

# The Planting of a Church

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles now and turn with me to the Old Testament prophet of Isaiah. Isaiah 49. I'll read the first seven verses in your hearing. This is God's Word.

Listen to me, you islands! Hear this, you distant nations! Before I was born, the Lord called me. From my birth He has made mention of my name.

He made my mouth like a sharpened sword. In the shadow of His hand He hid me. He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in His quiver. He said to me, You are my servant, Israel, in whom I display my splendor.

But I said, I have labored to no purpose. I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God.

And now the Lord says, You form me in the womb to be a servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, and gather Israel to Himself. For I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has been my strength.

[1:04] He says, It is too small a thing for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.

This is what the Lord says, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel. To Him who is despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers, kings will see you and rise up.

Princes will see you and bow down, because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you. I am not sure how aware you are of what is going on in broader Calvinism in the United States, but something exciting is afoot.

The Reformed faith in America is pulsating, pulsating with a desire to plant churches. And large urban areas are the primary target.

Some men are preparing the groundwork, other men are training to be church planters, and others are on the ground, doing the work of planning the church.

[2:16] New York City has a thriving, reformed, urban church scene. All over the city, and all the little different neighborhoods, there's these little churches coming up, and there's an eye for more.

They want more and more of these little churches. And throughout the Midwest, in cities like Nashville, and Memphis, and Chicago, and St. Louis, there are more and more Reformed churches springing up.

In the Pacific Northwest, in the city of Seattle, churches are coming to life all over the place. Are they all 1689 Confession churches? Would they join ARPCA?

Probably not. But they do preach the same sovereign God, that we hold to. They hold to the same doctrines, that we do. And Jesus Christ is preached.

And with Paul, we should say, I rejoice in that. So why am I bringing this up? Because, while our culture, is going from worse, to worse, and people are giving in, to relativism, and post-modernism, to new age philosophy, and to even paganism, Christ is still about the business, of planning his church.

[3:36] And the church, is going from strength, to strength. It's getting larger, and larger. And it is our, great privilege, to join Christ, in this great building effort, that he is doing.

Grace Fellowship, has a part to play. And that means, each one of you, has a part to play, in planning the church, in the world. Well, there's no plans, right now, for Grace Fellowship, to plan a church, anytime soon.

It might be upon us, before we know it. And so, it's good for us, to stir up our thoughts, as we think about, what that would look like, from the word of God. So, turn in your Bibles, here in Isaiah, I need you to turn to, Acts chapter 11.

Acts chapter 11. And we'll look at, verse 19. And this is the story, of how, the church in Antioch, was born. How it was planted.

And tonight, we're going to see, what Jesus did, in Antioch. What he did in Antioch. And how he did, what he did, in Antioch.

[4 : 44] Well, what did Christ do, in the city of Antioch? Let's look at, verse 19, and we'll read, a few verses here. Now, those who had been, scattered by the persecution, in connection with Stephen, traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message, only to Jews.

Some of them, however, men from Cyprus, and Cyrene, went to Antioch, and began to speak, to Greeks also, telling them, the good news, about the Lord Jesus.

The Lord's hand, was with them, and a great number, of people believed, and turned, to the Lord. So, what did Christ do, in Antioch?

He powerfully, asserted, his authority, into the Gentile world. He saved, pagan, idolaters. These people, in Antioch, didn't know, anything, about the true, and living God.

They didn't know, anything, about Jesus Christ. They were Greeks, after all. And they didn't have, the scripture, in any form. They didn't know, about the Old Testament.

[5 : 54] They weren't, morally, good people. They were, godless sinners. And yet, out of that rock, Jesus Christ, carved, and made, a church.

And so, what do you see, when you see, your neighbors, not going to church, on Sunday, but instead, watching football, spending their whole day, doing that? What do you see, when you see, their children, walking down the street, and their swearing, at a very young age, do you see, a potential worshiper, a potential church, member, or do you see, a lost cause?

