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Sermon Notes

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Timeless Lessons in Church Planting

Acts 13-14

I. The Vision of Church Planting for FBC Durham

A. This is a Historic Morning!!

B. FBCs History of Planting Churches

C. Church Planting is Central to the Great Commission

1. The Two Infinite Journeys

a. Internal journey of sanctification: constant growth in the pattern of Christ

b. External journey of evangelism and missions

2. Christ's central mission plainly stated... AND committed to us

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

3. Ed Stetzer's poignant comments

Dr. Ed Stetzer: How would we define church planting? The best definition I know of which describes church planting is the word "missions." Church planters are missionaries. If church planting isn't about missions it's only about rearranging Christians. You can start a new church using attractive programs, dynamic worship, and fancy PowerPoint displays, but if all you're doing is drawing other Christians from other churches, that's not missions. We call that "sheep-stealing," or "swapping chairs on the Titanic." Church planting is about missions, reaching out to the unchurched.

D. FBC Durham's Strengths and Weaknesses

The Internal Journey **MUST FEED** the External Journey:

FBC is known for good teaching and accurate theology. But if that theology doesn't lead us to go out and make disciples of lost people, we are simply reciting principles but not living them. We have become hearers of the word, not doers.

Calvin Guy wrote this:

"We apply the pragmatic test to the work of the theologian. Does his theology motivate men to go into all the world and make disciples? Does it so undergird them that they, thus motivated, succeed in this primary purpose? Theology must stand the test of being known by its fruit."

E. Logical Steps that Led the Elders of FBC

- 1) The God-ordained vehicle for making mature disciples of lost, unchurched people is the local church.
- 2) There are far more lost and unchurched people in the Triangle Region than all the presently existing churches can handle
- 3) Therefore, we need more churches in the Triangle Region.
- 4) Therefore, someone must plant those churches.
- 5) The best planting agency in the Triangle Region is a healthy, theologically sound church.
- 6) FBC is a healthy, theologically sound church in the Triangle Region.
- 7) Therefore, FBC should plant churches.

F. Challenging Statements About Church Planting

- Among evangelical churches, those under three years old will win ten people for Christ per year for every hundred church members; those three to fifteen years old will win five people per year, and after age fifteen, the number drops to three per year.
- The longer a church is in existence, the fewer people it will win to Christ in proportion to its attendance
- 80-85% of American churches are on the down side of their life cycle; the majority of evangelical churches are in decline; 3500-4000 churches close every year
- In 1900, the Census Bureau counted 212,320 churches; in 1995, 345,406 churches existed in the US, an increase of 62%; but over that time period, the US population tripled... an increase of 200%. Thus there were far fewer churches per person in 1995 than there were in 1906.
- For seminary trained people: Roland Allen (*Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*) says in effect "The more theological education you have, the less evangelism you tend to do."
- The estimated population of lost people in North America is in excess of 200 million; but many of these have already been exposed to some form of the true gospel, making them that much harder to reach
- Between 92-98% of Canadians are unchurched

- North America is the only continent where Christianity is NOT growing; yet North America has far more Bible colleges, seminaries, radio and TV programs, and Bible knowledge than anywhere else in the world
- By some estimates, half of all churches in the USA did not add one new member through “conversion growth”
- “The United States of America is now the third largest mission field in the world”
Thomas T. Clegg
- The Durham-Raleigh-Cary region was designated as the 12th fastest growing in the US
- The overwhelming majority of organized ministries in most evangelical churches are focused exclusively on the care of members rather than reaching the lost: Sunday School, children’s ministries, women’s ministry, men’s ministry, etc. If we looked at a list of the organized ministries of FBC, that would definitely be the case.
- “Church planting, not just the converting of individuals, was the method of the Apostle Paul.” Roland Allen

[Source: Ed Stetzer, *Introduction to Church Planting*, NAMB website]

What Do We Mean by “Church Planting”?

FBC would intentionally develop a pattern of strategically planting and assisting in the planting of churches in the Triangle Region whose DNA meets our criteria and whose people would primarily come from those previously unchurched. Toward this end, we would develop leaders and pioneering members who are willing to go and populate those church plants, and strategies appropriate for each region we are seeking to reach. There would be a atmosphere and expectancy of personal growth (internal journey) and evangelistic growth (external journey) at FBC and a willingness not to stay comfortable year after year in the inward-focused ministries of a stagnant church. People will be expected to make sacrifices to see this goal attained.

