

# SCRIPT FOR 200 BARRIER PRESENTATION

## SESSION ONE

### UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE BARRIER

Who knows when the concept of barriers to growth was first articulated or who initially suggested the idea.

I know the first time barriers made a real impression on me was when I heard the late John Wimber say, “We know there is an invisible barrier somewhere between 150 and 250 in church size.”

Of course, several barriers have been suggested by various people.

The 200 Barrier is the most popular

Carl George has suggested an 800 barrier

2,000 seems to be a barrier in the Church of the Nazarene

Many pastors think of 100 as a barrier

Some have suggested a barrier at 50

The truth is the first barrier is the “Primary Group” barrier at about 25.

I discovered this when I first began researching the 200 barrier back in 1979

I looked at churches in attendance groups of 25 and we had more in the “under 25 category” than any other size category.

I was puzzled by this for several years.

I think “Primary Group” theory is the best explanation for this.

“Not all small groups are primary groups but all primary groups are small.”

Primary groups tend to peak out at about 25.

One way to deal with the situation is to declare there are no barriers at all.

A distribution of churches according to size reveals only a rapid decrease in the number of churches as the categories increase in size.

Womack, in The Pyramid Principle, suggested several points of clustering.

But, no barriers can be convincingly delineated based on numerical distribution.

The 200 Barrier isn't really based on numbers.

The 200 Barrier is postulated on social and organizational dynamics.

These social and organizational dynamics are affected by the number of people in the organization.

Size affects group dynamics because people can only remember a limited number of names and they can only relate to a limited number of other people.

Communication dynamics change as a group enlarges.

Span of control becomes a factor organizationally.

Specialization and complexity (organizational development) categorize personal interaction.

Increased size raises expectations of quality performance which tends to professionalize practices.

Increased size calls for a more rationalized approach to organizational concerns.

C. Peter Wagner developed a typology of group relationships which will help us understand social and organizational dynamics in the local church.

As groups grow in numerical size they reach a point where social and organizational dynamics must be structured in order for satisfactory human relationships to be maintained and for group expectations to be satisfied.

The most accurate way I know of explaining this is by describing a group changing from “one big happy family” to a rather highly developed organization.

In a one big happy family type of church everyone knows quite a lot about everyone in the church.

In a larger, more highly structured church people know only a limited number of persons, usually the people in the groups in which they participate.

This is a mammoth change—it is popularly called a paradigm change.

In terms of organizational function, it is totally different.

In a word, the 200 Barrier is “change.”

This organizational change appears to occur somewhere between 150 and 350 participating persons. There are several variables:

The number of adults in the total.

The frequency of participation by the adults in the group.

The relational style of the people in the group.

The leadership style of the pastor.

The change does not occur abruptly at a specific size but gradually over a fairly wide numerical range.

It is not a wall that you crash into but a very steep hill to climb.

It is actually more like going from travelling by car to traveling by airplane—but the transfer has to be made while you are moving!

Naming it the 200 Barrier has caused some pastors to think that they had broken the barrier when their church averaged over 200 in attendance.

An attendance of 350 is the point at which it is more likely that a church has truly broken the 200 Barrier.

Nine out of ten churches never grow to a size of 350.

Weber's Typology is an enlightening description of the process.

The 200 Barrier is the most formidable growth restriction that any church ever faces.

When I presented my research to the ASCG several years ago a denominational executive of the SBC suggested that he thought pastors of large churches would say that 1,000 was a more formidable barrier than 200. I asked Rick Warren, who was present in the meeting, what he thought. He declared that the 200 Barrier is the only barrier.

Unfortunately, the 200 Barrier became a fad of the 1980's and early 90's. There is very little interest in the 200 Barrier today. Yet, it remains the most formidable growth barrier that any church will ever encounter.

In many respects, the 200 Barrier is the watershed between organizational weakness and strength. Below the barrier the church is programmatically limited and just barely financially viable.

This is not to denigrate the small church. The church under 150 has many wonderful qualities. In my visits to small churches I find that the people are happy and enjoy the church. The fellowship and pastoral care are great. For this reason small churches win quite a number of new people, percentage wise.

