

Church Planting with Acts 29

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Preacher: Dwight Bernier

[0 : 00] Good morning, once again. I'd like to take this time, to you silent speakers, to introduce to you Dwight Bernier, who is going to be our speaker.

Just a few things about Dwight. I had the pleasure of meeting Dwight last year, kind of at a surprise, as you know. I was in, if you remember, I was back in Ontario for a couple of conferences, and there was this little mini-conference, kind of in between, put on by an organization called Acts 29. Acts 29 is an organization that is given to not only church planting, but building up the church around the world. What's interesting is that some of the, during COVID, there was some teaching online that I was able to sign up to and interact with other teachers and other pastors, kind of around North America, and I found it to be a complete blessing to me, so I've really appreciated the ministry.

I've been blessed by the ministry, and I'm hoping just as we invite Dwight up to spend time with us, and a few things about Dwight. One, he pastors a church called Church 21 in Montreal, and he's also the director of Acts 29 Canada.

Now, he's going to come up, and he's going to tell you, his name is Dwight Bernier from Montreal. You're going to really think he's Canadian, but he's not. It's actually Dwight Bernier from Maine, not Dwight Bernier from Montreal, but he lives in Montreal now and loves the Lord.

[1 : 35] So come on up. I've just been really blessed by my time, just hearing the wisdom as he interacts with pastors really across the world, and just a lot to learn and benefit from. So I'm sure we're really going to be blessed by the message today.

Great. Thank you so much. I thought when you were talking, is this okay? Is this on, working? Great, wonderful. I thought when you were talking about the mini conference, you were going to talk about this mini man that you met along the way.

So at least you made fun of me for being American, right? But I'm also Canadian, so we became citizens a few years ago. My great-grandparents are from Quebec City.

I tell Quebecers, it's your fault that you couldn't provide my great-grandparents jobs to stay in Quebec, so it's your fault that I'm American. And they're like, but I'm like the prodigal son. I'm returning, and I'm here to bring you good news.

So that's my thing. Yeah, I lead a church called Church 21. My wife and I, we planted that in 2011. So it's one church, four different congregations in English, one in French.

[2 : 35] We have another French church plant that's going. And we, our desire is to saturate the region of Montreal with gospel communities and outposts and people of good news. And that's our ambition.

That's what makes our family excited. I have four little kids. Well, they're not so little anymore. I have a 13-year-old boy, 12-year-old boy. My 13-year-old son says, Dad, you're my favorite preacher. My 12-year-old son says, Dad, you're pretty boring.

So you'll fit somewhere in between there this morning probably. But I had the privilege of starting Acts 29 in 2018. And really, it's one of my favorite ministries to get to be a part of because we get to be local and resource local.

We get to be thinking about the nation. And we also get to be connected to the work that God is doing around the world in very meaningful ways. And so it's a, I think it's a brilliant ministry and such a privilege for me to get to be a part of that.

And thankful for this invitation to be here today. So let me pray. And then we will, we'll get going. I'm gonna do, I heard that you're like 16 verses into Romans.

[3 : 39] We're gonna do 13 chapters of Acts today. All right? So there you go. Let me pray. Jesus, thank you that you love your church. Father, thank you that you have rescued people to be part of

your family through Jesus.

Spirit of God, I pray that you would fill us, fill us with expectation that you're gonna speak to us today. from your word. I pray that as we work through Acts 1 to 13, we would be in awe of you and the work that you're doing to bring people to know you, to bring people from spiritual death to life, to bring spiritually blind to see, spiritually deaf to hear, and that this is the work that you're continuing to do today.

So we love you and we need you for everything. Amen. Amen. So I'm a church planner. I cross the border a decent amount of times. I did six quarantines during COVID, if that tells you how often I'm doing border crossings.

And one of my favorite things to do is when they ask you, hey, what do you do for a job? And I say, I'm a church planner. And they're like, oh, what do you mean? And they get cute, right? They're like, oh, so you take like a building and plan it?

I'm like, no. Because the church isn't a building. It's a people and we meet in buildings. And if you ever want to get stuck at the border for a long time, tell them that you're a church planner. It's amazing.

[5 : 00] Or if you want to be really quick, they're like, whatever. Like just, it sounds like you're okay. You're probably not a terrorist. They'll be fine. But the idea is like, what do you mean? What do you mean you're a church planter?

And why are you planting churches? This is a question we get a lot in Montreal. Why are you planting churches? Traveling around Canada as I engage with people. Why are you planting churches? Don't we have enough churches?

Hasn't the church done enough harm to our society? Why would you want to start more of those things? And then as I meet with certain Christians, they say, yeah, but okay, cool.

Church planning. But is church planning actually in the Bible? I don't see it anywhere. Jesus said, go and make disciples. Don't go and plant churches. So is what you're doing actually biblical? I don't know about you, but have you ever wondered, you know, where and how the church really started?

Like where did the church get its start? And we're going to look at that today in Acts 1 to 13. Maybe you ask the question, how did we get here? So in Montreal, I expect that a quarter of the people who are entering into any of our gatherings are not yet followers of Jesus, and they don't think that they're followers of Jesus.

[6 : 06] They're really exploring who he is and what he's done, and if the church is actually a legit thing, or if it's continuing on. We have lots of university students that do studies on our church, right?

I do interviews all the time with people on our church. They send us their data later, and a lot of it's just bogus, but they're trying to study this thing. How do you still exist? And are you relevant at all for what we're actually trying to do?

And so how did the church start? How do we get here? That's what we're going to look at today.