Our “DNA”:

Vision Statement:

We exist to delight in, display, and declare the glory of God, equipping His people to spread that delight to all nations through Jesus Christ.

Core Values:

- The Glory of God
- Love for God and others
- Christ’s death, resurrection, and Lordship

- Scripture as perfect and sufficient
- Progressive sanctification in holiness
- Progressive discipling in evangelism and missions
- Body life in Spirit-filled families and church

The Two Infinite Journeys must be equally emphasized:

- The internal journey of progressive sanctification
- The external journey of progressive discipling through evangelism and missions

The Churches planted would be:

- Self-supporting
- Self-governing
- Self-propagating

G. The Specific Call of South Durham Church

1. National Founder's Conference in Owasso, Oklahoma... Summer of 2008
2. Wednesday night ACTS Class on Church Planting: October, 2008-March, 2009
3. Ron Halbrooks took a strong lead in encouraging a growing vision for planting a church
4. Vision crystallized around the fast growing area of South Durham
5. Some brothers especially took this calling to heart: Christian Jernigan, Paul Johstono... and eventually Adam Darnell
6. The elders encouraged their vision and sought to bless and strengthen it over the last three years
7. The South Durham Church formally called Adam Darnell to be its lead elder; together with his wife, Heather, they were committed to seeing that church established and grow healthy
8. Over the last year or more, the South Durham Church has been strongly on the radar screen of the elders and of FBC as a whole... numerous outreaches, efforts to help plant that church have been invested
9. The elders prayed over the FBC membership, and urged specific members to pray about leaving FBC to help plant South Durham Church... a number of godly members are doing that

10. Now, this morning, we are formally commissioning them to begin their life as a separate local church

II. Twelve Lessons of Church Planting from Acts 13-14

A. Church Planting is the Fruit of a Healthy Church (13:1-4)

1. Listen to the Text again

Acts 13:1-4 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ ¶ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

2. The history of the church at Antioch

- a. Antioch a major city
- b. Economically vibrant
- c. Ethnically diverse
- d. At a cross roads... a major feature of the Roman Empire's control and prosperity in that region
- e. A history of early Gentile evangelism and conversions

Acts 11:19-20 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. ²⁰ 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.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

- f. Barnabas in particular... a Jew from Cyprus, led the way in Antioch

Acts 11:22-24 News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ 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. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

- g. The calling they receive in Acts 13: Barnabas going BACK TO CYPRUS to plant churches there... his home area

Acts 4:36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)

- h. The church was evangelistically fruitful... very fruitful
 - i. Later centuries: a major center of biblical studies in the historic-grammatical tradition (vs. Alexandria in the allegorical pattern)
3. The church at Antioch BLESSED with godly leadership... and excellent teachers

Acts 11:25-26 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ 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.

Acts 13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

- 4. A healthy, flourishing church: great combination of the INTERNAL JOURNEY and EXTERNAL JOURNEY:
 - a. Outstanding teaching by many gifted teachers
 - b. A continuing passion to reach the lost of Antioch with the gospel
- 5. Healthy life of worship and corporate expressions of love for God and for each other
- 6. IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS: A Calling to MISSIONS... which I interpret this morning in terms of local church planting
- 7. Church planting and missions FLOW from the health of a local church

Matthew 12:33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

B. Church Planting is Led by the Spirit of God (13:2, 4)

- 1. Note especially the role of the Holy Spirit

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

2. The Holy Spirit had already laid this work on the hearts of the individuals... now He was leading the whole church to embrace them and set them apart for it
3. "SET APART FOR ME"... this is CONSECRATION LANGUAGE... and that is also what FBC Durham is seeking to do with South Durham church and its people
4. The role of the Holy Spirit also confirmed in verse 4:

Acts 13:4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

5. The Spirit's direct leadership of ongoing strategy also a major feature of the Book of Acts:

Acts 16:6-10 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

6. So, South Durham Church: may the Holy Spirit continue to bless you, lead you, guide you... may at some time in the future, when you are strong enough to do so, may the Spirit command you also to SET APART some godly brothers and sisters to plant another church yourself

