

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of August 30, 2009
"What's All This Church Planting Talk?"**

[Today's message looks at church planting from a Scriptural context and why our congregation should be interested in it.]

[Topics: Church Planting; the Father's Mission; Make Disciples]

Excerpt: What's all this talk about church planting? We just had this church planting training this past week. And we're collecting \$1 bills in our offering each week for the past 5-6 months for our own church planting.

Our denominational President, Joseph Tkach mentioned at our church conference last year at Agoura Hills that his dream for GCI (Grace Communion International) would be a church planting movement.

So why do we talk about church planting, when we are a denomination of small churches? Now New Hope is the largest church in our denomination in the United States, but we're not very big. So why would we want to go and plant a church? And how could a church of 15 or 20 or 30 people possibly plant a church?

So with our collecting of the \$1 bills in the offering, it's not how much money we collect – although we average about \$40 per week – it's about having church planting on our mind long enough that it becomes part of our heart, that it becomes part of who we are, not only as a denomination but as part of our congregation as well.

Lately, we've been talking about the perichoretic relationship. That's the relationship within the trinity of God. How Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate and how the early church began to call this relationship perichoresis – this total intertwining as one yet three individual persons completely impacting each other.

And this relationship is something God is inviting mankind into. So we hope our church planting flows out of that. Yes, we want to reach people who don't know Jesus yet. But we also want to do this out of this relationship that God wants to share with mankind. So that's our starting point.

The appropriate motivation for church planting is God's love for people. Yes, God loves people and he wants to connect them to himself. Now the strange thing is that he's chosen to do that through what we call "the church."

John 3:16 from the Message Bible: **"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life."**

Since God loved the world, what did he do? He gave his Son. Other translations say God sent his Son. God sent Jesus. So whose mission is it? Is it Jesus' mission? Well,

it is in a way. But who sent him on the mission? The Father did. The Father sent Jesus to come down and reach mankind and to begin to make disciples. That was his mission.

Now the church has an expression called “missio dei.” But it’s not the church’s mission. It’s not GCI’s mission. It’s not New Hope’s mission. This is the Father’s mission – that flowing out of his loving relationship in the trinity of God, he wants mankind in relationship with him. The Father is the missionary sending others out. He’s the one who sent Jesus to this earth.

And so Jesus was that embodiment of that mission. He came down to earth and said, “Let me show you what the Father is up to. Let me help you see what God’s doing. God loves you. God cares for you. He cares so much for you that I’m going to die for you.”

Now the Holy Spirit flows out of the trinity of God as the agent of the mission. He’s the one who inspires the church. He gives gifts to the church. He produces the fruit in the church. He helps the church work that mission. So all three in the triune God are working on this mission to bring mankind into this relationship.

We are the co-workers with God the Father, with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit. In other words, we are participating in what God is doing. In the past, we often focused on us doing it and that we’ve got to go out there and preach the gospel. It was as if it were our mission.

But it’s not our mission. It’s God’s mission. Even Jesus came to fulfill the Father’s mission. Jesus left the church the Holy Spirit to help carry that mission forward. God wants the church to come and participate in that mission and go out to others.

So what did Jesus do? He came down and made some disciples, didn’t he? He called on people and asked them to follow him. He first had 12 disciples and then later on 70 and eventually he had a 120. But then what did he do? He sent them out as the ecclesia – the “called out” ones to go out into the world to impact others to make a difference and to make more disciples.

Then he wanted them to create faith communities for these new disciples – what we call churches or congregations. In Acts 2 after the day of Pentecost, the disciples went up to the temple courts in large groups and then they would go out to the homes and meet there in small groups, where they ate together, prayed together, and they studied the apostles’ teachings together. They connected with one another how God was working in their lives.

Now it’s a two-sided coin. We can plant all the churches we want. But if there are no disciples for the churches, there’s no point in starting a church. So we want to plant churches but we also want to make disciples. New churches have a way of impacting people, somehow. You plant a new church and God draws a lot of new people to that church.

