

 Journey On
Foundations
Moving Forward to a Christ-Centered Life

VENTURE ➤ IN
**LIVING
SENT**



LIVING SENT

It was the low point of my life. My wife had died, and I was struggling with my call to ministry. I needed a couple of days to clear my head, spend time in prayer, and seek God's direction for the future.

Soon, I settled in at a retreat center to have an honest conversation with God. I needed time to remember my identity in Christ. Did I still have significant work to do in His kingdom? Had my life purpose changed? What was my next step in fulfilling God's plan and purpose for my life?

Much like Jacob in Genesis 32, I wrestled with God, determined to not let go until I had settled the questions of identity, purpose, significance, and destination. I was willing to do whatever was necessary to get the answers I needed.

By morning, I heard and understood what God was saying. "I want you to spend the rest of your life equipping and encouraging others on their journey toward Christlikeness." That's all, I wondered? "That's enough," He said.

Breathing a sigh of relief and experiencing peace and joy, I asked, "Will you provide me a life verse for the journey?"

"I will provide two," He replied, "Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 22:37-40."

Since then, my life mission and verses have remained the same, but my understanding of them has deepened. The simple expression is to help others "Love God, Grow in Christlikeness, and Live Sent."

I am excited about this journey we will be taking together. I pray that, at its conclusion, you will fully understand who you are in Christ and be able to share with others your life purpose; that you will love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength; that you will have experienced spiritual growth in your journey toward a Christ-centered life; and that you will live the sent life that God has called you to and prepared you for.

Grab your Bible, pen, and travelogue, and let's get going.

On Journey Together,



J. Steven Layton, D. Min.

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FOUNDATIONS CURRICULUM

VENTURE IN LIVING SENT

Volume 6, Book 1
Travelogue

Jason Dukes

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VENTURE IN: Living Sent, Volume 6, Book 1

This travelogue is designed for use by adults to record and assess their individual spiritual journey to Christlikeness.

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WHAT LOVE REQUIRES ... AS YOU GO

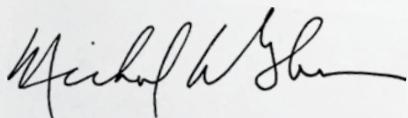
Recently, I was talking to a friend who is a New Testament professor at a nearby seminary. As we were talking about the early church in Acts, he made this comment: "The early church had no concept of reaching the world with the gospel, but they couldn't wait to tell the next person they met."

The plan to reach the whole world was so simple, and yet profound. It's hard to miss, and yet it's hard to trust this simple method of just telling the next person you meet. But that was the plan. Look around, see who's standing near you, start a conversation, and find a way to tell them about Jesus.

The Great Commission, instead of saying, "Go," is better translated "As you go..." That is, as you go through your day, find those moments grace opens and be ready to give a defense of what you believe about Jesus. Love your neighbors. Do acts of kindness and service for no more reason than it is what love requires. Listen to the confused, be a friend to the lonely, have a dinner party for neighbors who never get invited to any party at all. Look for ways to begin a friendship, open up a conversation, and let the good news of Jesus Christ flow in and through every moment of your day.

This is a new way for most of us to think. We're used to thinking about missions as something we do on the other side of the world. Now, our missions calling can be as close as across our street, in our own neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We hope this study causes you to think about the people around you—those you see at the gym or walking in your neighborhood, the people who work in your offices and go to the same schools you attend.

We hope as you work through this study, the Lord will open up your heart to the opportunities we have to reach our world. There's never been a better time to talk about Jesus. The world is asking questions only He can answer.



Michael Glenn, D. Min.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TRAVELOGUE

The travelogue for *Living Sent* is designed to be a companion to an individual or corporate Bible study experience. All believers are challenged by the call to live a "sent" life. These Bible studies provide insights from Scripture about what it looks like to live sent as an individual, and how each body of believers can model a "sent" culture. The lessons explore the effect of our words and deeds as we teach others to come along side us in worship and service, with the goal of reproducing ourselves in other believers who will do the same. Venture In communicates biblical principles for joining Christ in His redemptive plans. This study urges those who would be Christ-followers to use the simple model of discipleship that Jesus used in teaching the Twelve to become fishers of men, making disciples who would, in turn, make other disciples.

There are different types of journeys. Some are ones we take with friends or family, while others are adventures we pursue on our own. All the Foundation Curriculum travelogues were designed to be used either way. Learners may dive into these lessons by themselves, so the journal is designed to stand on its own. Others may gather a group of friends, going through the travelogue together, sharing insights each has gained during private times of engaging the material. Complementing the travelogue, we have developed teaching plans that allow these lessons to be taught in a more traditional format, such as a LIFE Group or Sunday school class.

This travelogue, as were the preceding five studies, is designed to encourage practicing at least four different spiritual disciplines in each lesson. First, learners engage a text of Scripture, thus practicing Bible study. Secondly, we have included a memory verse for each lesson to encourage the habit of Bible memorization. Third, journaling will be part of the experience as learners write out their thoughts in engaging the material. Finally, prayer is an essential part of this experience as we prayerfully reflect on how God is speaking to us.

We hope you will find these lessons to be a true source of joy and encouragement as you take your next steps on the journey to becoming more like Jesus. Whether you are a new follower of Jesus, or a disciple-maker of many years, we believe these lessons will provide you with sound biblical and practical guidance for your next step in becoming more like Him, and in sharing the gospel as you are going.

Happy travels!

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "LIVE SENT?"

Norma J. Goldman

Almost certainly these words—live sent—are not part of your everyday vocabulary, though you have likely been living sent (whether well or poorly) since becoming a Christ-follower.

Simply put, the person who lives sent is following the model Jesus used when teaching His followers, specifically the Twelve, to become fishers of men.

Part of the concept of living sent involves a proper view of the church as a people, not a place. While unintentional, our speech may lead others to believe that the church is a "what," rather than a "who"—a body of believers. In so doing, we may diminish the purpose, vibrancy, and energy of the transforming power of Christ when lived out in individual believers, regardless of the setting.

In this lesson series, our writer takes us back to God's great plan for redeeming a lost world. The lessons challenge us to find our place in the *great . . . cloud of witnesses* (Heb. 12:1, KJV) that brought salvation to us. And as we become fishers of men, those we disciple will, likewise, become fishers of men.

These are not casual matters. Consider this:

- More than 4,000 language groups still don't have the Bible in their language.
- 3,100 people groups still have not had a missionary sent to them.
- 67 percent of the world's population are oral learners and need someone to tell them the gospel.
- More than 3.5 billion people believe there is another god besides the good, loving, and living God of the Bible.
- Only 3 percent of the financial resources of the American church are expended in regions of the world where the gospel is not readily accessible, or has yet to be proclaimed.¹

This travelogue was designed to teach you what it means to live sent, and how to be part of a sending body of believers. How awesome our Father is, in allowing us to be part of this great enterprise.

¹ Statistics from IssacharInitiative.org

VISION FOR LIVING SENT

Roger Severino

Many Christians are familiar with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. . . .* But Jesus also gave similar commissions in the other Gospels and in Acts.¹ And in John 20:21, Jesus says, *“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”* It is truly amazing how much is being said in these 10 words.

First, there is the assumption that Jesus existed with the Father before His birth in Bethlehem. The Scriptures are clear that Jesus was not simply a great teacher or prophet, but God incarnate.²

Second, this short verse teaches us that the Father sent Jesus to earth with a purpose. Jesus gets at that purpose when He says He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection became the means for God to declare sinners righteous (2 Cor. 5:21).

Third, there is something about the way and purpose that the Father sent Jesus that connects to how we are commissioned to live in the world. Obviously, you and I cannot die for the sins of others like Jesus, because we are not the perfect, holy, eternal sacrifice. But the mission of Jesus in the world becomes our mission. This is living sent.

But how do we live sent? How did Jesus instruct His disciples to carry this out? What did He model and teach? How does the rest of the New Testament inform this?

That's what these lessons address. But let me warn you. You may not find these studies comforting. They may challenge you to look again at assumptions you have held and consider a new way of thinking. You may have to examine traditions, rituals, and even language to make sure they align with Scripture.

Are you ready to go on mission with Jesus? Are you ready to live sent?

¹ Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.

² John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3



Here's a brief summary of how the five practices or rhythms help us accomplish the single purpose of making disciples.

We **fellowship** to encourage one another through the often difficult mission of making disciples. Diligent **discipleship** helps us translate the language and story of the Bible into our own lives as well as the lives of others as we make disciples. Then, we **worship** as a response of all that we are learning and experiencing in relationship with Jesus as well as in our disciple-making efforts. We **minister** to one another and those in need because we are compelled to love others like Jesus loved us, inviting others to serve with us so that they might see the gospel demonstrated as well as declared. We **evangelize** because we are compelled to help others discover the same identity, security, and purpose with Christ that we have discovered in Christ in the hope of making disciples with Jesus.

It's the same with the various focused ministries of the typical church.

The children's ministry doesn't just exist to take care of kids. It exists to equip parents to make disciples of their children. The church partners with parents to fulfill this Deuteronomy 6-commanded endeavor.

Small groups are not to be closed Bible studies. Rather, we assemble to support one another, to strengthen our endurance, and to encourage one another to love people where we live, work, and play (Heb. 10:23-25), with an ultimate purpose of making disciples.

Service is not just a Christian obligation for every believer. For Jesus, service was a disciple-making tool for the twelve apostles. He invited them to serve alongside Him to demonstrate His Father's love by meeting real needs among the overlooked and ignored.

Why am I so assured that the church's purpose is to make disciples? Two reasons. First, because Jesus said He was sending His followers as He was sent to make disciples who make disciples. He was compelled by the gospel truth that defined His life, death, and resurrection as a God-sent, redemptive, securing, restorative mission. Second, because Jesus' last command was emphatic and clarifying—“*Make disciples.*”

Before we unpack these two reasons, consider these questions:

What would you say is the purpose of the church?

How do a church's activities and ministries relate to that purpose?

What are some things churches do to hinder that purpose?

What do you need to change in your life in order to better engage in the church's purpose of making disciples?

HOW WAS JESUS SENT?

Jesus prayed, "In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world" (John 17:18, MSG). Jesus also told His disciples in John 20:21 that they were sent in the same way He had been sent. So, why and how was Jesus sent?

Read John 1:14-18; note below why and how Jesus was sent.

THE SENT RHYTHMS OF JESUS

Most people struggle and are often stifled by the "how" of making disciples. We don't need another silver-bullet program to answer this question. We need simply to consider the sent rhythms of the daily life of Jesus.

Did Jesus heal the sick, teach the seeker, and love the poor just so He could meet their needs? Not entirely, because He also left some needs unmet, often leaving people waiting to see Him (Mark 1:37-39). There must have been another reason.

Could it have been for the sake of the 12 men He invited to serve with Him, who like many people in their day were searching for a Messiah-given hope?

Jesus declared, "*Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too*" (Mark 1:38). All four Gospels make it apparent that Jesus did exactly that, and with His disciples in tow. Jesus came to declare and demonstrate the Kingdom had come near in the hope of making His Father known, and making disciples of His Father's ways. He was intentional not only to preach to the masses, but also to focus on the teaching of the Twelve.

Becoming disciples of Jesus who were then sent to make disciples of Jesus involved three simple rhythms: Ongoing Service, Ongoing Conversation, and Ongoing Learning.

Service and conversations were the active rhythms. The passive and constant rhythm of learning resulted as the twelve apostles served and conversed with Jesus. As the apostles gathered around tables and during walks together, Jesus translated the good news into their lives, helping them to grow in their fluency of the Scriptures. They then were sent to invite others to serve together and translate the gospel into those people's lives.

Throughout the following generations, the multiplication of learning and sending has continued, and here we are 2,000 years later talking about how Jesus made disciples.

Jesus invited 12 men to learn and live the ways of His kingdom, deconstructing their understanding of relating with God as living *for* God, while reconstructing their understanding of relating with God as living *with* God. They learned their identity in Christ, grew in their security from Christ, and were sent to live on purpose with Christ. They then were sent to invite others to do the same.

That's how Jesus made disciples. He now sends us to do the same.

Turn now to pages 140-141 and examine two visuals titled "The Sent Rhythms of Jesus" and "The Sent Rhythms of His

Followers.” Record in the space below what stands out to you about these visuals.

Why do you think Jesus gave significant attention to healing the sick, teaching the seeker, and loving the poor in His disciple-making efforts?

Share why you agree or disagree with the following statement: To Jesus, serving is understood inside the purpose of disciple-making, not only for those being served, but also for those invited along to serve.

THE GREAT COMMISSION— MATTHEW 28:18-20

My wife and I have seven kids. We are learning that the last instructions we give to them are usually the only ones remembered and acted upon. So, when possible, we try to make our instructions concise and singular in focus. We even have to be redundant at times.

It was the same with Jesus. On multiple occasions in multiple ways, He commanded in concise form the message of Matthew 28:18-20. For example, in Mark 1:17, Jesus taught His followers to become fishers of men (and women). He commanded His followers to live their lives proclaiming how they themselves had confessed, repented, and found forgiveness in Jesus, and that all others were welcome and free to do the same (Luke 24:44-48). He also declared that His followers were to be a sent people in the same way the Father had sent Him (John 20:21). Creatively and redundantly, Jesus taught, commanded, and declared that His disciples were to make disciples.

Our instructions as followers of Jesus are clear. Our purpose as the church of Jesus is singular. We are sent as Jesus was sent. We are to make disciples with Jesus who, in turn, make disciples with Jesus, and so on. This is a defining characteristic of a devoted follower of Jesus. The final instructions of Jesus offer us our commission.

18 Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Note that there is but one subject and verb (and direct object) among all three verses. The subject is an understood imperative—"you." The verb is **make**, and what they were to make was **disciples**. The remaining content of these verses modify and relate to "make disciples." Grammatically, this is significant for two reasons. One, it communicates the specific purpose of the commission. Two, it describes how to carry out the commission. Regarding the description of how to carry it out, there are five descriptors in these verses, each with its own unique implication.

The first descriptor (v. 18), roughly translated from the original language, was "All authority having been given to me." Jesus was put in charge. He was now giving His followers their charge. They could trust His commission. They should carry out His commission.

The second descriptor (v. 19), also from the original language, was "as you are going therefore [make disciples] of all nations." Jesus knew His followers had natural, daily rhythms. They had places they went and people they bumped into, some on a regular basis. Jesus wasn't adding a new dimension to their lives. He was asking them to be the church in the rhythms of their daily lives, and to make disciples along their normal pathways every day.

However, Jesus also understood that some of them would be sent elsewhere in the Roman Empire, whether for business, trade, or for a focused mission journey and evangelism. That's the **nations** part of this descriptor. When the early church scattered in Acts 8,

many followers of Jesus had a new “as you are going” to make new, normal pathways as they adjusted to daily life somewhere else. God had prepared for this by establishing a season of history in which:

- Israel would be the land bridge for the three inhabited continents of the world.
- There was a common language due to the influence of Alexander the Great’s Greek training for everyone he conquered.
- Roman-established transportation routes would allow believers to declare the good news and demonstrate it in the port cities and major cities of the Roman Empire.
- The cultural tolerances of the Roman leaders would allow Jewish leaders to hold power in their own land, causing them to cater to Roman demands while keeping at bay any leaders or groups that threatened their peaceful balance (like Jesus and His followers).