There are three points. I usually do no points. I just preach, but I'm told when I visit places I should do points, so I have three points.

I brought you a gift, right? Number one is how the church began, and this is a very long point. Preaching class, they tell you, hey, make your points about the same length. This is not going to be that, okay?

First point's going to be very long. Second point is why the church must plant. That'll be a very short point, and the last thing will be application, and that's let's consider our role in this, all right?

[7 : 09] Good? Good. Good. Doesn't matter what you say. I'm just going to assume that you are all saying good, and we're going to keep going. Matthew chapter 16. I'm going to start in Matthew, though. I'm not going to start in Acts.

Matthew chapter 16, Jesus says this in verse 16. Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And here's where it is. And I tell you, you are Peter on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Jesus makes this wild claim to a suspecting or suspicious individual.

I'm going to build my church on your proclamation, on the testimony that you're going to preach, Peter, and that all of my people will preach. I'm going to build my church. So there's a point that we need to understand before we get going into all of this.

The church is Jesus's, not yours. We talk sometimes as pastors when we say, oh, my church. I get what you're saying, but not really your church, right?

[8 : 17] And it's not your church either. We belong to the church. There's one church that's made up of many local churches, but Jesus made a promise that I will build my church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Okay, great. So Jesus is going to build his church. How is he going to build his church? Well, listen to Matthew 16, verse 21. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, scribes, be killed, and on the third day, be raised.

We don't have time to get into all of the history and everything behind that, but the big idea is that Jesus was going to build his church on himself, that he came to live a perfect life that you and I cannot live.

He came to lay down that life as a substitutionary death for us. He came to pay a debt that you and I could not pay on our own, and then he rose from the dead, and I get people after every, because we talk about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in every sermon that we're preaching in Montreal, and that's the big issue that people have.

Okay, I was with you. Maybe Jesus was a kind individual. He died for people. That's so nice. You know, people jump in front of cars to rescue cats all the time. What does that matter? But it's the resurrection that people have an issue with, and I'm like, good.

[9 : 32] That's what you need to wrestle with because not everyone gets up out of the grave, but Jesus did to show us what awaits those who follow him, that we're going to have new bodies, that we're going to be brought into this kingdom that will have no end, that we will be a part of the new creation, that we will be resurrected, that we will be with him.

BK drove me around Squamish yesterday and some back roads, and it is beautiful. Beautiful. Absolutely stunning where you live. Almost like the St. Lawrence River, right?

That's what I get to see. You know, oh, there's my sewage. There it goes. So beautiful. But Squamish has nothing on Jesus. Like, you think Squamish is beautiful.

You think that sunset behind whatever mountains evokes tears and joy, tranquility. It's got nothing on him. It points to him. That every heart is longing for him and to be with him forever.

And so as we talk about the church and how it began, we need to understand a little bit about the church. The church is a rescued people. You didn't rescue yourself. You didn't come to an enlightened understanding that, wow, I'm messed up.

[10 : 42] I need to do something about that. I need to decide to follow Jesus. No, you were stuck alone in spiritual death, an enemy, a rebel of him. He came to you because he loves you.

He woke you up. He brought you to life and he brings you into this family. You belong to a family that will have no end. You didn't get to choose that family. And some of you are like, I know I didn't get to choose that family, right?

But this is the hot mess that Jesus calls the church. He says, I love, I love my church. I'm building this church. The gates of hell will not prevail against this.

That the church is a rescued people. The church is a forgiven people. You didn't forgive yourself. Jesus forgave you because your rebellion was against him. The father has forgiven you through Jesus and he has adopted you into his family and he's transformed you.

I tell people, I don't have time to get into all this either, but my story is when I became a follower of Jesus, I was 22, alone in an apartment building and I say, it's like Jesus broke into my apartment, took my brain, took my heart, gave me a new heart, new mind, new desires, and a new way of seeing the world.

[11 : 51] I didn't sit there and concoct this plan for how to feel this way. Jesus did it. He transformed me and he's transforming me. He's doing the same thing with you if you're a follower of him and we're an eternal people for Jesus.

This is the church. This is the church. That's one aspect of the church and we relish in that, we enjoy that, we bask in that, but there's another element of the church. The element of the church that we are the sent people.

That like Jesus was sent into this world so we're sent into this world and that's the focus of what we're gonna look at today because sometimes we really like the programs. You guys have a wonderful building. We meet in like dingy gyms and circus basements and like it's, we were meeting in a unity center where we had to like put some flag over this weird like cultic symbol that was up over where we're preaching and it's just bonkers. You guys have a really nice building. Sometimes when we get into a building like this, we're like, how do we fill this building and keep it busy? How do we stay busy? How do we occupy ourselves with church stuff?

[13:00] And when we first meet Jesus, there's this real sentness usually that takes over us that we want people to know this one that would love someone as messed up as me and transform me. But then we get super comfy and I don't know anyone who loves annual meetings, but it's like, well now I care about the budget.

And like, let's make the next month about this and there's nothing wrong with the budget. But we lose the sentness of the church. The New Testament doesn't know of a church with programs that just keep the church busy.

The New Testament, the Bible's broken up into two big sections, Old Testament, New Testament. The New Testament speaks about forging followers of Jesus who keep being sent. So that's what we're going to look at very briefly today.

Go to the book of Acts if you have a Bible. Acts chapter 1, verse 4 to 5. I'm going to move very fast. Very fast.

Acts 1, 4 and 5 says this, While staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father. So this is Jesus. He's already resurrected from the dead. He's meeting with his followers.

