



Episode 101: Wisdom Starting Over

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Nick Moultrie

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Transcript:

Mingo Palacios: [00:07](#)

Hey everybody, welcome to the PD podcast. My name is Mingo. As always, trying to give you some great content and some conversation that you can apply directly to your ministry in this season while you're leading right where God has you.

Today in studio I've got Nick Moultrie, and this conversation is all about the wisdom that he can share when you're in a season of starting over. Recently I had cherry-picked, I had asked Nick if he would step out of a ministry that he had been building for one full year – and he had an extreme amount of success while building this youth ministry. I took the job of lead pastor at a local church probably 10 or 12 miles from where Nick was pastoring, and I made the big ask, I said, "Would you consider starting over and building a youth ministry with us?"

[00:55](#)

Much to our blessing, him and his wife, Stevi, said yes. I know it's been a bit of a challenge because you went from something that was thriving – you had

worked diligently to build something great, and here you are in a season of starting over. You're less than a year in. I'm celebrating my one-year mark coming up at the church.

I thought it would be a perfect conversation for our listeners who may be in a season of starting over. They also might be in that weird head space where they're thinking of ministry seasons past, wondering if they made the right or wrong decision because they're not seeing the same results in this new effort that they saw in a ministry season past.

So, Nick, welcome to the podcast. Super thankful you're here. Why don't you give us a little bit of background on the ministry that you were building, the ask, the call, why you said yes. I've badgered the death out of you to join our team, and you guys just kicked off the new school season, and you had a great turnout in comparison to seasons past at the church historically. Give some listeners some insights and wisdom. I'm just going to turn the microphone over to you and ask some questions as you roll off what wisdom you'd like to share in seasons of starting over.

Nick Moultrie: [02:09](#)

Yeah. Thank you so much, Mingo. This is awesome. We were really nervous at first because we had always been part of a ministry in a certain part of San Diego, and this ministry was calling us to move out very far east. The challenge that provided itself to us was this community just doesn't have this type of love. They're looking for people to come in and really just impact students in the area. So we started looking more into it.

Mingo Palacios: [02:43](#)

That was the call that you said yes to, right?

Nick Moultrie:

That was the call we said yes to.

Mingo Palacios:

Yeah. That was the one prior to the ministry role that you're in now. It was a huge need.

Nick Moultrie:

Absolute huge need.

Mingo Palacios: The whole city, that whole community, the Church is doing great things – capital “C” church – for that particular community. You guys were a part of the revitalization of the youth ministry, the youth community and culture in that community. Can we say “community” any more times?

Nick Moultrie: [03:15](#) Community, yes. The pastor there, amazing pastor. Love the guy. He is just doing great things with the church planting movement in general. He definitely challenged me to love this area in a way that no one else is doing. That for me was motivation, and that's what got our feet on the ground, really providing – like, what's the need?

With that question challenging me every day as I come into work, it really helped me to get things going in this new place that I was at. We just started loving on students in the area, finding out where they hang out – and not being creepy. That kind of sounds scary. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: [03:59](#) [laughs] “Where are your kids?”

Nick Moultrie: Yeah, “we’ve got some candy for you guys.” No, it wasn't like that.

[04:03](#) But we were really trying to connect with the students of a one mile radius, because we lived right in the heart of this town. We started to see students from the neighborhood show up to church, and that was something that – we were just experiencing God do some amazing things.

Mingo Palacios: [04:23](#) Then comes an ask. Why don't you do this? Give us some ratios, some numbers so that people know what you started with and what you had gotten stuff to before the pivot.

Nick Moultrie: [04:35](#) We got there and we were running about 20 students, combined high school and middle school. We just started praying and asking God, “How do we impact this community? What do we need to do to help this community out?” We started doing stuff in the neighborhood, started showing up to the school, and really trying to look for the influencers of the

neighborhood, people that are there that can help us relate to the people there, those types of students. We started meeting up and just having fun. It was a judgment-free zone. These kids were showing up and we were asking them to hide their...

Mingo Palacios: [05:17](#)

Contraband?

