



**STARTING  
POINTS**

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Carlton L. Coon Sr.  
General Director  
North American Missions





# STARTING POINTS

# LORIN BRADBURY



WORD AFLAME PRESS  
HAZELWOOD, MO

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By Lorin Bradbury

Word Aflame Press  
Hazelwood MO

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<sup>1</sup> Valentine's Day

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<sup>7</sup> Independence Day

<sup>8</sup> Thanksgiving

<sup>9</sup> Christmas

<sup>10</sup> New Year's Eve



# PREFACE

I have entitled this series of sermons *Starting Points* with the intent that they will serve as a starting point for other ministers. The way they are laid out, a minister could pick up any one of these sermons and preach or teach it. I would be honored if someone did that, but the intent is to provide a starting point that will result in messages tailored to individual congregations.

Furthermore, it is my goal to provide a balanced diet for your church with content addressing a mixture of topics that teach Bible doctrine as well as Christian living. Also, I have included messages coordinated with the major holidays of the year. “Knit Together in Love” is an exposition of I Corinthians 13, and works well for a message around Valentine’s Day. I first taught that message on February 14, 1982 in Hoonah, Alaska, and entitled it “A Valentine’s Day Message.” “Getting Ready for Communion” was developed for the week leading up to Easter. It also may serve as a starting point for a Good Friday message. “He’s Alive” is an Easter message. “Mothers—God’s Living Epistles” was an adaptation of an adult Sunday school lesson entitled “Living Epistles” that happened to coincide with Mother’s Day 2011. “The Responsibility of Being a Man” was created specifically for Father’s Day 2011. The lesson entitled “The Great I Am and Freedom” was originally created for a Wednesday evening, July 5, 2000. It describes the freedoms we experience as Christians at the cost of the life of Jesus Christ. As the year progresses, there are lessons for Thanksgiving—“Generosity and Thanksgiving,” Christmas—“The Miracle Birth,” and New Year’s Eve—“New Beginnings.”

I began pastoring in 1976, at twenty-four years of age, three and one-half years after my conversion. Though I was a soul winner from my new birth, the majority of my preaching experience prior to pastoring was limited to a nursing home. Assured by the Holy Ghost that I had been called to missionary work, I accepted a call to pastor the United Pentecostal Church of Hoonah, Alaska. It was there I learned to develop sermons and Bible studies. With no repertoire of sermons to draw upon and no starting points to aid me, I was responsible for five messages a week—two messages Sunday morning (an adult Sunday school lesson and an evangelistic message), a Sunday evening evangelistic message, a Wednesday evening Bible study, and a Friday evening youth service. Approximately, six weeks into my pastoral ministry, I ran out of things to preach and teach. I will never forget that Sunday evening. We had guests present and I was unprepared. In all honesty, I was out of sermons. I opened my mouth, but the Lord did not fill it. When nothing meaningful seemed to come out, I blamed the devil for hindering a move of God. I said something like, “Folks, I sense a great resistance to the moving of God’s presence by the devil tonight.” In truth, the devil has little to do with the effectiveness of a sermon when one is unprepared. But it wasn’t that I hadn’t tried to prepare, or that I had been negligent, I was empty and I didn’t know what to preach.

That night, after the service, I withdrew to that little office in the Hoonah church, humiliated and fearing my future as a pastor. As I prayed, I saw a book on the shelf left by the former pastor, Mitchell Glover, on sermon preparation. That book, *The Preparation of Sermons* by Andrew Blackwood, totally changed the way I approached sermon preparation. Every verse of Scripture became a potential sermon. Take a verse, a paragraph, or even a whole chapter; there is a message in it. Just as you take an agate and tap on it until it breaks open revealing the beauty on the inside, every verse is loaded with meaning. Blackwood advocated developing an outline off the text, writing out the message, and then making an outline off the written message. I did this, and sermon preparation—though arduous at times—became exciting. I also learned to prepare outlines that were not only useful for the moment, but could be reused.

I often think of the young minister just starting out, or the bi-vocational pastor who works forty hours per week and stands before the same congregation three times a week, desiring to present meaningful material to help them grow in Christ and live an overcoming Christian life. It is with that individual in mind, that I have prepared this series of starting points.

In giving credit where credit is due, a number of these lessons came from the *Word Aflame Adult Teacher*, which served as a starting point for the lesson. Some bear the original titles from the *Word Aflame Adult Teacher*, but the lessons were re-worked, as I would hope that each minister would do with these lessons, using them as starting points. Direct quotes from all sources are cited accordingly.

