

# Church Planting in Samaria

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Preacher: Phil Stogner

[ 0 : 0 0 ] in the 1960s we were glued each week to a spy series called mission impossible now mission impossible always began with the opening destruction of this tape scene and it went like this our intrepid secret agent would go to a laundromat for instance and he would go through the clothes and there would be a door and he would go through a door and there would be a desk he would open up the desk and there was an old cassette tape kids get your mom and dad to tell you what that would be like with the reel to reel but he would he would look over his shoulder to make sure that he's not ever heard and he would press play and then this tape would slowly begin to play with this message good morning mr phelps your mission jim should you choose to accept it is and then normally it'd be some mission to go into a community as a secret agent or into some organization to impact change in that organization he would go in secretly as always should you or any member of your im team be caught or killed the secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions this tape will self destruct in five seconds good luck jim and then the smoke would start coming from the tape and i guess there wasn't any danger of a fire hazard because it would just go up in a cloud of smoke and then he would leave the laundromat to go on mission we've been looking at beginning last week the book of acts it's a book and a history a record of the earliest church and the saints on mission for jesus christ a mission that he gave them in acts 1 8 which was you will be my witnesses in jerusalem and then to all of surrounding judea even to samaria and to the ends of the earth that commission on acts 1 8 of jesus to his his disciples is an articulation of a strategy that we see in the great commission where we as followers of jesus christ are to share our lives and our faith in christ with others to make nation to make disciples even of the nations around us now this word mission is everywhere um every organization has a mission statement or perhaps a strap line even our own organization in ministry of glasgow city i've often heard our pastor say even in a word you can capture our mission equip equip the saints or the ministry well we have personal mission statements i have a personal mission statement i'll read it to you my personal mission is to encourage pastors to be faithful in their walk with jesus and fruitful in their ministry it guides me to know that i have a mission and i can measure that am i on a mission or men am i encouraging men in their walk with jesus and are we seeing some fruit in their

ministry the shepherds of the flock number 10 downing street whenever they appear to give us the latest report on the coronavirus and the pandemic they have a mission statement you'll see it on the podium stay at home save lives so we have these mission statements around us the church can be said to have a mission statement and that is to be my that's the lord jesus christ witnesses and this word the very word for mission comes from the latin and it means to be sent and so the big idea of this portion of scripture that we're going to look at this morning in the time that remains is this the gospel the gospel the gospel mission is like seed people who are scattered about and as we are scattered and with the gospel the good news we will see fruit from our witness in other words the gospel is seed that will result in fruit and that fruit is going to be new congregations new worshiping gatherings of disciples which is a church plant i want to show you three things about our mission three things that if you mr phelps accept this mission need not worry that jesus if you get caught on your mission that he's going to disavow you in fact he's promised his power the holy spirit and his presence to be with us on this mission but if you decide to accept this mission here are three characteristics number one it's going to look natural as opposed to mechanical it's much more organic natural than it is a program or a campaign it's a natural mission number two it's a personalized mission it's going to look perhaps a bit different when we go on mission for christ to go forward like scattered seed with the gospel we're going to bloom and look differently in our community than perhaps others some are going to be very bold and confrontational even some are going to be much more quiet with deeds of service of love some are going to bear their testimony

some are going to preach sermons but we're all invited with our strengths and our weaknesses our talents even our skills to be on mission a personalized mission and then number three it is at heart and core always a gospel mission we don't diffuse a mission it's not to be confused with other campaigns we're not trying to fill our churches simply for ourself we're trying to share the gospel because the gospel has been shared with us in other words the gospel that has come to us the forgiveness of our sin the favor of god his mercy even his love for us and our promise to be his sons and daughters forever that gospel has so impacted our life that it propels us and it propels us forward to share with others in our witness and word and deed

