

# WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

## Hurry up.....and slow down

As I closed last month's newsletter, we were newly on the ground in Ocean Springs (well, in a borrowed house in Biloxi for now)....and we were anticipating an April that was going to be crazy, busy, and hectic. Boy, were we right! April was great, but it was non-stop, and it was filled - Filled with preaching in churches, presenting the vision for evangelism-based church planting in Ocean Springs, attending a conference in Memphis, and even a trip back to Birmingham where Stephanie and I packed up my mom and moved her down to Biloxi to her new home in a senior living / retirement community here on the coast. All of those were good things, wonderful things, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to visit and to share and to see God build this team. But I was also gone, on the road, more than I was present or "home" in Ocean Springs this past month. And so the month felt hectic and exhausting.

And that is too often how I have lived as a pastor. The truth is, I have spent much of my life running. Maybe it is the nature of church ministry: There is always something else to be done, another meeting to plan and lead, another fire to put out, another crisis to cover. Maybe it is my natural personality and approach to things. Maybe it is my performance-based background. Maybe it is my own fears and anxieties that if I ever stop running, it all might come crashing down. Maybe I was running to try to impress people...or to avoid disappointing them. Maybe I was running to stay hidden, to avoid being known, or found out. But the end result is that, I have spent much of my personal life, and much of my career as a pastor, running around like Chicken Little, and too often running right past what I should have been doing instead. And I am asking the Lord, in this new season, to make me different. To show me a better way. And a new pace...



## After all, when you look at how Jesus did ministry, What do you see?

Jesus always lived and moved on purpose, and His face was always, ultimately, set toward Jerusalem and toward the cross. He knew why He was here and what He came to do. He said things like, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach the gospel there also, for that is why I have come." But if you look at how He did it — Jesus never seems rushed. When He was walking through a crowd and a woman who needed healing reached out desperately to touch Him....He stopped. He listened to her. He spent time. When those around Him expected Him to be a different kind of Messiah, one who would take over and set up His rule among the greatest by force.....He went to the lowliest and the despised. He had supper with them. He lingered, He laughed. And He truly became "God with us." He brought the gospel, He brought the Kingdom...He healed people in

the ways they most needed. And He did it over supper, over walks with His disciples, and through an un-rushed community of conversations and really listening to people whom He called His friends. I want to be more like that. I pray this church plant will be more like that.

## So as you pray for this new work in Ocean Springs — Will you pray for something different:

- Will you pray for a missions effort, a church planting effort that reflects not only the message of Jesus.... But the manner of Jesus?
- What could that look like among a community of believers who marinate in the gospel together; who celebrate salvation and grace together; who help each other, yes to trust Jesus, but also to walk like Jesus, and listen like Jesus; a community of people who do life together, really knowing each other, rather than just rushing from one program to another?
- What could it look like for a church, rather than retreating in fear and reaction, and rather than doing scheduled “raids” out into the culture, to instead look for a parish — A circle of people around us, with whom we interact to mix our lives into theirs, so that unbelievers feel welcome, and heard, and safe to ask questions, and un-rushed so that they are able to consider the gospel and the claims of Jesus in a context of hospitality and relationships, and who find people who were once strangers...but who now offer them grace?
- And what could it look like for a church to have a different goal: Fulfilling the Great Commission through a long runway of such relationships, discipleship, and evangelism, rather than just being a launch pad trying to rocket to “particularization” and having a building as quickly as possible? One goal inevitably re-collects and re-arranges Christians....the other reaches lost people for the sake of the Kingdom. Pray we will be about the right one!
- So, will you pray for Stephanie and me as we start ministry here? Will you pray for the house that we need in order to do this kind of ministry — A house of gathering, of hospitality, and a house where people can linger and hang out with one another, knowing and being known. We are searching for that house now. And will you pray that, here at a new beginning, we walk in the peace, the pace, and the joy of the gospel that we so want to share with others?
- And will you pray for me to be a pastor who works as hard as anyone, but who does so in the Lord’s strength and timing, not His own; who learns to walk instead of run, and to walk like Jesus; who makes much of Jesus, not his own effort and plan.... And who has time for un-hurried conversations?



## And now that we are on the ground and the work is starting, will you consider joining our team of investors and partners?

- I am pleased to report that we are at 85% support raised, in just five months of support raising. New partners and investors are joining our team — Would you please pray about how God would have you be a part of this so that we can “bring it home” to 100%?
- To give, use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"  
PO Box 890233  
Charlotte, NC, 28289-0233.  
Please write “Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant” on the memo line.
- And finally, more information for all of this and updates on our Ocean Springs journey can be found at our website: [www.PlantHopeOS.org](http://www.PlantHopeOS.org)!



### **A closing encouragement:**

“Nobody in America gets listened to very much. I was surprised at how little people had relationship. I never read anything on church growth. I just started going through the neighborhoods...getting acquainted with people. And I just said, ‘This is my parish.’”

– Eugene Peterson