Daniel prophesied all this would come. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4 that it all came to be in the fullness of time. Messiah came and then sent His followers to neighbors and nations to make disciples.

When my wife and I were helping to start a church in Florida, one of the promises we made to the initial group of folks who committed to joining our effort was that we would do our best to not add “church activity” to their lives. Instead, we would encourage and equip them to *be the church* in the activity of their lives. The response was interesting. Over time, we saw people who did not have a church background quickly orient to living a sent life. For those with a church background, however, the lack of church activities was unfamiliar. They had to get used to being the church rather than just going to church.

The third descriptor (v. 19) for “make disciples,” was **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**. In the process of making disciples, baptism should occur. Why?

Baptism is an identifier and an indicator. In eastern cultures, a person who did anything “in the name of” another person was identifying himself or herself with that person. Jesus was signifying to His followers how important it was for them to be identified not just

with the Father, but more specifically with the Father who had sent His Son who ushered in the age of spirit and truth. The apostle John hints at this in John 1:12, referencing how we have become children of God. Also the story of the woman at the well in John 4:23 notes the way she would become a worshiper in spirit and truth in the near future.

Baptism also was an indicator of a change, even a new direction. For the Jew, it was an indication of a commitment and a cleansing, as evidenced in their baptism rituals prior to temple worship. For Jesus, His baptism indicated a change from being a carpenter from Nazareth to being the affirmed Son of God. Most evangelicals today describe it as a symbol of what God has done for us and a public profession of a surrender to follow Him no matter the cost.

In disciple-making, it is a point of commitment. Making disciples is not a post-conversion concept to Jesus. One can argue that the apostles had not come to a point of belief, trust, and commitment to Jesus as Messiah until after His resurrection. Therefore, part of their disciple-making process was before they trusted Jesus as Messiah and Lord. So, baptism for them became an identifier with Messiah Jesus and an indicator of their full commitment to Him as Lord. It is the same for us today.

The fourth descriptor (v.20), again roughly translated, was “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Jesus knew that in order for His disciples to become teachers of His ways they had to become fluent in His ways, both in word and deed. What this does not mean is that we must know all the answers as His disciples to be able to teach others. What it means is that we are never-ending learners committed to learning and living the ways of Jesus with others.

Notice, a disciple is not the “learn-ed.” A disciple is a “learn-er.” We never quit learning, or quit observing all that Jesus has commanded. As a result, we have the respect, trust, and credibility to teach all that Jesus has commanded in the hope that people may become fully devoted followers of Him.

A word of warning. Be careful that learning more about God does not take the place of learning about God with others. Be cautious of relating more with facts and concepts regarding God than we do relating with God Himself while relating with others. Be

aware that facts and concepts learning can seem very right to us, but it typically does not produce the kind of disciple who observes all that Jesus commanded, particularly the command to make disciples as we are going.

The fifth descriptor (v. 20) of “make disciples,” also roughly translated, was “indeed, I myself am with you always, even up to the end of the age.” May we not miss this final promise from Jesus. The Sent One, whose name was Immanuel (meaning “God with us”), was reassuring His followers that even though He was ascending, He was still who He came to be. The utmost implication is that we don’t go and make disciples by ourselves or of ourselves. Rather, as we are going, we are disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus with Jesus, by the power of His Spirit, and according to His promise.

Simply put, Jesus was inviting His followers on mission with Him.

Why would Jesus issue this commission to His followers?

What is He really inviting you to be a part of?

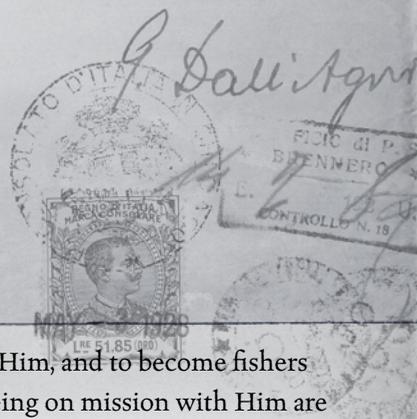
In your own words, describe what it means to “make disciples.”

What might have to change in your life as well as in the life of your church in order to make disciples, and to be the church, rather than just “go to church?”

AS WE ARE GOING . . .

May we make disciples of Jesus where we live, work, and play, both among our neighbors as well as unto the nations. May we live sent!

WHY WE DON'T LIVE SENT LIVES



WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Jesus called the first disciples to follow Him, and to become fishers of people. Today, following Jesus and being on mission with Him are inseparable parts of our discipleship.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
MARK 1

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
MARK 1:16-20

**MEMORY
VERSE**
MARK 1:17

WE ARE THE CHURCH

Every Sunday morning and in all forms of communication throughout the week, we heavily emphasized to the members of a church start in Florida what “church” means so that no one would miss the point. Even Caleb, my five-year-old son, caught on to the point that he could remind others what “church” is.

He and I were riding with a friend one afternoon when the friend made a harmless comment that is common among almost every church person you and I know. He said, “I will ask him about it when I see him at church Sunday.”

My son wasted no time in piping up from the back seat, “You won’t see him ‘at church.’ Remember, we are the church. We don’t ‘go to church.’ We are the church. So, let’s go this week and be the church.”

My friend and I smiled, having been slightly stung by a child’s not-so-subtle reminder. All Caleb had repeated was the statement

we emphasized at the end of every Sunday gathering. "Remember. The New Testament refers to 'church' more than 140 times. Not one of them references a place or an event. So, we didn't come to church this morning. We are the church. So, go this week and be the church." When I was a part of a revitalization effort in a more traditional setting, our benediction was to quote John 20:21 as a reminder that we are sent as Jesus was sent.

CHURCH IS A WHO, NOT A WHAT

Why did we say "go this week and be the church" and read John 20:21 together? We did it so we could have a constant reminder that church is not a "what," but rather a "who."

Many people who call themselves Christian understand that the church is people. However, our words often contradict what we believe about the church. Many evangelical leaders even teach in sermons that the church is people. But the issue is that it's not what we teach but what we emphasize creatively and redundantly that becomes our culture. While we may teach "be the church," all of our language gives away that we actually think we "go to church."

Consider this. The four most common prepositions we use with the word "church" are "in," "at," "to," and "from." Yet, the New Testament never uses these prepositions when referring to the church. We want to be a "people of the Book," but we betray our righteous desire with our non-biblical language.

Why is this worth pointing out? This is more than just an issue of semantics. Jesus did not say He would make us to become "church goers," "church members," or "church participants." We weren't made to be "in church." We were made to be "in Christ," following Jesus together as His church. And according to Jesus, He is actually making us to become fishers of people.

A NON-SENT NOTION

Understanding the church as a "what" rather than a "who" keeps us going to church on Sundays rather than being the church daily. Thinking of church like a "what" is what I call a non-sent notion, whereby we hold dearly to that which hinders us from living sent. It is a notion that gets in the way of Jesus making us to become fishers of people. Therefore, it is nonsense biblically since it is non-sent missionally.

How do you commonly think about and talk about “church?”

Is what you think about “church” faithful to or different from the way the New Testament refers to “church?”

Not down any other non-sent notions besides the notion that church is a “what” instead of a “who.”

FISHERS OF PEOPLE

The first chapter of Mark focuses on when Jesus came onto the scene, invited some men to follow Him, healed and ministered to many people at Capernaum, then moved on with His new disciples to the next town to preach the gospel there. In the middle of the chapter, Jesus called the first disciples.

FISHERMEN

As He was passing along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen (Mark 1:16).

Jesus saw **Simon and Andrew**, two fishermen, **casting a net into the sea**. We may think of these men as lowly **fishermen**, as though they were poor retired guys who parked their beat-up, old car on the shoulder of a bridge, grabbed a pole, and threw a line into the creek or canal. But these men were not just fishing for fun or supper. This was their trade. And based on what I heard from some well-read seminary professors, if they had the boats and the nets to keep on fishing, they were brave, successful business owners.

They were brave because the **Sea of Galilee** was legendary

for its sudden and scary storms. These men risked their lives, at least from the perspective of the common villager, catching the fish that would become supper for many homes, not just their own. They were successful because we see them not only fishing when Jesus meets them the first time, but we also see them fishing when Jesus saw them again after His resurrection. They had an ongoing business with family and workers tending to it. They were neither poor nor rich. But they were successful in that they earned a decent living for their entire family.

MAKE YOU TO BECOME

“Follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people”
(Mark 1:17)!

It was for this reason that Jesus used a fishing metaphor to invite them to **follow Me**. If they had been bankers, He may have said “investors in people.” Had they been farmers, He may have said “cultivators of people.” But they were fishermen, so He said He would make them **fish for people**. More than that, according to the original language of the text, Jesus said He would make them to become fishers of people.

Several translations of the Bible clue the reader into the profound significance of Mark 1:17. Jesus is not just offering an evangelistic charge. He is using language that indicates a change of identity and purpose for these men. He is using existence language. The word can be literally translated “to become” or “to come to exist.” Jesus is literally saying, “I will make you to become,” or “I will make you to come to exist.”

ORDINARY LIVES WITH EXTRAORDINARY PURPOSE

Jesus was telling them that their growth track as His follower was not one of self-actualization and moralistic perfection. He contrasts His followers from Mark 1 with the pharisaical leaders of Mark 2, who had become nitpickers of men’s behavior. Jesus was saying that His followers would become what He had always been inviting His followers to become—a people on mission with Him, sent to help others discover their God-declared, cross-secured, spirit-assured

identity. Then, those new disciples would also become a sent people casting a net in the hope that others around them will get caught up in what Jesus was making them to become.

Let's be clear. Although these men were brave and successful, they were still ordinary. Acts 4 indicated this fact. The point being that natural, ordinary people doing ordinary things are invited to come along with Jesus for a supernatural, extraordinary purpose while they continue to do their ordinary, everyday things.

18 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in their boat mending their nets. 20 Immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him (Mark 1:18-20).

Simon and Andrew **immediately . . . left their nets and followed Him**. Jesus, **going on a little farther** along the lake shore, then invited **James** and **John** to do the same, and they, too, **immediately . . . followed Him**.

Think about your discipleship practices. To what degree, if any, do you think they are helping you to become a fisher of people?

Which of these approaches to becoming a disciple for Christ makes you more effective as a living sent believer: seeking personal self-improvement driven by your own efforts, or seeking personal involvement in what Jesus is making you to become? Explain your choice.

What changes in your disciple-making practices do you need to make so that you can become a fisher of people?

THE GROWTH TRACK OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

I mentioned earlier that several of the translations of the Bible clued us into the profound significance of what Jesus was saying in Mark 1:17. So, what's so profound and significant about it?

Well, it's actually profound because it is simple. We don't grow as followers of Jesus because of our own making. We grow as followers of Jesus because we surrender to what He is making us to become. It is significant because it is fruitful. Our growth in Christ is evidenced by our leading others to grow in Christ.

However, is that the way the North American church has typically defined growth? I would suggest that it is not.

Personal Moralistic Development Based on years of observation, I would suggest that the North American church has commonly dedicated its energy to help Christians grow through a discipleship that focuses simply on personal development. It is highly individualistic. It too often results not in becoming fishers of people but rather in becoming self-sufficient, moralistic people.

BECOMING A COMPLETE DISCIPLE

How did Jesus define "growth?" I would suggest that He defined growth for His followers as their becoming fishers of people who surrendered to abide with Him and who were committed to what He was making them to become.

Yes, we are to become more Christlike, growing in love, faith, and holiness. But far too many Christians stop at the personal growth aspect of discipleship. If we are to be more like Christ, we must move beyond self-focused growth and go share with others the presence and love of Jesus. Both personal growth and going out to share Christ with others make up what we might call a complete disciple.

PAUL EXHORTS THE CHURCH AT ROME

In Romans 10:1-5, Paul rebuked the Jewish Christians of Rome for extracting themselves away from what they considered to be an evil Roman culture as they attempted to establish and preserve their own

self-made righteousness. In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul consecutively reminded the readers of God's gospel, kindness, grace, promise, plan, gift, mercy, and love. Over and over again, it was God's work, not their efforts. It was not their personal development, but His commitment to transform them rather than condemn them.

In Romans 9, Paul brought it home leading into a stinging exhortation at the beginning of chapter 10. At the end of chapter 9, Paul wrote: *30 What should we say then? Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness—namely the righteousness that comes from faith. 31 But Israel, pursuing the law for righteousness, has not achieved the righteousness of the law. 32 Why is that? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone*" (Rom. 9:30-32).

We are given His righteousness as an undeserved gift, a reality in which we are to place our faith. We don't develop our own righteousness. That is a stumbling block with fatal consequences.

Paul then asserted at the beginning of chapter 10 that the Jews missed the mission of God because they misunderstood the message of God. God did not intend for them to establish their own righteousness. Rather, He intended for them to believe His righteousness and submit to it as well as live sent inside of His righteous purposes. Here is how the Holman Christian Standard Bible and The Message explain how they missed the mark.

3 Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:3-4, HCSB).

They don't seem to realize that this comprehensive setting-things-right that is salvation is God's business, and a most flourishing business it is. Right across the street they set up their own salvation shops and noisily hawk their wares. After all these years of refusing to really deal with God on his terms, insisting instead on making their own deals, they have nothing to show for it (Rom. 10:3-4, MSG).

Paul was challenging the Jewish Christians of Rome to not repeat Israel's mistake. Paul exhorted them to beware of just trying to be good for God and instead surrender to the righteousness God provides and share that good news with others. In doing so, they would discover God's goodness above their own and help others to do the same (Rom. 10:14-15).

IS BEING GOOD THE GOAL?

In one interaction, Jesus avoided the compliment "good" when He was called a "good Teacher." He responded by declaring that only His Father is good (Luke 18:18-19).

Maybe just trying to be good is not the goal. Could it be that being good misses the point of the mission and message of God? Maybe our striving to be good would cause us to miss out on what Jesus is making us to become. Maybe this way of thinking about Christian growth is a non-sent notion.

UNBELIEF

What's the point? The point is that a misunderstanding of Christian growth as personal moralistic development is an evidence of not believing in the God who gives us His righteousness. In other words, I either believe in a pursuit of my own goodness or I believe in God's pursuit to give me His goodness. Unbelief is not so much believing there is no God, as believing in my own goodness rather than God's.

To do so would cause me to not live a sent life, being too focused on developing my own goodness to care about helping others develop a belief in the underserved gift of the goodness of God.

Do you believe in the pursuit of your own goodness, or do you believe in God's pursuit to give you His goodness? Explain your choice, including why.

