

## **Starting Point Sunday:** Remembering How We Got Here & Where We Are Going

*Thank you for considering this sermon for Starting Point Sunday!*

*The following sermon is only a guide, so feel free to tweak and make any changes you'd like. The goal of this sermon is to help your congregation think with a Kingdom mindset, and to remind them that the great commission is the ultimate goal of the Church. The message will most likely be around 30 minutes long, depending on what you take out or add (With the Starting Point video included). We believe that your Church will be encouraged today with this message, God Bless!*

*-The New Churches Network Team, W.O.D.*



## Starting Point Sunday

### **Intro Story: Flying (Flaming) Lanterns**

-I heard a story of a church not too far from here that was celebrating their Church's anniversary

-The leadership team got together on the Church's anniversary for a prayer night, and someone had brought Chinese lanterns (The ones that you light up and they float away into the sky)

-The person suggested that it would be a cool symbolic way of being a light in their community, so about ten people went out into a park to light them off.

-It was going to be a way to remember all the things that God had done in their Church so far

-The person who had bought them was bragging to the younger single staff members, "If you want to impress a girl, light them a lantern, they will love it."

-he also was saying that these lanterns were really cheap on amazon

-as they started to light the lanterns, one by one, before they could fly up into the sky they started to catch on fire instead of filling with hot air

-I guess you get what you pay for

-they were panicking and feeling a little silly that their symbol had burned up right on the ground, until one had finally worked...and another one too!

-they celebrated and cheered...2 out of 10 isn't bad...until one of them caught on fire in mid air...and started lowering into the surrounding suburbs...

-now the other one started to go down as well...uh ohhhhh

-they were really scared now, and some of them went to go drive around the neighborhood to make sure that they hadn't started a fire!

-some of them were praying for rain

-luckily, one of the people drove by a burnt out lantern in the middle of the road down the street...

-phew, but there was still a missing lantern...where did it go!? Hopefully this doesn't start a fire!

-a younger single staff member turned to the person who had brought the

lanterns..."So, you still think this is a romantic idea to impress a girl?"

-and finally, they saw a little light in the distance, the other lantern had worked and was flying high in the sky and eventually disappeared to their relief

-what a way to honour and remember that church's anniversary...they vowed to never do that again

## **Today Is Starting Point Sunday: What Starting Point Sunday Is**

-today we want to remember and honour our Church's past...(without lanterns)

-we have a great and rich history in this Church

-all across Ontario, there are hundreds of other PAOC churches that are preaching today on Church planting: how our Church

got here, and where we are going in the future

-we all have a starting point

## **(Optional) Here Is A Brief History Of Our Church**

-it was started by \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_\_  
etc.

-other thoughts on the starting point of your local church

## **The Goal Of Today's Message**

-there is a principle in the New Testament that talks about Church planting that we are looking at today

-if we can learn what this principle is, it ensures that our Church will be healthy

-and it will make our lives more effective for living for God

-let's dive into the book of Acts to see what that principle is

## **Bible Story context: Who is Paul the Apostle (Saul) & Barnabas?**

-Paul (Saul) was someone who used to be opposed to the thought of Jesus and the Church, but God had dramatically changed his life

-Paul was now a Church leader and met a friend named Barnabas who was also a Church leader

## Acts 11:22-26

<sup>22</sup> News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. <sup>24</sup> He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup> and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

## Paul & Barnabas Have A Great Life In Antioch

-Paul has a mentor in Barnabas

-they are growing in faith, helping others...life is good

-for a whole year now they have something great going, its very comfortable for them

-but God calls them to something new

## Acts 13:2-3

<sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

## **What Did God Call Them To? God Called Them To Church Plant!**

-they would go to a city with 0 Churches and start a church

-they would stay for a while, and move on to the next city and start a new one

-they did this over and over from city to city

-and guess what...lives were changed! But it was hard work...

## **Look At Some Of These Struggles They Had To Go Through As They Planted Churches:**

- Demonic forces opposed them (Acts 13:8)
- Verbally attacked and lied about (Acts 13:45)
- Expelled from certain cities (Acts 13:50)
- Almost murdered (Acts 14: 5)
- Stoned (Acts 14:19)
- Many hardships (Acts 14:22)
- and Paul & Barnabas decided to plant new Churches for the rest of their lives...even after all of this

## **So Why On Earth Did They Want To Plant Churches...Even After All Of The Struggles?**

- firstly because God told them too...but why did God want them to do this?

-because they knew something that recent studies have proven to us today:

-New Churches are the most effective way of reaching a community for Jesus

**Studies Show That:** (Use as much or as little of these data points)

-A new church gains 60-80% of its membership from new conversions.

-a study of 64 churches planted revealed that they grew 12 times faster than established churches! In fact, many denominational studies have confirmed that most members of a newly planted church have not been a part of any other congregation before.

-On the other hand, churches that are over 10 to 15 years old

gain 80–90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.