[14:06] He says, Wait for the promise which he said, You've heard from me. He said, John, baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit many days from now. I bet they had no idea what this was going to look like.

Baptized with the Holy Spirit. Peter, what do you think that means? John, what do you think that means? Oh, that's neat. This is what I think it means to me, right? This little circle Bible study about what this is going to be like. Jesus said in verse 8, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, so the city, Judea, the surrounding region, Samaria, their enemies, and to the ends of the earth. So a few things about what was going to happen.

The church was going to be built through spirit-filled witnesses. The church is going to be built through spirit-filled witnesses. Jesus is giving them a global vision.

This isn't a thing just for your neighborhood. This isn't just a thing for your little community. This is going to take over the world. This is why Acts 29 is so compelling to me because I'm like, Oh, I want to be part of the global story.

[15:05] Right? I think it's hard to think about my neighborhood being completely transformed, but like Libya too? And Yemen? And Saudi Arabia? And China?

And Russia? Jesus has a plan for those places? Oh, I want in on that. How is this church going to be formed? Well, it's going to be through spirit-filled witnesses just like you and me.

The idea, though, is that sometimes we get really smart because we have a degree or something and we're like, Oh, okay. You want me to pray and wait? Yeah, but I like taking action. I like doing things.

And what we see here is you're just supposed to wait. You don't have the power to build the church. You don't have the intellect to build the church. You don't have what it takes to build the church.

So just wait. You're going to receive power. And what happens? Well, BK read the text for us in chapter 2, verse 1 to 8. The Spirit equips the church to actually witness.

[16:03] It's interesting. We want more of God, don't we? We want more of the presence of God in our lives. And yet, we don't want to witness. We don't want to show and tell of what Jesus has done for us and what Jesus is doing, this global vision, because we're a little bit embarrassed or ashamed.

BK told me you're in Romans and on Romans 1.16 for like three years or something, right? Like, that we don't want to be ashamed. We don't want to be ashamed. The Spirit doesn't promise power for everything, but He promises power for the witness.

He says, I've got you. You don't even need to worry about what you're going to say. I'll provide the words. I'll show up and give you what you need in that moment. And it might not even be words. It might be that I'm going to do something that you don't understand, and it's going to happen through you not having the answer for that person. That we need to trust the Spirit of God as He's building this church of Jesus.

But here, we see that they get languages. They're hanging out in a room and all of a sudden, you know, I speak French. I'm fluent in French. I like to think I'm bilingual. My neighbors say, you're not bilingual, but whatever.

[17:16] I wish Acts 2 happened to me. Lord, bring French. Like, just do the download, upload thing, like whatever. I want it, right? I want it. But it was a lot of work.

These guys are like, oh, I wonder what's going to happen today. Oh, I'm speaking Egyptian. Oh, I'm speaking Arabic. Whatever they're speaking, they're speaking language that they didn't have at the beginning of the day.

Why? Because the Spirit wanted to use them to witness in a specific way. And as the Spirit comes on them and gives them these gifts and power for witness, what happens?

We see people literally being changed. You remember Peter? Peter, who said to Jesus, I'll die with you, Jesus. I will die with you.

And then like a little girl comes and says, hey, weren't you with Jesus? Like, no, little girl, get out of here. I didn't know Jesus. I don't know who, what you're talking about. Denies Jesus three times. Cowardly, right? We look at that aspect of Peter and we say, coward, but you would probably do the same thing, right?

[18:18] If we're honest. But then we see when the Spirit of God comes upon Peter, it's like a whole new man. In Acts 2, verse 22 to 24, these are the same people that were just chanting, crucify him, crucify him.

Peter now stands up in front of these people and he says this, men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified. Like, you did this. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, but God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

I can imagine Peter, my first sermons I preached on the streets of St. Catherine Street in Montreal because I was a brand new Christian and people told me, well, like, real Christians preach on the street.

I'm like, well, number one, I hope I'm a real Christian. Number two, I don't know how to preach and number three, like, I'm in. So, like, I had weed blown in my face. Those are my first sermons. First time I preached in a church gathering, I'm like, no one's gonna, like, try and fight me?

[19:33] They're like, I don't think so. I'm like, that's a big guy up front. Like, is he for me or against me? He's for you. Okay, good. You know? But Peter, as he stands up, probably in the back of his mind is thinking, I'm gonna be with my buddy Jesus today.

I'm out today. He preaches, and what happens? Verse 36, it says, let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified, and I imagine he's waiting for the stones to come.

And it says, now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? What are we supposed to do with this news? And I imagine Peter being like, I don't know.

I wasn't expecting this. But it said to them, repent, be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and your children and for all those who are far off, everyone whom the Lord, our God, calls to himself.

And they were baptized and thousands of people were added to the church that day. He went from being scared of a servant girl to proclaiming Jesus regardless of what was going to happen to him.

[20:41] In church history, he tells us Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he didn't feel like he was worthy enough to be crucified in the same way of his Lord. Here's what happens when the spirit-filled witnesses start sharing about Jesus.

It says in verse 41 of chapter 2, those who received his word were baptized. There were added that day about 3,000 souls. I love it. I'm a visionary leader.

I have an executive pastor named Brian Stegner. This verse is a nightmare for him. He's like, how do we serve coffee to 3,000 people? How are we going to baptize 3,000 people?

We baptized about 20 people a couple years ago at one time. And by number 15 in the same water, I'm like, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

You know, it was really gross. Really gross. 3,000 people. A nightmare organizationally. The spirit loves it. The spirit could do this stuff all the time.