AS WE ARE GOING

It seems counterintuitive, doesn't it? How could focusing on my own growth be a non-sent notion? But as a pastor, I have had many Christians come to me and challenge that all this focus on living sent isn't helping them grow. Each time, I have explained how care for their own needs as we love one another must be coupled with the care taken to intentionally live a sent life daily. Personal growth as a believer and living sent go hand in hand, according to Jesus: "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). The care and growth of each person who says he or she follows Jesus is just as important as the care and growth of each person who has yet to follow Jesus.

Doing either care or mission alone without the other is not faithful to the invitation of Jesus or to the compelling nature of His gospel. We cannot only care for the believers, nor can we only care for those who have yet to believe. We must do both. But our tendency, as Paul challenged in Romans, is to focus on our own care and growth rather than making disciples with Jesus. That is why many churches adopt missions other than the mission of God.

As you go, reflect on this scenario:

John wanted to grow in Christ, but he didn't think he was growing with all of his church's emphasis of living on mission daily. But he stayed engaged and, about two years later, he realized that his commitment to making disciples helped him experience his greatest season of spiritual growth ever.

Based on this lesson, what difference would it make in your growth as a disciple of Jesus if you would commit to living sent daily?

NOTES

FOLLOWING A SENT GOD



WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Jesus came for the lost, the sheep without a shepherd, and calls His followers to pray for and participate in His mission.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
MATTHEW 9

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
MATTHEW 9:35-38

**MEMORY
VERSE**
JOHN 10:10

THE GOD WHO WAS SENT

We are invited to follow the God who was sent. What is your initial reaction to this assertion?

A God who was sent? Sounds belittling of God. What God could possibly be sent by someone else, or could possibly be given a mission to go somewhere by someone else? Jesus could, and He did. Why? Because, First John 4:7c says, *God is love.*

Here is His story, and it's the story, the mission, into which we have been invited.

THE STORY OF THE GOD WHO WAS SENT

God loves. And love gives. So, God gave life even though He didn't have to. He knew how much He would have to give. But He wanted to because love doesn't stay still, doesn't keep to itself, doesn't sit alone.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve knew life, and what a life it was! But the serpent, sneaky and jealous, told Eve she could know more than just a with-God life. But, why would she want to? God never meant for Adam and Eve to know more than life with Him. God knew that for them to know more than life with Him would mean that they would know death without Him.

Eve made a choice, and Adam went along. They knew something had gone dreadfully wrong. Knowing good and evil instead of just His goodness was not God's intent. So, they hid, in shame and fear. But God came near because He never wanted them to know death.

Even before God made them, He knew His most precious creation would choose to break themselves. Still, God didn't want Adam and Eve to stay broken. He didn't want the life they chose to last. So, He already had a plan to restore them, to give them (and us) life anew. Why? Because love doesn't let broken stay broken. So, the repair would come in time with God making the greatest sacrifice ever.

God did not want us to forget why He first made us. He wanted us to remember how much He loves. So, He began to send messages. Letters. Words about His great love for us. The message was sent to Abraham. Spoken to Jacob. Delivered by Moses. Promised to David. Declared by Isaiah. Lived by Hosea. Whispered by Malachi. Then, finally, a last message came in the form of Jesus Himself.

Emmanuel. God with us, where He had always wanted to be. It was God's love that compelled Him to restore us from our selfishness to return to the life He had always intended. It was the message He had been communicating to all the Adams and Eves who had been sent away, wondering if God really loved them, afraid and ashamed that they messed it all up.

That message?

God so loved the world that He laid down His own life to kill off the knowing-good-and-evil life. He never meant for us to know fear, shame, or death—all the things that make us question His love, all the things that make us believe that death is all that life will ever will be. He only wanted us to believe His love. So, He helped us before we asked, and forgave us before we said we were sorry. He took our selfish choice upon Himself, became our sin, and killed it.

That's what love does. It gives a second chance, new hope, renewed life, and resurrection. He didn't have to. He knew how much He would have to give. But He wanted to. Love always comes near, moves first, and takes the initiative.

WHY?

Why would God do this? Why would He give so much, extend so much mercy, and take the initiative to forgive before we ever said we were sorry? The answer is simple: *God is love* (1 John 4:8). His compassion for the people He created leads Him to forever be God with us.

The apostle Paul confirmed that God can't be or do anything other than be who He is or do what He does. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself* (2 Tim. 2:13).

Paul also described Christ in this way: *Christ, who gives us the best picture of God we'll ever get* (2 Cor. 4:4, MSG). Matthew also echoed the sentiment, consistently painting Christ with the vivid color of compassion.

How does "The Story of the God Who Was Sent" challenge you to love like the God who is love?

COMPASSION FOR THE CROWDS

35 Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. 36 When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matt. 9:35-36).

In verse 35, Matthew described the disciple-making rhythms of Jesus which was the focus in Chapter 1. He delivered the gospel while healing the sick.

In Matthew 9:36, Matthew focused on what Jesus was attempting to do. Jesus had **compassion** for the crowds who were **weary**

and worn in attempting to do an abundance of good for God. Matthew 11:28a reiterates this point: *“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened.”* Jesus was hoping to clarify that God did not desire an abundance of good performance. Rather, He desired an abundance of experiencing His good presence. We weren't created to be good for God but rather to go with God. Focusing on the former results in being weary and worn.

Jesus has an abundance of compassion for those enslaved in this way of living, especially for those whose authority figures lorded over them the weary ways of good performance for God. These leaders were not good shepherds. They were more like wolves who left the people **like sheep without a shepherd**. Jesus came to rescue the sheep from these ravenous leaders.

SENT FOR THE SINNER, NOT THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

Matthew 9:10 tells us that Jesus liked to fellowship with tax collectors. The Pharisees took notice and asked why (v. 11). Jesus overheard their question, and responded: *12 “Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do. 13 Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners”* (Matt. 9:12-13). His response was a direct rebuke of the self-righteous Pharisees.

Jesus exposed their misunderstanding of what God desired from them. He did not want them to think of themselves as good, for they would then consider themselves **well**, not needing a **doctor**, not needing the goodness of God.

Furthermore, Jesus rebuked them in verse 13b with the words of the prophet Hosea, who challenged the people to not think that their personal **sacrifice** merited the favor of God (Hos. 6:6). Rather, Hosea declared that God, the giver of **mercy**, desired for people to live mercifully and give mercy (Micah 6:6-8). Jesus echoed Hosea's challenges exposing the Pharisees' self-righteousness rather than confessional posture.

PRAY FOR WORKERS SENT INTO THE HARVEST

37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38).

The people who “were weary and worn, like sheep without a shepherd” were (and are now) the **harvest** that is **abundant**. Jesus Himself offered the solution to gather them in—**pray** for workers to be sent by God into the harvest.

Do the crowds where you live, work, and play move you to prayer? Why, or why not?

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how willing are you to ask God to send you as one of His workers into the harvest?

WHY PRAY FOR WORKERS AMONG THE HARVEST?

Other than “Jesus said so,” why do we need to commit to praying for workers to be sent into the harvest?

First, because there are so many sheep without a shepherd and so many weary and worn sinners. This reality is true regardless of whether you are referencing church culture or the world’s culture. The gospel needs to be declared and demonstrated in both environments.

The second reason is because the evil one is out to destroy the sinners and the workers, who are really one and the same, desperate for gospel and grace. One of the primary ways the evil one looks to destroy us is by getting us to misunderstand what abundant life actually is.

In John 10:10, Jesus declared that He had come that we may have abundant life. In that very verse, He contrasts the efforts of the evil one, “the thief,” who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Steal what? Kill what? Destroy what?

Based on the broader context of John, I would suggest this answer. The thief comes to steal abundant life from us. How? By killing our belief (John 3:18). Why? Because in doing so, the thief

would destroy God's most precious creation—the beloved children of God.

This leads to the third reason to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest. The thief strives to distract us from our work, and to lead us to pursue other purposes and pleasures outside the fullness of God's love. He seeks to distract us from following Jesus and making disciples with Him. He wants us to be busy "going to church" rather than "being the church." Since the garden of Eden, he has sought to deceive us into thinking we can know enough and do enough to be god-like. He always wants to draw us away from knowing God's goodness, living in His presence, and experiencing abundant life.

I would suggest that the two primary ways the thief has done this, particularly in modern times, is by deceiving people into valuing two lies.

IN CHURCH OR IN CHRIST

The first lie is that it is important to be in church. For example, people will say things such as, "Johnny is doing so much better now, because he's back in church." We didn't intend to do it. We just got deceived. But we now have an American church culture in which being "in church" matters more than being "in Christ." Don't misunderstand. Every believer needs to be in church, but if he or she is in Christ first, then he or she is in church for the right reason—serving in Jesus's name both in and outside of the church.

SAFE OR SENT

The second lie is that the abundant life is being safe. In fact, the thief has many of us believing one of the most popular church clichés ever—the safest place to be is in the middle of God's will. But the New Testament clearly notes that followers of Jesus were not very safe, but they were secure in the midst of the dangers they faced. A life that values being safe is most often not a life that values being sent. Abundant life is not being safe; it is living sent.

Would you say that the world knows the North American church as followers of a sent God or a safe God? Why?

Read **Philippians 1:16-30**. What is in store for the workers sent into the harvest?

THE MISSION OF GOD

Thom Wolf is typically credited with posing this formative question: *Does God's church have a mission, or does the mission of God have a church?*

One could argue that the answer is both. But careful examination forces us to wrestle with the thought that God was on mission long before His church was on the scene. He has always been a "Sent God." God has always been helping us believe that He loves us and is good. He sent His Son to redeem and restore the people and creation that chose to know more than just His goodness. God now invites His church to take part in His mission, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to declare and demonstrate His love and goodness to neighbors and nations so that every tribe, tongue, and nation might become the dwelling of "God with us."

Furthermore, it could be argued that the point of God's mission is the formation of His church, meaning the people of God from all times that He is forming into His bride and His dwelling. Therefore, it seems correct that the mission of God now has a church. But what are the implications of this notion?

MAKE DISCIPLES

One implication of the mission of God now having a church is that the church does not exist to establish or preserve itself, but rather to make disciples. The church is a people being formed in the context of the mission of God.

ARE WE ON MISSION WITH GOD?

Since the mission of God now has a church, it begs the question: are we, as part of the church, engaged in His mission with Him? Are we following the God who was sent? That's where actually making disciples of Jesus who make disciples with Jesus comes in.

Jesus taught that He was sending His followers just as the Father had sent Him. What describes the trajectory of our spiritual journey? Are we living sent, or do we exist as a church with some purpose other than living on mission with God?

TOGETHER

We are on mission with God together. We are sent to make disciples together. His mission has a church—a people who follow Jesus together while caring for and encouraging one another, as well as provoking and equipping one another to live on mission with Him. We are disciples of Jesus growing to and purposed to make disciples with Him.

What are some ways the North American church can miss being defined by the mission of God?

What might have to change in order for you to become a sent person on mission with God?

THE MISSION CONTINUES

God does not want us to forget why He first made us. He wants us to remember how much He loves. So, just as He sent His Son, He now sends His church to love others as Jesus loved us. He desires that we love first even if we are never loved in return.

To respect a family member. To value someone not like us. To be a friend rather than expect friendship. To care for a boy or girl

ignored, a man or woman overlooked. To serve a neighbor in need. To relate to the lonely. To pray for and even go love someone across the world.

Provide drink for the thirsty, nourishment for the hungry, medicine for the sick, friendship for the imprisoned, and clothes for the cold and homeless (Matt. 25:31-46). Ensure security and help for the orphan and the widow (Jas 1:27).

We are to go near, even before we are invited. Loving like He has loved us. Putting others' interests above our own, not just because it is what we ought to do, but because it is what we are compelled to do, and because of what has been done for us.

As those who have been loved, we are to give love.

The message God has always been sending, and so clearly communicated by Jesus, is now written on our hearts (2 Cor. 3:3). Jesus now sends us out to deliver it.

It's a letter about the love of the sent One read by us to those where we live, work, and play, in the hope they will receive His love and goodness and become more sent ones.

May we live every day as a letter of God's near love. May we go near as He was sent near to us. May we follow the Sent God.

May we live sent!

Close this lesson with a time of prayer, asking God to show you the ways He wants to send you to share His love with the worn and weary sheep who live apart from Him.

NOTES

A COMPELLING NEW IDENTITY

WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Remembering our gospel identity secures us to embody the gospel courageously and live with gospel purpose.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
EPHESIANS 1-3

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
EPHESIANS 1:4-6; 2:1-10; 3:14-21

**MEMORY
VERSES**
ROMANS 4:4-5

IDENTITY DEFINES PURPOSE

"I was blind, and now I can see" (John 9:25)! The man's statement meant much more than the condition of his eyes. It had to do with the condition of his "I," specifically, his ID. Henceforth, he would be identified in the community as the "blind guy who can now see."

Why? Because the new identity Jesus gave him secured him enough to speak clearly to his manipulative critics. He understood that his purpose was defined by and compelled by his Christ-given identity.

Jesus asked a demon-possessed man, "What is your name?" The demons spoke for him, saying, "Legion." While a whole bunch of pigs had a bad day that day, this man's day was glorious. He begged to go with Jesus on the boat. But Jesus said no, instructing him to go tell everyone what the Lord had done for him (Mark 5:1-20).

Why? Because the new identity Jesus gave him secured him enough to speak courageously to those who had ostracized him. He,

too, understood that his purpose was defined by and compelled by his Christ-given identity.

IDENTITY. SECURITY. PURPOSE.

People do because of who they are. As followers of Jesus, we do because of who Jesus is making us to become. Mark 1:17 reminds us that as we follow, He makes us to become fishers of men and women.

Record your personal response to this statement: As a follower of Jesus, my identity is now in Christ, my security is now from Christ, and my purpose is now with Christ.

John summed up this principle in 1 John 3:1-2: *Look at how great a love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know Him. 2 Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.*

Paul affirmed this principle in Romans 8:15: *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!"*

An adopted child takes on a new, permanent name. Roman law forbade parents from abandoning an adopted child. So, the child was secured by the one who gave him or her that name. The child could not only call the adoptive father, "Daddy," but he or she also could take on the purposes of that adopted father. The action of the adopted father defined, secured, and compelled the action of the adopted child.

In Ephesians 3:14-21, one of our focal passages, Paul summarized our Christ-given identity, security, and purpose. Some consider this a hymn of promise for the early church.

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. 16 I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit, 17 and that

the Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, 19 and to know the Messiah's love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us — 21 to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:14-21).

Notice the "identity" language of verses 15-16—**named** and the **inner man**. Our Heavenly Father has given us a new name. We are His because of what He has done.

Rooted and firmly established in love and **to know the Messiah's love** in verses 17-19 are the "security" language. Our Heavenly Father has secured us with His forever love. He has invited us to an abundant life with Him, believing and growing to understand how loved we really are by Him. We are secured because of what He has done.

Verses 20-21 focus on the "purpose" language—**the power that works in us** and **to Him be glory in the church**. Because of His love, our Heavenly Father is at work for us, in us that we may know His love, and through us that we may make His love known. We are purposed now to love as He has loved us, and to make Him known as He made Himself known to us.