so that they too can come to hear the gospel that we articulate it's a gospel mission so let's look first and see a few more things related to it being a natural mission if my host could pull up the one slide that i have of the map let's go to some area okay uh hopefully you can see this from your homes and it's not too small but that red dot is jerusalem and judea surrounds surrounds jerusalem going north we come into the territory of samaria we pass jericho where the famous jericho road with the good samaritan as opposed proving himself a true neighbor instead of the religious jewish leaders then we go a little farther and we come to jacob's well for out of john 4 jesus meant he went out of his way to meet and to share the good news even himself with a samaritan woman now we're in the territory of samaria so the point that i want to make and i just love maps in the bible quite sadly my bible does not have a map i'm trying to figure out a way to add those colorful maps and uh bibles that we used to have they're quite handy but you could put as it were you could put in place of jerusalem you could put glasgow glasgow city and you can put judea as all of the communities and the cities surrounding us as we go far to the borders we're going to come into our samaria now i'm not going to focus so much in the time because i don't have that enough time to do both judea and samaria but suffice it to say that as we're going to samaria as we're going to samaria we're going through judea and we're going into a culture that is like ours but it's not the same uh host you can pull my slide down now we have you can divide our culture that we find ourself in this post-secular this post-christian age and world you can divide our culture into church cultures or previously church cultures people that knew something about god they're familiar they would have been perhaps inside of a church at some point in their life maybe married in a church or they've been to funerals or maybe they've been to special christmas carols or easter services but they're familiar with the language even a bit of christianity the other side is an unchurch culture we're going to look at that next week when we talk about what it looks like to plant churches to the ends of the earth but planting churches in samaria is planting churches that are in a culture that are very much like our and they're quite receptive but by half you see the samaritans were half breeds they were half jewish and half assyrian from their assyrian forbearers years and years and years earlier the assyrians conquered northern israel but then as they would eventually leave they had intermarried with jews and their offspring were half breeds now we see if you were to look into john 4 in jesus's encounter

with a samaritan woman we see that he is speaking with a woman that has quite a bit of knowledge of the jewish faith and even acceptance of it by half for instance she says in verse 20 of chapter 4 of john our fathers worshiped on this mountain but you say that jerusalem is a place where people ought to worship jesus will go on to correct that but she could point back to samaria to mount garrison samaritans believe that that is where the messiah that they look forward to come the christ the christos they look forward for him to come to that mountain not jerusalem jesus says i am he and i've not come simply to jerusalem and i'm not coming to mount garrison i'm here with you right now and those who worship me will worship me wherever they are in spirit and in truth god is not bound now fast forward to our text we read here that saul was at the execution of stephen and he approved it the word for approval means that he wasn't simply delighted and smiling once as a one-off occasion to rejoice that he has killed a very vibrant and vocal christian but it's to say it's a continuing attitude that was spreading among all the people so that not only did saul approve of the execution of stephen but others did and they approved him going house to house ravaging god's people like a wolf when this sins god's people they have become very very uncomfortable and it sends them it disperses them it sends them out as it says a scattered people they are the scattered people and like seed they are scattered in all the communities around them and luke very precisely says throughout the region of judea and samaria he's connecting it back to acts 1 8 and the commission of jesus to go to samaria why had they not gone to samaria earlier it was because of half-breeds the jews even christians said that's not our culture that's not exactly like our culture that's not our people we don't have friends there we don't want to make friends there we are

uncomfortable around samaritans i could take you to other texts and passages of scripture to show you how uncomfortable they were around them john who we're going to look at in just a moment at one point jesus wanted to go through a samaritan village but it says that they rejected him they didn't want him and the disciples to enter and john says jesus you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy these guys he said no not at all so they really looked at them even christians said we're uncomfortable with them but god the holy spirit made them uncomfortable where they were so that out of they became so uncomfortable in jerusalem that god the holy spirit used that discomfort to put them on mission to minister throughout judea and samaria what's the point we'll not go to people that we're uncomfortable