[21 : 41] It says in verse 47, they were praising God, having favor with all the people. The Lord added to their number. How often? Day by day. The church just keeps growing.

Those people were being saved. This is what God does through spirit-filled witnesses. Let's keep going. Chapter 4. This is getting annoying to those who are religious and overseeing the religion that we're just supposed to keep going on.

It says, chapter 4, verse 1. As they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captains of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them. So those are like the religiously important people, right? They were greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

So what did they do? They arrested them, put them in custody until the next day for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000. It's like, oh, let's put them in prison.

The spirit's like, cool, thanks for putting them in prison so I can show that I'm even more powerful than that. As they're in prison, people are gonna keep meeting Jesus. Jesus is growing his church.

[22 : 49] And this movement that Jesus is doing through his spirit-filled witnesses is happening in two different ways. And listen, chapter 4, verse 29, 31. It says, now Lord, this is a prayer, look upon their threats.

They're being threatened. Right? What do you do when people are threatening you? I'm gonna kill you if you do this thing. I minister to people in India. I work with church planners there, equip them so they can go back into their communities and plant churches.

And story after story after story, these villages where no believers have ever been, no followers of Jesus ever, ever, ever, I'm meeting with these guys who were told by the leaders of that community, if you come and you share that message, we will kill you.

They said, okay, well we're coming back next week and we're gonna share this message of who Jesus is. And they would pray and fast. That's their whole strategy in India.

It's like, yeah, like what's your church growth thing? They're like, well we prayed and we fasted. I'm like, yeah, yeah, yeah, but like what else did you do? They're like, well yeah, we did fast a little bit more. So yeah.

[23 : 53] So they pray and fast that week before they would go in. They go in, the religious leader all of a sudden is welcoming them into the community. Half these villages come to follow Jesus in the first few weeks.

They look at the threats and they're like, oh great, this is an opportunity for the Lord to work against what humanly should actually happen. But the movement in the early church is rooted in witness and prayer.

Verse 29, Lord look upon their threats, grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with boldness. Is that your prayer? Ah, I'm being threatened at work. Ah, the neighborhood association says that they're gonna, they're gonna fine us, you know, if we, if we do whatever, if we speak whatever, have the, the lawn chair on our lawn for too long or whatever.

Maybe you don't have neighborhood associations like that. They can be bonkers, right? But, grant us to keep speaking with boldness. Verse 30, while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant, Jesus.

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. This wasn't anyone's idea, this wasn't anyone's plan, this wasn't in the playbook.

[25 : 07] This, this whole movement was built on prayer and expecting the witness to work. Prayer, intense prayer and expecting that the witness was actually gonna work.

we overcomplicate things, don't we? We try and get cute and clever. I'm all for plans, I'm all for goals and KPIs and all that stuff.

But the Spirit of God oftentimes like flips those over and says, that was really nice and cute, thank you for that spiritual offering that you just poured out on the altar, I appreciate that, but here's what I'm gonna do. And are we so attached to this that we aren't willing to relinquish control over that and get behind his plan?

Because his plan's gonna change the world, yours might change the carpet. Right? He's gonna rescue souls, you might provide a meal. This is what the Spirit of God does.

Are we people of prayer? I struggle with prayer a lot. I just like to get things done, I wanna type A, I'm driven, I'm ready to go and do this and the Lord often slows me down through circumstance.

[26 : 14] Would you just, would you ask me for this stuff? I'd love to give it to you. We have a Father who would love to give us everything he's promised he'll give us. We often spend so much time asking God for the things he didn't promise to ever give us.

Do you beg him for your neighbors? Do you beg him for your friends and your coworkers? Do you beg him for people in Squamish and the surrounding regions? Do you beg him for people around the world to know him?

Or have you just lost that? Is that gone altogether? If you have no passion, no desire, not even like a movement for other people to know him, would you beg him for that this morning?

Just stop listening to me at this point and speak with him about this. Like, Lord, would you give me that desire? Would you give me your desire for people? In chapter four, we see it's not just growing wide, but they're growing in generosity.

This movement is taking care of one another as well. So it's not just this movement to fill buildings, but also to provide every need that one another had. Don't we want that type of community?

[27 : 16] That's a community my neighbor's looking for. One where they can actually be family. They're not impressed by like the lights and whistles and fog machines and, you know, whatever we think people want.

They're not impressed by that. Because Cirque du Soleil, who practices in one of the gyms that we rent, puts on a way better show than we ever will. But they don't have the Holy Spirit. They don't have the Holy Spirit.

They're longing for a place where they can belong, be loved, not be judged for the issues that they're working through and where there's life that's promised to them.

We have that to offer. We don't just fill seats. Right? We fill lives. We invite people in. Ministry. And I'm talking to everyone.

If you're a follower of Jesus, you're in full-time ministry. It's inefficient. Ministry to people, real ministry, is inefficient. How many of you find parenting to be super efficient?

[28 : 18] It's like my, I have a 13-year-old son. He's my oldest. Every deep conversation is like 10.05 p.m. You know, Dad, I was really thinking, I'm like, would you think at 6 p.m., please?

You know, like I'm on it at 6 p.m. I'm not sure I'm spirit-filled past 10 p.m. I don't know. Right? But it's like, it's so frustrating and beautiful, isn't it?

Ministry to people is inefficient. They're going to bother you. They're going to show up at times that you're like, but my Google calendar says that I'm not available. My phone's on sleep mode.

