

# PLOT TWIST

**When God Surprises His People**

## Part 4: *The First “Christians”*

The Christian church is the only society in the world in which membership is based upon the qualification that the candidate shall be unworthy of membership.

~ Charles C. Morrison,  
*Holman New Testament Commentary*

What happened in Antioch was one of the greatest events in history.

~ William Barclay, *Acts*

This great work was done by a group of ordinary Christians who went and shared the gospel. In fact, much of the growth of the church must have happened through such people – as should be the case today.

~ Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary*

This aggressive evangelism by anonymous Christians throws our heavily programmed modern church into stark and feeble contrast. Never mind that they had been driven from their homes and scattered. Never mind that God let them to one of the most wicked cities of the Roman world. They had a message to deliver.

~ Kenneth O. Gangel,  
*Holman New Testament Commentary*

Antioch is a model community, engaging in evangelism, teaching, and ministry to brothers in need.

~ Darrell L. Bock, *The Acts of the Apostles*

The believers are first designated “Christians” in Antioch. The reason? The believers are constantly talking about their Lord. The Christians in Antioch are consumed with Jesus Christ.

~ Frank Viola, *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church*

One of the most surprising features of Acts is the diversity of people God calls to be included among God’s people. In Antioch we meet the first church that is made up of Jewish and Gentile believers together.

~ Robert W. Wall,  
*The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*

In Antioch we see that growth in the size of a church is closely linked with its growth in maturity, not simply with its outreach programme.

~ Robert W. Wall,  
*The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*

Luke does not record a hint of hierarchy in the early church. There’s no priesthood, no class of super-saints called the clergy. There’s just the body of Christians. Over time, it seems, we add layers of religiosity and ritual, hierarchy and tradition, until the simple pattern of the church becomes unrecognizable in all its complexity.

~ Ray C. Stedman, *God’s Unfinished Book*

There’s nothing more exciting than the sense of renewal that comes when we rediscover the original New Testament model for the church. May God open our eyes to see the church as it was in the New Testament times – and as it can yet be again.

~ Ray C. Stedman, *God’s Unfinished Book*

**The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**

~ **Acts 11:26 (NASB)**