**Breakthrough - Week 4**

**Teaching Team Notes**

**Intro and Series Recap**

Good Morning! Welcome to Week 4 of our Breakthrough Series. We have so much good stuff to share with you today, I am going to jump right in to get us all up to speed in case some may have missed one of the previous three weeks.

As a church we are we are in a season of **BREAKTHROUGH**.

* More than ever before I see a growing hunger for prayer and a heartfelt desire to see God move in and through our worship.
* We are hearing more reports of people being miraculously healed.
* And we’re seeing more and more people find their way back to God. Just last month we had over 100 people choose to follow Jesus and be baptized.

It brings to mind what David said with these words in the Psalms:

***“Your awe-inspiring acts have everyone talking! I’m telling people everywhere about your excellent greatness!... We shout with ecstatic joy over your BREAKTHROUGH for us!”*** *(Psalm 145:6-7)*

Now breakthrough is something that God can certainly do on his own, that is for sure! But because we have a relational God the pattern we normally see involves **US** and **GOD**. When people pray God breaks through.

* Our part is prayer
* God’s part is the breakthrough

We’ve been walking through the book of Acts which is a history of the Acts of the Apostles and Christ-followers who made up the first century church. And we see a pattern over and over in the life of the early church: When people pray, God breaks through (3x).

So we are in a “season” of breakthrough that we hope will extend for months, even years. But right now we are in a 6 week series called Breakthrough which continues next week when we will invite everyone who calls COMMUNITY their church home to come with 1) A special gift 2) and a Commitment of what they are willing to give above and beyond your normal giving to the church over the next 3 years in order to help even more people find their way back to God.

Let me emphasize that this all begins with **PRAYER**. None of this is accurate. ~~So I hope you are part of one of our small groups that will be having special Breakthrough Prayer Gatherings this week. And if not, you can join us . . . (explain local Prayer Gathering.) I also hope you are following along in our Breakthrough Journal. We truly want this series and this entire season of breakthrough to begin with prayer and to be sustained with prayer.~~

While breakthrough begins with PRAYER, it starts with **PEOPLE**. When we give generously to the Breakthrough Initiative we are investing in the next wave of emerging leaders and **Leadership Residents** through our **Lead Lab**.

We are investing in **Community** **Music** through our songwriters and musicians. Co-writing experiences, music publishing opportunities, and conference-leading have resulted in new songs like “Make Room” and “When Heaven Breaks Through” that are creating an even more engaging worship culture at Community.

We are investing in our **Students**. We have experienced firsthand the impact students can have on our church, and we want to ensure that every location moves closer to developing a strong Student Community where more and more middle and high school students can find their way back to God. (StuCo Video?)

Breakthrough happens in People. But Breakthrough also happens in **PLACES** (We will need to determine which examples we choose)

Through this Breakthrough initiative we will invest in every single Community location to further the mission in our local communities. One great example is our **Downers Grove** location. It is busting at the seams -- and fortunately God gave us the opportunity to acquire a church building right off Main Street, across from Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers. It is an outstanding location, but it needs renovation and remodeling. Breakthrough will help us do that.

We need a 24/7 weekday presence for our **Lincoln Park** location. We know a visible presence in that key community would have a ripple all over the city. If we’re going to continue to impact the city of Chicago, Lincoln Park is a great place to start!

We also plan to launch **Community Online** in a bigger and better way. Hundreds of people are celebrating with us every week on line, and we know that’s just the beginning. We believe the outreach potential of our Community Online is incredible.

And yet there is more! ☺ The first 10% of BREAKTHROUGH will go to **CELEBRATION GENEROSITY**, making it the largest gift ever to our:

* Compassion Team
* Philippines Team
* NewThing Team
* Restore Team (C412)

Today we’re going to learn about the last part of the initiative . . . which is “**PLANTS**.” Now when I say “plants” I’m not talking about shrubs or ferns. Around Community when we talk about “plants” we mean **church plants**.

**Why Church Planting?**

Back in the very beginning just after Jesus resurrected and before he returned to the Father, the Christ-followers were in **one** place: Jerusalem, reaching **one** people: Jewish people.

Jesus commissioned his followers to take his message to Jerusalem, but then to spread out to Judea and Samaria, and eventually to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8 on screen). The mission was to take the good news of Jesus to **all** places reaching **all** people. And God had a plan for how he would accomplish this. What was and continues to be his plan? Church planting.

**Antioch: A Sending Church**

Through some adverse circumstances Christ followers had to be dispersed, and for the message of Jesus to spread God intervened. Here is how Luke, the writer of Acts puts it:

***“Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles[f] about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.”*** *(Acts 11:19-21)*

The second part of the book of Acts turns its attention to how the good news of Jesus reaches those who were not Jewish, who at the time were called Gentiles. From this point forward, these people play a significant role in what God is doing through his Spirit. And so they start a new church in Antioch.

The city of Antioch was significant in a number of ways. Josephus, a first century historian notes that the city of Antioch was the third most important city after Rome and Alexandria. The city was large, wealthy and diverse, and so the church in that city became a central point for what God was about to do through his Spirit in the rest of the world.