**Special Note:** Because of the intended flexibility of this work, some material is repeated in a few lessons.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratefulness to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who called me into the greatest calling in all the word—preaching the gospel. I would like to express appreciation to Pastor J. R. Blackshear, whose ministry positively impacted the early years of my Christian walk and no doubt shaped the direction my ministry has taken. Further, I would like to express my appreciation to the congregations in Hoonah, Juneau, and Bethel, Alaska, who allowed me the opportunity to develop and hone my preaching and teaching skills through the years. Last, but not least, I am very grateful to my wife, Bonnie, who has been my greatest supporter and encourager. Her positive comments have stayed with me and pushed me to throw myself into yet another sermon or Bible study, and her critiques have forced me to back up and try again. Thank you to all who have shaped my life. Truly, there are no self-made men; we all have been shaped by others.



# LESSON 1

## JESUS' PLAN FOR EVANGELISM

**TEXT:** (Luke 24:46-49)

He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

### INTRODUCTION

1. We often refer to this portion of Scripture as the Great Commission.
2. This commission was for all believers to proclaim the good news of salvation to all people.
3. There is no greater purpose expressed in Scripture for the church than for believers to evangelize and disciple their world for Jesus Christ.

#### A. Recorded in All Three Synoptic Gospels

The commission was given to the disciples at Jerusalem immediately prior to Jesus' ascension.

“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15-16).

#### B. The Primary Intent: To Bring the Gospel within Reach of Everyone

1. Every child of God must do his or her part for the Great Commission to become a reality.
2. The basic purpose of our existence must be to witness to all within our reach:
  - a. Those with whom we work
  - b. Those who live in our neighborhood
  - c. Those we meet traveling the road of life

### I. THE MEANING OF EVANGELISM

1. Before we can preach the gospel, we must know what it is and how it can be applied.
2. Jesus gave us some guidelines to follow in fulfilling His commission.

#### A. The Gospel Is Centered in Jesus

“Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

## **B. The Requirements for Converts**

1. Without faith in the deity of Jesus Christ, without faith in the work of Christ on the cross, and without faith in the forgiveness of sins, a person can receive no benefits from the Cross.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

2. Repentance includes not only the confession of sins but also the forsaking of sins.

“He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:46-47).

3. Repentance is a prerequisite for water baptism.
4. Baptism is more than an outward show of an inward experience.

“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11-12).

“God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:20-21).

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

5. God wants to fill every soul with the Holy Ghost.

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39).

## **II. THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM**

### **A. Everyone outside of Christ Is Lost**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

1. No one can be justified by his own deeds.
2. The only hope or remedy is the blood of Jesus Christ.

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (I Peter 1:18-19).

## **B. It Is Not God's Will That Any Should Perish**

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

1. If we have to witness to a hundred souls who do not care for the truth in order to find one who would welcome it, it is well worth the effort.
2. If anyone is excluded from this great salvation, let it be that person's fault rather than the church's fault.

## **III. THE EFFECT OF EVANGELISM**

“Napoleon Bonaparte allegedly said, ‘Alexander the Great and I have conquered by the power of force, but the Nazarene has conquered more hearts through the power of love than Alexander and I have together ever conquered’” (Davis, 1994, winter, p. 49).

### **A. In Jerusalem**

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).

### **B. In Samaria**

“Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.  
 . . . But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:5-8, 12).

### **C. In Cornelius's House**

Cornelius was a good man, but lost.

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:1-2).

“[Cornelius] told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved’” (Acts 11:13-14).

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:44-48).

### **D. In Ephesus**

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’

They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’

So Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’

‘John’s baptism,’ they replied.

Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:1-6)

## CONCLUSION

1. The task of world evangelism is everyone’s responsibility.
2. Placing the church in the hands of men may have seemed risky, but Jesus knew that the powers of Hell itself could not stop the advance of His church.
3. The reason for the success of the early church was that He promised to be in their midst.

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

“What will the church today do with Christ’s commission for believers in these modern days of the twenty-first century? Will we go forth, preaching the gospel and baptizing believers in the only saving name of Jesus? Will we busy ourselves proclaiming God’s Word throughout the world, making disciples for Jesus? We have a great call, a great commission, and a great responsibility! But we also have a great God, who has promised both to empower us by His Spirit and always to be present with us, “even unto the end of the world” (Davis & Johnson, 2009, fall, p. 24).