It is, in fact, the qualities of the small church that comprise the major elements of the 200 Barrier. People do not want to give up the "one big happy family" relationships of the small church.

Yet, many people in small churches would like the ministry of a larger church—in fact, many of them seek it out by transferring to larger churches.

Small churches are a phenomenon of distribution and, as such, are highly valuable.

They were appropriate to rural North America and even have a place in urban North America.

But, today the large church is appropriate to Urban North America. People want, and need, more ministries than the small church can provide. The economic support of the clergy requires a larger base from which to derive income.

Clergy and laity alike, and together, need to squarely face the reality of the 200 Barrier and decide to enlarge their church beyond the barrier.

When Ten Steps To Breaking The 200 Barrier was first published in 1988 a pastor bought several copies and gave it to

his people to read. One of the lay leaders of the church said to the pastor, “Since reading this book I realize that I was responsible for stopping the growth of the church a few years ago when you tried to get us to grow. I thought I was doing the right thing, but now I realize I was wrong. But pastor if you will lead us in growth again I promise you I will give you my full support and help you break the barrier!”

The first task in breaking the barrier is for everyone to understand the nature of the barrier and make a commitment to work to break it.

## **SESSION TWO**

### **OVERCOMING THE BARRIER**

#### *PART ONE*

#### *SPIRITUAL PREPARATIONS*

#### Examine Your Motives

- To increase the church’s potential for winning people to Christ.

- To provide more comprehensive ministries for your people.
- To increase the church's visibility in the community.
- To glorify God with a credible and noteworthy witness in your city.
- To provide increased financial support for world evangelization and the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.
- To enlist additional workers/leaders in the mission and ministry of the church.

### Intensify Your Praying

- You already know you need a miracle. Nine out of ten churches never break the barrier.
- More than average prayer is required.
- Mobilize every source of prayer possible.
- Program and organize prayer.
- Pray publicly about the effort to break the barrier and explain to the people why you want to break it.
- Maintain sincerity as you intensify praying.
- Keep humble.

### Increase Your Faith

- Accept the fact that you need greater faith for what God wants to accomplish through your ministry.
- Admit that your own self-concept has caused you to hold back from trusting God to make your ministry powerful.

- Confess your lack of faith and pray that God will increase your faith.
- Search the Scriptures for faith-building passages.
- Read faith-inspiring books.
- Go hear people of great faith speak.
- Watch for faith events in your church and in the lives of your people.
- Act on faith yourself—trust God to respond.
- Attempt something great for God.

## OVERCOMING THE BARRIER

### *PART TWO*

### *CHANGING ASSUMPTIONS*

#### Small Church Organizational Characteristics

- Individual relationships are primary.
- Values a professional minister. Pastor is paid to minister.
- It is lay controlled through informal structures.
- It is survival/maintenance driven and conservative.

#### Small Church Pastoral Characteristics

- Primary caregiver
- Overestimated significance

- Expectation Driven
- Availability
- Performance
- Role comfort
- Poor delegating ability
- Poor planning
- Individualism
- Ignorance of trends

### Large Church Organizational Characteristics

- Group focused. Ministry is primary.
- Staff Directed. Board sets policy.
- Structures are primarily formalized.
- Vision/opportunity driven. Liberal.

### Large Church Pastoral Characteristics

- Emphasis on the big picture.
- Take-charge competence.
- One another ministry expectation.
- Group focus.
- Flexible supervision.
- Outcome objectives.
- Large-picture focus.
- Role creation.
- Non-dependency.
- Managerial skills.

## Switching Characteristics

- Both pastor and people must adopt an “Agreement to Switch” document.
- Pastor and Transition Committee must conduct quarterly evaluations of transition progress.
- Transition Committee must review the agreement to switch document in connection with any complaint.
- Text of “Agreement to Switch” document.

## OVERCOMING THE BARRIER

### *PART THREE*

### *DEVELOPING A PLAN*

#### Set A Barrier Breaking Goal (Step 4)

- 350 is probably the minimum goal.
- The “Gravity Effect” must be taken into consideration.

#### Think Through Your Plan

- Does not have to be a detailed long range plan.
- Space/parking requirements must be anticipated.
- Lay leader training can be estimated.
- Personnel additions should be planned.