with will not include will not begin relationships with them will not befriend them we certainly won't love them as long as we're uncomfortable with them and many times god because god loves the lost because god loves the lost then he will break our heart with the very things that break his heart when we drive along the highway past a canvas lane for instance and we come to realize that all those steeples are empty churches when we come to realize there's very little witness evangelical presence of the gospel of jesus christ and it breaks our heart and we become very uncomfortable and we'll begin to have a prayer for them we'll begin to perhaps even locate there or identify christians there that we can encourage to begin to share their faith like seed in that place as we leave this idea of it being a natural mission notice that it's the holy spirit that is seeding them in samaria the holy spirit is leading them not men not even a church it's not mechanical it's quite natural and as they go there with their own love for the gospel they begin to impact their fellow citizens and their new neighbors in jesus christ these saints what got stephen killed was at the heart of his message and you can see this in act 7 at the heart of his message was this god is not bound by this building and he could look around at the jerusalem temple in fact he's not bound to this people alone he's not bound simply to the jews god is boundless and he wants to go forth and that got him killed but philip and luke links stephen and philip they both were hellenist jews they both were deacons they both had a similar message to say god is not bound to this building in jerusalem so we must go rather than expect people to come to us and philip in samaria then quite naturally with this mission emphasis of going rather than expecting people to come begins to proclaim christ in samaria with the very expectation that the holy spirit that this was the mission this was the plan and the holy spirit would bless it with results and all quite naturally secondly it's a personalized mission i want to show you look at three ways that the citizenry of samaria hears the gospel first of all it says in verse 4 that the people went preaching the word now this is the word for evangelism for good news don't think that the people were all licensed and ordained and set themselves up like preachers either from a pulpit or a soapbox no this is what tim keller calls gossiping the gospel this is what michael green in his famous classic book evangelism now and then as he looks back to the early church how were they so how were they so successful in winning converts to jesus christ how were they so successful and fruitful he says this

[ 20 : 14 ] he says that the earliest church personal conversation was the main method by which the gospel spread in the earliest days personal conversation is the very best way of evangelism it can be done anywhere it can be done by anyone and unlike much preaching it always hits the mark and then michael green gives a little he puts a point on it when he says they have set us an example which we are to continue but for some reason we are curiously reluctant to follow could it be that we don't value our personal conversations everyday conversations with our neighbor very common conversations but from our faith from our identity as a christian with jesus christ could it be that we don't value that could it be that we've been made to feel that it's only the preachers it's only the sermon it's only those that are that really understand the scriptures and theology could it be that we say personally i can't go on mission we leave it only for those that are called well that's not what we see here what we see here that those who are being scattered they would have been new believers even in themselves and they radiated in their personal conversations their faith in jesus christ not so much evangelism as far as asking people to come to faith in the first conversation but in every conversation they're showing that they have a new heart that they are people that are in love with jesus and they have found him in the means of salvation number two there are preachers and that's philip there are those that are like the heavy artillery that will in a city blast a hole in the wall but then we are the infantry we need to then go into that city like scattered seed and share our faith individually but there is a philip and there is a place for those that are evangelists that have those gifts of evangelism that can appropriately argue for the faith preach the faith and even confront us with our sin and then the third way that we see is deed notice that the word the gospel

the good news is being proclaimed philip proclaimed to them the christ but there's also in verse beginning with verse 6 and then verse 7 there's the deeds their signs unclean spirits are coming out many who were paralyzed or lame were healed and what was the result there was much joy in that city

I believe that it can say that with this metric this measure the city was glad that christians were there they were glad that a church had come to them they were glad that it had come into their neighborhood what a difference for their good these christians made individual everyday common conversations a preacher an evangelist dare I say a church planter and then deeds deeds of kindness but notice that these deeds are meeting a felt need in that community time doesn't permit me to go into the magic and the sorcery and the spells that was going on in this superstitious village of Samaria but let me say that they had felt needs such as health needs that they were looking for a magical talking cure but they weren't being helped scholars in looking at verse seven when it says that there were many who were paralyzed or lame they said

Luke is like a skilled medical writer in that he's not using those terms as adjectives such as there is a lame man but he's using it as a verb saying there are men and women who are being paralyzed as if it's an ongoing condition they're not being helped by magical spells talking cures even the opinions or the solutions of others are failing them but then the gospel comes and the deeds the ministry touching upon their felt needs even their bodily needs this is where recovery ministries this is where evangelistic bible studies this is where food ministries this is where we go into a community and we don't simply share our faith with our neighbor in relationships with them now but we began to go public and look for a way to minister to them indeed and then notice the metric there was joy much joy in that city the people were receptive and they responded to that lastly it's a gospel mission