WHY WE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

We go and we make disciples because the good news of the gospel is that we don't have to keep our shameful, selfish name. We have been adopted into His family forever, and it is the good news of the gospel that compels us to go and help others believe it.

We don't grow as Christians to be more identified with Christ, more secure in His love, or more able to do stuff for Him. We grow as we realize more and more with whom we have been identified (Jesus). We trust more and more in whom we have been secured, and we go on purpose to neighbors and the nations with Jesus to help others discover their Christ-given, undeserved, abundant-life identity, security, and purpose.

How would you say the people and community around you identify you?

Which of these choices describes the way you live—living to earn or keep God's love or living as though fully and securely loved? Why?

What would be different about your life if you lived knowing you are fully loved by God?

Describe the purpose of your life and the local church you're a part of in three sentences or less.

WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

Occasionally, I have the special privilege of walking with, learning from, and hopefully encouraging and coaching other pastors and leaders. One such leader is Lawrence Tom, pastor of a Chinese congregation in Philadelphia. Once we were sharing what was currently going on with each of us. I asked a question that forever changed my thinking about identity in Christ: "What has surprised you lately from what God is teaching you?"

Lawrence said he had recently concluded a series on Ephesians about our "together identity in Christ." He said God's Spirit had hit him hard with a gospel truth that not only rocked him, but also will define him forever. He said, "I realized in a moment of praying through a section of Ephesians this truth—even on my worst day, I am still 'Lawrence Tom in Christ.'"

Let that sink in.

WE WERE. WE ARE. WE WILL BE.

Identity matters. All of us yearn to live from the core of who we really are. There is an issue, however. The issue is how selfish and sin-directed we are when we are without the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

What is not an issue is the fact that the gospel begins, not with the bad news of our sin, but with "God is love." The good news is that God knew that we would sin before He even made us, and, yet, He created us anyway.

4 For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, 5 He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, 6 to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved (Eph. 1:4-6).

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3) **chose us** in Christ before He made us, and before He made **the world**. Don't get distracted by the **predestined** language, because it too often has directed us toward a focus on what we think we know rather than what we know God did. So, Paul clearly stated that God, in accordance with His **favor and will**, determined **before the foundation of the world** to identify and secure us as His adopted children through His only Son. In verse 6, Paul hammered home why God did all this. It was not deserved. Rather, it was graciously given as His unmerited favor upon us because He chose to favor us as His beloved in the same way that He favors His **Beloved** Son.

The good news of the gospel is that *He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21)*. The bad news is our issue of selfishness and sin-directedness that war within us against the truth that we've been given an undeserved righteousness and unmerited favor in Christ Jesus. The bad news is who we were.

BUT GOD

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins 2 in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to

the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens, the spirit now working in the disobedient. ³ We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclination of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, ⁵ made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace (Eph. 2:1-5)!

We were **dead in our trespasses and sins**. We were **carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts**, and **by nature children under wrath**. Who we were at the core was far from what God intended us to be. **But God, . . . rich in mercy**, loved us, and chose to make **us alive with the Messiah**.

Then Paul used language that makes a much more formative statement than we typically have given it credit for. He used the present tense to herald the reality of who we are in spite of who we were: **You are saved by grace!** We are! This is our undeserved, God-ordained, Christ-secured, Spirit-assured identity. You and I are saved from both the self-destruction of our selfishness as well as the weariness of our self-righteousness, all because of the selfless, righteous Jesus. We were dead in sin, but because of God's love, we are saved. Life's most important question for all of us is—do we believe that is who we really are?

WHO WE WILL BE

⁶ Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, ⁷ so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6-7).

Paul turned his attention toward the **coming ages**. He is assuring us that who we were in sin and who we are now in Christ will be realized in its fullness in who we will be **with Christ Jesus** face-to-face. This future aspect of our undeserved salvation is described

as the **immeasurable riches of His grace**. Paul asserts that God's kindness compels Him to give this to us. No wonder the identity and security He has freely given to us in Christ is so compelling for us. It is even compelling to Him.

Jot down your initial responses and heartfelt thoughts regarding who we were, who we are, and who we will be.

Why is who we are in Christ harder to believe than the common notion that we must work hard to improve who we are?

What are the present implications of the future certainty of who we will be face-to-face with Christ?

Record your thoughts regarding this statement: God could not keep Himself from giving His Son's righteousness and riches to us because of His love and kindness.

OUR COMPELLING NEW IDENTITY

God's being compelled to send His Son to make disciples grounded in the gospel truth is what gives us such a compelling identity. We are purposed as sent ones to go and help people believe the good news of the gospel. We have a compelling new identity.

SAVED BY GRACE

8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

Once again, Paul asserts the present reality of our “in Christ” identity. **You are saved**. The language Paul used for **by grace** indicates that the active party was and is God. By His grace, our salvation has come. **Through faith** indicates our response to God, our belief that He would love us enough to take the initiative to give us something before we had ever asked for it.

Faith is not a blind belief. It is a provoked, grateful, compelled response that anchors our identity in an eternal reality that exists inside of time and beyond it.

Then, Paul clarified that salvation has nothing to do with our performance. If it were based on performance, then we could **boast** in what we have done or will do. However, our salvation is not based upon anything about us, not even our response of belief. The reality of our salvation is based solely on the One who did the saving.

No two verses in the entire Bible make this clearer than these penned by Paul: *Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness* (Rom. 4:4-5).

If we could have worked for our salvation, God would have owed us something. Imagine that! God owing us something? No. Technically, we owe Him. After all, He is the Creditor (Rom. 4:5). And notice who He declared to be righteous—**the ungodly**. Wait a second—our common comments betray us.

We say, “He is a good guy,” or “She is a good lady.” We wonder, *why would that happen to them, they are such good folks? Or, that would never happen to a guy like that.*

We have not made ourselves by our good works. We have been made who we are for good works. God purposed us to show off His goodness, not show off our own.

CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS

For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

God **created** us to **walk** in Christ Jesus and put on display God’s

good works as we walk with Him in His goodness. God even **prepared** His intended purpose for our lives **ahead of time**. Our compelling new identity identifies us with the kind, loving, good God who has acted on our behalf before we ever asked Him to, securing us to love like He has loved so that we may live on purpose to make disciples with Him.

This is our compelling purpose—to teach the truth of our undeserved, present reality to others. Timothy would later pastor the church of Ephesus. Paul instructed him: *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

Now, may we—fully identified in Christ, fully loved by Christ, and purposefully sent with Christ—live compelled by this God-ordained, Christ-secured, Spirit-assured identity, security, and purpose.

Jot down your reaction to this statement: The gospel isn't compelling to you unless it's compelling you.

How are you and the church you are a part of entrusting the gospel to faithful men and women so that they may teach others also?

Take time now to ask God to help you live identified in Christ, secured from Christ, and purposed with Christ in order to help others discover their own identity, security, and purpose.

NOTES

THE RHYTHMS OF A SENT LIFE: BEING

WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Believers are Christ's "letters"—living proof of God's work in our lives. God makes us competent to be His ministers to impact others with the good news of Jesus.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**

2 CORINTHIANS 3-5

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6

**MEMORY
VERSE**

2 CORINTHIANS 3:3

BEING BEFORE DOING

Growing up in New Orleans, I did not learn much about nutrition, but I did learn a lot about good food. And how to eat it.

Here are my three favorite recommendations to eat in NOLA. The Praline Connection is owned by a third-generation family redeemed out of the New Orleans slave trade. It is a hole-in-the-wall on the edge of the French Quarter. It is a soul-food delight barely big enough to seat 25 people. You are family there. Order the white beans and rice with fried pork chop and corn bread. You can thank me later.

Bistro Daisy is an award-winning casual, fine-dining getaway in Uptown on Magazine Street. It is quaint and engaging. The menu changes at the whims of the creativity and palate of the chef. You won't be disappointed.

Snug Harbor is the jazz bistro of Charmaine Neville. Pecan pie and other after-dinner treats tandem with the sounds of uber-

talented musicians. It's a short walk from Praline Connection and a short drive from Bistro Daisy. Charmaine is usually there on Monday nights. You never know which local musicians might be on stage or called up from the crowd. Did I mention the pecan pie?

Now that I've got you all hungry...

We New Orleanians know that eating is recreation, connection, and community as much as it is cuisine and culinary. This is what we believe and value. Good food, in large part, is what defines us. It is, in other words, who New Orleans is.

As we examined in Chapter 4, identity defines purpose. To Jesus, "being" got more attention than "doing." Not that doing doesn't matter. It does, but being determines doing. Whether it's the story of Martha and Mary, when He withdrew to sit with His Father, why He called us to abide with Him, or how He took His commands to a heart level in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus definitely understood the formative nature of being. He rebuked the Pharisees often for doing what God never intended while missing what God had intended—to be with them—God with us.

WHOSE WE ARE

Catalina fellowshiped consistently with a group of women. They encouraged one another, and served together for quite some time before she discovered and believed her Christ-secured identity. She knows four languages, so prior to trusting Christ, she translated at a service project where many Hispanics were present. While she did some things "for God," it wasn't until she believed the gospel and began to live "with God" that her life began to be transformed. Her being preempted her doing.

She would often say, "I was searching for who I really was until I discovered whose I really am." Valuing whose we are above who we are is a being-before-doing worldview.

Remember, we are His. Jesus is making us to become (Mark 1:17). Jesus is the One in whom we believe, according to His will and work (John 6:29,40). He declared us to be sent ones as He was sent (John 20:21). He defines our identity, security, and purpose, forming who we are from whose we are.

THE FAITH REALITY OF OUR BEING

We saw in Chapter 4 how faith anchors us in a God-ordained, Christ-secured, Spirit-assured, you-are-saved reality. It was an undeserved gift to be identified with the God who is love. It is a reality in which we anchor our belief that defines who we are. In turn, it then determines what we value, thus forming what we do. We were not worthy of this gift of a with-Christ identity. But we are now called to imitate the One who gave it to us, not just imitating because of what we do, but imitating because of who we are—as *dearly loved children* (Eph. 5:1).

What does it mean to be imitators if who we are matters more than what we do? If we believe that what we do will make us who we are, then we are believing that imitating God will make us more like Him. However, if we believe that God made us more like Him—who have been given the righteousness of His Son—then we are believing that imitating God will come from who He is making us to be. Our doing will flow out of a gratefulness for what He did for all of us as well as what He is making each of us to become.

How would a focus on doing before being undermine the gospel of Jesus and shortchange our relationship with God?

Read Matthew 25:31-46 to notice the response of the sheep versus the response of the goats. What does this tell us about how the Master values our being over doing?

NOT ON STONE TABLETS BUT ON OUR HEARTS

Jeremiah prophesied of a day that would come when God would write His ways on our hearts so that what we do could come from whose we are. Jeremiah proclaimed:

“Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the LORD’s declaration. “I will put My teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people” (Jer. 31:33).

Paul challenged his readers in the Book of Romans that their doing was not demonstrating their gospel-defined being:

14 So, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, instinctively do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts will either accuse or excuse them 16 on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus (Rom. 2:14-16).

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he pulled this way of thinking into the everyday issues the church was facing, both challenging his critics and affirming the believers.

YOU ARE CHRIST’S LETTER

1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized and read by everyone. 3 It is clear that you are Christ’s letter, produced by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God—not on stone tablets but on tablets that are hearts of flesh. 4 We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ. 5 It is not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. 6 He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life (2 Cor. 3:1-6).

Paul was defending himself to a divided church being influenced by his critics. He asserted that he needed no letter of commendation. The people were dear to him, even **written** in his heart, because

of who they were in Christ. Furthermore, because of the gospel Paul had delivered to them, other people could recognize what the Corinthian church was becoming in Christ by what they did (v. 2). Paul had delivered the gospel, they had believed, and now they had become deliverers of the gospel as well (v. 3).

Why? Because Christ fulfilled the Jeremiah prophecy. It is now our reality. Their being **Christ's letter** is why Paul was so confident to hold the Corinthian church up as his own letter of commendation. Paul then notes that the **competence** he and the Corinthian church possessed comes only **from God**. It had nothing to do with what they had learned or done (v. 5). This is in contrast to Paul's critics who normally highlighted something else that needed to be learned or that needed to be done on top of believing the gospel of Jesus. They tried to follow the letter of the law, but Paul was reminding his readers that it was the **Spirit** who had written the law of love on their hearts (v. 6).

We cannot learn or do enough to become Christ's letters. Only God's writing His law of love and His teachings on our hearts makes us competent to be His ministers to help others discover whose they are in Christ. Paul was confident in this, and we can be, too.

Paul continued this thinking on into 2 Corinthians 4-5.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-7. How does this "treasure in clay jars" relate to being before doing, highlighting whose we are as vital before what we do?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. How does Jesus making all things new relate to being before doing, and whose we are before what we do?

This is more than just "ask Jesus into your heart" and "you can be a new creature." This is a present reality, not because of our prayers or even our belief, but solely because of what Jesus did. Paul wrote:

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us (2 Cor. 5:19).

We are a new creation because of the resurrection of Jesus. We were reconciled into this new reality, and now He is sending us to make disciples who believe this present and eternal reality. We are His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) delivering the gospel of the One who knew no sin who became sin on our behalf that we might have His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). This is who we are in Christ.

WE BE WHO (AND WHAT) WE BELIEVE

OK. Don't let the bad grammar take away your focus. Think about this: We BE who (and what) we BE-lieve. Therefore, who and what we be believing is definitive of what we be doing. The doing is shaped by the being.

I would suggest that we consider emphasizing with one another as well as with our churches the following seven "being" rhythms of a sent life.

- Be believing.
- Be confessing.
- Be grateful.
- Be listening.
- Be learning.
- Be loving.
- Be multiplying.

My wife and I were challenged early on to consider what we really want our kids to be rather than only focusing on what they are doing. We spent some time processing this question: Who do we want our kids to be becoming when we send them to college? We determined that if we could emphasize these seven rhythms of being with our kids before college, then we could be confident of their chances of continuing to live from their Christ-secured

identity toward Christ's disciple-making purposes, thus shaping a life on mission with Him.

BELIEVING

We want our kids to be believing, to have begun believing the gospel of Jesus by the time they go to college. Jesus taught about the importance of belief in John 3:16-18, and He also taught about the need for this initial belief to persevere toward abundant life (Luke 21:19).

CONFESSING

We want the kids to be confessing, to recognize a contrite heart and broken spirit that God never despises (Ps. 51:17). Much like King David, there will be many days over the course of their lives and their relationships when a willingness to be confessional would be the difference between life-giving restoration and life-stealing shame. John declared God's faithfulness to forgive when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). This matters more than perfect rule-keeping, especially since God has now written His ways on our hearts. Our confessional heart is justifying, while our perfect rule-keeping is not (Luke 18:9-14).

GRATEFUL

We want them to be grateful, aware more every day of all that God has done for them, in them, through them, and to them. Simply put, we want them to be grateful for the gospel; that *He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves* (Col. 1:13). We want them to be like the one leper who returned to say thanks to Jesus (Luke 17:11-19). *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift* (2 Cor. 9:15).