- Program expansion needs to be projected.
- Financial demands should be calculated.

### Focus On The Critical Few

- In any given group of occurrences a small number of causes will give rise to the largest proportion of results.
- Make a list of all the activities currently in operation in your church.
- Condense this list down to the three or four activities that are actually winning people to your church. Ask new people what was the major factor in their decision to become active in your church.
- Next, make a list of all the numerical growth producing program possibilities that you and your people can think about. Ask other people and read books about growth.
- Circle three or four of the most promising possibilities.
- Combine the three or four items from each list and condense it down to the three or four best possibilities. Don't discard something that is working.
- Make sure you and your people are comfortable with these priorities and investing most of your efforts in these growth programs.
- Implement these activities to the hilt!

### Create Excitement

- Make a list of all the ways you and your people can think of that will create excitement.
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### Launch A Growth Thrust

- Sunday School renewal.
- Personal evangelism training.
- Mass/direct mailing campaign.
- Children's outreach.

### Balance Organizational Priorities

- Evangelism And Education.
- Quantity And Quality.
- Reaching People And Providing Space.
- Money For Staff And Staffing For Growth.
- Excitement From Growth And Efforts To Build Morale.

### Evangelize First

- Churches grow by adding new converts—not transfers.
- Evangelism is unpopular—especially with pastors.
- Must focus church on evangelism.

### Lead The Change

- Maintain equilibrium in the midst of change.
- Managing conflict.
- Followership of the laity.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIER

## *PART FOUR*

### *HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN*

Knowledge alone will not result in productivity. It is not enough to understand the nature of the 200 Barrier, nor is it sufficient to know the steps necessary to break the barrier.

The world seems to be comprised of people who let things happen and people who make things happen.

People who make things happen exhibit certain distinctive characteristics:

#### They Believe That A Certain Thing Can Be Made To Happen.

- They do not simply wish that something will happen. They are convinced that, if they manage the situation properly, they can actually make the desired thing happen.
- They do not think of their confidence as disregarding the sovereignty of God but as an expression of faith in God.
- Make it happen people are not necessarily visionary but action oriented. True, they can visualize what they want to happen but their secret is their confidence that what they visualize can indeed be made to happen.

#### They Make A Commitment To Make It Happen.

- They do not wait for someone else to make it happen, nor do they depend on circumstances to cause it to happen.

- Make it happen people are decisive. They are “Here am I, send me” kind of people.
- They say if it needs to be done and I can do it, then I will do it.

### They Have Courage To Accept The Responsibility For Everything Involved In Making It Happen.

- Courage is the ability to conquer fear or despair.
- Make it happen people have an idea of the challenges and the things that could go wrong and they are willing to accept those contingencies as part of the deal.
- Not recklessness or fearlessness but the ability to overcome their fear, is a distinguishing characteristic of these persons.
- Their courage is not only to do, but to accept the responsibility for their actions—win or lose.

### They Take The Risk To Begin And Pursue The Actions That Make It Happen.

- Make it happen people are starters. They do it now.
- They know that “Starting, the job’s half done.”
- Theirs is not a trial run but a decision for the entire project.
- They are “D Day” kind of people.

### They Are Determined To Overcome Any And All Obstacles As They Arise.

- Make it happen people are firm and resolute.
- There is no vacillating. A moment’s hesitation could reverse the momentum.

- They have no intention of giving up or stopping short of the goal.
- Their mind is made up because they are confident that the thing they desire can be made to happen.

### They Persist In The Effort All The Way To The Point Of It Happening.

- Make it happen people go on resolutely or stubbornly in spite of difficulties.
- They are not only determined in their mind, they persist in their actions. They keep working at the task.
- They follow Winston Churchill's advice, "Never give up!"
- In the final analysis this is the critical factor in the success of make it happen people—they persist until the thing happens.

What, then, are the actions necessary for Nazarene pastors all over North America to lead their churches in breaking the 200 Barrier?

- Pray and lead your people in praying.
- Inform your people of the nature of the 200 Barrier and secure their commitment to support the effort to break it.
- Make up your mind to accomplish the task.
- Develop your plan/strategy.
- Launch the plan with a commitment to complete it.
- Persist until the task is accomplished.