Now in Spokane County in the state of Washington (where Pastor Glen was before), they had 365 Christian churches there. A group of church pastors did a survey and asked these churches how many new members did they add last year, 3 years ago, and

5 years ago and what is their attendance each month? They had approximately 50,000 attend all the churches each Sunday. That was approximately 18% of the county's total population. And the attendance had not significantly changed during those 5 years. There were approximately 4000 new believers added during those 5 years, which was not many.

The interesting thing was that 39 new churches had been planted during those 5 years. These newly planted churches added more new believers than all the other 300 plus churches combined did. New churches, somehow, attract new believers.

So that's why GCI wants to make disciples and also learn how to plant new churches by putting some people out into the community who are missionary types, who can draw people from their neighborhood, who can reach a new set of folks and begin to build a congregation or a church.

In **John 20:21**, Jesus said, "**Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I also send you.**" Wouldn't you like to participate in the Father's mission? Wouldn't that be kind of cool to be a part of what God the Father is doing? This is Jesus' mission, as well. He came to do the mission of the Father. What Jesus did was to make disciples and plant a church.

So Jesus came fulfilling the Father's mission. Not only did he die for all mankind, but he also started a church. He raised up some leaders who could lead that church. For three and a half years, Jesus taught them, disciplined them and encouraged them. The first church had 120 members – those disciples who were there on Pentecost.

This church began planting more churches. Peter would go out. And then later Paul would go out and gather a bunch of disciples together, pray with them and the next thing you know he had planted a church – a little faith group. What so interesting is that after Paul had raised several churches, he sent Timothy go to them and raise up elders. Imagine a church starting up without any elders.

Throughout history, churches have planted churches. Jesus has inspired people. It's unbelievable the number of people, who have packed up and left their home, and gone somewhere else to plant a church. They've gone to the Philippines or China. They've spent their whole lives there in some cases because they heard the calling to go make disciples and plant churches.

There are many remarkable stories of church planting in this country. For example, there is a small church of no more than 50 people who planted 30 churches because of the prayers and hard work of one older lady in that church. She found and disciplined young people and sent them out to start new churches.

Pastor Glen personally knows a widow named Esther who lives in Macedonia. Her husband died, but she continued to pastor their church. She gathers up young people, disciplines them, prays for them and gives them enough money to go one way to outlying villages. She has raised up churches all over Macedonia by sending out young people with enough money to get there. They find a job and establish a new church there. They have a heart for this.

Jesus, through the Spirit, has been planting churches for the last 2000 years. And he's doing it now more than he ever has. For example, there are thousands of new churches being planted across China. And so we seek to join him in what he's been doing and continues to do. Hopefully with our prayers we, too, at New Hope will enter into that. We need to pray and ask how do we do that – to plant new churches. Pastor Glen doesn't want to plant just one church; he wants to plant a bunch of them.

So our dollars in the offering every week are not so we have the money. It's not a large sum. But that's not the point. The point is we need to be thinking about what God is doing. And we need to join in with that. And every time you take a dollar out of your wallet, it causes you to think about church planting.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:2, "Pray that I will send workers into the harvest."** So at 10:02 AM every day, pastor Glen's alarm goes off on his cell phone to keep his mind and heart on the subject of church planting. He's praying that God will raise up leaders out of our congregation or bring us leaders into this congregation who we can send out church planters or church pastors to help the kingdom grow. Church planting helps us enter into what Jesus was sent to accomplish. He started it and then sent the Holy Spirit to help us accomplish the Father's mission.

At our training session last week, we had 7 Filipinos. One was Mr. Eugene Guzon, who's the national director. The others were three couples, who are looking to plant a church here in southern California among the Filipino community. They are planning to pack up and leave the Philippines to come here to plant a church.

