

The background of the slide is a sepia-toned, blurred photograph of a church interior. It shows a group of people, likely a congregation, gathered for a service. The focus is soft, with the people appearing as indistinct shapes and colors, creating a sense of a busy, communal environment. The lighting is warm and somewhat dim, typical of an indoor church setting.

The Early Church, Our Church

A seven-week worship series

1. Diversity in the Body of Christ



“Christians” at Antioch

- **Acts 11:19-30** The Gospel Goes to Gentiles

Persecution in Jerusalem pushes the gospel to other regions... eventually into Antioch.

“When he [Barnabas] arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.” v.23

“The Gentiles took to the Christian message as the very thing they had been waiting for, as something that exactly suited their case, and a large number of them believed the gospel and yielded their allegiance to Jesus as Lord.”

F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (NICNT)

Growth Despite Diversity

- Antioch was third largest city in the empire
- Differences in race, religion, politics, status, etc.
- Church grows up with God-fearers, Greeks, converted pagans, etc.
- Many disciples are filled with the Spirit
- Word circulates about the “Christians”
- Antioch becomes inspirational hub of missional activity and proof of God's Kingdom

Paul, Galatians 3:26-29 NLT

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. **28** There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

“The whole point of his [Paul's] argument is that all those who belong to Christ belong at the same table with one another. The relevance of this today should be obvious. The differences between us, as twenty first-century Christians, all too often reflect cultural, philosophical and tribal divides, rather than anything that should keep us apart from full and glad eucharistic fellowship.”

N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship & the Calling of the Church*

The background of the slide is a sepia-toned, blurred photograph of a church interior. It shows a congregation of people, some standing and some kneeling, in what appears to be a worship service. The architecture includes a prominent archway and a balcony or gallery in the background. The overall tone is historical and reverent.

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