## **Other Studies Show That Canada & Ontario Need New Churches.**

-Nearly 82% of all Canadians have no meaningful church relationship!

-In Canada there are close to 24 million people who do not have a personal relationship with Christ!

-According to Outreach Canada demographic research, only 18% of Canadians attend church regularly. In urban centers like Toronto, only 5% of the population can be categorized as consistent church attendees!

-No single city or province in Canada has a greater percentage of churched people today than a decade ago.

-Among existing churches in Canada, 80% are characterized as plateaued, declining, or disintegrating.

-To have one evangelical church for every 1,000 people in Ontario alone, 8,594 new churches would need to be planted!

-Evangelical churches have failed to gain an additional 2% of the Canadian population in the past 50 years. In other words, we are not even reaching our own children!

-Evangelical planting (1.6% annually) falls behind population growth (1.9% annually).

- North America is the ONLY continent where Christianity is not growing!
- 230,000 new Canadians have immigrated annually during the last decade. The majority are Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist or Confucian – the “mission field” is here.
- Canadians dying without Christ: 165,000 souls each year.
- these facts should be sobering to us
- Because we know what our Church is here for
- what it really comes down to is the great commission:

## **Matthew 28**

<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

## **After Jesus Gave This Command, What Did The Disciples Do?**

-they started Churches...that was their idea of fulfilling the great commission!

-we should follow their example

-the goal isn't to just plant churches, its to reach people for Jesus...it just so happens that the most effective way to do that is to plant churches

## **And Here Is The Truth That Paul & Barnabus Knew About Church Planting**

-that even though it is hard work, they should do it...because life isn't about them

-life isn't about being convenient or comfortable

-life is about the Kingdom of God

## **What Is The Kingdom Of God?**

-the kingdom is everything that happens that is God's will

- anytime something happens that God wants, that is God's kingdom
- its not about one local church, and its not about getting credit
- it's not about being comfortable
- its about God's will happening in the world
- and if there is one thing that I want to get across to you today, it's this:

## **Main Idea: Our Goal Is Not Comfort, Our Goal Is The Kingdom**

- when Paul & Barnabas were at the church of Antioch...it was comfortable
- by leaving they risked their comfort, money, time, friends, everything...why?

-because they knew the truth that our goal should not be comfort, but should be the Kingdom

-at one point in our Church's history, someone stepped out of what was comfortable and took a risk because they knew life wasn't about comfort, it was about God's Kingdom

## **Why This Is Important To Know?**

-because if we don't know this, we might live our entire lives trying to be comfortable instead of building God's Kingdom

-and it doesn't have to be Church planting directly, but we need to be reaching out to those who don't know Jesus and building God's Kingdom

## **We Should Have A Kingdom Mindset**

-Paul & Barnabas risked everything, even though they wouldn't personally benefit from it

-we should have that same mindset

-we have it good here in our local church...life is good...but its not just about our local church

-we are just a small part of God's whole Kingdom

-And its not about who gets credit or comfort, its about obeying God and reaching the lost

## **To Be Honest: It's Not Always Convenient Or Comfortable Planting Churches**

-you sometimes give your best leaders away, money, time, & sacrifice

-but it's the right thing to do

-and God has modeled it for us in the New Testament

-But there is a unique joy that only comes from Church planting

-look at the result of Church planting when Paul & Barnabas finished their first church planting trip

## **Acts 14:21-28**

<sup>21</sup> They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. <sup>23</sup> Paul and Barnabas appointed elders<sup>[a]</sup> for them in each church and, with

prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. <sup>24</sup> After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, <sup>25</sup> and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

<sup>26</sup> From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. <sup>27</sup> On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. <sup>28</sup> And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

## **Church Planting Is Hard Work, But It's The Right Thing To Do**

-and our church planters in our larger Church family, the PAOC, are heroes and heroines for doing what they do

-and we need to support them

## **Application:**

### **1) Accept Jesus If You Haven't Yet, That's The Whole Point**

-The Good News

### **2) Give To The Starting Point Offering Today**

-100% of the money raised is going to help start new Churches in Ontario

### **3) Become Aware Of What God Is Doing With Church Planting In Our Larger Church Family**

-The New Churches Network is the W.O.D. team that is leading our Church planting in Ontario

-visit their website @  
[www.newchurchesnetwork.com](http://www.newchurchesnetwork.com)

### **4) Choose To Live A Life For The Kingdom, Over A Life Of Comfort**

-God wants this for you because he loves you

-You can make a difference for God!

## Outro

-The New Churches Network has a list of dozens of communities in Ontario that has thousands of people in them...without an active Church

-let's see that changed!

-Years ago someone stepped out and gave up what was comfortable to start this Church that we are a part of now

-now we have the chance to be a part of another Church's starting point

**Main Idea: Our Goal Is Not Comfort, Our Goal Is The Kingdom**

**Pray**