I was walking, around Walmart, the other day, and, the people, just struck me. Just the people, being there. Here they are, buying their shoes, picking out, their cereal, deciding, what they're going to eat, they're talking, to their children, they're pushing, they're pushing their carts around, they're buying everything, that they need.

Probably, most of them, are completely, oblivious, to God. In their thoughts, they don't have, any room, for him. And yet, they're potential, worshipers.

They're potential, worshipers. If God, gets a hold of that lady, picking out shoes, and that man, picking out cereal, and those children, then he, can turn them around, and turn them from idols, and turn them to the living God.

[7 : 21] And he can make them, a worshiper. And so, no matter how far gone, people are, this passage, teaches us, that Jesus can save them, and he can put them, and bring them, into the church.

And that is what Jesus Christ, did in Antioch. He built his church, out of the most, unlikely, of bricks. These weren't, the ideal starter material, for a church.

And we, are the same, way. Grace fellowship, doesn't exist, we're not a people here, because we're super good people, that it just, it was the natural thing, for us, to join a church.

His grace, and his power, reached into our lives. Wherever you were at, he reached into your life, and he pulled you out. Jesus powerfully, asserted, his authority, in Bremen, Indiana, and that's why, there's a church here, among godless, Gentiles.

And because, Jesus Christ, is the same, yesterday, and today, and tomorrow, we can hope, we can hope expectantly, that he will go on, pulling people out of, paganism, and idolatry, and build his, and build his church.

[8 : 37] He can powerfully, assert his authority, again, and again, and again, in the planting, of more churches. Well, that's what Jesus did, in Antioch.

He powerfully, asserted his authority, to plant a church. Secondly, and this is much longer, how did Jesus do, what he did, in Antioch?

How, how did he do, what he did? His actions took, four steps. It progressed, with four steps, and that's what we're going to, spend the rest of our time on, looking at these four steps, in each step in turn.

So, step one, Jesus used, very exciting, excited, laymen, to proclaim the gospel. Jesus used, very excited, laymen, to proclaim the gospel.

Remember, look at verse 19. Now, those who had been scattered, by the persecution, in connection with Stephen, traveled to Antioch, and these were the men, who started teaching, the Greeks.

[9:42] Well, who was scattered, in the persecution, connected to, Stephen? Acts 8, 1 tells us, that it was everyone, except for the apostles, except for the leaders, of the church in Jerusalem.

So, who were these folks, who were going to Antioch? Well, they were just, ordinary, church members. They were Jewish, laymen. Our passage tells us, that they were from, Cyprus, and Cyrene.

Now, Cyprus, if you know your geography, it's on the eastern end, eastern end, if you're, looking at it, of the Mediterranean. It was mostly, a Gentile island.

There was a Jewish colony there, but they were far outnumbered, by Gentiles. It was sort of a, out of the way place. It wasn't any place important. Cyrene.

It was on the coast, of what is modern day Libya. Again, mostly Gentile, but there was a Jewish colony there. They were far outnumbered, by the Gentiles.

[10:43] Cyrene, Cyprus, these places, weren't anything important. So, who are these folks? They're, from nowhere, religiously speaking.

They weren't, from the big cities. They weren't, from Jerusalem. They weren't, from anywhere important. They weren't, apostles. They weren't, even Jews, who lived in the homeland.

And if, you were a good Jew, the best of Jews, you would want to go, and live in the homeland. They, weren't there, except, on Pentecost, and, they were saved. They weren't, sophisticated theologians.

They'd just been, run out of Jerusalem. They'd just been, persecuted, and so they had to, flee Jerusalem. So, in other words, they're not, ideal, starter material, for a church plant.

They were just, excited, about Jesus. Nothing could keep them, from telling others, about Jesus. And so, they proclaimed him. You couldn't, stop them, from telling them, about Jesus.