What are we prepared to pack up and do? Where are we prepared to go? What might God be asking us to do? The least we can do is to pray and ask God to raise up people or bring to us people, who have a heart for this so that we can mentor and train them and send them out to make a difference.

And pastor Glen is praying for some of our kids that as they get older, God will put in their hearts to make them pastors and planters. That should be our prayers as well. We desperately need young men and women who are called of God to serve in ministry.

John 6:29, "Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" This verse in context is emphasizing the believing part. But Jesus was the first sent out from heaven by the Father to fulfill the Father's mission. Jesus knew he was the sent one. He knew he was called by the Father to accomplish something.

What has God sent us to do? This morning in Bible study, we were discussing in Romans 12 the various giftings and it said that if you have been given the gift of prophecy, do it. If you have been given the gift of service, do it. If you have been given the gift of teaching, do it. If you have been given the gift of mercy, do it cheerfully. If you have been given the gift of giving, give generously.

Paul encourages us to go and do what God has equipped us to do. What is God calling us to do? What gifting has God poured into you? If you are getting older and can't go out and do anymore, you can certainly pray for the younger ones who can go out and do. You can pray that they will feel a stirring of God in their heart and feel his calling.

That they would respond and feel that this is something they can accomplish and that they would be prepared to sacrifice or to give up things to do it.

We're all familiar what **Matt. 28:18-20** says. **"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20) and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"**

Notice it says, "Teach them to observe what you have taught." The Greek word translated "observe" is *tereo*, which means to hold fast, keep, serve or watch. Think of it this way. You're going out into the world and you're teaching others to watch as you do what Jesus commanded you to do.

Isn't that what Paul said? "Follow me as I follow Christ." Paul asked others to observe how he was doing things, as well as he could, following Jesus. And then asked them to observe and follow that. It's not about us telling others what to do, but rather it's us doing it and telling them to watch as we do it. That's quite different.

In order to plant a church we have to first make disciples. We have to get out into the community. We have to look for opportunities and look what Jesus is doing out there. We need to ask Jesus to help us observe what he is doing in the community. And then we'll join him. And he will make disciples in the process and gather them together into a faith community.

Pastor Glen was struck with the idea this morning as he was driving out of his cul-de-sac, that he should have a neighborhood barbecue in his front driveway and talk about what will they do if another calamity happens. It's a good excuse to get to know each other and talk. Virtually no one on his street communicates with each other.

We are basically garage-door Christians. We push the button and our garage door goes up and we drive into our garage and we are in our safe little sanctuary. And we may never see our neighbors. And they are doing the same thing. This happens everywhere but California. Everyone parks his car in the driveway in front of the garage. But we still don't know each other.

So church planting is: participation in Jesus' ongoing mission to the world. Now there are different ways of church planting. One is what is called a daughter church, which is the most common in America today. This means that a church of 300 would take 100 members and plant a church at another location. But that's not what we're talking about.

What we are talking about is sending a few people out into the neighborhood to make disciples and gather people together to start a faith community like the apostle Paul did. We believe that is the most effective way.

Church planting is: sharing God's life and love. All of us can do that. We can go out and connect with people. For some this is very natural and for others it's not.

Church planting is: sharing the good news of salvation in Christ for all humanity and humanity's inclusion in God's Triune perichoretic life. So we go out and tell people here's what God has done. He's brought you into a relationship with him. Do you want to acknowledge that? Church planting is going out and talking with people and telling them how much God cares for them.

So part of the dollar bills each week is to help you think about what you do when you are out there in the community. We need to think about how are we connecting with the folks in the community. How are we talking to them? How are we sharing God's love?

Church planting is: inviting people to believe the good news and participate in the life of the trinity. We invite people into that relationship that we ourselves experience with God. They need to observe us loving them. And so they can say, "That's what the love of God looks like."

And when we get enough together, we can begin a church, which will draw other people. A church plant consists mostly of new Christians. Our desire is not to plant a church with mostly old Christians who don't go to church any more. Our desire is brand new believers who are fresh and excited and don't have Christian friends.