You can't be here, bro. Didn't you know? My first call as a pastor, right, we'd just planted the church, I got a call at 4.30 in the morning from someone in our core group, and I'm like, first of all, I don't know why I didn't have my phone on sleep.

I think I had a flip phone at that point, so there's no sleep mode. It's just on all the time, like ready to go. Type A phone. And so I answer, and I won't tell you his name, but he's like, hey man, I'm in a real mess.

[29 : 22] I'm like, yeah, what's going on? He's like, well, I made some bad decisions last night. I'm like, okay, like what? He's like, well, I did cocaine all night. I'm like, yeah, that's a bad decision. All right. This is our core group, right?

Like, so exciting to change Montreal. It's going to be amazing. I did cocaine all night. I'm like, okay, that's not good. He's like, and the guy who did it with is going crazy in my apartment, and I don't know what to do.

Can you come help me? I'm like, bro, I'm like 5'8 on a good day. You know, what am I going to do? Did you try 911? No, I did drugs. I don't want to call 911. I'm like, oh my goodness.

So I'm like, hey honey, I might die. I'm going to go over real quick to go and see Buddy and try and sort this thing out. Inefficient. Ministry's inefficient.

But that guy loves Jesus so much. That guy is on fire for Jesus. That guy is a witness for Jesus. That guy's not doing cocaine anymore. That guy's not putting himself in these situations.

[30 : 21] We get called out of bed often. We get called out of our comfy situations because Jesus wants to minister to someone that's not on our time block.

But it's not about us. It's about him. That's our ministry. Not just the pastor. Not just the church planter. So this church is growing. It's growing, growing, growing in Jerusalem.

Acts 5, 12 to 16 tells us that. I don't have time to get into that. I knew I'd tell stories so I'm going to be brief on some of this stuff. But things are blowing up. And if this church started getting really, really big and BK was like, hey, we need a meeting.

We need to knock out some walls. We need to grow this thing. I'm pretty sure all of you would be super excited. Right? Like, man, people are meeting Jesus. It's awesome. During COVID, I was preaching like five times, you know, a Sunday.

And it's like, oh, your church is growing. It's like, no, we can only meet with like 10 people in a room at a time. It's, you know, wow. But that idea of preaching all day long to like really full rooms is exciting because that means, well, maybe might mean that God is moving.

[31 : 21] And it's so tempting to just want to make it all about us, isn't it? Like, we'll build a bigger house, a bigger barn. We'll do the bigger thing. And Jesus says, no, I told you it's going to happen in Jerusalem, but it also needs to happen in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

And so, what ends up happening is something that no one prays for, but the Lord allowed it to happen in Acts chapter eight, verse one. It says, and Saul, who we know as Paul, Saul approved of this execution of a man named Stephen and there arose that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem.

They were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, except the apostles. No one chooses persecution. The Lord allows it. And what seems like this great movement, this awesome thing that's happening, it's like, oh, okay, that's it.

Like, the band is all done. I guess, I guess we're done with that, that movement. We can be tempted when some sort of, something we think is persecution comes upon us.

I guess, I guess the Lord's all done. I guess he didn't think through this completely. He had the first few thousand years okay, but I don't know, COVID really, really stumped him. Not quite sure what he's gonna do.

[32 : 30] The movement's not over. It's just changing. It's different. We're spirit filled, right? The spirit changes things along the way. Instead, Jesus uses this persecution to take this movement out of one city and make it global.

And here's where we come in. This global movement wasn't led by the apostles. This global movement wasn't led by people with seminary degrees.

This global movement wasn't led by those who can read Hebrew and Greek. It was led by normal, ordinary followers of Jesus. Jesus. They left the city and as they were leaving, they were telling the story of how Jesus transformed them and people were being changed.

Unfortunately, we only have a little glimpse into this in the book of Acts. But I think the examples that are given in the book of Acts are indicative of the stories that were happening all over the place. Acts chapter eight, we engage with this guy named Philip and I won't read any of this, but you can read this later.

This guy named Philip, he leaves the city, goes to a place called Samaria, starts telling of what Jesus has done and the city turns to Jesus. There's great joy in the city.

[33 : 47] Spirit-filled witness sent to a place proclaiming the story of who Jesus is and what he's done. People get changed. Philip also meets this guy from Ethiopia.

He's a leader in that nation. He's a servant of the queen. He's reading. He happens to be reading the scroll of Isaiah 53. You have to be rich to get your hands on a scroll of scripture.

He's reading this thing out loud. Philip just happens to be there overhearing Isaiah 53, a chapter in the Old Testament. Philip runs up to the carriage and says, hey, do you know what you're reading?

The guy's like, no, no idea. It's like reading law books for me. I'm like, I have no idea. I'm going to jail probably and then my executive pastor is like, I'll read it. Let's stay out of jail, right? But I don't get it.

Isaiah 53, don't get it. Philip explains it to him. The guy becomes a follower of Jesus, gets baptized and then this Marvel Doctor Strange thing happens, right? All of a sudden, Philip is there and then he's not, right?

[34 : 48] Marvel is even ripping off the New Testament, right? All of a sudden, Philip like leaves and he's in this place called Azotus and it says that he begins preaching the gospel.

He's like, well, I don't really know where I am. Looking for a Hebrew happy meal somewhere. I'm a little hungry but I'm going to keep preaching. Normal, ordinary Christians proclaiming who Jesus is and it's working.

Then we see in chapter 9, verse 31. I'll just read that to us. The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

This was quick, wasn't it? Spirit of God takes the persecution meant against the church and uses it to build the church to reach the world.