LISTENING

We want them to be listening, not just to their own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6), but to the God who wants constant conversation with them. Paul wrote that we should pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). This does not mean 24/7, but that we can live in constant conversation with God. Most of our conversation with God needs to be listening to Him.

Too often we wrongly think about prayer as a discipline we force ourselves to do, and that it interrupts our busy schedules. However, prayer is not a discipline we forcibly interrupt our lives to do. It is like breathing that we must have to sustain physical life. Prayer is constantly life-giving because it is constantly keeping us in tune with the Life-Giver. Stopping to have conversation with God does not interrupt our everyday lives. Instead, it is the exact opposite. Our everyday lives interrupt our conversation with God. May we listen to God as well as cherish getting to listen to one another.

LEARNING

We want our kids to be learning, always longing to know God more fully, and always learning more and more how His ways and His gospel come to bear in our daily conversations and everyday relationships. Paul prayed this for the Philippians, wanting them to grow as learners (disciples) in knowledge and discernment of the things of Jesus.

9 And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, 10 so that you can approve the things that are superior and can be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

LOVING

We want our kids to be loving, always caring more about what someone else is becoming than what they are becoming. We want them to love to the extent that others would come to Christ and know that He loves them, and wants them to love still others in the same way. We know what love is because Jesus laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16). We will be known as His followers by our love for one another (John 13:34-35). Understanding the Scriptures is not possible apart from seeing them through the lens of loving God and loving our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). We know God loved us first, so we must love others (1 John 4:7-11).

MULTIPLYING

We want our kids to be multiplying, making disciples with Jesus who make disciples with Jesus. Multiplication is a result of a follower of Jesus who is believing, confessing, grateful, listening, learning, and loving. Paul told Timothy to give the gospel to faithful men who would teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). This is who we are.

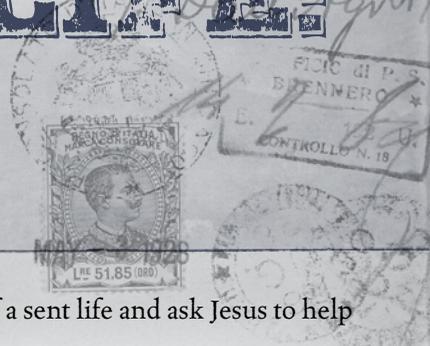
May we be living proof of God's work in our lives, and thus sent ones on mission with Him, by being a believing, confessing, grateful, listening, learning, loving, multiplying people.

Consider committing to making the following prayers an ongoing part of who you are each day.

- Lord, help me be **believing** in Your goodness alone. Help the gospel come to bear in all areas of my life.
- Lord, help me be **confessing** my sin and selfishness quickly, focusing on Your goodness, agreeing with what You say about my sin, acknowledging that only You are good.
- Lord, help me be **grateful** for Your goodness You have given to me in spite of my ongoing ungratefulness.
- Lord, help me be **listening** to You and to others.
- Lord, help me be always **learning** Your gospel and how it securely defines me and compels me to love like You have loved me.
- Lord, help me be **loving** as You have loved me, taking the initiative to serve and give in the hope of others discovering abundant life with You.
- Lord, help me be **multiplying**, making disciples who make disciples, learning Your ways with others as I translate Your gospel into my daily conversations and everyday relationships in the hope that others will discover their identity and security and purpose with You.

NOTES

THE RHYTHMS OF A SENT LIFE: DOING



WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Believers need to consider the habits of a sent life and ask Jesus to help them become His sent ones.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
MATTHEW 10

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
MATTHEW 10:5-16

**MEMORY
VERSE**
2 TIMOTHY 2:2

FROM BEING TO DOING

If it's true that "you are what you eat," I would have to introduce myself as, "My name is Chips and Salsa," or "My name is Peanut Butter."

Consider the places where you commonly eat, get coffee, or get dessert. What would your name be?

SENT ONES WITH SENT RHYTHMS

What we do flows from who we are. Our purpose is defined by our identity. We live based on who or what assures our security. Therefore, the daily rhythms of our lives are shaped by our beliefs, as well as what we are becoming.

What exactly are daily rhythms? Simply put, they are why, what, where, and with whom we commonly do life. They are our values, dreams, everyday pathways, relationships, the places we regularly go to, and the people we encounter.

My childhood dog was named Duchess. In the course of her daily activity, she wore a pathway in our backyard so that no grass could grow.

We also create pathways in our everyday lives. The purpose of our lives determines whether those pathways become gospel pathways, or whether they remain common, everyday pathways. As sent ones, may we beg God to make our daily rhythms gospel pathways whereby we translate the gospel of Jesus in an ongoing, relational way into our own lives as well as into those who welcome us into their lives.

In Chapter 5, we discussed who we BE. This chapter focuses on what we then should do, taking into consideration how the “Sent Rhythms of Jesus” can be the rhythms of our lives.

Describe one way you could see your common, everyday pathways becoming gospel pathways.

What do you need to pray for in order for your security to be based solely on Jesus so that you can live sent?

HOW JESUS SENT HIS FIRST DISCIPLES

In Chapter 3, we focused on Jesus’ command to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest. I like how Eugene Peterson worded the next verse in Matthew.

“The prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered. Jesus called twelve of his followers and sent them into the ripe fields”
(Matt. 10:1, MSG).

Jesus came to redeem us from the effects of our sins. He also came to make disciples of His Father’s ways, who He would then send to make disciples, who also would make disciples, and so on. Following

the list of their names in verses 2-4, Jesus did something confounding to contemporary discipleship leaders.

Jesus sent them with only a few instructions. There's no indication they were trained for 12 months, enrolled in seminary, or licensed and ordained into the gospel ministry. All of these things are healthy and effective. However, it is worth noting these men had none of these training opportunities. Therefore, it is important that we consider the potential of those Jesus invited along for the first time to be disciple-makers.

WHO WERE THE PEOPLE JESUS SENT?

Some significant questions arise regarding the spiritual status of the men Jesus called to be His disciples. Were they "lost" in the sense that we think of unsaved people in our day? Were they "searching" for anything that would make their lives more meaningful? Or were they "Christ followers?" The Bible never uses these terms in relationship to these men, nor does it answer why Jesus chose them. As typical Jews, it would be safe to say that they were expecting the Messiah to come, not in the way Jesus came, but in the manner of a military leader who would set them free from Roman bondage.

While we know only their names and some of their professions, Jesus knew all about them and called them, already knowing how each of them would respond to His teaching and guidance over the succeeding three years.

So, whether they were "lost," "searching," or "expecting," how could they possibly be effective disciple-makers?

The American church tends to train new Christians for months before sending them out to make disciples. But by that time, the close relationships they previously had with lost people have, basically, been disconnected, making it more difficult to lead them to faith in Christ.

So, why not give these new believers a few brief instructions and send them out right away? While they may not be trained evangelists, their enthusiasm about their newfound faith in Christ spills over into the lives of their lost family members, friends, and work associates. Why not encourage them to pray for and share with their friends what they are learning from Jesus so that others might also be encouraged to discover life in Christ?

Certainly, training, learning, and coaching are needed and helpful. It's just that Jesus took a more send, then coach; send, then coach approach with these first disciples. Their learning continued after He left His Spirit with them. But don't miss that He sent them out right away, debriefed them, and sent them again and again with coaching in between.

Furthermore, many of us need to awaken to the fact that if we don't have healthy friendships with those who might be considered "lost" and "searching," then we will have trouble making disciples. Keep that in mind as we examine the instructions Jesus gave these first disciples.

If you are a new Christian, how might you use the excitement and enthusiasm of your new life in Christ to share your faith with others?

If you have been a Christian for a while, ask the Lord to renew your enthusiasm about being a Christian so that you might share your faith with others.

SENT INSTRUCTIONS

The instructions Jesus gave His new disciples are also very insightful for us as we go to neighbors and nations to make disciples.

5 Jesus sent out these 12 after giving them instructions: "Don't take the road leading to other nations, and don't enter any Samaritan town. 6 Instead, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10-5-6).

These verses might seem confusing because, in Acts 1:8, Jesus sent His followers to neighbors and nations. Here, however, Jesus focused His followers on their daily pathways and immediate surroundings.

“As you go, announce this: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matt. 10:7).

Jesus gave them their message—**the kingdom of heaven has come near**—which summarizes the gospel in two ways. First, it is a message of hope that what people might consider to be far off and absent is actually close by. *“On earth as it is in heaven,”* said Jesus (Matt. 6:10). It’s as if Jesus is saying, “Heaven has come near, so look for it, listen for My Father, and how His kingdom ways are stirring around you.”

Second, this message highlights what could be the best summary of the gospel ever offered—God with us. The Father gave Jesus the name Immanuel for a reason. He summarized His good news of the gospel wrapped up in the Gospel-Giver Himself. God put on skin and came close to be with us.

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, drive out demons. You have received free of charge; give free of charge” (Matt. 10:8).

Jesus basically was instructing them to love others in their brokenness the way God loved them in their brokenness. He was asking them to trust Him that they could do what they had seen Him do, because He was with them. **Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse** the leper. Cast out **demons**. Give because your resources come from an unlimited giver. Basically, love people toward wholeness and full restoration, like Jesus loves us.

9 “Don’t take along gold, silver, or copper for your money-belts. 10 Don’t take a traveling bag for the road, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, for the worker is worthy of his food” (Matt. 10:9-10).

Jesus then turned toward what not to take. No money, clothes, **sandals, . . . a walking stick**, or food. The original language of the text implies they are not to bring unnecessary extras of these things. God will provide along the way, because He is with you.

Then, Jesus introduced a concept very significant in under-

standing the overarching heartbeat of these instructions. Jesus told them, **the worker is worthy of his food**. This *worthy* thought will continue further into the rest of Jesus' instructions, but let's unpack it a bit now.

"Worthy" in the original language implies "of comparable worth." This is significant, because it not only helps us understand what Jesus meant in these instructions, but also what the New Testament is inferring when that term is used regarding the evaluation of our lives.

Jesus is basically challenging the disciples to:

1. Remember how God had poured Himself into them and loved them.
2. Go and do the same, proclaiming the goodness of God while serving, giving, and loving the people to whom they are sent.
3. Then, the people to whom and with whom they do these things will care for the disciples by cooking food, cleaning clothes, and giving them a place to lay their heads. In a comparable way to what has been done for them by the disciples, they will give back in return, much like the way the disciples were compelled by how God had poured Himself into them and loved them.

Imagine a balancing scale with three plates. One plate is filled with how God has loved, is loving, and will always love. This plate is the standard of the scale. Nothing we or others do will alter what is on this plate. The second plate measures how you and I love as recipients of God's love and goodness. It only affects the scale if it is filled with what we are compelled to do because God loves us. The balance of the scale is never affected if this plate is filled with self-seeking, self-indulgent, or self-righteous actions or activities. Imagine, then, a third plate filled with those who respond to the love they have received from those who have loved them in the name of Jesus and the goodness of the gospel.

Our worthiness is not based initially on anything about ourselves. It is formed by and compelled by the plate filled with how God loves and gives. Paul picked up on this notion, even hinting at it:

10 For we must all appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless (2 Cor. 5:10).

The word *repaid* does not imply “get what you are worth.” It is in the subjunctive case, meaning that there is another active party in play here. That active party is God. So, anything we do *in the body* is really not our own in the first place, since He is the Creator and giver of the body and of all things from which we might receive gain. It basically means that anything we are “repaid” has already been paid. God already gave it. We didn’t invest it well, but then we realized the Master who gave us the “talents” was actually good and not evil. So, we decided to invest what was never ours but His. Then, when He returns, He lets us share in the gain of what was never ours.

Consider for a moment this amazing gospel thought: *We don’t get what we are worth. Rather, we get in on what He is worth!*

And that’s what Jesus was saying in Matthew 10:10. As you go to make disciples, don’t gather up your “stuff” to take along. Instead, take what is not yours, but His, and give it to others. They, in turn, will respond to your generosity, and God will use them to keep providing for you in a way that reflects the worth of what God gave to you in the first place. You won’t get what you’re worth. You will get in on what He is worth as people respond to the gospel you are declaring and demonstrating to them.

11 “When you enter any town or village, find out who is worthy, and stay there until you leave. 12 Greet a household when you enter it, 13 and if the household is worthy, let your peace be on it. But if it is unworthy, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 I assure you: It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town” (Matt. 10:11-15).

Jesus told the disciples to look for those who will welcome them into their homes and their lives. **Find out who is worthy** and **stay** with them. Share with them what you have been given, and watch them respond. But if people don’t respond, Jesus said, the **day**

of judgment will not be what they would hope for.

“Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

As they were sent, Jesus commanded the disciples to be **shrewd as serpents** but **as harmless as doves**. The word *shrewd* can also be translated “wise.” It is a word that implied a knowledge gained from someone else applied purposefully into daily life. God gave snakes the instinct to do only what is necessary for them to live. Jesus was sent that we may have abundant life (John 10:10) and engage others to find abundant life in Him, too.

The word *harmless* can also be translated as “pure.” My dad, a Greek scholar, has always said that when we see the word “pure” in the New Testament, we are not to think only of pure, perfect behavior. Rather, we are to think of pure motives in the sense of singularly-focused purpose. Doves, as the movie *Finding Nemo* highlighted, are always chirping, “Mine! Mine! Mine! Mine!” Their purpose is singular—find food, eat, and share it with little ones, if necessary. Jesus was commanding the disciples to have a pure, singular focus in their living sent. Their purpose was not for self, but for the sake of people discovering the truth of the gospel and their identity with Christ. Nothing else. This was in stark contrast to the **wolves** who lived, not for God, but for personal benefit.

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how confident do you feel about going out to make disciples according to Jesus’ instructions?

If you gave yourself a low score, what might you do to feel more confident about making disciples?

PAIRED UP

One important note regarding “doing” the rhythms of a sent life. In Mark 6:7, Jesus paired up the disciples before He sent them out. The gospel is not something that can fully show its effect in a singular life. We must live sent, at least, in pairs. The gospel shows itself most when we love one another most. Furthermore, we need the encouragement to keep on embodying the gospel together amidst a world of wolves, many of them often among the religious crowd. We cannot do this alone.

If you do not have a disciple-making partner, ask the Lord to pair you up with the person of His choosing.

HOW WE CAN LIVE SENT LIKE JESUS

John 20:21 indicates that followers of Jesus are sent like Jesus was sent by the Father. Recall the emphasis in Chapter 1 on the Sent Rhythms of Jesus. In the next several lessons, we will be unpacking the principles of the Sent Rhythms of His Followers (visual pg. 142). Chapter 7 includes suggestions for 10 “doing” Rhythms of a Sent Church as an introduction to being a sent church together. These rhythms are applicable personally, as well as collectively.

AS WE GO

Paul challenged Timothy to adopt these sent rhythms as a multiplying leader, understanding the effect of his “doing” life-on-life teaching.