Now, what makes this church a special type of church? Theologian Jack Levison points out a few key qualities of the church at Antioch:

1. The church at Antioch was a *listening and learning* community (Acts 11:26). When Paul is brought to Antioch, he took a whole year to teach people about the good news of Jesus and about the mission Jesus had entrusted to them. This was a **yearlong** process they had to go through!
2. The church at Antioch was *generous* (Acts 11:27-30). As the church learned about another community of Christ followers struggling through a famine, they raised funds to provide relief for them. They were a church that learned to give generously above and beyond to help others find their way back to God
3. The church at Antioch was a *multicultural community* (Acts 13:1). Remember that the city of Antioch was large and diverse, and the church reflected its community. At this point you might be thinking, wow this church was perfect. But it wasn’t. Like all churches, it had its fair share of challenges. In fact, because of its diversity, the church had debates about certain traditions that Jewish people thought the rest of the people needed to keep. But in the midst of the chaos, they decided that as important as these cultural differences were, they were not as important as the mission of helping people find their way back to God. They knew the mission is what mattered most.
4. Finally, The church at Antioch was engaged in *prayer and fasting* (Acts 13:2-3) They knew that the only way they were going to experience breakthrough in their lives and in the life of the church was through prayer and fasting. So they put a high priority on praying and fasting – consistently looking to God for guidance.

Now all of that was an “internal” work that they intentionally engaged in. But the “external” result was that they not only grew in numbers but actually became a multiplying church that started a whole movement of church planting. Guided by God’s Spirit, they separated Barnabas and Paul and sent them out to fulfill the Jesus mission through church planting. Paul takes three missionary trips, and in the process, they multiply, they grow and plant other churches. But each and every one of those missionary trips started from this church plant in Antioch.

**Community: A Sending Church**

Like the church in Antioch, we have always believed that God called us to be a sending church. From the very beginning we had a three-fold vision. To be:

1) An Impact Church – A church that is reaching people who are far from God and making a difference in the local community. The kind of church, where if we suddenly disappeared the community would miss us and know it’s not what it was with us. We also wanted to be

2) A Reproducing Church – And we thought that would happen as we planted new churches – and it did. But it also meant we would be one church in many locations – now 10 soon to be 11 in Chicagoland. And finally, our vision was that if God would so bless us we would

3) Catalyze a Movement of multiplying churches all over the world.

Little more explanation. And we are now beginning to see the third part of that vision come to life. In fact over the last 3 years we have been able to help plant over 1,500 new churches through NewThing! Our local expression of NewThing is what Communiy is doing in Chicago.

Now, of course, we could never do this on our own. Years ago a friend of ours introduced us to an African Proverb: **"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."** That proverb reminds us of Jesus’ final prayer recorded by his close friend John where Jesus asks for unity and collaboration among Christ-followers (John 17). And why did Jesus pray for unity? So that the mission would be accomplished and more people would find their way back to God.

“our” instead of NewThing NewThing’s vision is to be “A catalyst for movements of multiplying churches.” And we fulfill that vision as we work with local churches to help them **collaborate** with **other** local churches in networks to plant churches together. Get me something on this if you want it (Simple diagram to illustrate a movement of networks)

It might help you to think of a network like a small group.

* A **small group** consists of people.  And a **network** consists of churches.
* A **small group** prays together, explores scripture together and grows spiritually together. A **network** prays together, and encourages one another to plant and grow churches together.
* A **small group** multiplies when someone completes his/her apprenticeship. And in the same way, a **network** multiplies when someone completes a residency where he or she is equipped to plant a church.

Community started NewThing which now has hundreds of networks all over the world. But we are also a churches that is **in** a Network. In fact, we lead 2 networks right here in Chicagoland.

Speak more general (names/partnerships get confusing)

And right now we are helping to plant a new church in the Edison Park community of Chicago (picture of Bob Hedge and family) along with other churches in our network including Park Community Church, Sow Church Chicago, and Kingdom Covenant Church. David Washington, (pic of David) a former Leadership Resident of Community leads Kingdom Covenant in Roseland, an under-served Neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. And they are investing their resources to help plant this church in a middle class mostly white neighborhood on the far Northwest Side. I love that!

Need another sentence or two. We want to see that happen over and over and over again here in Chicagoland. That's what the **PLANTS** part of the Breakthrough Initiative is all about. Helping to catalyze even more collaborative church planting efforts in some of Chicago’s most under-served communities.

~~Should we go here… or just focus on Breakthrough Initiative But, we're not just doing this in Chicagoland or even only in North America, we're doing this ALL OVER THE WORLD! In places like Pakistan, Australia, France, Germany, Uganda, Brazil, the Philippines, and Albania to name a few. To date, we are working over 44 countries! And our BIG DREAM is to someday work in all 196 on the planet!~~

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." If we want to see Breakthrough in Chicagoland (and all over the world) we need to plant churches together.

**Challenge: My Role in Church Planting**

So you might be thinking – Wow, I had no idea we were doing all this stuff. People aren’t asking this question. How can I get more engaged? I am so glad you asked…

I think it is easy to see church planting as something that **others** do. You know, leave that to the professionals. We applaud their efforts and think it is great for them, and great for our church, but what could I do to contribute to a breakthrough in church planting?