[11:47] Others, about Jesus. They weren't, interested, in talking about, the latest, theological point. They weren't, interested, in finding out, what this person, says about that, and what this person, says about this.

Like, so many, online bloggers, are always talking about, I just want to find, they want to argue, about the latest point. That wasn't for them. Jesus was for them.

And they, proclaimed him. They were excited, about Jesus. They couldn't, contain themselves. And so, they started, talking, talking to Gentiles.

They started, talking to Gentiles. And remember, they're Jews. And there was a wall, a great wall, of hostility, between the Jews, and the Gentiles, that you couldn't, break down. But the gospel, was this pot.

And it was, boiling over, inside of them. And so, that gospel, moved them, to break through, that wall, of hostility. And they were, worked up.

[12:45] They were, stirred up. And so, it didn't matter, the cultural differences, between the Jews, and the Greeks. The important thing, was Jesus. And I think, that's why they did it.

I think, that's why, they were able, to go, and they were able, to speak to people, that they weren't, comfortable with. Because, Jesus was a bigger deal, to them, than the cultural differences.

They loved, Jesus. And they saw, what he had done, for them. And they were, amazed, at what Jesus, had done, in their life. And they saw, how glorious, and good he was.

And they were, mesmerized, with him. And so, they had, to tell others. The cultural differences, between Jews, and Greeks, were nothing, compared to the, greatness, of Jesus Christ.

And so, they were, captured, by that first love. Do you remember, when you were, first called, and you loved Jesus, and you thought, you know what, this will never, grow cold, and this will never, grow old, and I want to go, further, and further.

[13:49] They were, captured, by that first love, for Jesus. And do you ever, look at someone, and say, you know, they're really, different, than I am.

They're really, different, but I don't, care. I don't care. They have all, those crazy tattoos, and they listen to this, the wildest music. Man, I don't, I don't care.

Jesus, is a big deal. Those things are not a big deal, but Jesus, is a big deal. And these ordinary, Jewish laymen, were excited, about Jesus, and so they wanted to tell, the Gentiles about him.

They wanted them, to experience, him, in the same way, that they had. Well, why did they talk, to the Gentiles? Because they really loved them.

They really loved them. Remember, they were from, predominantly, Gentile areas. They were far outnumbered, by Gentiles, in their homeland. They lived, and they worked, with Gentiles, day in,

and day out.

[14:54] They had, Gentile neighbors. They had, Gentile shopkeepers. And they loved them. And they wanted, to do them good. And the best thing, that we can do, for anyone.

The greatest expression, of love, that we can have, for someone, is to tell them, about the best person, that we know. And that's, Jesus Christ. Well, these were the people, that Jesus used, to start the church, in Antioch.

They're the people, that Jesus is still using, to plant churches, throughout our country, and throughout, the world. They're people, they're normal people.

They don't have, the seminary degree. They don't have, a great education. They live in, less than ideal situations. But they're excited, about Jesus. They're in love, with him.

And so, they don't sit back, and wait passively, for others, to take the lead. They seize, the opportunity. They see, what can be done. And they get busy. They're always busy, telling people, about Jesus, and introducing people, to Jesus.

[16:05] And any successful, church plant, will have, excited, laymen involved. Now, it's very important, and we're going to see, this later, to have an excited, passionate, qualified, prepared leader.

But if he is joined, to a lifeless, selfish, bunch of Christians, then that church plant, is going to go, nowhere. A healthy, vibrant, successful, church plant, is going to have, healthy, vibrant, church members.

And so, that's the first step. Jesus used, excited, laymen. The second step, the Lord blessed, and men repented. The Lord blessed, and men repented.

It's not enough, to be all excited, about Jesus. Our excitement, and our, passion for the gospel, may give people the gospel, and may break down, cultural barriers.

Our words will plant the seed, and our words will water the seed, and our words will, you know, put the dirt over the seed. But in the end, it's the Lord, who gives, the growth.

