used in dealing with criticism which he did not deserve!**
2. **His work is being very SHARPLY criticized here.**
3. **He DOES NOT lash out at his accusers.**

4. The fact is that Peter **KNEW FULL WELL** that he had done exactly as the Lord had directed him.
5. Having followed perfectly the will of the Lord, Peter had such confidence that he was in no way alarmed or discouraged by MEN who misunderstood what he had done.
6. He had absolutely **NO FEAR** in setting forth the complete and full record of what had happened.
 - 1) He understood how they felt because he, himself, was reluctant in the beginning to do this thing.
 - 2) Acts 10:28-29 **And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. (29) Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?**
 - 3) He had been shown something by the Lord and he would now pass on his knowledge, gladly and fully, to these brethren.
7. There was a patience demonstrated by Peter that would serve ALL Christians well.
 - 1) It is quite easy to allow your knowledge of Scripture to cause you to lack appreciation for the ignorance of Scripture you might observe in others.
 - 2) That is not wise!
 - 3) **FIRST**, none of us have infallible knowledge.
 - 4) We could be wrong about some position we have always held.
 - 5) We should be careful to have **BCV** for every doctrine we accept!
 - 6) When someone is concerned enough about my soul to confront me with some question about what I have said or done, I should be willing patiently to listen to what they have to say!
8. Peter did this and then he made it quite clear that what he did was done with the approval of the Lord.
9. How did it all turn out?
 - 1- It turned out in the best possible way.
 - 2- Acts 11:18 **When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

III. Shows HOW Christians ought to act when they have drawn WRONG conclusions (11.18).

Acts 11:18 **When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**

1. These brethren are to be commended for being willing to admit their error in criticizing Peter.
 - 1) It seems human nature not to want to acknowledge that I have been **WRONG**.
 - 2) No one likes to say it!

- 3) Those words do not just come flowing easily from most tongues!
2. But how wonderful that Luke has provided a little insight here into the hearts of our 1st Century brethren in Jerusalem.
 - 1) They received the explanation Peter gave with grace.
 - 2) They determined in their hearts that it was God's will that ALL MEN hear the gospel and have the opportunity to become Christians.
 - 1- NOTHING could possibly have been said to COUNTER Peter's argument.
 - 2- The Lord had directed him into the house of Cornelius.
 - 3- He had shown with a DIRECT sign from heaven that He was NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.
 - 4- Had these brethren held to their criticism, they would have found themselves fighting against God.
 - 3) Rather than behaving like many Jews do in the preceding and following chapters of Acts, they accepted the teaching.
 - 4) **THEY GLORIFIED GOD...** 33.357 δοξάζω^a; δόξα^d, ης f: to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor—'to praise, to glorify, praise.'¹.
 - 1- This matter of the universality of the gospel was to be quite a difficult challenge to many Christians of a Jewish background in these early days of the church.
 - 2- However, the truth ALWAYS was and will ALWAYS BE that the gospel is for all.
 - 3- There will be a meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15 to reaffirm the conclusion drawn here—**THEN HATH GOD ALSO TO THE GENTILES GRANTED REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.**
 - 4- How thankful you and I ought to be that the gospel is for all!

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

IV. Demonstrates HOW to have the Lord WITH us in our efforts (11.21).

Acts 11:21 **And the hand of the Lord was with them:** and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

1. The simple fact is this: ANY TIME AND IN ANY PLACE where Christians are carrying out their responsibilities as they ABIDE IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST (2 Jn 9), the Lord will be with that group of people!
2. Matthew 28:18-20 **And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**
3. What Christians MUST DO to avail ourselves of the Lord's help is to obey His will, trust Him, and pray for His guidance.

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 429.

