

Case Study on Journey Fellowship in Oviedo, Florida

The Pastor

David Baxter

Age: 34

Grew up: Texas

B.S.: Baylor University in Waco, TX

Degree in: English

Master of Divinity: Southwestern Theological Seminary

Degree in: Biblical Languages (94)

Wife: Vanessa

Children:

Jeremiah (8)

Luke (6)

Daniel (5)

Experience:

Youth Ministry: 8 years

His Story

He has worked for 5 years as a Youth Minister in Zephyr Hills, Florida. He was first exposed to church planting during an evangelism practicum in seminary. They traveled around to different churches helping with evangelism and he notice. “The ones that really had it going on were the church plants.” He was well out of seminary and was content in his youth ministry position, but the thoughts of the church plants kept coming back to him. The absurdity of the thought was the fact that he had three children and a wife to support. The children Jeremiah 8,

Luke 6, and Daniel 5 were a real concern for David he wanted to do what God wanted him to do, but the instability for a church planter with no church planting training he thought would go against his first calling as a husband and a father. His tenure ended in Zephyr Hills, Florida and he had the opportunity to take a mildly lucrative Youth Ministry position in Texas near Vanessa, his wife's family. He was with his youth in Zephyr Hills at a conference. During the conference they were doing a poverty simulation. He was out doing the simulation and one of the truly poor people they were with during the simulation was this very dirty haggard old women. Not knowing who he was she walked up to him and said. "You are a man of God, do what you need to do." David explained that he took this as a message from God comparable to what Chriswell told the pastor of Saddleback, Rick Warren in the "The Purpose Driven Church". He decided at this point in time to put out a fleece.

Two church plants, through the association, had contacted him and the one he was interested was in Southern California. Having already resigned his position in Zephyr Hills, he sent his family to her parent's house and went to Southern California to talk with the people there. After being in California for longer than expected he returned his family and planned to plant the church in Southern California. His somewhat anxious but supportive family began to prepare for a move to Southern California. Leaving in a matter of day he received a phone call from the California Association with the news his sponsor church had backed out and he was not to come and plant a church there. When David received this news he was both angry and at peace at the same time. He was frustrated at the lack of communication, but he on the other hand had a sense of relief.

Apparently the news of the situation in California spread throughout the association and whenever he called it seemed people knew what had happened in California and were

sympathetic. He continued to talk with people in the convention and was offered the opportunity to do church plants in Utah and Boston. He considered Boston, because it was a college town, but there was not a real ease about that. He was also offered a position in the Church Planting Apprenticeship Program. This program required the planter to plant 4 churches in 3 years and only at the end of the third year could the planter stay at the plant. David realized that he was called to be a founding pastor and declined the position. Then he heard from some people in the Florida association who wanted him to plant a church in a town outside of Orlando called Oviedo. He went to Oviedo and met with some people from the association. It was a less than inspirational trip in his opinion. The man from the association drove him quickly around Oviedo and put him in an office and told him to work on his Mission and Vision Statement. David recollected that he knew that these things were crucial, but he wanted to see more of the town and meet some people there. The day ended with David babysitting the association leaders kids and in general left a bad taste in his mouth toward Oviedo, yet he had a peace about pursuing the church plant there.

His first obstacle was that he had intended to move into a new apartment complex and when he prepared for the move they said the apartment complex may not be ready at the scheduled move in date. The inspector had come by and the place was not ready for inspection and they did not know when he would be back to redo the inspection. David told the lady that the building would be ready because he had prayed about it. (This statement is out of character for him, but he knew he was right.) The lady at the apartment complex seemed irritated by this statement and told him not to blame her if the inspector did not come. The inspector came and he was able to move in right on schedule.