[17:16] Look again, at verse 21. The Lord's hand, was with them, and a great number, of people believed, and turned, to the Lord. Why was there a church, in Antioch?

Because the Lord's, hand, was with them. Jesus went with them, with power. Jesus has, infinite power. He has, sovereign control, of all things.

He is God, after all. He is omnipotent, over all things, and all people. He is sovereign, in every situation. And that means, he has the right, and the authority, to call, whoever he wants.

And to save, whoever he wants. Jesus saw his servants, telling others about him, and he added his power, to their words. And the result, was phenomenal.

The result, was phenomenal. Phenomenal. A great number, of people believed. Do you believe, in conversion, by the hundreds, and by the thousands? The Bible, teaches us that.

[18:17] And, the normal situation, I think, is for one or two, to be saved here, and there, and here, and there. But, we should not, view that, as that, that's, because Jesus is weak.

Jesus, doesn't get tired, after he saves, one or two people, and then have to rest. He has strength, to save, thousands at a time. Remember, Pentecost.

He saved, three thousand, in one day. Three thousand, souls at the same time, were changed, from stone, to flesh. Three thousand, souls were stolen, out of the hands, of Satan.

And so, here in Antioch, Jesus did the same thing. He saved, a great number of people, and a great number of people, believed in the Lord. Jesus worked, repentance, into every one, of those believers.

They had been going, their own way, they had turned aside, and they were doing, the things that they, wanted to do. They had been idolaters, without a care in the world. They were like those people, in Walmart, completely oblivious.

[19:23] They were like our neighbors, completely oblivious to God. And Jesus took a hold of them, and he turned them around. They were like our neighbors. They didn't go to church.

They didn't know the Bible. They're the kind of people, that you stop on the side of the road, and you ask them the Ten Commandments, and they can't give you any of them. This is what kind of people, were in Antioch.

They didn't know anything about Jesus. They just saw some people, that were excited about him, and Jesus worked in their lives, and saved them.

Jesus doesn't need our neighbors, to come to church, and become good moralist, before he can save them. His grace, after all, is irresistible grace.

Do you remember the I, in Tulip? It worked for you. It worked for you. It worked for me. And it worked for our neighbors. It worked to plant a church, among the Gentiles.

[20:23] So God can carve a church. God can carve a believer, out of the stone of idolatry, and he made it Abraham. And he can carve a church, out of godless Gentiles, and he made it Antioch.

And God can still, carve a rock, the rock of idolatry, and make it into a church, here in Indiana.

God's irresistible grace, should encourage you, in this whole matter.

It should encourage you to see, that the fields are white, unto harvest. They're white, unto harvest.

Is the field, full of sinners? Yes.

They're sinners. And that's great, because Jesus came, to save sinners. And you say, they're dead.

They're dead. They can't respond.

And that's great, because Jesus, is the resurrection, and the life. It's all the better, that they're dead, and that they're sinners, because Jesus, is the Savior, for dead sinners.

[21:27] And so, if the Lord, wants to plant a church, on the west side of South Bend, he can. If the Lord, wants to plant a church, in the sprawling, subdivisions of Granger, he can.

And if the Lord, wants to plant a church, in the Hispanic population, of Bremen, he can. Because God's grace, is absolutely irresistible. The fields, are wide under harvest.

They are ready, because Jesus, is ready to save. And Jesus, is able to save. His grace, is irresistible. And so, we can reach further.

We can go further. We can hope for more, because the Lord's hand, in the Lord's hand, there's infinite power, to save. So, if your attitude, is too small, too short-sighted, then look up.

Lift up your eyes. That's what Jesus, told his disciples. Look up. Look at the fields. They're ready.

We have a powerful gospel, because we have a powerful Lord.

[22:28] And so, let's not be satisfied, with the current field, that we have. Let's not be satisfied, but let's expand. Let's be encouraged, to reach out, to the very ends, of the earth, because all authority, in heaven, and in earth, has been given, to our Lord.