I got a phone call true story in my last church plant and congregation in Charleston South Carolina we had a number of young adults they were we had a large air force base there and navy base and so we would get soldiers from the military we had a lot of students because we had a university there we had a large medical community medical university we were constantly seeing people come into our church and our fellowship and our church plant stay with us for a couple of years and then they would relocate I get a call from one of our air force officers he and his new wife who had been a part of our congregation had relocated about five months earlier to an air force base in Texas and he says Pastor Phil how do we plan a church and I said well what is going on Ian and he said well Rachel and I have come here and there is no church there is there's no worshiping community but we're finding there are people that used to be a part of the church and they love to see a church started here in our isolated Texas community we also have begun a bible study and our house our parlor is already filled with people as we walk through the gospel of John together and worship is beginning to take place we're starting a church tell us what what we are we doing it right I would say this is the pattern that we see here in Acts 8 you're in a community there is a you begin to share your faith and there are those that without a church home as well who are Christians they're attracted God begins to gather you together and then we see men we see bible teachers we see elders raised up we see church planters or pastors who come in and assist that group to form as well as continue to grow as well as stay on mission we see that in verse 14 the apostles back in

[ 28 : 48 ] Jerusalem back at the ranch in Jerusalem headquarters denominational headquarters they hear that Samaria has received the word of God the word for received means welcome they welcomed the word of God so they hear this and they say right then we will come you have been sharing your faith people have been welcoming the word of God they are receptive this is a community now that is receiving and being impacted by the gospel with joy and so the apostles come people are being baptized the holy they are being prayed for they are receiving the holy spirit and they are moving toward what I would submit to you worship that is the gospel mission that is the fruit of the gospel we begin with people like seed with the gospel are scattered into

Samaria and there they don't simply stay on a shelf but they go into the ground of Samaria they go into the lives and the hearts of the citizens and then with the very blessing of the holy spirit an initial plant begins to break the surface and bud we see the gospel in verse 20 when Peter addressing Simon the magician says you thought you could obtain the gift of God without money that is the free gift the undeserved gift a gift that comes only by grace from God that's the gospel the gospel is also seen in verse 12 where it says Philip he preached good news and that's the word for gospel about

the kingdom of God and about the name of Jesus Christ in other words he preached good news about the kingdom that like a conquering king to a people formerly enslaved you can find freedom in God and what's more not only be citizens of his kingdom but royal sons and daughters of this king through

Jesus Christ who is both fully man Jesus fully Lord and divine God and Christ and he is the savior of the world we see the gospel in a nutshell in verse five where it says that Philip proclaimed to them the Christ this is our gospel message that we proclaim Christ we speak about what it's like to be a member with all confidence of his kingdom even as his sons and daughters beneficiaries of this good news of the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ and people in Samaria are receiving this and a church is going to arise from this now wait a minute I know as I'm ending you're saying wait a minute wait a minute you're you're playing that's an American thing you're playing fast and loose with the details here

I don't see in the Bible right here in Acts 8 any church being planted I don't see a congregation at the end it doesn't say that in verse 25 that Peter and John they now return to Jerusalem going throughout Samaria and then I submit to you Judea in other words all the region of Samaria is going to be reached by reaching this one city why because it continues to radiate out from these scattered believers not the apostles but men and women individuals and casual conversations that include the gospel of Christ I don't see a church plant but what we do see here is this we see the early signs of a worshiping community being birthed it's it's they're just this church plant like a plant that we have in our garden now is just budding it's just breaking the surface these are people that have been baptized that is publicly they have confessed

Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and they have been baptized so they now identify themselves as God's people in connection with those back in Jerusalem number two but they're not asked to come back to Jerusalem to worship number two they receive the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit testifies to us that we are Christians that we are in union with Jesus Christ and so now these half-breeds come to faith in Christ and there is no superiority of these Jewish believers with now these Samaritan believers and the apostles leave them as a worshiping community now has all the ingredients and it's forming a church well thank you once again for allowing me to speak to you about how church plants are a part of the great commission and the commission that we see out of Acts 1-8 the vision and the prayer of

[ 34 : 35 ] Glasgow City Free Church is that we would be a church planting church that we would not be restricted even to simply seeing the growth of new congregations and immediate to Glasgow but even in the surrounding regions and in whatever way we would be a part with our prayers with our people with our provisions to see new congregations receive the gospel by the witness of believers in that community toward the end result of a new worshiping congregation being formed Amen