When new Christians get excited about worship services, they will invite their non-Christian friends. That's why new churches tend to grow. We need to realize that statistically when people become part of a church within 5 years they virtually have no non-Christian friends anymore. That's because Christians get so intertwined with the church they forget about the people around them.

This is why we are on this church planting kick. We need to realize that this isn't just pastor Glen's kick. This is the Father's kick. This is what the Father is up to. And he sent Jesus, who followed the pattern. And then he passed it on to the Holy Spirit and to the church and said go out and make disciples.

And when we do this, we gather the called out ones together and they will be called the church or the ecclesia. Wouldn't it be cool if New Hope didn't get any larger but that we plant numerous churches over the next 3 to 5 to 10 years? That God brings us people in who we commission and send them back out into the community and they make disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the Philippines they are planting one church after another. In other parts of the world it's amazing how many new disciples are being made and churches being planted. It's only in America that planting a church is like pulling teeth. That's why we need to get back into the community and connect with them so we can make disciples to put in newly planted churches.

That's why we participated in the Resource Fair yesterday at the Rose Bowl hoping that a bunch of non-Christians would show up. But it was 100 degrees and smoky, so that didn't help us to get people to come. But it's the point of trying.

How many of you have gone fishing but never caught anything? To those who raised their hands, I'll bet none of you ever went fishing again. Now we know that's not true! Many of you keep going out there because it's not how many fish you catch. It's the

point of going fishing, isn't it? Even if we didn't catch any fish one time, that doesn't stop us from fishing. We keep going back.

So yesterday at the Resource Fair we went fishing but we didn't catch a thing that we know of. But people did take our business cards and some of the handouts we had. And several people came by and one said that she was on a prayer team praying for the Worldwide Church of God while we were going through our changes. And when we told her of our denominational name change, she prayed for the new force that God was going to do in us. It was worth for us to be there just to hear that.

Now if God planted some seed yesterday, that's great. But we need to get out there and do what we can. Do you know what, if we do this again, we need to participate in an event that's put on by non-Christians. Let's do it when the community is putting something on and not by churches.

Now the lady, who's the Methodist that attended our church planting training session last week, moved into Wilkes-Barre, PA and bought a booth for \$250 for the summer at the Farmer's Market. And there she is every week handing out her information and telling people that she will be starting a church. And she has a whole bunch of people she knows on a first-name basis who are asking her when will she start that church. She went out where the people are and started connecting with them.

So we're going to look for ways. Now we'll probably screw up a bunch of times. But we will keep trying and eventually God will bless us as we keep reaching out for what he's doing.

So God has some great plans and pastor Glen believes that God has brought GCI and our congregation to the point of looking at this because he wants us to do this. And he will bless us. We need to be praying about it and thinking about it.

We need to be asking God to bring us some people that we can support and encourage and help go out. And as we do that God will open the door. It's not because of who we are but it's who he is and what he wants to do.

Key Scripture: John 20:21, " Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I also send you."

General Group Question: What mission of the Father did Jesus come to fulfill? Did he pass this mission on to the church to continue? Briefly explain what this mission is.

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. In order to successfully plant a church, what must the church planter do first?
2. Why do newly planted churches attract more new believers than older established churches?
3. How does John 20:21 fit into the theme of church planting?

4. Why has Pastor Glen asked New Hope's members to donate a dollar bill into the offering?
5. What roles do Jesus and the Holy Spirit play in accomplishing the mission of the Father?
6. What did Jesus ask his followers to do in Matthew 28:18-20?
7. Of the four actions associated with church planting, which one are you the most comfortable with? Which one are you the least comfortable with? What steps could you take to be comfortable with doing all of them?
8. For church planting to take hold in your local congregation, what should you be praying for? Why?
9. What can you, as an individual do, to better connect with the people in the local community? What can your congregation do?