Well, we read from Isaiah, at the beginning, of the service. And Isaiah said, you know, to restore the tribes, of Jacob, to the Lord, that's too small, of a thing. I'm going to make you, a light, to the Gentiles, to the ends, of the earth.

And so, until Christ comes, there is more land, to conquer. There is more neighborhoods, to reach. There's more neighborhoods, to penetrate. There's more cities, to go into.

So, what Jesus has now, what Jesus has now, is too small for him. It's too small for him. He deserves more. His light, needs to go, to the end, of our street, the end, of our neighborhood, into our city, into our state, into our country, and to the very ends, of the earth.

And we can, take it there. Because salvation, belongs, to our God. So, let's be expectant then. We're marching, to victory.

[23:45] We're not, in a fruitless fight. We're going, to victory, because God, and his grace, are irresistible. And so, that's step two. The Lord blessed, and men repented, and believed.

Step three. Jesus used, qualified men, to teach. He is qualified, men to teach. Let's look at verse 22, and we'll read through 26.

Verse 22. News of this, reached the ears, of the church, at Jerusalem. And they sent, Barnabas, to Antioch. When he arrived, and saw the evidence, of the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them, all to remain, true to the Lord, with all their hearts.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and faith, and a great number, of people, were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas, went to Tarsus, to look for Saul, 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.

[24:55] Well, news reached, Jerusalem. the church of Jerusalem, and they sent, Barnabas, to Antioch. News, of what the Lord, had done, reached their ears, and they were ready, to respond.

They were ready, to respond. Peter, not too long ago, had his vision. Remember, where the sheet, was lowered down, and the Lord said, kill and eat, and Peter said, well, there's unclean things here.

And you remember, the rest of the story. And he goes, to Cornelius' house, and God, saves Cornelius. Well, Peter, probably just, not too recently, had that vision.

That's what's immediately, recorded before this, in Acts. And that, stunned, the church. Look at, verse 18, of chapter 11.

Just right above, where we started reading. It says, that they praised God, saying, so then, God has granted, even the Gentiles, repentance unto life. And you can hear, the wonder, in their voices.

[26:01] It took some, getting used to. It took some, getting used to, to think, that God could, that God would, save Gentiles. And it took some, pondering, and thinking about.

They realized, that all of a sudden, you know, the field is much bigger, than we thought. And we have to reach, the Gentiles. And so, while the church in Jerusalem, is thinking, and pondering this, God, beats them to the punch.

And a large number, of Gentiles, from Antioch, believe, and are saved. And so, what did the church, in Jerusalem do? Well, did they say, well, we don't know, about those people up there.

We don't know, who taught them the gospel. They're not one of us. So, we got to be careful. We better not get, too excited about this. No, they sent Barnabas, to Antioch.

They sent one of the best men, they had, to Antioch. Yeah, probably to check things out, to make sure everything's, kosher. I just thought of that.

[27:05] That's kind of weird. Just, check things out, yeah. But also, to do whatever he could, to help.

And so, Barnabas went. What a guy. Barnabas is the kind of guy, that you want involved, in a church plant. He's the kind of guy, that you just want around.

He's great, whether he's with you, or whether you're sending him away. He saw the grace of God, and he was glad. We know that Barnabas, wasn't a strict hearted, close hearted, kind of guy.

He loved the Lord, and he loved people. Earlier, he, the first mention we have of him, he sells a plot of his land, and he puts it at the apostles' feet.

And remember, when Mark messed up, on the first missionary journey, it was Barnabas, that said, you know, let's take Mark again. And Paul said, no. And I don't know, who was right or wrong, but, Barnabas was the kind of guy, that would, want to encourage people.

[28:12] Barnabas was the one who dared to introduce that crazy man, Saul, to the apostles. That baby, brand new apostle to the rest of the church.