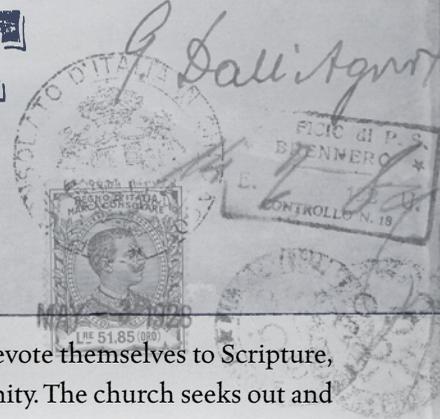
And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

Ultimately, the “doing” rhythms of a sent life are evidenced not by what we do, but by what others are compelled to do because of what we do.

Close this study by voicing this prayer as your commitment to be a disciple-maker.

Lord, help me become Your sent one, making disciples like You did because I believe in You, the Sent One.

THE RHYTHMS OF A SENT CHURCH



WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

The church is a body of believers who devote themselves to Scripture, prayer, and to building a caring community. The church seeks out and welcomes those God brings into the community.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
ACTS 1-2

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
ACTS 2:42-47

**MEMORY
VERSE**
JOHN 17:23

THE GETTING-READY TIME

The story of the church is a 168-hours-a-week story. The rhythms of a sent church are based upon the idea that followers of Jesus live as disciple-makers in their everyday relationships and conversations. All the while, they are being encouraged and equipped to do so in large and small groups each week. Making disciples is always emphasized, and daily spiritual practices are valued and validated as highly as Sunday morning gatherings.

Church leaders put a significant amount of thought, energy, strategy, and planning into Bible study and worship each week, typically on Sunday morning. These gatherings are purposed to be encouraging and catalytic. They are moments when, together, we remember who God is, how He has loved us, how worthy He is to be praised, and that He has sent us out to be the church among both neighbors and the nations.

Hebrews 10:23-25 highlights these particular purposes for assembling together. It is more than just an event at some particular place at some specific time. We need to assemble together, because if we are committed to making disciples, we need encouragement. We need to be lifted up and provoked back out again. It's easy to let Sunday gatherings become just encouragement sessions, while neglecting the sending element. Remember, we are primarily a sent people, not just a gathered one.

While the Sunday morning gathering is important, pastors must validate and equip church members for their daily ministry where they live, work, and play, in the hope of their becoming disciples of Jesus who make disciples with Jesus every day. At the outset of Chapter 1, we said that the singular purpose of the church is to make disciples. Gathering weekly for encouragement and equipping is the getting-ready time for making disciples.

A SENT CHURCH TOGETHER

This lesson will paint the picture of who His sent church is together and describe more vividly what we do together as His sent church. Maybe we should start there—what do we do together? What are the collective “Sent Rhythms of His Followers?”

Here are 10 suggested sent rhythms that we can do together as His church:

- We can live **PRAYING**, letting life become a pause in our never-ending conversation with God.
- We can sharpen and equip one another to become **FLUENT** in the gospel and in the Scriptures, so that His Word becomes our words.
- We can look for those who **WELCOME** us into their lives.
- We can be serving and then **INVITE ALONG** “the searching” (from among those who welcome us) to serve others alongside us.
- We can serve to meet needs, but recognize that Jesus used **SERVICE** as a tool for disciple-making among those He invited to serve with Him.
- We can debrief over coffee and meals around **TABLE** conversations as well as along daily gospel pathways.

- We can listen to the Holy Spirit as well as to others and **TRANSLATE** (incorporate) the gospel into our own lives and into those everyday conversations and circumstances.
- We can allow ourselves and others the space of grace to **BECOME** what Jesus intends us to become.
- We can celebrate with new Christians in baptism when they **BELIEVE**, encouraging them also to become fluent in the gospel as they serve and invite others to serve with them.
- We can **SEND** them ready to look for others who welcome them.

Imagine the effect if we begged God to help us collectively apply these rhythms in His church. The effort to make disciples would be at the forefront of everyone's minds. The equipping for disciple-making across the board would be priority number one. And every aspect of church ministry from all the entry points to worshipping together to small groups, to kids' ministry, to mission journeys and community service, and more would have one common purpose—to make disciples with Jesus who, in turn, make disciples with Jesus.

Think about the rhythms of your everyday life. If they are focused only on your personal development as a disciple, how can you refocus so they are geared toward becoming a disciple of Jesus who makes other disciples with Jesus?

How is your church validating and equipping you to make disciples?

THE SENT RHYTHMS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Disciple-making seemed to be the one common purpose of the early church. Acts 2:42-47 details how they devoted themselves to certain practices in order to see this purpose lived out.

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING

42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.* 43 *Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles* (Acts 2:42-43).

The phrase **devoted themselves** is translated adequately in most translations, and is easily understood to carry with it certain implications. One who is devoted continues to do a particular act or service until it becomes a natural, recurring practice. There is a danger of this recurring practice becoming routine. However, if the purpose is remembered, then the recurring activity can bear much kingdom fruit.

Another implication of devotion is a level of intensity. There's no halfway about it. Someone who is devoted is fully surrendered to give everything into that devotion.

A final implication of devotion is endurance. The original language in this text indicated a looming difficulty. Devotion prompts a steadfastness and persistence, no matter the difficulty, no matter what.

Luke describes one of the devotions of the early church as **the apostles' teaching**. Based upon what Jesus commanded in the Great Commission, this was simply the apostles "*teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:20). More specifically, it is likely related in some way to explaining the Scriptures as a whole, from the Law to the Prophets to the teachings of Jesus, much like Jesus did with two travelers along the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Verse 43 indicated the result of their devotion to the apostles' teaching—**fear overcame everyone, and many wonders and signs were . . . performed**. What they were hearing about began to happen among them, and it increased their reverence for God more and more.

In the "Sent Rhythms" visuals (pp. 140-141), two metaphors and one rhythm are related to the apostles' teaching. First, the rhythm is learning. Ebbing and flowing between the ongoing rhythms of service and conversation, Jesus' disciples learned the gospel, the ways of the Father, and the overarching story of the Scriptures. Meta-

phorically speaking, they became fluent in all of those, the Word of God becoming, in their own words, the flow of conversation rather than just forced into conversation. Because of this fluency, coupled with a fluency that came through listening to the languages and stories of the people who welcomed the disciples into their lives, they were then sent to translate the gospel of Jesus into the lives of the people they encountered along their gospel pathways.

Pray for fluency in the Word of God for the purpose of disciple-making. Journal your responses as you read and re-read Psalm 119, begging God to make His Word your words.

THE FELLOWSHIP

42 . . . the fellowship . . . 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need (Acts 2:42,44-45).

The word **fellowship** (v. 42) implied a close mutual relationship and involvement. The common word for “church” was an extra-biblical word from the 1st century that Jesus adopted. It commonly referred to a group of people called out or devoted to a **common** purpose, united around a together mission.

In *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch highlighted a sociological study that indicated it was a dangerous mission or a difficult situation that created significant unity among an otherwise disconnected group of people. This cultural phenomenon highlights the miraculous significance of the fellowship of the church. Only the mission of God and the gospel of Jesus, and what they compel us as the church to do, are able to unite an otherwise, selfish, self-serving group of people around a common purpose and specific mission. The caring for one another, whether through cheers or tears, and the sharpening of one another, whether through highs or lows, is a result of the purpose and mission into which Jesus has invited us.

That’s called **the fellowship**. The inclusion of “the” in the original language indicates this is not just any old fellowship. It is

the fellowship of the people identified with the living God. Each local church, if it is devoted to its intended purpose, is an expression of this fellowship. Furthermore, the language indicated this to be more than just one of the many things the early church did. This was who they were together. They were a fellowship. They did not just fellowship.

Notice in verses 44-45 what resulted from their becoming the fellowship. **All the believers were together and held all things in common.** And, they gave generously **as anyone had a need.** Their being the fellowship was produced by their ongoing service and conversations together, as shown in the “Sent Rhythms” visuals.

The word translated “common” can also be translated “to share mutually.” A teacher my wife and I greatly appreciate once said, “This was an indication of an open-handedness, not a closed-fistedness. They held all things loosely except for their devotion to Jesus and one another.” Service together, conversation together, learning together, and disciple-making together make us into the fellowship. As Jesus said in Mark 1:17, He is making us to become fishers of people when we follow Him. This becomes our purpose and mission, because it becomes our identity together as sent ones, and we become the fellowship.

The next practice of their devotion actually takes this a step further.

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

42 . . . the breaking of bread . . . 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude (Acts 2:42,46).

Breaking **bread from house to house** probably included the Lord’s Supper, but the act was more than that. It was a joyous, everyday devotion practiced both in the **temple complex** as well as in their homes.

Their breaking bread together fulfilled the two most important commands—loving God and loving neighbor (Mark 12:30-31). They

loved God by breaking bread to remember how Jesus broke His body and spilled His blood for them, as He had commanded (Luke 22:14-19). They loved their neighbors by inviting them into their homes and their lives that they, too, might discover their identity in Christ.

With reference to the “Sent Rhythms” visuals, the early church used the table in much the same way we should today—to invite people to serve, then debrief, and converse around the table over a shared meal. It is in these in-between spaces—between serving and between Sundays—that people typically are transformed. If we provide a gracious space to which they can come, then those yet to believe the gospel will be given the best chance to become believers. This gracious space is required for disciple-making, and the table with the breaking of bread is the best place for this space to exist.

THE PRAYERS

42 . . . to the prayers . . . 47 Praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved (Acts 2:42,47).

The **prayers** of the believers (v. 42) could certainly have been the set of prayers the Jews would pray daily. But for the early church, it was likely a Christ-centered variation of those prayers.

The New Testament gives us a clue as to the focus or content of what the sent church prayed. Here are just three suggested reasons for praying.

First and foremost, the prayers included praise and commitment regarding God’s redemptive mission, which compelled them to pray for boldness on mission with Him. Read Acts 4:23-31. Next, they prayed for one another, whether sick or well, for the sake of the glory of Christ. Read James 5:13-16. Finally, they prayed in ongoing conversation with God (1 Thess. 5:17).

In relationship to the “Sent Rhythms” visuals, the prayers connect with how we are relating with God and learning His ways, as well as with how we send and multiply. Our prayers, if similar to the prayers of the early church, will remind us of, prepare us for, and send us on God’s mission to make disciples of Jesus with Him. That’s

what resulted for the early church. Verse 47 indicated their prayerful adoration and God's productively adding to their fellowship daily.

This was more than just church growth. Highly intelligent leaders did not figure out the magic formula for church growth. The Book of Acts is the story of what happens when disciples of Jesus simply go where they are sent with the Holy Spirit leading them to make disciples with Jesus who make disciples with Jesus, the way Jesus did.

WHAT THE EARLY DISCIPLES DID NOT HAVE

It may be worth noting what the early believers did *not* have in their disciple-making efforts, which we have an abundance of in the modern church.

They did not have an abundance of Bibles, buildings, and budgets. Certainly, I'm not against the Bible, good facilities in which to gather, or budgets which support a disciple-making ministry. These are not evil, nor are they in need of being eradicated. But we must ask a very valid question: Why, with the abundance of these three, are we not seeing God adding to the fellowship daily as described in Acts? Could it be that we are utilizing these things in a "non-sent" way; that they are not being used in a purposeful way that leads to church members living sent?

TOGETHER

Consider the following acronym for the sake of emphasizing our identity as a sent people and our activity as a sent church – SENT—which stands for Scripturing, Eating, Neighboring, Together.

SCRIPTURING—when His Word becomes our word and we are able to share the message of the Bible in the natural flow of our conversations rather than forced into conversation, growing as a learner of Jesus toward gospel fluency.

EATING—when the natural rhythms of caloric and coffee intake become gospel-centered, purposeful connection; and conversation with all who are searching to discover their identity, security, and purpose; looking for those who welcome us into their lives.

NEIGHBORING—taking the initiative to first love like Jesus loved us, serving locally and sending globally, and inviting the searching along to serve with us.

TOGETHER—a family of missionary servants growing in a gospel unity to make disciples together, which is crucial for the work of God to happen among us and through us.

In John 6:29, Jesus declared the work of God to be helping others believe in the One who was sent. Jesus prayed for the maturing oneness of His followers “*so the world may know You have sent Me*” (John 17:23c). The work of God comes among us through the maturing of our oneness as followers of Jesus who are committed to making disciples with Jesus who make disciples with Jesus.

Culture often labels the church with different metaphors—hospital, club, institution, mission agency. What might be an appropriate metaphor for your church? What do you wish the metaphor to be?

What might your church be doing that hinders these kinds of sent rhythms? How could that change?

May we be a sent church, engaging the Scriptures, being people of prayer, and building authentic community around the mission of God and gospel of Jesus in the hope of others becoming disciples of Jesus.

NOTES

Churches which have not established a sent culture tend to have four common characteristics, all of which add up to missing what it takes to be a sent church.

1. GOING HAPPENS WITHOUT EQUIPPING

“Go,” “send,” “missions,” “local,” and “global” are all important words to a sent church. Hopefully, they are more than words. If a sent church is to have a sending culture, it must equip all its members to be sent ones. Being a sent church is an identity, not just something we do. It’s more than just offering an evangelism class or training for a mission trip. Instead, it is a unified focus, an overarching emphasis, and an ongoing effort to equip and send where we live, work, and play, while coaching along the way. Then, at times, sending those already living sent daily to go live sent unto the nations.

When a sent culture has been developed, a church begins to think and live as though making disciples is not one of many things it does. Rather, it is the one thing it does, from which all other things are defined and through which all things being considered are filtered.

List three emphasis points you would describe as the overarching focus of your church.

List three equipping efforts you would describe as the overarching focus of your church.

Which of these listings and efforts (any or all) are helping your church develop a sent culture?

2. SERVING HAPPENS WITHOUT DISCIPLE-MAKING

Churches who want to send without having developed a sending culture typically encourage their members to serve frequently in a

variety of ways. However, if a sending culture does not exist, then serving normally has one of two ends in mind, if not both. One is that Christians serve because the Bible says so. The other end is that serving is necessary because there are needs.

While both of those ends are biblically valid, Jesus had another end in mind with regard to serving. Jesus served not only for those He ministered to, but also for the sake of the 12 men He chose to serve with Him. He did not carry some sense of obligation to “close the deal” and evangelize or make disciples of every single person He served. However, He gave a significant amount of attention to teaching and debriefing those 12 guys.

Certainly, Jesus cared about those with needs, and He would have wanted to see them be disciples, as well. But, above all, He dedicated the bulk of His earthly ministry to make disciples of those whom He invited to serve with Him.

A sending church sends people to serve. A sending culture goes one step further and invites the searching to serve alongside them in the hope that they will see and experience the gospel of the servant King and become His disciple.

How does the church of which you are a part view serving?