Nick Moultrie:

Contraband, anything like that. It was that type of an environment. But we didn't kick them away. It was like, "Hey, just show up. There's no issue here."

Mingo Palacios: [05:27](#)

Right. That's a very real, very open ministry, when kids are going to come with things that –

Nick Moultrie:

Every week.

Mingo Palacios:

Your parents would be very reluctant to know, "oh man, these students are bringing these things?" But that's the heart of a great ministry, that kids feel safe, that they belong despite what they are currently finding themselves immersed with.

Nick Moultrie: [05:51](#)

Yeah, it was wild. But the way we were praying and the team that was being built, it went from averaging 20 for about the first couple of weeks, and it just started growing. By the time we had left, we were looking at about 110 students a week.

Mingo Palacios: [06:10](#)

That's a major milestone. That 100 student mark, that's a big breakthrough, I would say. There's so much momentum when you go from 20 to 100.

Nick Moultrie:

Yeah. A lot of things going on.

Mingo Palacios:

It must've felt great.

Nick Moultrie: [06:26](#)

Yeah. The energy – we eventually split the two different age groups of middle school and high school. Sundays was just a middle school environment, middle school Sunday, and we were just seeing some really fun energy. You do the energy differently for the different age groups. Wednesday night was high school. It was just a blast. It was really fun.

Mingo Palacios: [06:48](#) Walk our listeners through the new opportunity, new church, new horizon, because this is where I think the real wisdom of the episode is going to pour out. What were you measuring when you and Stevi, your wife, were talking through the idea of leaving something that you had invested so much into? You said yes because the Lord had provided that opportunity, so it wasn't like you were leaving out of disobedience or anything like that. You had to weigh some things out.

And then we'll talk about how you have protected your own mind and heart as you've had to start over. But what were some of the things that you guys did that could be clues and cues for our listeners when being presented with two opportunities?

Nick Moultrie: [07:38](#) In ministry – and I learned this a couple of years ago – you've got to do ministry with your hands open. You can't clench on to any type of ministry that God's put in your hands. You've got to go, “God, I have this ministry right now and I'm going to be faithful with it until you're like, ‘it's time for me to take this.’”

[07:59](#) It wasn't the fact that our time necessarily was like, boom, done, like drawing in the sand. It was God – we felt this nudge and the invitation from you that “hey, there's an opportunity out there, and we want you to consider – what you've done, we want to see you do it again.”

I think that what a lot of people – I'm going to talk for me, because I don't know how everyone else would relate to this, but I was encouraged that God would allow me to build a ministry the way I did that. I was like, whoa, God, that was awesome. Going into that next season, I had to look at that and go, “God, you used me to set students up to come closer to you. You used me to prepare whoever's coming in next, for them to know what is attainable, what they can reach for God.”

[08:51](#) Because we created a crazy environment of worship. We went to camp together. We went after God together with the 100 students that I had a week. Now it's like, “oh, I'm going to lose all that.” It's like, no, you're going to go to that next place and you're going

to do what you did, and even in a better way because of what you've learned.

Sometimes in transition it can be really easy to want to look back in order to move forward. There's tons of things that we learned from this season, but there was also this overwhelming sense of like, "God, we saw what we were able to do, but now it's time to – we're going to go do this again and we're going to do it even better."

Mingo Palacios: [09:32](#)

I was thinking about the things that I was managing as I was making the offer, because there are people who will listen to this episode who will be trying to draw in partnering talent, other pastors, a great hire. I remember one of the things that I was trying to be was the most clear and the most honest with what I knew I could offer. Painting a clear picture of the ministry that we had, ups, downs, the indifferences, the history of the church. Not painting a false reality that you would step into and go, "Whoa, this is nothing like you said." Every pastor paints an honest picture of the ministry that they're inviting somebody to step into. But the biggest thing that I could offer – me being the lead pastor of this new church, or this church reboot – was proximity.

[10:32](#)

We didn't have massive amounts of money to throw at a salary. You have a youth building, but it's not what a typical church, I think, would say is, "oh, that's our youth building." It's the old gathering place where the church outgrew by size, and now it goes into the hands of the youth. It's not a highly attractive interior building. You don't have endless amounts of money. We're all operating on a tight budget.