C. Church Planting is Communicated by Worship, Fasting, and Prayer (13:2-3)

1. I already said it was in the flow of healthy church life
2. Specifically, it was **while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting** that the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul..."
3. Again, verse 3 **says after they had fasted and prayed**, they were sent off
4. Corporate disciplines: WORSHIP... FASTING (mentioned twice)... PRAYER
5. The Sovereign Spirit can do anything He wants, communicate any way that He wants... BUT HE IS A GOD OF MEANS... the Word of God is His primary means of communicating His will (that's what the prophets and teachers were

doing before the New Testament was codified)... He also takes the clear and general teachings of the Word and makes them specific to this or that situation by direct leadership of CHRIST'S SHEEP

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 16:13-14 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

6. worship, fasting, prayer get our hearts ready to hear Him speak directions to us, guidance into our lives
 - a. worship warms the hearts of the church and fires up our affections for Him
 - b. fasting concentrates the body, weaning it from possible earthly distractions and idols
 - c. prayer is the direct means of communication: "Tell us, O Lord, what is your will for us?"
7. God is Sovereign... and also a God of means... WORD, WORSHIP, FASTING, PRAYER

D. Church Planting is Commissioned by a Local Church (13:3)

Acts 13:3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

1. Two different uses of the word "church" in Acts
2. There is the church UNIVERSAL, the worldwide Body of Christ... Christians all over the world who have loved the Savior and trusted Him

Acts 20:28 Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

3. There is the church LOCAL: the church at Ephesus in Acts 20, whenever the word "churches" is used in Acts...

Acts 15:41 [Paul] went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches

Acts 16:5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

4. The Universal church cannot DO anything in the world... local churches can BAND TOGETHER to do a job too big for any of them to do alone ("cooperative principle"); BUT the primary vehicle of church planting is a healthy LOCAL CHURCH... like the Church at Antioch

E. Church Planting Requires Sacrifice (13:2)

1. The church at Antioch sent the BEST PEOPLE THEY HAD... Barnabas was one in a million... the perfect encourager and leader and teacher of a growing church

Acts 11:23-24 When [Barnabas] arrived [at Antioch] 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. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

2. And the other was the Apostle Paul... the greatest single man in church history (obviously other than the Lord Jesus Christ)... the author of the Book of Romans; the tireless, passionate evangelist and faithful teacher of the church
3. The BEST THEY HAD TO OFFER... what a sacrifice!!!
4. And these individuals themselves had to sacrifice... they had to be willing to forsake the comforts of a successful ministry in Antioch and suffer mistreatment in every city they went to (more on that in a moment)
5. So also FBC Durham has to sacrifice to be active in an ONGOING SENSE in church planting... and Adam and all the brothers and sisters involved in planting this South Durham Church will have to sacrifice

F. Church Planting Requires Going Forth (13:3-4)

Acts 13:3-4 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ ¶ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

1. Barnabas and Paul were SENT OUT by the church at Antioch, SENT ON THEIR WAY by the Holy Spirit
2. They went down to the port city of Seluecia, boarded a ship and travelled over the Mediterranean Sea to get to Barnabas's native land... Cyprus
3. The reason they did this is that was where the LOST PEOPLE were
4. Churches cannot expect to be fruitful evangelistically staying safe and sound, indoors, hoping that lost people will make their way into the church
5. As the South Durham church is beginning, we are sending them OUT, no longer to worship with us on Sunday mornings... they are on their own now
6. Beyond that, God is sending them out in the streets and neighborhoods of South Durham to reach the people there

G. Church Planting is Based on Evangelism (13-14)

Acts 13:5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.

Acts 13:7 the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.

Acts 13:12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

Acts 13: in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, Paul gave a very powerful gospel presentation and the next week, many Gentiles in the city came to hear the word of God as well

Acts 14:1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.

Acts 14:3 So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord

[Lystra and Derbe] ***Acts 14:7 they continued to preach the good news.***

Acts 14:20-21 The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. ²¹ They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.