- 1) **As we do these things, we will be blessed.**
- 2) **We will NOT have the miraculous abilities they had in the 1st Century.**
- 3) **We have that which they did not have: THE COMPLETED WRITTEN WORD of God.**
- 4) **But God will certainly bless our efforts as we obey, trust, and pray!!!**

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

V. Reminds us we are WISE to look for GOOD results of working for the Lord (11.22).

Acts 11:22 Then tidings of **these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem**; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

1. **TIDINGS OF THESE THINGS CAME TO THE EARS OF THE CHURCH ...**
 - 1) **This figure of speech emphasizes that the church is a BODY.**
 - 2) **1 Corinthians 12:13-27** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (14) For the body is not one member, but many. (15) If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (16) And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (17) If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? (18) But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. (19) And if they were all one member, where were the body? (20) But now are they many members, yet but one body. (21) And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. (22) Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: (23) And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. (24) For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: (25) That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
2. **What is indicated here is that someone or more than one someone who was part of the Jerusalem church was serving as EARS for the body.**
 - 1) **They received NEWS about the good work that was being accomplished in Antioch.**
 - 2) **This good news was then shared, discussed, and assistance was sent to Antioch to help even more fruit be harvested.**
3. **I would like to suggest that the church TODAY likewise needs members of the church who know about and promote GOOD THINGS happening with regard to the spread of the gospel.**

- 1) I am confident much good is being accomplished by our brethren around the world.
- 2) I have never had much confidence in the doom and gloom figures that many so-called church growth experts are accustomed to passing around.
- 3) The organizational structure of the NT church is of such nature that NO ONE can be a GENUINE expert on numbers.
- 4) I do not believe the numbers I see.
- 5) I tend to think that there are much greater numbers than most brethren report.
4. The point is that surely there are many many wonderful works that are being done by faithful brethren throughout this world that are worthy of celebrating!
5. Where are the Christians who are looking for these good results and reporting them.
6. And, more importantly, where are the Christians who are hearing of good things and making the determination to do what they can to assist????!!!

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

VI. Presents Barnabas as a GLAD PREACHER (11.23).

Acts 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

1. When the GREAT ENCOURAGER, Barnabas, came to Antioch, he was himself encouraged and the Bible tells us specifically that he was GLAD.
 - 1) What made Barnabas GLAD was seeing THE GRACE OF GOD in that great city.
 - 2) Going back to verse 22 we see that TIDINGS OF THESE THINGS had reached the EARS OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.
 - 1- THESE THINGS being what happened when men of Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch preaching the gospel (v. 20).
 - 2- And then, the result was that A GREAT NUMBER BELIEVED AND TURNED TO THE LORD (v. 21).
 - 3- Of course, any RIGHT-THINKING person would be made to be GLAD by that kind of wonderful good news!
2. Let's FOCUS for a moment on the words WAS GLAD as words Luke used, by inspiration to describe this preacher at Antioch.
 - 1) GLAD is found 89 times in KJV, 21 in the NT.
 - 2) 25.125 χαίρω^a: to enjoy a state of happiness and well-being—'to rejoice, to be glad.'².
 - 3) The idea of the word is the state of being calmly happy or well off.
 - 4) One good way to get the idea of this word is to consider its use in Acts 13.48.
 - 1- Here it is used to describe how the Gentiles felt when Paul declared that he had been sent to deliver the saving message to Gentiles.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 302.

- 2- Acts 13:48 **And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.**
3. The great church at Antioch was able to accomplish much good.
- 1) No doubt the things that made them a great church were some of the same things that made their preacher, Barnabas, a **GLAD PREACHER**.
 - 2) I believe we need more churches TODAY like the church at Antioch.
 - 3) Also, when we have more churches like the church at Antioch, we will have more **GLAD preachers!**
4. What if we would consider together **THE TOP TEN FACTORS THAT PRODUCE A GLAD PREACHER?...**
- 1) #10... **MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.**
 - 1- The preacher who preaches for a congregation where the members are **NOT** ashamed of the gospel is blessed indeed.
 - 2- Such members will recognize the value of the good news that the preacher is delivering and will not hesitate to invite their friends and neighbors to come hear that message.
 - 3- When it comes time for gospel meetings or special opportunities for the proclamation of the gospel, they will work **HARD** to bring precious souls to the meetinghouse.
 - 4- As they go about their daily activities there will no doubt arise many opportunities to **SPEAK UP** for that which is right and good.
 - 5- Such members will seize upon these opportunities.
 - 6- When truth is attacked these members will **BOLDLY** speak out in its defense.
 - 1] 1 Peter 3:15 **But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:**
 - 2] Proverbs 23:23 **Buy the truth, and sell it not; ...**
 - 7- The **RESULTS** of this kind of appreciation of the gospel will greatly **AID** the efforts put forth by the preacher.
 - 8- The preacher will preach his heart out, recognizing the work of evangelizing is a **COOPERATIVE** one!
 - 2) # 9: **MEMBERS WHO HAVE THE VISION OF THE CARPENTER** (Matthew 13.55; Mark 6.3).
 - 1- Goebel Music once preached a sermon about **THINGS JESUS MAY HAVE LEARNED FROM CARPENTRY**.
 - 2- In this sermon he listed 4 things that Jesus **MAY HAVE LEARNED** from the trade of carpentry.
 - 1] To look beyond things as they are to see them as they might become.
 - 2] That sometimes the **BEST** furniture is made of the hardest wood.
 - 3] That effort spent on building a foundation is **NOT** spent in vain.
 - 4] That a little bit of carelessness can be the source of great problems.