But proximity was one of those things that is something you can't get anywhere else. And I do know that in both your world and my world, some of the greatest lessons we've ever learned have been in proximity to great leaders.

Nick Moultrie: [11:20](#)

Yeah. Honestly, that was another huge thing. I know that working with you and working in this environment, I know that I'm not going to be able to ever walk and not grow in who I am as a leader. That was really

inspiring and encouraging for me moving into this next season. It was just like, man, I know that I'm going to be called and put in front and displayed in order to – “who do I want to be in the next 3 to 5 years?” was the question I was asking myself a ton.

Mingo Palacios: [11:56](#) That's a great question that somebody looking to pivot can ask themselves. Who do you want to be in the next 3 to 5 years? Knowing that maybe you've invested one or two in a certain place, is the next one or two years going to afford you the kind of forward momentum that you wanted or that you currently want?

Nick Moultrie: [12:14](#) Totally. So that was something that I know with the church that I was at, there was a route that would get me there, but it's just how you get there within that route. In making this transition, it was like, you know what, this is going to be the route that I know would be – with who I am and who God's created me to be, it's going to help me get to where I'm trying to go in a different way.

Mingo Palacios: [12:39](#) Yeah, that's good. How many months have you been currently leading Student Ministries at Torrey Pines?

Nick Moultrie: [12:46](#) I would say it's been about almost 8 months.

Mingo Palacios: [12:50](#) Just so the listener understands, within 8 months, I've invited Nick and Stevi to both share from our platform in hosting positions. That's something that we can control to give them some visibility inside of our church. Our church is averaging between 5 and 600 attendees, just so you have an idea of who we are as a church.

So instantly, one of the things that I could do to help improve and give them some wider than their own scopes and responsibilities was giving them visibility inside the church at large by way of hosting. I invited Nick to team-teach with me inside of one of our regular Sundays, and then eventually to fully take on a Sunday yourself.

Now, months later, we've birthed an extra p.m. service. We went from two services to four services in

the last year, and Nick is a part of the teaching team with his wife for our p.m. services. So tons of expansion by way of opportunity, I would say.

Nick Moultrie:

[13:56](#)

Absolutely. And within the 8 months, even within that, the opportunity to speak at different summer camps has come up. I remember I was talking just a few weeks ago and going, man, I really am feeling this overwhelming sense of leadership, overwhelming sense of teaching, and this confidence that's like, wow, there's something that I'm really excited about, and this season is affording that for me. So it's been a really awesome transition going from where I was at to where I currently am.

Mingo Palacios:

[14:30](#)

With tons of success where you were to rebuilding something brand new. And just for organizational awareness, I also found myself as a lead pastor carrying what I sensed was too much weight, responsibility-wise, making too many decisions where I felt like there was an unhealthy rhythm with my own staff that were saying "Okay, Mingo, what do you want?"

I think that for a healthy church to continue to break through those barriers of how many people we're able to serve through membership and attendance, you have to be able to pass off that ownership to others. So I created what I call a "Core Four" amongst our staff. Nick is included in that, along with our worship pastor and one of our adult ministries pastors. This co-ownership of our church – you almost could imagine it like an executive level of leadership, so that I'm not making decisions in a vacuum without the input and the wisdom of some other trusted leaders around me.

[15:31](#)

That's been another great opportunity. As a youth guy, I'm looking across the table at Nick saying, you're more than just a guy who's running our student ministries. You are a critical mind and a critical leader for our church at large.

If you're somebody who's operating inside of a traditional church – maybe you're the lead pastor or you're the associate pastor in a church – maybe one

of the challenges you can present to yourself to level up is to invite those other youth leaders into your circle and to share some of the ownership of some of the larger things that happen at your church so there can be an awareness, a training, a discipleship, an apprenticeship that happens, not just “you’re over there leading those kids at the same time I’m over here leading these adults.”

Nick Moultrie:

[16:18](#)

That's really key. Really good. Just getting invited to the table is something that – unfortunately we all ask ourselves the question, “what's in it for me?” Part of it's true. Part of it's selfish and whatever. “What's in it for me? If I go do this next thing that I'm leaving something good and I'm going to the next place, what's in it for me?” is the question I can ask myself.