1. Remember Ed Stetzer's comments: Church planting is really about leading NEW PEOPLE into the Kingdom
2. In Paul and Baranabas's day, there would have been no thought of "sheep stealing" in Cyprus... there were no "sheep to steal"
3. But their example of passionate evangelism stands over FBC Durham AND South Durham Church, challenging us not to be satisfied with numbers on Sunday morning and small baptism statistics
4. The primary focus of the growth of South Durham church AND FBC Durham must be EVANGELISM...
5. The Triangle area is filling more and more with unchurched people... lost people
6. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe
 - a. All of us had violated the Laws of God and were justly under His wrath
 - b. God sent His Son into the world to save us from our sins

- c. Christ died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice
 - d. By simple faith in Christ, we can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life
7. This is the centerpiece of the church planting effort... spreading this news to as many people as God opens the door for

H. Church Planting Will Encounter Bitter Opposition (13-14)

- 1. In Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas were opposed by Elymus the Sorcerer... "A child of the devil and an enemy of everything that's right"
- 2. So also every bold advance for the gospel will see SATANIC OPPOSITION
- 3. Paul and Barnabas were opposed in Pisidian Antioch as well:

Acts 13:45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.

Acts 13:49-50 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

[Iconium] *Acts 14:2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.*

Acts 14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

- 4. BOTH FBC and South Durham church must expect this basic rule: the more faithful we are in evangelism, the greater will be the Satanic opposition

I. Church Planting Is Blessed by God with Fruit (13-14)

- 1. For all of that, however, Acts 13 and 14 are filled with evidence of the grace of God... many new believers who have trusted in Christ

Sergius Paulus in Cyprus believed

Pisidian Antioch:

Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Seeking and saving "those whom God had appointed..." the elect!!!

Result: MULTIPLICATION of the effort:

Acts 13:49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

[Iconium] Acts 14:1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.

[Derbe] Acts 14:21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.

2. These new believers were the crown and glory and joy of Paul and Barnabas, evidence of the grace of God in and through their ministry

J. Church Planting Moves from Individual Conversions to Structured Churches (14:23)

1. These individual converts were not left as spiritual orphans to fend for themselves
2. Instead, God has appointed them to be gathered together into assemblies... into CHURCHES
3. Indeed the word “church” means “assembly” in the Greek... those called out from the population to gather together
4. Acts 14:23 gives a very clear vision for the ordering and structuring of the churches

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

5. These churches were to strengthen the disciples and enable them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ
6. So also the Lord is setting up in South Durham A CHURCH... organized along New Testament lines
7. This orderly church will be the means of ongoing support for the persecuted, struggling, growing believers
8. The spiritual gifts ministries will flow among the members of the church and will strengthen each one

K. Church Planting Results in Local Eldership (14:23)

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

1. Elders are the godly leaders of that local church structure just mentioned
2. They would be the undershepherds of the flock
3. Acts 20 is Paul's beautiful and powerful farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus
4. The elders are called upon to watch over themselves and the flock of which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

5. They are to imitate Paul's level of commitment to the mission:
6. They are to consider themselves accountable to God for the spiritual condition of each member of the church

L. Church Planting Results in Joy for the Disciples AND the Sending Church (13:52, 14:27)

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

Acts 14:27 On arriving [in Antioch] , they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

1. The purpose of all this is that God will get the glory and the people get the joy of partaking in such an eternally fruitful ministry
2. In ten years, if the Lord blesses and you are faithful, you may look back on a decade of fruit for eternity... lost people brought from Satan's dark kingdom into Christ's Kingdom of eternal light
3. You may know that God has blessed you with joy in the work He entrusted to you

III. Applications

A. Come to Christ!!

B. FBC: Stay Committed to South Durham Church

1. Pray regularly for them
2. Celebrate their successes; pray during their challenges

3. Pray for Adam and Heather Darnell... for their encouragement, for their protection

4. Pray for other key members as well... Satan will be opposing them!!

C. FBC AND South Durham Church

1. Embrace an ongoing pattern of church planting for the rest of our lives

2. Let's fight the grim statistics that I cited which show that the longer a church exists, the LESS EVANGELISTICALLY FRUITFUL it becomes

3. Have a renewed vision for outreach and for church planting