 How can this be a story others can tell? Picture of Rodrigo on screen. I (Rodrigo) grew up in Mexico in a relatively poor church. But the pastor had a passion for even poorer neighborhoods. Every Saturday morning, we would go to these poor neighborhoods to bring breakfast to the children in these neighborhoods. We would serve hundreds of kids each Saturday in abandoned lots.

From there, there would grow a large enough group who wanted to meet and learn more about Jesus. So my pastor would encourage a family and say: “You are going to be the pastor of this church.” And they did it! It was amazing! He started 15 churches that way in just 20 years. I was just a teenager and I had no concept of church planting, but it had a profound impact on me. And in part it is why I am so passionate about church planting and why I gave my life to helping as many people as possible to find their way back to God.

We all have a part to play in church planting. I have a part, you have part, we have a part. If we really want to see a breakthrough in church plants, we have to ask ourselves: what is my role in this?

Maybe like the church in Antioch your role is to:

Wordsmith these words to be coherent.

Listens and learns: Maybe you are here and thinking: “I see churches everywhere. Do we really need more churches? Actually, we do. If every seat in every service in every church was full in our community we still wouldn’t come close to having enough room for everyone in our city. And new churches see 4-5x as many people finding their way back to God as compared to churches 10 years or older. The need and opportunity is tremendous.

So for some of us, the first step is to listen and learn. Sit down with a church planter. Buy him or her breakfast or lunch. Ask him about his greatest challenges or how you can pray for her him. Let him or her know how much you appreciate what they are doing.

For some of us, we need to be more Generous: Remember, you don’t have to be wealthy to be generous. This example seems so specific. Kid named Matt Blauser who gave $1 for church to get started. Then, the developers who made our Romeoville location possible. Show both. Come back to Breakthrough, envelope in hand, that’s the opportunity that is before us tomorrow. ~~My friend Rudy Rubio planted a church in Lynwood, CA - a very under-served community. Its population is not able to support their own church, so my friend reached out to 80 of his friends and family and asked them to support him with $50.00 dollars a month for three years to help cover his salary. Not everyone said yes, but a lot of them did. Think about it, you can barely go to the movies and get popcorn for $50.00. I found out recently that you can plant a church in Nepal for 5k a year. And while planting a church in the states is more expensive~~, every generous gift helps people find their way back to God.

God might be challenging you to be a person who Includes: Let’s look around and answer a real and honest question: Make this more personal to attenders. This sounds like a challenge to pastors. Does my church reflect the demographics of my community? Is our worship style inclusive enough to the people in our community? Are empowering, encouraging and supporting minority leaders so that they lead not only minority churches but multiethnic, multiplying churches – ones that we would attend?

How about Prayer and Fasting. Jesus urged us to pray for workers to be sent to reach people who are far from God. Matthew, the Tax Collector and writer of the first Gospel says that when Jesus walked around different villages and towns he felt compassion and saw the people there like “sheep without a shepherd.” Then he challenged his followers and said: “***the harvest is plenty, but the workers are few, PRAY to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers.”***

Which takes me to the last challenge: Being Sent. We are in a season of breakthrough in prayer, people, places and plants, and we need people who are listening and learning -- being generous and inclusive -- people who are praying and fasting, and people who are willing to be sent.

Focus of challenge needs to be Breakthrough Commitment Sunday.

~~I know this may feel a little radical, and even uncomfortable. But my ask is this: Will you simply be open to a big and bold breakthrough? – One that may include God asking you leave the comfort of where you are now to move to another place where you could help even more people find their way back to God? Will you dare to say that prayer and simply be open to how God may move you?~~

**Conclusion & Prayer Time (JF - 400)**

If you are a follower of Jesus, a church planter has directly impacted your walk with Jesus. In the first century, a church was established at Antioch. People left for Turkey and Africa where churches were formed. From Turkey and Africa they went to Europe. From Europe they came to the American colonies where churches were planted.

On April 26, 1879, a group of people started First Christian Church in Vandalia, Missouri (pic). Years later, some members of that church invited a 10-year-old boy to attend. He found his way back to God and grew up and became a pastor who planted Deer Creek Christian Church in the south suburbs of Chicago (pic). That man had two sons who also went on to plant a church. It’s a church called Community Christian Church in Naperville (pic) that went on to plant 9 more locations...including the church you are attending right now!

(Guided Prayer Time)

**Communion Idea**

The church is the instrument God uses to reach communities, restore relationships and reproduce apprentices to further the Jesus mission. The early church recognized that they needed the power of God’s Spirit in order to fulfill this mission. As a result Luke tells in Acts 16:5 that **“*…the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.”***

Here’s the beauty of this, God already gave us everything that we need in order to fulfill his mission. He gave us Jesus. In Jesus we have the certainty of breakthrough. And as we take communion we not only remember what Jesus did for his church, but we also remember that he is the one sustaining us today. We also proclaim his death and resurrection until the day he comes back. The bread represents his body given for us and the juice represents his blood shed for us.

(Note: Would be fun to mention how many people have found their way back to God through Community?)