David's ministry experience had been with youth, so he was naturally drawn to a younger crowd. The UCF campus in Oviedo was another real draw to the town. It was when he met up with a man who was the former praise and youth leader at Tuscahill Baptist Church, David's mother church that a core group began to develop. Joey led praise and also led the youth for three years. It was not clear if he was fired or he left, but it was just clear that it was a tense exit at best. David and Joey hit it off. David made it clear that Joey was gone from Tuscahill for 3 years before he met up with David. There were less than three families that left Tuscahill to join Journey. At least one of them was one of the bigger tithers at Tuscahill, so it would be no surprise that that might cause a strain in the relationship with the mother church. We will look at the mother church relationship a little later. Joey does come into play, because when he met David he was going to school in Deland. Most of the core group members were people that had a connection to Joey, in reality. David was often vague when I would ask him questions about who was in the core group. None of them were new Christians, but the main focus of Journey is outreach. The two did not mesh in my mind. It seemed that David was a talented preacher and Joey a talented praise leader. When they came together and began the services they drew a crowd. Three weeks after the sputtering launch Journey was growing and baptized 4 at there third service. I could not ascertain if they were all new believers or not, but it was comforting that they were doing something that coincided with their mission statement.

Location, Location, Location

Oviedo, Florida

Local Population :11,114 (1990)

22,162 (1998)

Land Area

3, 469 Square Miles

Demographics

Oviedo has 91+ percent white non-Hispanic population

The average household income is well above the national average

The near by college gives it a far higher than normal education rate.

Oviedo is a suburb of Orlando, Florida. And according to Dr. Stetzer “The only thing necessary for planting a church in Orlando is a pulse” Sarcasm aside it is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and the nation. The commuters into the tourist happy Orlando area have a perfect bedroom community in Oviedo. The economics of the area are tourist driven yet; they still support most of their own business industry. Three major pharmaceutical firms are in Oviedo as well as the University of Central Florida. The fastest growing college campus in the state. Orlando has the advantage of still having large area of undeveloped land around it and Oviedo is a city that has grown out of the expansion of Orlando. It is an upper to middle level income community and in general seems to have all the qualifications for a fantastic church plant.

Target Group

The Target group of Journey Fellowship is a microcosm of the demographics of the area. The age ranges from 18-35 yr. old. Most either have or are working on their college

degrees. Though it seems awkward that David has his Master in Biblical Languages, this fits well with the highly educated seeker crowd David is aiming at. The people in David's church are mostly postmodern, but he does not really like to use that term. Other attributes of the target group are that they are artsy, busy, and long for connection. Journey aims to use this desire as a point of contact.

50% of Journey Fellowship is college students; this has a positive side in that there is a lot of energy and time available. Most church planters will tell you that you cannot start a church with college students, because of their transient nature as well as the fact that they are not usually the most affluent people. Their cost usually outweighs their giving.

The Mother Church

First Baptist Tuscahill is their mother church. They were verbally positive toward the ministry. They did not give any financial backing, except they did help with day-to-day postage. This did not include any buld mailing. David felt that the idea of the plant and what was going on was never really told to the congregation. First Baptist Tuscahill has many ministries one of which is the Antioch Ministry for fallen pastors. Most people who did not know him seemed to avoid him, and he thought it might be because they connected him with that ministry. He was required as they were, to go to all the staff meetings and he fit in with them as a stranger. David met with the pastor a Tuscahill and sought advice, especially during the early lean years and he always gave David a pat answer, like "you just need to pray about it" and when David would rejoice over things going well. The pastor changed the topic. David and the pastor had an amicable, but not a close relationship.

Strategy

Robert E. Logan said “My seminary education didn’t prepare me for 80 percent of what I was attempting to do.”¹ David Baxter felt the same way as a novice church planter. He knew that he had a passion for planting a church; and also a vision for planting a church, but with little preparation he had he learned on the job. David’s books that most influence him give a good key to what his strategy was. In reality, he has a hybrid approach; a mixture of Seeker Sensitive and Purpose Driven.