It's not so much about that. It's about starting with a new leadership team and being okay with what's next. I don't know. I want to expand upon that, but I'm getting kind of tongue-tied with that.

Mingo Palacios:

[17:02](#)

Part of me wonders – you can only measure what you know. In this particular situation that we've turned into an episode, you knew for one year the kind of leadership that you were experiencing, the kind of church that you were at, tons of opportunity, in a place that was soaking up youth ministry like a sponge. And you knew that. The offer on the other side of the table was relationships that we had forged for years, so there was a familiarity in the kind of person we were. But we had never worked together in that. So there was a risk that you were going to have to take on. The “what's in it for me?” was a fair question.

[17:46](#)

You had asked that, like “Hey, this is something that Stevi and I are looking forward to down the road. We know we can do youth ministry, but we want to be leaders of leaders. We want to eventually see a church come to the table through our own marriage and through our own ministry.” I clearly understood that. I think it was really healthy for you to present those bigger goals on the table.

So I also wouldn't just assume that you'd be a guy inside of our world and that would be the end. But to know that it was my burden, my responsibility, if you're saying yes to coming into my circle, I needed to be keenly aware of how to best lead you to the places you wanted to go despite the church or the position that you were going to be joining me in.

Nick Moultrie: [18:21](#)

Yeah, absolutely. Since that transition and moving into this new space – gosh, even just launching off the school year this year, our team has doubled in size. The youth ministry, doors are opening up on the school campus that we're reaching, and we're seeing the same track that we did at the ministry that we were at before.

And then on top of that, the leadership level within the church itself, people are seeing Stevi and I also as pastors and not just youth pastors of the church. So it's just been a really great experience.

Mingo Palacios: [19:06](#)

That's good. Now, let's get to the wisdom. If somebody's out there and they're thinking, "Man, this opportunity is in front of me. I don't want to tell anybody where I'm at." Maybe they're listening to the podcast and thinking, "What's the wise next step?"

What are some things you can put out there for a listener who may be wrestling with making a pivot to a new place or a new opportunity? Or maybe they said yes and they're looking backwards with some FOMO, their fear of missing out of what they've left. What kind of wisdom would you give them?

Nick Moultrie: [19:35](#)

Both of those are things that I struggle with all the time. Not like it's affecting my ministry now, but just stuff that I look at and go, wow, God, you used me. He's still using you.

But the first thing that I am a firm believer in is you've got to end well. You have to end well. What does that look like? You are setting someone up. Your exit plan is the beginning plan for someone else.

So we developed a transition team and spent a few weeks meeting with people, getting a transition team

in place so that middle school and high school was taken care of. Until they are replacing you with somebody, you've got to figure out –

Mingo Palacios:

You've got to hold the fort.

Nick Moultrie:

Yeah. Your exit plan is the beginning plan for the place you're leaving. Be willing to sit in that for a couple of weeks and help. Sometimes it's like, "we've got to abandon ship; let's leave right now." It's just important to end well.

Mingo Palacios: [20:35](#)

Yeah, that's good. There's nothing healthy about a hasty exit. There's very few things that can happen good in a hot exit where you don't do the due diligence of planning and helping set up somebody who's going to be coming into your place. Better to leave something flourishing than something floundering.

Nick Moultrie: [21:00](#)

Yes. Things were going great when we left. That made it really difficult too. I think what pours into the FOMO part is like, man, we had an awesome midweek and people were coming, teams were being built. You leave on a high. There's times where I look at the old photos, Facebook and Instagram, "A year ago today..."

Mingo Palacios: [21:26](#)

Reminding you every day, right?

Nick Moultrie: [21:29](#)

"This is when so-and-so got saved," and you're like, "sick!" But I have to protect my heart. God is doing that where I'm at now. If He used you to do it before and you're still being faithful, He's going to use you to do it again.

Mingo Palacios: [21:51](#)

[singing] "I believe, I'll see You do it again..."