He was the only one that reached out to Saul at the time. He was all about people. He was all about people. His real name was Joseph, but everyone called him Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.

And Barnabas was the kind of guy that would pat you on the back and give you a smile. And he would say something, and that just hit the spot. That was what you needed.

It was like cool rain on a really hot summer day. He refreshed everyone he got close to. And that's what kind of, a kind of church planner, the kind of person a church planner needs to be.

But you know, Barnabas wasn't anybody's fool either. He wasn't a pushover. He was a serious Christian. He loved the Lord, and he was serious about it.

[29:19] And so when he saw what Jesus was doing in Antioch, he encouraged them. He encouraged them to what? To remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. Why would he say remain true to the Lord with all their hearts?

Because he knew there was a danger that baby Christians face. That they can be easily turned aside. And he knew the dangers that they were facing. And so he encouraged them to remain true to the Lord.

Barnabas wanted them to be fully devoted to Jesus. He wanted them from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet to be faithful to Jesus. And Barnabas knew that wholehearted obedience was what the Lord required.

And he knew that was the only response to the gospel. And so he encouraged them in their faith. Well, what else does it say about Barnabas? Look at verse 24. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.

Barnabas was a good man. He was the perfect man for this job. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He was gifted. He could teach.

[30:29] And when he spoke, people were fed. They were encouraged. They saw more of Christ. They understood more of their sin and more of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

They understood how good the gospel was. And their love grew. They fed on the word of God from Barnabas and they were nourished. Others were convicted and convinced of the gospel.

And so they believed. He was full of faith, says Barnabas had spiritual eyes. They could see through difficulties. They could see through sin.

And they could see God at work in people's lives. And that is what a church planter needs. To be able to be a man of faith where he sees through the difficult things, sees through the immaturity and the weakness, and still have faith.

Still be trusting and pointing and looking to God. And the people were built up with just being around Barnabas. Faith was contagious for them.

[31:31] Their hearts were raised. Their eyes were lifted up. And they got to know Jesus better. Well, what was the result of Barnabas coming? It says at the end of verse 24 that a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Jesus used Barnabas to build up the church. And soon it became too much for Barnabas. It was too much work for him. And so he went to Tarsus and he found Paul. And he brought Paul back.

And together, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, Pastor Paul and Pastor Barnabas preached at this church. And he taught them. And day after day, this young church was fed on the spiritual milk of the Word.

And they taught them by their life and by their Word what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

And so under their preaching, people were sanctified.

They were changed. They went from glory to glory. And they started to change so much that they received a new name. They were changed.

[32:38] And so the old things had to go away, including the old names that they were known by. And they became Christians. And whether they gave themselves that name or someone making fun of them gave them that name, it was fitting, their identities were being swallowed up in Jesus Christ.

They followed Christ. They loved Christ. They believed in Christ. They were faithful to Christ. They loved Him. And they knew that He loved them. And they acted like Christ.

And everything about them began to change. Everything about them started to look very Christ-like.

So they were called Christians. Christians. And those are the kind of teachers and those are the kind of preachers that make for a successful church plan.

They were able to go into a less-than-ideal situation, a less-than-settled situation, with less-mature believers, and really bring them along.

Now, if you could imagine what it would have been like, all these young Christians, there would have been some terrible problems, if you think about it. People coming out of their sinful lifestyle and they don't know what to do.

[33:51] And Barnabas and Saul, or Paul, had to counsel in difficult situations. They had to take people that were really confused and bring them along and be able to teach them in ways that they could understand.

Well, these people, Paul and Barnabas, were perfect for this. Because they were just, they were generally upbeat. They were joyful.

They were full of encouragement. They were full of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit flowed through their teaching. And when they preached and when they taught, the Spirit came and worked in people's lives and encouraged.

And the church grew in holiness and in numbers. More and more people came to Jesus Christ. And so Jesus used qualified teachers to plant the church in Antioch.