- 3- **The kind of VISION that Jesus had allowed Him to:**
- 1] **Look at 2 sons of thunder (Mk 3.17), who once wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village (Luke 9.54)... and then see John having become THE APOSTLE OF LOVE.**
 - 2] **To call Saul of Tarsus (hard wood) to become the great missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9.15).**
 - 3] **His teaching emphasized the importance of building upon a SOLID ROCK Foundation (Mt 7.24-27).**
 - 4] **One unacquainted with carpentry might make the mistake of measuring one cut of wood with the measuring tape and then using that one to measure the next.**
 - 1/ **Doing this rather than measuring each one with the measuring tape is a SMALL mistake.**
 - 2/ **BUT, will add up to things not being SQUARE when they are put together.**
- 4- **Christians NEED the VISION that comes from such lessons as these that Jesus MAY have learned from carpentry.**
- 1] **We need members who STRONGLY believe in the power of the gospel to change men and women, boys and girls.**
 - 2] **We need members who DO NOT automatically exclude someone from their prospect list simply because they are FIRM in their false beliefs.**
 - 3] **We need members who realize that it takes time and persistence in teaching to bring forth fruit.**
 - 4] **We need members who HOLD FIRMLY to the pattern of BCV for all that we do (Col 3.17).**
- 5- **Such members make GLAD PREACHERS!**
- 3) **#8: Members who have the kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13.**
- 1- **Paul makes very clear to us in the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13 that we may do many great things WITHOUT LOVE as the motivation and it will profit us NOTHING.**
 - 2- **Loving hearts in members of the Lord's church will be noticed by those outside the flock!**
 - 3- **It will be an attraction that will be quite winsome—Acts 2:47 *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***
 - 4- **In our presentation of TRUTH, LOVE must be evident—Ephesians 4:15 *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:***
 - 5- **Loving members make GLAD PREACHERS!**
- 4) **# 7: Members who are PERSONAL EVANGELISTS.**

- 1- **2 Timothy 2:2** *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*
- 2- Many years ago Ivan Stewart wrote the book: **GO YE MEANS GO ME**—and that title still states a truth!
- 3- Members of the church have received a special blessing in knowing the blessed gospel.
- 4- We thus have a special and **PERSONAL** obligation to be zealous in evangelism.
- 5- Members who do recognize this great truth and are actively participating in spreading the gospel make **GLAD PREACHERS!**
- 5) **#6: MEMBERS WHO ENCOURAGE WORLD EVANGELISM** (Mk 16.15).
 - 1- How easy it is for members of the church who live in the USA, and in the so-called **BIBLE BELT** to develop a mindset that ignores the vast population of our planet.
 - 2- Some might **ASSUME** that there is such ready access to Bible teaching there as here.
 - 3- Such is certainly **NOT** the case.
 - 4- For the saving message to be heard in foreign lands requires men to be sent and those few who are sent need lots of encouragement to continue their work.
 - 5- Members who put forth effort to be like Onesiphorus are so valuable—**2 Timothy 1:16** *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:*
 - 6- Often refreshing foreign evangelists like he did Paul is such an important and valuable trait.
- 6) **#5: MEMBERS WHO GIVE LIBERALLY, SACRIFICIALLY, AND CHEERFULLY OF THEIR MEANS AND THEIR TIME** (1 Cor 16.1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
 - 1- What a great **ENCOURAGEMENT** the churches of Macedonia were to the Apostle Paul!!!
 - 2- It was out of their **DEEP POVERTY** that they gave.
 - 3- The reason they gave was that they had **FIRST** given themselves to the Lord (2 Cor 8.5).
 - 4- Unselfish members who recognize the **SERIOUSNESS** of their stewardship responsibilities are a pleasant dream for the gospel preacher!
 - 5- It is my opinion that JD will see more Christians parted to the left—to the place prepared for the devil and his angels—over the sin of covetousness than for any other sin.
 - 6- What a **JOY** and what **REJOICING** when preachers see members who are good stewards of their possessions and time!
- 7) **#4: MEMBERS WHO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE WORDS OF HEBREWS 10.24-25.**
 - 1- **Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (25) Not forsaking the assembling of*

ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

- 2- So much good has been designed into the worship assemblies by our blessed God and Father!
 - 3- How is it possible that the members of the church can so often forsake such meetings?
 - 4- We NEED to consider one another and get the point that our gatherings together will edify us and spur us on toward love and good works.
 - 5- Members who understand the sinfulness of forsaking the assemblies contribute to the GLADNESS of any preacher!
- 8) #3: **Members who use the NT as their standard of ethics and morality.**
- 1- Paul challenged the Corinthians saints: 1 Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
 - 2- Any system of ethics other than following the teachings of Jesus Christ is BY FAR an INFERIOR system!
 - 3- Too many members of the church seem to be following the system of hedonism.
 - 4- Hedonism says: If this thing brings me more pleasure than pain then I OUGHT to do it.
 - 5- To follow such an ethical system will lead to eternal destruction.
 - 6- Sadly, the preacher's efforts are too often CONTRADICTED by the lives of the members.
 - 7- Preachers who preach where members live lives CONSISTENT with their teaching are made to be GLAD INDEED!
- 9) #2: **Members who LOVE THE TRUTH and who study their Bibles** (2 Tim 2.15).
- 1- Preachers are charged with preaching THE WORD in season and out of season (2 Tim 4.1-4).
 - 2- To have hearers who truly love the truth and have no itching ears is a tremendous blessing.
 - 3- Lovers of truth will also be those who WALK IN truth, and the sentiments of every faithful gospel preacher is expressed by John—3 John 1:4 *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*
 - 4- The very idea that a Christian can attain the needed instruction of God's word in three or four hours of assemblies per week is really foolish!
 - 5- Members who have studied BEFORE coming to Bible Class are a wonderful source of GLADNESS for the preacher!
- 10) #1: **ELDERS WHO ARE SCRIPTURALLY QUALIFIED AND WHO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK** (1 Tim 3.1-7; Titus 1.6-9; 1 Peter 5.1-4).
- 1- This would be the NUMBER ONE characteristic of a local church to produce a GLAD preacher!

- 2- **If this ONE QUALITY be present in any local congregation, a preacher is SO FAR DOWN THE ROAD toward gladness that he would be foolish to turn down the opportunity to serve in such a place.**
3. **Yes, Barnabas was a GLAD PREACHER.**
- 1) **Antioch was a great church.**
 - 2) **It is certainly possible for there to be great churches and GLAD PREACHERS today.**
 - 3) **Much cooperation and communication is needed to produce such happy results, though.**
 - 4) **The effort on the part of both preacher and congregation surely commends itself to each of us!**

Acts 11 Helps me in that it—

VII. Shows the great Antioch church to be a CARING and GIVING group of CHRISTIANS (11.29 + 26b).

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: + **Acts 11:26** And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

1. **The generosity and concern of these Antioch disciples is something that is quite characteristic of what the Lord intends for any CHRISTIAN.**
2. **There was something SPECIAL about the church at Antioch.**
3. **It was the church where the name CHRISTIAN is first used in Scripture to describe God's chosen people.**
4. **Surely you and I can see many great reasons for the greatness of the church that met in Antioch of Syria!**

Conclusion:

- 1.