The gates of hell don't win. We have people in our church right now that just moved from China. They were part of the underground church and one of the pastors on our team had a meeting with them and they said, Pastor, we really don't understand some of the things going on in the church.

[35 : 54] I'm like, oh, okay. His name is Jeff. The pastor and he's saying, what's going on? They said, well, like, no one comes to our little missional community or our small group or city group that we're supposed to be on mission through this thing.

It's like, yeah, we're really trying hard to like work with people's schedule and they're like, I thought that the schedule was the Lord's. You're like, yeah, it is. You're right. And then they begin telling the story of what it was like for them in China.

They're like, oh, we have no advertisements. We're meeting in very secret places. We can't tell of what we're doing. We're passing off pieces of scripture, you know, to one another. We're sharing everything quietly and the church is growing like crazy.

We can openly say things. We can put out signs. We get like tax deductions. We, all this stuff and we're ashamed of the gospel. And it's like, oh, Lord, would you make us, make us more like, like them.

Persecution, we think, is going to snuff out the church. But in China, Iran, Afghanistan, persecution there is causing the church to explode with growth because the Holy Spirit says, oh, I can't be here.

[37 : 02] Hold on a second. Let me show you what I can do. Oh, you thought, you thought COVID was interesting how that virus spread? Hold on. Let me show you how my gospel spreads in places where it's not allowed to be.

You can't mask the gospel and keep it out. Persecution seems to make it bigger. Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, says that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

Right? Where the church is growing, persecution usually is. We're so scared of persecution, aren't we? Is the West. We don't want it. We don't pray for it.

And yet what we see is that Jesus takes persecution and leverages it for his church to grow. And then Jesus, in the book of Acts, he converts the enemy, Paul, in Acts 9, verse 1 to 9.

And then he takes him. We're finishing. Here we go. Acts 13. We made it. You're like, we didn't really do all of it. I know. But it sounds good, doesn't it? We're doing 13 chapters today. Acts 13, 1 to 3.

[38 : 02] Jesus has converted. This guy named Saul, Paul, now he's a follower of him, no longer an enemy, was a Christian killer, and now he's a proclaimer.

And he's in this church in Antioch. And it says, they were in the church of Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, who's called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, a member of the court of Herod, the Tetrarch, and Saul, while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting.

So, something like this. The Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

The rest of the book of Acts that we're not going to look at today is focusing in on Paul's story of planting, how Jesus worked through this guy named Paul to plant churches all over the Roman Empire to the ends of the earth.

The people who weren't part of the people of God are now part of the people of God. And the world literally is being changed. It says in Acts 17 that the world was being turned upside down.

[39 : 09] That's how people viewed the church. I don't know that that's how people view the church today. I don't think anyone's going to be like, man, Squamish has been turned upside down, right, because of the churches who are working together.

So good. Amazing. But we're viewed not as just like unhelpful and out of touch with reality, but the church is viewed as dangerous because of the history that we have and some of our views on certain things.

But we're supposed to be the good news people. Maybe we've taken secondary things and we've made the main things. And those are the things that are representing Jesus to our city and we're the people who are now sent to say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

That's not what the church really is. That's not Jesus' message at all. Here's who he is. Like, let me invite you into the life of the church. Experience who Jesus is and the people that he has rescued. Taste and see, right? Psalm, I think, 34. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Experience him. That's what people are looking for.

[40 : 14] The story doesn't end in Acts chapter 28. The story keeps going. The church keeps going. Hopefully you realize that if you're part of the church.

You're like, I am continuing to go. That's really good. But the church keeps going. We know this because he's converted you. I'm going to skip ahead in Romans. Romans chapter 5, verse 6. It says, while we are still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Verse 8. God shows his love for us and that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Verse 10. If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we're reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

You are still plan A. Spirit-filled witnesses is still Jesus' plan on how he's going to build his church. and he's going to do it in the ordinary life that you're living.

That was point one. Point two, really quick. Why must the church keep planting? Because the world doesn't know him. Why do we need to keep thinking about planting more churches? Because the world doesn't know him.

[41 : 21] People shouldn't have to drive an hour and a half to come to a church that loves Jesus and submits to his word. We want to make gospel outposts and gospel hubs closer to them. Making disciples leads to church planting.

It's not like starting a franchise. Oh, let's start an Acts 1-9 franchise. That's not it. Some of you are really good at business. Some of you are good at starting franchises, maybe. I don't know. But we plant churches around new disciples who are meeting Jesus.

And we gather people around them to equip them and build up a community. Why does the church keep planting? The world doesn't know him. Many in British Columbia don't know him. I've hung out in Vancouver quite a bit.

Talked to a lot of people. They don't know him. They know about him. They know some stuff about him. Just like you might know, oh, Dwight's wife is five foot one.

Cool. But you don't know her. Our culture thinks that they know a lot about Jesus. You're the people who are sent to not just tell. No, no, no. That's not true. But to also say, hey, come and see.

[42 : 26] Because the people in my neighborhood, my friends who don't love Jesus, they're like, cool. I like your statement of faith. That's nice. But does it work? It's cool you say you believe that.

But belief isn't this noun. Belief is a verb. It's does this actually work? And is it beautiful? Those are the questions.

People aren't really asking the questions, is it true? They're saying, does it work? And is it beautiful? Jesus is beautiful. Jesus does work.

He's got the best offer on the table. And that's what I'll say to my friends. I'm like, listen, your offer doesn't lead to eternal life. My offer does. Try him. Like, just ask.