Nick Moultrie:

[laughs] Exactly. So yeah, definitely I run on FOMO, because we have Instagram and I see everyone doing fun stuff.

Mingo Palacios: [22:05](#)

I think the big piece of encouragement is that you're not alone and that's not an isolated feeling. You always have the ability to look back and say, "Man,

those could have been the best days. Was it a mistake to step on and move forward?”

I felt that. When I left the ministry in San Diego and came to work for Saddleback, I remember thinking, “Man, did I give up great for something good?” The Lord was teaching me new things in every ‘yes’ that I stepped into. Only now am I really feeling like I'm applying the wisdom from each of those great seasons. It's like this great recipe where I'm now adding ingredients that I've foraged from each of those seasons. You have to be able to take time and step away and realize that there's a bigger picture than what you're experiencing in the here and now.

Nick Moultrie: [22:56](#)

Looking back and going, “man, it'll never be the same again” – I think that if you're struggling with that, you need to challenge yourself. Are you still growing? Are you still learning? Because if you can't go in the future, if you can't move forward and feel like you can make an impact somewhere else, I think there's a lack in growth. There's something that you need to – like “I wish we could do things the way we used to.” That's a place that shows me that – like, are you still growing? Are you still willing to walk in faith with Christ?

Mingo Palacios: [23:36](#)

Do you have the faith for what's forward? It's a great indicator. I think when you start looking at the highlight reel behind you, it's probably a huge indicator that you need to take time today to re-center with Jesus.

Lord, bring me a fresh vision. You say you're bringing something new. “Behold, I do new things,” right? I think of the Psalms. David says “sing a new song.”

So if the Lord is evoking change out of us, if the Lord is doing a new thing, we would ask God to reveal to us what those things are and what our part is in that new thing, that we wouldn't just be looking at the old thing that was new way back when. Not out of default just hitting the repeat button, hoping that we're going to get the same blessing that came then, now, because we know how to do it or we've seen it done before.

- Nick Moultrie: [24:40](#) You'll be challenged to change your methods up, and there's nothing wrong with that. The thing that you did there might not work here, but are you willing to learn? Are you willing to embrace this new season and just be a student of it?
- Mingo Palacios: [24:54](#) That's super good. Nick, thanks so much for sharing your two cents. Do you have any other piece of information or piece of advice as we wrap down this episode for anybody listening, wondering if there's wisdom in starting over or if they've totally made the wrong decision?
- Nick Moultrie: [25:10](#) Man, just make sure you're listening to God's voice. That's all I've got. Listen to God's voice. And if you're really wrestling with this area right now, make sure you're seeking out mentorship and help for that because it's a big decision.
- It was one of the hardest ministry decisions that we've made to this day. We sat on it for a month. My sleep patterns, everything was going out the window because this is a big decision. Some people listening right now are sitting at the beginning of a really big decision. God's going to be there. God's on either side of this, so just walk in faith in that.
- Mingo Palacios: [25:51](#) That's awesome. Nick, if people want to follow up with you or they want to get connected with you, how can they do that?
- Nick Moultrie: [25:55](#) You can follow – my Instagram is @nickvmoultrie. Facebook, Nick Moultrie. Connected to Torrey Pines Church and youth pastor gatherings down here in San Diego. I'm excited for this year.
- Mingo Palacios: [26:11](#) That's awesome, man. Nick, thank you so much for being a guest on the podcast.
- Listen, if you were inspired or if somebody came to your mind and you can encourage them with this conversation, I encourage you to tag them in it or maybe forward them this episode and really be praying about how the Lord can use you in somebody else's season of uncertainty.

Maybe you can be a word of encouragement. Take some of the best pieces from this conversation and just pour that over somebody who you know is maybe right in the thick of a new season, and you can just give them that perfect piece of advice that will remind them that God is with them, that He hasn't forsaken them, and that His best is always right around us. It's not like He's holding a carrot two miles down the road from us, but He's a good father, and He's not intending harm. He doesn't want hurt for you. He wants you to understand that He is with you, and even if you can't see through it, He's with you until you can see clearly. Love you guys. We'll talk to you soon.

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