Well, the fourth and final step was simply this. The church stood on its own two feet. And I think that is the point of the last bit of our passage, which we're going to read right now.

[35:00] Verse 27. During this time, some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.

This happened during the reign of Claudius. The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

The church in Antioch saw the mother church, Jerusalem, in need. And they rose to the occasion. Each one, as they had ability, gave.

The church in Antioch took the initiative. They saw a fellow church in need and they stood on their own two feet to help that church. By that time, they felt strong enough.

It had probably been about a year or so that Paul and Barnabas had been preaching and they felt strong enough that, you know what, we can send them away for a while. We're standing now. [36:08] We can do without our church planning pastors for a while. So they weren't under the thumb of Jerusalem, the church of Jerusalem. They stood beside her and they loved her.

And they were very different. They were very different from the church in Jerusalem. Remember, the church in Jerusalem is almost completely made up of Jews.

And the church in Antioch is almost completely made up of Gentiles. And so, the churches looked very different. What the things that they did, what the people looked like, what the people dressed like, the culture was very different.

But that was okay. Because Antioch and Jerusalem, they were sisters. They weren't identical twins. they were sisters. And that is the kind of church planning that we would want to be involved in.

The idea is not to create an identical sister. The idea is not to take Grace Fellowship and just move it to a different city because it wouldn't work.

[37:14] It wouldn't work. The idea is not to create an identical sister where they do everything like we do. They look like we do. They're the same kind of people that we are.

We want to create a partner in bringing Christ's glory to the nations. Not a servant. Not one that does everything like we do, but a friend. Like a friend who's faithful in their own way.

And that's what Antioch became. Jesus Christ asserted his power and he raised up a church from out of nothing. Out of nothing.

There was no church there. And then a year later, here's a fully functioning, ready-to-go church. He used excited laymen. He gave repentance and faith.

He used qualified teachers. And then he matured them to the point where they became their own church. So Antioch later sent out church planners and missionaries and they planted churches which in turn planted other churches churches and on and on it went.

[38:21] And the light is still going to the ends of the earth. Jesus is still in the business of building his church. And it's the biggest, it's the most important thing going on in the world today.

And so we as a body need to be prepared to take part in whatever way we can. Church planning shouldn't be something traumatic for us. It shouldn't be a once in the lifetime thing for us.

It's part and parcel of how Jesus builds his church throughout the earth. It's not unusual. This is what Jesus did here and this is what Jesus has done throughout all of history.

It's his normal method. So what do we do? Well, we pray for a passion for the lost. We want to be excited laymen so we pray for passion.

We pray that the Lord would grant repentance and faith. We pray for Barnabas like men. That God would change us, change the leaders, change and raise up other men to become Barnabas like men who will go in and plant a church.

[39:36] And we pray that God would bless our efforts and that he would take those things and establish the work of our hands because without him, everything else is for naught. Well, may God do so.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would grant to us a passion for the lost. Give that passion to me.

Make it to be a pot boiling over inside of every one of our hearts that we would get back to that first love where we weren't so distracted with so many other things but we were mesmerized and in love with what you've done for us.

We were in love with Jesus Christ. Will you help us to get back to that point so that we will have the spiritual strength and stamina and passion and delight to go and spread the glory of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth and the ends of the earth are far away so help us to spread it to our neighborhood and to our street that we would tell of his glory to our next door neighbor who doesn't know you.

That we would go out of our way to speak to them. And Father I pray that you would raise up Barnabas like men in our congregation who have a passion for the lost who love people who would encourage and build up the saints through their teaching and preaching.

[41:17] Thank you for the leaders that we do have. Thank you for Grace Fellowship. This is a standing miracle of your hand. And we pray that you would continue to bless us.

Will you help us and give us opportunities to do this work of church planning wherever you would have us to do it. and we pray that we would be a people for your name.

That we would be faithful to you no matter what. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.