

# **Essential Traits of the Apostolic Church**

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The Antioch Church has been the model for missions movements, church planting, and urban reconciliation for almost 2,000 years. The following principles show why this church, rather than the Jerusalem Church, is the church model:

## **I. The Antioch Church was an inclusive church that was born out of persecution (Acts 11:20)**

1. Often, people who are the victims of persecution and are experienced in the way of suffering are a more broad and broken people ready and willing to go out of their cultural box to welcome and love others, as opposed to the homogeneous model of the Jerusalem Church. Note that David said that God enlarged him when he was in distress; Psalm 4:1.
2. There is the real and the ideal; often those experienced in suffering have more compassion and really know what it is like for God to love them unconditionally.

## **II. The word over the Antioch Church was “purpose,” which transcends earthly & material possessions, money, and concerns (Acts 11:23)**

1. The apostolic church emphasizes God’s kingdom purpose rather than material possessions, convenience, or comfort.
2. Often, people go by the voices of others or by their own feelings and circumstances. God has called His people to go by His purpose for their lives as their ultimate guide.
3. God’s kingdom purpose is always corporate purpose; that is to say, our individual purpose will never be fulfilled unless it is attached to a local church.

## **III. The Antioch Church had emerging fivefold ministry gifts (Acts 13:1)**

1. They had prophets and teachers. No reference is made of apostles, pastors, or evangelists; thus I believe this was an emerging leadership.
2. Barnabas and Saul became apostles after they were sent out and continued to mature.
3. There was evidently some kind of discipleship process in which leaders were continually raised up. In Acts 11:26 the whole church was taught, implying that there was some personal process of mentoring. For example, cell groups or house meetings were common in those days, which would make sense because their leadership model was the Jerusalem Church which taught “house to house” (Acts 2:46).

**IV. The leadership and congregation were multiethnic (Acts 13:2)**

1. The Jerusalem Church was multilingual and multiethnic but was not transcultural because they never reached out beyond Judaism.
2. The Antioch Church modeled ethnic reconciliation. There were five walls that divided the ethnic groups in the city of Antioch; believers in this church would scale the walls to attend church.
3. Believers today still need to be intentional and “scale the walls” that divide them from their ethnically or economically different brothers and sisters.

**V. The leadership was vocationally diverse (Acts 13:2)**

1. Barnabas was into real estate; Saul was a religious leader; Manaen was a politician.
2. Scripture teaches that it takes more than a religious leader to transform a culture or nation (see the books of Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel, etc.). We need to see an Antiochian leadership model that employs business, political, and religious leadership together to proclaim the kingdom of God.

**VI. They were a church that connected to God’s presence**

1. They regularly ministered to the Lord. Today’s congregations only come to God to receive from the Lord instead of ministering to the Lord. If we would learn to minister to the Lord then He would minister back to us beyond measure.
2. They heard from the Lord regarding mission and purpose. Many people just want to hear from the Lord regarding their own personal issues!

**VII. They were a sending church**

1. They understood and preached corporate mission and corporate destiny!
2. The members and leaders followed apostolic protocol in regards to their ministry. Nowadays most ministers “went” instead of being “sent.” This is the reason why there are so many dysfunctional pastors and churches in this nation!

**VIII. They were a benevolent church and gave to other ministries and churches (Acts 11:29)**

1. A people who understand pain are also a people who empathize with the needs of others, which results in them being moved by compassion to give to others.