3. GATHERING HAPPENS WITHOUT AN EMPHASIS TO SEND

Opportunities to serve locally and globally are communicated through announcements at gatherings as well as through social media and on the website. There's no lack of giving people the chance to go. But for a church which is trying to be a sending church without having established a sending culture, gathering happens minus an ongoing emphasis to send.

Here are two examples:

A church trying to be a sending church without a sending culture will preach a sermon series or two per year on how we should be a sent people. Opposite this approach is a sending culture that offers application in its sermons week after week. The sermon addresses the needs of listeners, as well as invites and encourages

them to deliver the gospel to neighbors and to the nations.

A church trying to be a sending church minus a sending culture will encourage a serving and evangelizing arm in each of its small groups. However, in a sending culture, small groups are led to love one another as fellow disciples of Jesus for the sake of sending one another to make more disciples. It is already difficult to make disciples where we live, work, and play, as well as making disciples of the nations. But without the edifying provocation from a small group of fellow believers, it is nearly impossible. Without that encouraging, caring, securing, meet-each-other's-needs, ongoing love from other sent ones, it is tough to be obedient and take the risk to live as sent ones.

The church does not gather to have a pep rally for missions. Rather, it must gather with the singular purpose of sending always in mind. Care and missions go hand in hand inside a sent culture. Why? Because we need to be loved so that we can go and give love. We need our needs met by the body of Christ to go and meet needs as the body of Christ. We need to gather with the church so that we can go and be the church, daily to neighbors and globally to the nations.

4. DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS WITHOUT ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHARE

You sign up for a class where you learn about a variety of matters related to church membership: the beliefs and distinctive aspects of the church, what is expected of you, and the significance of giving and generosity. You also hear about growth opportunities through discipleship, international mission journeys, and local ministry opportunities.

But what about "make disciples?" What about beginning with the purpose of the church as Jesus commanded? What about ending with, "Do you know three people right now with whom you could share why Jesus and this church have become so meaningful to you?" What about challenging them to serve: "Who is someone you could invite along to serve with you?" Not for the purpose of church growth, but for the purpose of disciple-making, all in the hope that someone might also discover abundant life in Christ.

The same holds for discipleship classes and small groups. What if every session ended with, "Who would be encouraged if you

shared with him or her what has encouraged you from what you have been learning?"

The beginning and ending points in these kinds of conversations encourage, remind, and empower people to initiate discipling. It provokes us both to gather and to send, to go and love first like Jesus loved us, to share what's encouraging us with others, and to invite others to serve with us.

If your church does not have a sending culture, what might need to be addressed to change that?

BECOMING A SENT CHURCH

The New Testament includes the word "church" 140-plus times. None of them refer to a place or an event. While the most common prepositions used with "church" in our culture are "to," "in," "at," and "from," none of them are used before "church" in the New Testament. The church is a "who," not a "what." So, while we might believe and say that the church is people, our language and emphases betray our true understanding of what the church is.

Jesus called us sent ones, sent as He was sent (John 20:21). So, how did He live sent? In this lesson, in the context of who we are to be collectively as His church, let's look more in-depth at that question.

JESUS TOOK THE INITIATIVE, INVITING US INTO HIS FAMILY

*11 He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.
12 But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).*

In 1John 4:7-11, John asserted that we love because God loved us first. He took the first step to give us the right to be His children. He knew

before He made us that we would choose to know good and evil rather than just His goodness. Yet, He made us anyway. He is motivated by His love to give His love, so He created an environment in which He could dwell with us so that we might experience His love.

In John 1:11-13, John wrote that Jesus came near, but the ones who considered themselves **His own people** didn't even **receive Him**. God knew the Hebrews would not join Him fully on His mission to restore all tribes and nations to Himself, but because He loved first, He called them to be His people anyway, even coming as Messiah through them.

Then, He opened up the invitation to us all. For those who would believe, God **gave them the right to be children of God**. A Greek word used in this phrase is "begot." God "begot" us. It's a word referencing the male side of reproduction. God initiated and gave what was needed for there to be life, in this case life again, with Him.

HE MOVED INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.

We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

God came near. He put on skin and moved into the neighborhood. And it was not God just telling us the truth of what we had done. It was, rather, God telling us through His alive Word the truth about who we are and whose we are, all because of His **grace and truth**.

He valued presence, not just presentation, or else sending the law and the prophets would have been enough. He valued engagement not extraction, going close enough to know why love was needed and how to love. Why? Because as the psalmist wrote, His nearness is our good (Ps. 73:28), and He has always wanted to give His goodness to us.

Therefore, our going near with Him into the darkness of people's lives will show them His goodness. If we are to live sent, we may need to reevaluate the beliefs and behaviors that have separated us from the culture around us, and assume the values of Jesus, that of going close enough to love, being fully present, and full of grace.

HE HIGHLIGHTED TRUTH EMBODIED IN GRACE

15 (John testified concerning Him and exclaimed, "This was the One of whom I said, 'The One coming after me has surpassed me, because He existed before me.'") 16 Indeed, we have all received grace after grace from His fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:15-17).

Notice the contrast John makes between Moses and Jesus. Moses gave the **law**, but it wasn't enough. If it had been, Jesus would not have had to come. Paul, in his letters to Rome, Galatia, and Colossae, makes a clear assertion as to the purpose of the law but also its inability to restore us into the family of God. Jesus came to deliver the **truth** of what God had been communicating with us all along—that we are securely and forever loved, and He wants us in His presence and His goodness. He delivered truth in the clothes of **grace**.

Truth by itself can be a wrecking ball. Truth clothed in grace can be transformative. The space of grace is required for someone to have room to become who Jesus is making them to be.

In what ways are you declaring and demonstrating grace and truth within the culture in which you reside?

Jesus was the clarifying presence of the gospel. Now His church is the reflective embodiment of the gospel, but only when we go near as He came near to us, and only when we deliver truth clothed in grace.

HE EXPLAINED THE FATHER TO US

No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son—the One who is at the Father's side—He has revealed Him (John 1:18).

People were unsure about God. Many had mistakenly understood Him as nothing more than a rule-giver, a people-condemner, or a distant, silent father. Jesus came to reveal, explain, make known, and clarify who He really is.

In John 17:18, Jesus prayed that the same mission the Father had sent Him on was now the mission Jesus was sending us on. That could not have had anything to do with Him being the Redeemer of the world who died and rose again. Rather, it must have had to do with His mission to make the Father known, to clarify who God is.

Are we adequately and appropriately explaining the Father to others? Not that we know everything about Him, but explaining Him in the ways that we have come to know Him? This is our mission—as we learn more and more whose we are in Christ, we are sent with Jesus to explain the Father so that others might discover their identity in Christ, their security from Christ, and their purpose with Christ. That's what defines a sent church.

ESTABLISHING A SENT CULTURE

What might be required to establish a sent culture? The table below suggests some shifts in language and equipping that can help. The “From” side lists commonly used words and phrases. The “To” side includes new and renewed words and phrases.

FROM	TO
Teaching “sent” from time to time	An intentional emphasis on living sent all the time
Studying the Bible for personal benefit	Studying the Bible both for personal growth and gospel fluency in our everyday conversations
Bringing new believers out of the lost culture into the Christian church culture until they're ready to make disciples	Coaching new believers while they engage their lost friends for disciple-making
Inviting people to “church”	Inviting people to serve with us as His church

Living for God	Living with God
Desiring for people to be "in church"	Desiring for people to be "in Christ"
Making moralistic, good people	Making disciples who always remember their need for the Messiah
What do I think of God?	What does God think of me?
Sending people to make gospel presentations	Sending people to live with gospel presence and who also can articulate the gospel
Sundays as fueling stations	Sundays as gathering that then sends believers out as living letters of God's love to the lost
Members consuming	Disciple-makers compelled
Seeking a better life for self	Living a sent life with and to others, that they may also believe
Welcoming others "at church"	Sending out followers of Jesus to look for people who welcome us into their lives
Dropping the idea that we need to become the learn-ed	Embracing the idea that we will never quit being a learn-er
To, in, from, and at church	Sunday gathering of the church, daily living as the church, always sending the church

The gospel forced into our conversations

Including the gospel in the natural flow of our conversations, being translated into circumstances and context

Serving only to meet needs

Serving with us so that we might both see them become disciples as well as meet needs among neighbors and nations

As you read the chart, consider what changes you need to make to establish a sent culture in both your life and in your church. Record your thoughts here.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Evangelism, disciple-making, and living sent are more than just something we do. This is our Christ-secured identity together. May we be a sent church with a sending culture.

Pray now, asking God to help you and your church have a sending culture that continually reaches out to the lost and dying world.

THE IMPACT OF A SENT CHURCH

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WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Just as Paul's disciple-making in Ephesus led to the spread of the gospel throughout the region, so, too, should our collective witness lead to the Word being spread to those around us.

**BACKGROUND
 PASSAGE**
 ACTS 19

**FOCAL
 PASSAGE**
 ACTS 19:8-10

**MEMORY
 VERSE**
 ACTS 19:10

CULTIVATING FOR EFFECT

Hope Church of Fort Worth, Texas, was started by Harold Bullock some 30-plus years ago. From the beginning, Harold and his team of leaders cultivated a sent culture. While they have never grown above 800-900 people, over their history they have equipped and sent leaders across North America and around the world. Their effect? New local churches and disciple-making ministries were started in more than 220 communities nationally and internationally.

While you have probably never heard of Harold Bullock, you have heard of the Jesus with whom they send the church to make disciples. That's the way Hope Church likes it.

A church that establishes a sent culture in the hope of becoming a sent people will see the supernatural effect of a sent church. It may require a few years or 30 years, but it will happen because that's what Jesus intended for His church.

THE SENT RHYTHMS OF JESUS

The effect of a sent church will be seen when we effectively equip for and orient ourselves toward the sent rhythms of Jesus. If, as we are going, we make disciples with Him, we will see disciples made and sent to make disciples with Him. Why? Because a sent church embraces the way Jesus made disciples individually and releases its members to collectively make disciples with Jesus among neighbors and extending to the nations.

Look at “The Sent Rhythms of Jesus” visual on page 141. Notice again how Jesus used service and tables to make disciples. In the space below, describe the visual in your own words.

THE SENT RHYTHMS OF HIS FOLLOWERS

Consider how the sent rhythms of Jesus can become the sent rhythms of His followers. Look now at the second visual on page 142, the one titled “The Sent Rhythms of His Followers.”

A church is following Jesus, remembering the gospel, gathering to encourage, and sending to love first, just as Jesus loved. As church members live sent where they live, work, and play, they become aware of people who are searching spiritually. Members look for the ones who are welcoming conversation and friendship, particularly by opening up about past hurts, asking spiritual questions, and seeking counsel. The people who welcome Christ-followers in this way typically are open to what Christ-followers have to say about the identity, security, and purpose of their lives.

In the course of the conversations and friendship, the ones who are sent to make disciples invite along the ones who are searching. But it's not an invitation to a gathering or small group. Instead, the ones searching are invited along to serve. This is what Jesus did in His disciple-making rhythms. He called His disciples and immediately sent them to serve the hurting, share hope, and push back the

darkness which tries to steal, kill, and destroy people's lives. A sent church invites the searching to come alongside and participate in the various and ongoing ways the church is serving, both locally and globally.

As the searching and the sent ones serve together, they require physical nourishment. So, these breaks for meals and refreshment offer opportunities for conversation. These conversations aren't intended to be a mechanical exercise or cold, evangelistic tactic. Instead, it's the kind of conversations that create a relational environment whereby the searching can debrief as needed, ask sincere questions, and share heartfelt thoughts as they continue to seek truth.

THE SPACE OF GRACE

In the instant gratification society in which we live, it's all too easy to think and hope that those searching for truth will instantly surrender their lives to Jesus and immediately become disciple-makers. Rarely does that happen. Rather than holding the searching to high expectations, or trying to give all the answers to persuade them to come to Jesus, we need to give us and them what I call "the space of grace." That means that we ask God to give us patience to listen well and to have the wisdom to encourage graciously. It also means that we give God His time to work in their lives, and for them to make these decisions according to His timing, not ours.

The ongoing conversations present an ideal time to translate the gospel into the lives of the searching. The opportunity may come as a result of a variety of responses on their part. It could be prompted by a certain question, the mention of a difficult issue they are wrestling with, or a hurting relationship that requires counseling. The searching also may be prompted to share as a result of something they've seen or heard in the lives of those with whom they are serving. When the sent ones demonstrate in their lives that they need the gospel, and when they allow it to come to bear in everyday relationships and conversation, then the searching are more likely to see the need for, receive, and allow the gospel to come to bear in their own lives.

As the rhythms of ongoing service and conversation ebb and flow between the sent ones and the searching, then ongoing learn-

ing results. Both the sent ones and the searching grow toward gospel and scriptural fluency. The Bible is read personally and discussed collectively. Its message begins to be more than understood. Its words begin to become the words of the sent ones and the searching, flowing in the way they think and speak rather than being forced.

Don't miss this. At some point in the ebb and flow of serving, conversing, and learning, the searching become the sent ones. They, then, begin to look for others who are searching. Ongoing serving and conversing results in ongoing learning, which, in turn, leads to a growing gospel fluency. Simultaneously, the gathering and the sending of both the sent ones and the searching are occurring in ongoing fashion. They gather for encouragement, to be reminded of the truth of the Scriptures, and the grace of the gospel. Then, they go back out where they live, work, and play to begin again the process of finding and welcoming more searchers.

These are the sent rhythms of followers of Jesus who orient themselves to live sent, making disciples with Jesus. When these ongoing rhythms are happening, the church thrives, sending disciples to make disciples with Jesus. When these ongoing rhythms are happening, the church multiplies, sending to make disciples elsewhere, resulting in new churches, renewed existing churches, and new people-group congregations. When these rhythms are disrupted for any reason, even for reasons that seem noble and admirable, the church is less effective and less fruitful than they were intended to be.

What will you have to start in order to orient your life toward sent rhythms?

What will you have to stop in order to orient your life toward sent rhythms?

What do you need to continue doing to make disciples with Jesus where you live, work, and play?

EVERY JEW AND GREEK IN ASIA

Paul showed up in Ephesus and ended up conducting discussions for two years there (Acts 19:9-10). The result was staggering, one which too often is overlooked by readers of the Book of Acts. Take notice of it as we examine that text here.

THREE MONTHS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Then he entered the synagogue and spoke boldly over a period of three months, engaging in discussion and trying to persuade them about the things of the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8).

Paul dove right in, as Jesus had done when He made His run of the “Rabbi Circuit” around the synagogues of Galilee (Mark 6:6-7). As some men welcomed Jesus into their lives, He invited them along into serving and discussion, too. Paul was doing what the Master Disciple-Maker modeled, going to where spiritual discussion was already happening and looking for those who welcomed the chance to discover the gospel together.

This went on for **three months**. Paul gave his best effort to clarify the **kingdom of God** for them, as Jesus had revealed it to him.

