

## **AN ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN JOURNEY**

As 2023 was coming to an end, I saw signs at my local Tim Hortons that this Canadian icon and establishment would be celebrating its 60-year anniversary in 2024. When I stopped in for my morning coffee on Monday, I noticed that their new coffee cups have "60" on them to recognize this milestone. The year 1964 must have been a good year because not only did Tim Horton's come into existence but I was born in July of that year as well. Maybe this explains why at some point in my life I would become an avid coffee drinker.

After I got home, I began thinking about my earliest memories of Tim Hortons. My earliest recollection goes back to a cold Saturday morning when I was in Grade 7. We had hockey practices every Saturday morning at 7:00 a.m. in St. George. My mom would alternate with another parent on the team driving us kids to Saturday morning practices. I remember on the way to practice one morning, this other parent stopped at Tim Hortons along the way to get himself a coffee, and us two kids hot chocolates. I think the reason why I remember this is when the parent drove away, he spilled some coffee on himself and said a word I was too young to use myself.

I did not go to Tim Hortons too often in my early years except for a treat. I do remember my mother often getting my brother's birthday cakes there when they used to sell them back then. What my mother did not know is how much my brother hated their cakes. Maybe that explains why they were discontinued.

During university it was rare for me to frequent a Tim Hortons, but I did appreciate when I started working as an accountant whenever a visiting salesperson would enter our work establishment with coffee and donuts for my boss and me from there.

It was when I started ministry back in 2001 in Petrolia that I first started visiting Tim Hortons more frequently. Tim Hortons was the main gathering place in Petrolia so I would go in each morning to have coffee and conversation with some of the regulars. I referred to it as my coffee shop ministry and was blessed to get to know many people in Petrolia who were not just from my church.

When I came to Brantford in 2009, I got away from Tim Hortons and went instead to McDonalds and other local coffee shops. Since COVID, I seem to have returned to getting my morning coffee at Tim Hortons. Even though Tim Hortons has been around for as long as I have, my relationship with them has been on-again, and off-again.

This pattern of on-again, off-again may play out in many interactions or relationships in our lives including the one we have with God. This was the case with me. I was raised in the church as a child but there was a period of time in my mid to late 20's when I went through an off-again stage in my relationship with God. During this time frame I realized how much I was missing my relationship with God and recommitted to being on-again with Him. Thankfully I have stayed on-again ever since. Perhaps many of us have had an on-again, off-again relationship with God. While we may not have been consistent in our relationship with God, thankfully He has been this way with us. We are reminded of this in **James 1:17**:

**Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.**

Throughout our life God has been our true constant. Because of this, we can trust God completely because His nature, character, and intentions never change. This aspect should be our motivation to stay committed to remaining in an "on-again" relationship with Him. If, however, we are in an "off-again" season with God, may this be our same motivation to move back into a committed relationship with Him.

At this particular moment I am in an "on-again" relationship with Tim Hortons. This relationship may be "off-again" at some point as it has in the past. When it comes to my "on-again" relationship with God, this will be a constant that I will keep ensuring will never change.

***Keep safe and God bless,***

***Pastor Dean***