Books of influence:

Rediscovering Church by Bill Hybels

Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren

Planting Growing Churches by Aubrey Malphers

The Logan Tape Series

The confounding thing about all these sources is that he read them once he got to Oviedo. He really did not have a strategy when he started. David said the he ineffectively used a mail out. He said it was ineffective because it was not high quality enough and it did not list the sermon topics. He also had three people from his mother church that participated in a “Phones for You” campaign. These were not done with the quality or the number to make any dent in a market the size of Orlando, or Oviedo. Journey Fellowship launched May 2, 1999. They had 23 members in their core group; most of them were transplants from Stetson or had some connection with the youth minister, Joey. There were 40 people at the launch and it was very disorganized. The launch was pretty much a dud, but with the financial backing of one of the earliest members they rented a meeting room in the Holiday Inn for the first month after the launch. In that every thing David learned about church planting, he learned as he was doing it he was quite effective if not

¹ Beyond Church Growth, Robert, E. Logan

in numbers, at least in tenacity. I admire the faith of one who can lead this with not only his own interests on the line, but also that of a wife and three children.

Worship Style and Models

David has heavy influences from both the Seeker Sensitive and the Purpose Driven Church planting models. He defines his church as Seeker Sensitive, yet his preaching is Purpose Driven. When I asked him what style of preaching he used he said it was not narrative and never verse-by-verse, or thematic. "It's was more like story telling." He does have inserts in the bulletin with blanks to fill in Scripture as he uses it. Understanding that he is actually doing church planting, while I have only talked about it, I'm not sure if his combination of strategies is healthy for a church. If it is healthy it at least seems to be inconsistent with the outreach oriented, seeker sensitive, approach he is aiming for. He says that in-depth Bible Study is done during the weekly bible studies and that Sunday morning is Seeker Sensitive. I understand the desire to mix these models, but it seems that with this hybrid approach, you either end up with a less than seeker sensitive service. The service seems to cater to the churched contemporary in that the services are based on the five purposes. I would like to hear it in person before I make a judgment on that but at the same time he said he aims his sermons on the five purposes of the church, reverting back to the purpose driven model. The purpose of everything the church does is aimed at outreach, but they do not have an outreach strategy. They do have outreach events and their strategy is to get seekers involved in the worship or bible study; both of which are at least partially believer focused. Though I'm not sure how the strategy works, they are leading people to Christ and consistently baptize new believers.

They are following the Purpose Driven plan of discipleship with the names changed to fit Journey. 101 "Mapping the Journey"201 "Starting Point"301 and "Unpacking Your Gear". They have not started on 401 yet, but it is in progress.

The praise is contemporary and is led by talented players who consider their music as just a gift they want to give back to God. It is up-beat, but they usually do not use secular music as you might see in a

The Change

There was a time in the life of the church that things changed. The launch went well, but the church was still struggling financially and David did not really have the guidance from outside influences. He turned to the state convention, but it happened that during his crucial time of growth, the Association director and the Church Planting Director left. The state sent a guy down from Jaxsonville once a month, David said “He was very helpful, but often stuff he would tell him was to assist in mistakes he already had made.”

God brought Kristy Mayer into the path of the Fellowship. Kristy had been part of a successful church plant in Ocala. Kristy put David in touch with the pastor of Church at the Springs in Ocala. He and the pastor hit it off. The pastor of Church at the Springs became David’s mentor and also adopted Journey Fellowship. Journey Fellowship flourished with the strategic and financial help accorded them by their new mother church. David made particular

mention of a trailer that this church gave them. It was a church in a box type set up and it made the movement of equipment much easier. They were also able to upgrade equipment to bring higher quality to their worship sound. With support an mentoring Journey is up to approximately 200. About forty to fifty percent of their attender are involved in a small group bible study

Small Groups And Leadership

The small groups are led mostly by Campus Crusade Staff. Jouney has developed a good repore with the staff in the area. Orlando is the headquarters for Campus Crusade and they have been very supportive. Up until this point leadership has not been a big issue, but David know that it is wise to set standards, so he is in the process of developing leadership requirements. The stucture of the church is a leadership team that meets once a month and David is developing an Administrative Team. These teams are selected by the pastor

Theology

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. He has eternally existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. God created the world and everything in it out of nothing and continues to sustain His creation by His sovereign power. By His providence He is operating throughout history to fulfill His redemptive purposes.

Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; 3:22 Psalm 90:2 Matthew 28:19 Peter 1:2 2 Corinthians 13:14

Man

Man is made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. He is the supreme object of God's creation. Although man has tremendous potential for good, he is marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates man from God.

Genesis 1:27 Psalm 8:3-6 Isaiah 53:6a Romans 3:23 Isaiah 59:1-2

Eternity

Man was created to exist forever. He will either exist eternally separate from God by sin or in union with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life in Heaven. Heaven and Hell are places of eternal existence.

John 3:16 I John 2:25; 5:11-13 Romans 6:23 Revelation 20:15

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. United with the true human nature through a miraculous conception and virgin birth, Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead in bodily form after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, continually making intercession for His own. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again to Earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 1:22-23 Isaiah 9:6 John 1:1-5; 14:10-30 Hebrews 4:14-15 I Corinthians 15:3-4

Romans 1:3-4 Acts 1:9-11 I Timothy 6:14-15 Titus 2:13

Salvation

The central purpose of God's Word is to call all people into fellowship with Himself. Salvation is a gift from God to man. Man can never make up for his sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can man be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

Romans 6:23 Ephesians 2:8-9 John 14:6; 1:12 Titus 3:5 Galatians 3:26 Romans 5:1

Eternal Security

Because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God and not by the self-effort of the believer. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives this security.

John 10:29 2 Timothy 1:12 Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14 I Peter 1:3-5

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make men and women aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Holy Spirit uniquely endows each believer with gifts for the up-building of the Church--the Body of Christ. His power and control make it possible for the believer to live a life of Christ-like

character and to bear fruit to the glory of the Father.

2 Corinthians 3:17 John 16:1-13; 14:16-17 Acts 1:8 I Corinthians 2:12; 3:16

Ephesians 1:13 Galatians 5:25 Ephesians 5:1

The Bible

The bible is God's word to all people. It is the sole basis of our belief. Scripture originated with God and was given through chosen men. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because God inspires it, it is truth without any mixture of error and there are no other writings similarly inspired by God. This church recognizes that it can not bind the conscience of individual members where scripture is silent. Rather, each believer is to be led in those areas by the Lord to whom he or she alone is ultimately responsible.²

2 Timothy 3:16 2 Peter 1:20-21 2 Timothy 1:13 Psalm 119:160; 12:6 Proverbs 30:5

Vision

Journey Fellowship Will be.....

A Community of grace where the hurting can receive healing, the lonely can find connection and the searching can discover meaning.

A Force in East Orlando sharing the life-changing truth of God's grace by leading people to Jesus and developing them into fully-devoted followers of Christ.

A Network of small groups that function as the church, allowing everyone the opportunity to discover and use their gifts to build-up the Church.

² www.journeyfellowship.com

A Family that builds and strengthens families, mending broken homes and nurturing growing families.

A Presence on the U.C.F. campus and public school campuses in East Orlando, calling a generation of students to seek God.

A Training ground for leaders to be sent to start other churches and to serve as missionaries in the U.S. and abroad so that the nations will be called to God.

Purpose

We exist to lead people in the **Journey** faith and walk with **toward** being fully developed **Christ** followers

Values

Growth

Stretching us to develop in faith. Enlarging us by raising up others to use their gifts, creativity and talents.
Encouraging spiritual and character growth in others.

Authenticity

We are all about searching for truth and believe that God reveals truth to us through the Bible. In our search for truth, we accept where we are in the journey and seek to grow from here. We don't just talk about truth; we learn how to act on it.

Meaning

Whatever it takes to get the point. Messages are purposeful and relevant. Whatever it takes to express yourself. Music. Video. Drama. Dance. Whatever. Art with an edge--a message you can understand!

Outreach

More than meetings--we are getting out in our community and world to make a difference. We are mobilizing individuals and teams to demonstrate faith in life.

Together

We believe that life is best done together: Learn together. Play together. Grow together. We hang out together on Sundays and many of us join small groups with others in the fellowship during the week. Expect real, life- changing friendships.