C.S. Lewis would tell people, imagine that it's true. What would life be like if this were true? I'm not asking you to believe it yet, but imagine what life would be like if it were.

[43 : 25] The globe has 3.14 billion people. Like, it's hard to wrap your brain around that number, isn't it? 3.14 billion people who are part of unreached people groups still.

How are we going to reach them? Spirit-filled witnesses. You. That's how we reach them. Not with this awesome whiteboard plan, but you.

Acts 29 gives us an opportunity. I was with our Quebec churches recently and speaking about the needs that we have in North Africa and West Africa.

And there's this guy named Keo working in the Ivory Coast strategically, and all these guys are coming to him to be trained in French, so their second language, to go back into their first language, which is a tribal language, to reach unreached people groups.

We get to be a part of that. Right? We get to now go to Ivory Coast and partner with Keo and train these men and women in theology and ecclesiology and understanding how the church works to send them back into these unreached people groups.

[44 : 28] Right? This is a moment where I get to pinch myself and we should pinch ourselves. We get to be involved in this global movement. This is bonkers. This is wild. I don't know what I'm doing most of the time. And I'm like, I get to be involved in seeing unreached people groups meet Jesus?

Like, this is amazing. Sign me up. I'm in. Why must the church keep planting? Because the world doesn't know him. Third point. What's your role? What's your role?

If you're like, man, this guy keeps saying that we're spirit-filled witnesses, I'm going to keep saying it. What's my role? My role is to be a spirit-filled witness of Jesus who goes into my workplace, goes into my neighborhood, goes into my family, to pray intentionally?

Lord, would you please hijack these people's lives? Lord, would you please show up in a dream? Cause them to, cause them to have a desire for Jesus somehow.

Cause my words that talking about church or Christmas or something, like, cause something to awaken them so we can have a good conversation. Lord, I'm praying for that because I can't do this.

[45 : 39] And as we have opportunity, we share the good news of who Jesus is cause it's the best news on the table. I've never heard any news better than the one that Jesus puts out there. Right? And we slide that offer across the table and say, hey listen, you might not be ready for this yet.

You might have lots of questions. You might not even trust me yet, but I just want to slide this over. And whenever you want to talk about it, let's talk about it. Now we can continue on whatever we're on about. But the gospel is on the table for you.

This is good news. What's our role? We're all witnesses. We pray. We share the gospel. We live in community. We had a woman that met Jesus a couple months ago.

We do this thing called sextember. So in September, sex is something we talk about because everyone's talking about it. So we as a church talk about it every September. And this woman, a 50-year-old woman from China came.

She's been living in Canada for 10 years. She came. And after the sermon, I could tell like she's listening to me talk about God's intention for sexuality and whatever she's listening. And right after the sermon, she was leaving.

[46 : 40] I preach all day on Sundays. And so right after that last sermon, I'm out of there too. We bump into each other out in the parking lot. She thanks me. She tells me, oh, I've been thinking that my life is meaningless.

And I don't know where to find meaning. And so I heard that maybe churches could help. So I googled church near me. Your church came up. And here I am.

I'm like, whoa. Why are you leaving? She said, well, your message is done. And they're just going to do the weird singing thing. And I'm like, yeah, it is weird. I'm like, well, let me take you back in. Right? People think we're doing Christian karaoke, right?

We think it's normal. It's not normal to the world. So I take her back in and I introduce her to the local pastor there and then I leave. And Thanksgiving was just around the corner from then.

She was invited to a Thanksgiving dinner. She said, I've been here for 10 years. No one has ever invited me into their house. She said, no one's ever shared hospitality.

[47 : 38] No one has ever really spoken to me except when they have to. She said, I meet these people who say that there's this God who comes after people, who brings them into their family. She said, you showed me that was true.

The way that you do community is super important. The love that you have for one another is something that people are longing for. The dad issues that people have.

I want to be loved. And not have to earn approval. It's like, well, this is what Jesus offers out in his family. The unity that he offers around the cross and resurrection.

You get to show that and display that to Squamish. They don't know what that's like. But they have to get close enough. And it's not going to be on a Sunday necessarily. It's going to be being invited into your homes.

We tell people in our church all the time, they're like, oh, what's our outreach strategy? I'm like, meals. Yeah, but like, when are we really going to get serious? I'm like, over dessert. You know, like, meals.

[48 : 33] I've seen more people meet Jesus at my table than in our Sunday gatherings. Why? Because I invite not yet Christians and I invite Christians and we eat together and we ride bikes together and we run together.

Like, I enjoy doing those type of sports. You're like, that sounds horrible. Well, like, knit together. Play video games together. I don't know what you want to do. Whatever. But the idea is that we're bringing the community of God and those who aren't yet part of the community of God, we're putting us together and we're saying, we're going to live life.

Because people say, I'm really busy. I understand that some of you are super busy. We have surgeons in our church that they said, hey, listen, I work 80 to 90 hours a week. Your mission thing sounds super cool.

How do I fund it? I'm like, no, no, no. The Lord doesn't want your money. Like, yeah, fund it, sure. Like, we'll take your money for sure. But like, he wants you. I said, so, do you eat?

He's like, well, no, not during surgery. I'm like, that's really good. But like, when you're done surgery, do you eat? He's like, yeah, we usually eat together. I'm like, well, great. Could you eat intentionally? Are there any Christians?

[49 : 37] He's like, yeah, there is one Christian, you know, this nurse. I'm like, well, can you invite her? Can you eat together? And can you be praying for these other people that you're working with? And can you just eat together and be there for one another?

And he's like, yeah, we can do that. And he moved to Saskatoon. And I'm, you know, I'm like, oh, I'm so sorry. You have to leave Montreal for Saskatchewan. I just spent time in Saskatchewan. It's incredibly flat still.

It's amazing, right? I could see Montreal and Squamish. I'm like, that's where I came from. That's where I'm going. But he lives there and he has this ministry with doctors, right? Because he figured out I can live my normal, everyday, busy life with gospel intentionality.

I just eat with people. I'm there for them. When I hear needs, I talk to my gospel community. I say, can we meet the needs of these people? They do and they're like, whoa, I thought I could buy everything I needed in life.

And the Christian community is coming along to provide what is needed. You can do this. You are led by the spirit to live your ordinary life with gospel intentionality so that more people meet Jesus here.

[50 : 42] And would you beg God for revival? Oh, our church prays for revival all the time. Every time we're praying, people are saying, Lord, would you please send revival? Would you give us more of your spirit?

Would you cause us to have new affections for Jesus? It's like on repeat. My kids say, Dad, can you pray for anything else? Like you just pray for the same things over and over? I'm like, I can't wait. I can't wait for the Lord to answer that prayer so that I can begin praying for other things.

But until he does, I'm gonna keep begging him for that. That people in Montreal would love Jesus more than anything else in this world. That people in Squamish would love him so much more than the thrills that they get from skiing or mountain biking or climbing or from the beauty of looking at the gorgeous layout that God has put here over their cup of whatever coffee they're drinking.

Right? You get to put out something far better in your normal, ordinary life to people. I'm gonna skip a bunch of stuff and I'm gonna end with this.

Whenever I go into churches to speak, I'm never quite sure. In our church, we do responsive readings and we have a little bit of liturgy, but I'm like, oh, I'm not gonna put that on anyone.

[51 : 56] So I don't wanna be reading something and then not have anyone respond back. Right? So I'm just gonna read the whole thing. And I'll say, this is what you would have said if you could have had the opportunity to.

But this is how we respond to this. Whom shall the Lord send into the world? The church would say, send us. The leader would ask, well, why would he send you?

And the church would respond, because we are his people. We were once not his people, but because of his life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we've been forgiven.

We've received eternal life. We have value, meaning, and purpose that cannot be taken away. He calls us new creation. He's made us family. We're his servants on his mission.

We're ambassadors who are sent to show and tell of our great God. Then the leader would ask, well, would you go into danger? The church would say, yes. The leader would ask, why?

[52 : 57] And the church would say, because we have nothing to lose. We've already lost our lives to Christ. No danger can separate us from his love. The leader would ask, well, what if you die?

The church would say, well, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Death can't separate us from him. Jesus overcame death. One day, death will die. The leader would say, well, how will you change people?

The church would say, we can't change people. The spirit of God can. We believe that he uses the gospel to unlock closed minds and hearts, so we will share the way that Jesus has changed us.

And then the leader would ask, are you willing to do anything for the gospel? And the church would say, we are willing. We want to see Jesus lifted high above all else. Here we are. Lord, send us.

Jesus is building his church all over the world. We get the opportunity to partner together, hopefully as Church 21 in Squamish, you know, to figure out, how do we plan? How do we do this?

[53 : 56] How do we share resources? How do we benefit one another so that more Canadians would know who Jesus is? Right? My desire, and I'm going to be very Montreal-centric for a second. Part of the thing that God used to call me to Montreal was someone told me it's the least reached city in the Western Hemisphere.

And I'm like, I would love to see it become the most reached city in the world. Like, let's hustle and go after that. Like, let's run after that. Let's, you know, 99 point whatever percent not yet Christian, and I'm like, 99 point whatever percent opportunity.

Right? Everyone is an opportunity of potential life in this moment. That's the spirit that's moving in you right now. Allow for your expectations to rise that Jesus might bring revival in your heart to Squamish, to BC, to our country that we might be a blessing to the world.

Let me pray for us. And I'll just, I'll ask this question before I pray. What is Jesus saying to you? What's Jesus saying to you? What's in the way of you being that spirit-filled witness?

And let him deal with that. Jesus, thank you that you are here. You walk amongst your churches. We see that in the book of Revelation.

[55 : 19] You walk amongst your churches. You know precisely what's going on in each one. You know precisely what's going on in each heart that's here. I pray that you would minister by your spirit.

Pray that you would, if there's something in the way of us living a life where we witness and we show and we tell who you are and what you've done, that you would deal with that.

If it's shame, if it's guilt, if it's fear, if it's approval, if it's comfort, if it's power, if it's control, would you take that false God and destroy it? We have nothing to lose.

I'm going to pray for anyone who's here that doesn't yet know you. They feel like they need to perform so that you will look at them and say, oh, good. I will give them my affection because of what they have done.

I pray that today they would be released of that, that they would see what you did, Jesus, on their behalf was sufficient and enough, that your death and your resurrection has satisfied everything necessary for them to be called your people.

[56 : 23] I pray that you'd bring revival to Squamish. Pray that you'd bring a movement of prayer to this church and to the area that we would be getting up early, staying up late, we would be inconvenienced, that we would join in the inefficiency of kingdom work, that we can't fit it all into the nice hours we want it to happen in and that we would be, we would be so joyful to work on whatever schedule you want to use.

Father, we love you. Father, thank you so much that you call us your kids. I pray that you would, that you administer to each heart as they have need this morning.

We love you and need you for everything. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.