CONDUCTING DISCUSSIONS

But when some became hardened and would not believe, slandering the Way in front of the crowd, he withdrew from them and met separately with the disciples, conducting discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

Some Jewish leaders rejected Paul's message, even going so far as to heavily criticize **the Way**, as Christians were called. The word used to describe their response was **hardened**. The gospel Paul was preaching was a stumbling block to them, not a welcome cup of cool water. They struggled to understand the kingdom of God as a near kingdom restoring the world into an undeserved relationship with God, both the Jew and the Greek. So, Paul **withdrew** and engaged with the people who were welcoming him into their lives.

We know that he engaged in ongoing conversation, as illustrated in "The Sent Rhythms" visuals (pp. 140-141), and we know he did this in the **lecture hall of Tyrannus**.

My young son had heard me speak on this passage before. Afterward, he inquired, "Why did you talk about dinosaurs today when you preached, Daddy?" "Tyrannus" was a strange name for the lecture hall named for an Ephesian who owned it. While it's speculation, could it be that he believed Paul's message and opened up use of the lecture hall to him? That makes sense, especially since Paul lectured and led discussions there for two years.

Tyrannus literally means "despotic ruler" or "tyrant." But this man does not appear to be such. So, it's a bit ironic that Paul was leading discussions centered around the gospel of freedom in Christ, the only message that could free someone from the tyranny of darkness, unbelief, and sinfulness.

ALL THE INHABITANTS OF ASIA HEARD

Paul's discussions with those who had welcomed his message into their lives went on for two years. Verse 10 tells us that the results were nothing short of astounding. Read the verse over and over, letting the effect sink in. Then ask yourself, *Why we don't see this kind of effect today?*

And this went on for two years, so that all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message about the Lord (Acts 19:10).

Some translations read "Asia Minor," which would be the modern day region of Turkey and its surrounding countries. It is hard to believe that all of Asia was being referred to, since no historical

records of that time describe the spread of the gospel in what is today Russia, China, India, and other eastern and southeastern Asian nations. Regardless, the implication of what specifically happened is this:

- Paul came to Ephesus and encountered men who had been John the Baptist's disciples (Acts 19:1-7).
- Paul proclaimed the gospel in the synagogue. Some rejected him. Others, including former John the Baptist disciples, welcomed Paul and his message.
- Paul withdrew with them to make disciples of Jesus among them, and to send them to make disciples with Jesus who make disciples with Jesus, and so on.
- The implication is that Paul sent these new disciples of Jesus to declare and demonstrate the gospel of Jesus all over Asia. In a nutshell, Paul conversed with, learned with, translated the gospel into, sent with the gospel, brought back those gospel-bearers to coach them some more, and sent them again. He did this over and over and over.
- Thus, the effect was staggering—every person in all of **Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message about the Lord.**

Wow! Do we believe that could happen today? We had better believe it, since we serve the same Jesus who called and sent Paul to call and send others. It could happen today if we would value the mission of God above our own purposes, value being a sent people more than being a gathered people, and surrender together to make disciples with Jesus among neighbors both near and far.

FROM A "SENT CHURCH" TO A "SIT CHURCH"

What happened to the church at Ephesus might possibly be interpreted to be an example of what happens when a "sent church" becomes a "sit church." This church appears to have illustrated the effectiveness of a sent church like no other church described in the

New Testament. But, as a result of losing its first love (Rev. 2:4), it may have become a “sit church.”

Over a matter of some 30-plus years, the church of Ephesus went from being an outward-focused, disciple-making church to being an inward-focused, disciple-ministry church. Too many churches give rhetoric to the call to make disciples, but they really do nothing more than come up with creative ways to minister to existing disciples. This is what happens when a “sent church” becomes a “sit church.”

Acts 19 described Ephesus as a “sent church.” But Paul’s letters to Timothy seemed to describe it, to a degree, as still sending but seeming to begin its transitions to sitting. Then, in Revelation 2:1-7, John seems to say that Ephesus had become a “sit church.”

Through the apostle John, Jesus told them that He admired their effort, their endurance, and their intolerance of evil (Rev. 2:2). Yet, they had turned their affections away from what Jesus had intended for them since their origins—to go and restore the nations unto God. Instead, they had given their affection to simply caring for their own preservation and survival.

Jesus admonished them. “*You have abandoned the love you had at first*” (Rev. 2:4). I have heard preachers say that this verse asserts that too many Christians didn’t love Jesus with the same passion and enthusiasm as they did originally. That may be an appropriate application. However, even though the “you” used in the original language of John’s letter is singular, it is very obviously to be understood in the plural form, collectively as a message to the church as a whole.

If this is the case, then the rebuke here is not toward an individual who does not love Jesus with the same passion and enthusiasm as before. The rebuke is that the church forgot how loved they were and ignored the gospel’s compelling nature to go love like Jesus had loved them. Jesus is calling a “sit church” to return to being a “sent church,” and to go love Asia as they once did, even in the face of opposition, criticism, and persecution.

Here’s the difficulty. A “sit church” can go about a lot of things they think are right—doing God’s stuff, enduring in a culture opposed to God, and standing against others who have decided not to do God stuff. But, despite the effort, endurance, and resistance,

there often isn't a lot of "going" going on. The "sit church" sits well, but has lost its fervor to send well.

Being a "sent church" is not easy. To take time to sit in the lecture hall of Tyrannus is not an easy kind of equipping, but it's both necessary and worth it.

How would you characterize the effectiveness of your church? Is it a sending church or a sitting church? Explain your answer.

A Sent Prayer: *Lord, help me and my church reorient our lives both individually and collectively toward Your disciple-making rhythms. Amen.*

NOTES

DEEDS AND WORDS



WHY STUDY THIS LESSON? So that we might know well the good news of Jesus taught in Scripture and be able to communicate this message effectively to those around us.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
2 TIMOTHY

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

**MEMORY
VERSES**
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

OVERCOMING TRANSLATION BARRIERS

La Chapelle is a church in Montreal, Quebec, that began in April 2013. Now, with two campuses and a third one due in the future, more than 1,500 people are engaged and hundreds of adults have been baptized since inception. This historic movement of God's Spirit has not been seen in Quebec for nearly 40 years. Pastor David Pothier translates each time I preach there. He chuckles at some of the ways I phrase things, because he has to wrestle to translate them into Quebec French. It is an enjoyable but difficult process working with David to translate a message from English to become an understandable message in French.

TRANSLATION IS HARD WORK

Translation is more than just taking someone's words in one language and transferring them verbatim into another language.

Cultural nuances and linguistic idioms must be considered from both languages. The task is tough because an idea does not always translate unless the message can be taken from one cultural construct and shifted into another.

The same is true when attempting to translate the gospel, whether into my personal life, into the lives of fellow believers, or into the searching who have welcomed us into their lives, and whom we have invited to serve with us. The gospel of Jesus does not always make sense to those who are searching. The gospel can be a foreign language that we understand and use as the “churched.” But phrases and words common to us can be quite confusing to the “unchurched.” Furthermore, the cultural nuances and linguistic idioms of a Jewish Rabbi, who was the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, must be considered. Along with that, the cultural nuances and linguistic idioms of the searching person also must be considered.

Listening to and learning both the language of God and the language of the spiritually searching is essential in making disciples. It is not as simple as presenting a tract or sharing a rehearsed presentation. Presence is required in order to translate. Immersion in the cultures of both Jesus and the searching is required to be able to become fluent enough in both languages so that the gospel of Jesus can be translated.

DEEDS AND WORDS

In this study, we turn our attention toward not only living the gospel message but also being able to speak it as part of our everyday conversations. Although the old saying is true, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day,” it is necessary for the Living Word to become our words. This lesson focuses on how believers can become fluent in the gospel of Jesus.

How might the metaphors of fluency and translation make you rethink ways that you are involved in sharing the gospel and making disciples?

THE PROFITABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

Paul began chapter 3 of 2 Timothy with a warning of difficult times ahead. He gave Timothy a list of people to avoid. Paul was not saying to avoid sinners. Verse 5 clarified that these “sinners” are not the self-indulgent, ungodly. Rather, they are the self-righteous who wanted to be noticed as having the *form* of godliness, but not its *function* (2 Tim. 3:5).

The function of godliness is evidenced by Jesus making us to become fishers of people. The people Paul listed in verses 2-4 did not fit that category. Rather, they were exploiters of people. Paul warned Timothy, *Avoid these people* (2 Tim. 3:5b)!

This caution came in the context of the greater warning of difficult times ahead: *In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Tim. 3:12).

CONFIDENCE, CORRECTION, AND COMPLETION FROM SCRIPTURE

Paul then reminded Timothy that the only source of confidence, correction, and completion is Scripture. Paul challenged Timothy not to be one of those “imposter” religious leaders (2 Tim. 3:13). Rather, Paul wanted Timothy to remember what he had been taught by his mentors, including his mother and grandmother.

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Then, Paul offered Timothy a reminder of the security all Christ-following leaders have because of the profitability of the Scriptures.

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Paul assured Timothy that Scripture proclaims God's purposes in and through His leaders. Scripture helps us learn the truth about whose we are, confronts us when we live outside of our Christian identity, redirects us toward God's mission, and grows and sustains equippers to confidently and adequately equip the church to be a sent people.

When we become fluent in the Scriptures, we are able to translate the gospel into our own lives as well as into the lives of others. We don't have to have a Bible study to do so, but we have to have studied the Bible. And, while we don't have to know all the locations of every Scripture we reference, we have to be fluent in those Scriptures so that we can address every circumstance and conversation as we go to make disciples.

Describe ways your study of the Scriptures has resulted in more than personal improvement.

How has Bible study equipped you for every good work God has planned for you (Eph. 2:8-10)?

GOSPEL FLUENCY

The word "fluent" is defined by Webster as "able to express oneself easily and articulately." It's not being able to force the gospel into conversation. Rather, it is a God-given, Jesus-secured, Spirit-empowered ability to let the gospel flow in our everyday conversation.

Gospel fluency grows over the course of a life. No one is ever fully gospel fluent. But it does increase as the sent ones and the searching alike translate the gospel into their own lives and into the lives of others. It's the ongoing translation of the Scriptures personally and collectively that grows gospel fluency. One doesn't become fluent in the gospel and the Scriptures just by reading them. That only leads to an ability to recognize words and phrases of a language that is not our own. But actually having to translate that language, the Scriptures, and the gospel collectively for the searching, is what creates fluency.

Here are two practical ways to grow in gospel fluency—immersion and story.

THE NEED FOR IMMERSION

I studied French from grades 3-11, winning awards in academic competitions. I tested out of 15 hours of French prior to college. Yet, when I go to Montreal, I can barely think or speak it. Why? Because I know a lot of French, but I am not fluent in it. I have not immersed myself in French.

This is also true for many Christ-followers regarding the language of the Scriptures. We know a lot of Bible verses and information, and we know a lot of what the Scriptures say. But, can we express the message of the Scriptures easily, articulately, and accurately in the flow of what we say in our daily conversations?

Psalm 119 offers insight into what scriptural immersion and gospel fluency are. You might want to consider the following as an ongoing exercise, at least for a few days.

Read and study Psalm 119 to gain a better understanding of scriptural immersion and gospel fluency.

THE BIBLE AS STORY

Gospel fluency grows when the overarching story of the Bible begins to make sense when we understand humanity's story in the context of God's story. As my pastor has said: "We don't interpret the Scriptures. The Scriptures interpret us."

Here is an acronym that can help us make sense of the Bible as story. An explanation of each part of the acronym follows.

The MAKE SENSE Acronym

M-meta-narrative of I AM

A-assurance of the gospel of Jesus

K-kinetics of the Old Testament

E-energy of the New Testament

S-see what the Scriptures say.

E-examine the Scriptures' intent.

N-notice the then, not the now.

S-story the Scriptures.

E- experience the Scriptures with everyday questions.

M-META-NARRATIVE OF I AM

God's story was going on before the Earth was created. It will continue beyond the Earth's existence. His story is outside of history as we know it, and even history itself is His story. So, what is that story? It's the overall message of the Bible—the meta-narrative of His story. Keep in mind that our own stories don't make sense outside of His story, nor do particular sections of the Bible. So, a good question to ask yourself while reading Scripture is: *Where in God's story does this part of Scripture fit in?*

A-ASSURANCE OF THE GOSPEL

God has always been trying to communicate to assure us, to clarify, and to send us as living letters of the good news Jesus came to declare, demonstrate, and clarify. Every part of the Old and New Testaments assures us of the gospel Jesus delivered. As you read, ask, *What aspect of the gospel message is this portion of text giving me assurance?*

K-KINETICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Kinetics is the observance of a force acting on and into a mechanism. It is a healthy metaphor of the Old Testament. The Old Testament can be confusing apart from understanding the mechanism which its stories are acting on and into. That mechanism is the redemptive mission of Jesus and the restorative purposes of God. The New Testament is equally important in its message. The God of the Old Testament is no different than the God of the New Testament. His purpose in the Old Testament is the same purpose in the

New Testament. The representations of God in both testaments refer to the one God, expressing Himself inside of human history. Yet, the actions of God in the Old Testament are different than the actions of God in the New Testament. Why?

Because, in the Old Testament, He is acting toward the culmination of the first coming of Jesus, while, in the New Testament, He is acting toward Jesus' second coming. The Old Testament ushers God as baby into a manger. The New Testament ushers God as groom to His wedding feast. The Old Testament prepares for the moment when the Lamb would be slain. The New Testament prepares for when the Lion will be recognized in His rule and reign.

So, all the abnormality, messiness, killings, disobedience, and discipline of the Old Testament sets the stage for God to move into our neighborhood, Earth. Subsequently, the miracles, reconciliation, sacrifices, surrender, and endurance of the New Testament sets the stage for us to dwell with Him in His neighborhood, heaven. The question to consider here is: *How is Old Testament Scripture preparing the way for the cross of Christ and the sending of His church?*

E-ENERGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In physics, the kinetic energy of an object is the energy that it possesses due to its motion. It is an appropriate metaphor for the New Testament, which tells the story of the world's selfishness colliding with the selflessness of the Creator. Motion resulted in the invitation to follow Christ and the sending to love like the Sent God had come to love us.

Furthermore, our human desire for power and control collided with our sinfulness and inability to manage what we had been given. We began to interact, either by holding tight to our self-control, or by realizing our need for Jesus and confessing our sin. The energy of the New Testament creates a growing love among believers who embody the gospel, and compels them to be sent to help others discover their redeemed identity in Christ.

This is the energy of the New Testament—the motion of Jesus and His church together sent to help the world believe in the One who was sent. So, as you read the New Testament, ask, *How does this Scripture highlight Jesus' mission, the purpose of His church, and the formation of the family of God?*

S-SEE WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY.

This part of making sense of the Bible as story is simple—just read the Scriptures. Read a passage, then read it again, and again, and again. The more you read, the more you'll know what it says and how you can share it with the searchers you encounter. Notice the grammar. Jot down the highlights. Just simply try to see what it says. Ask yourself: *Can I summarize this Scripture in a sentence or two?*

E-EXAMINE THE SCRIPTURES' INTENT.

If they are to have a complete and informative story, journalists are taught to ask the five W's and the H question: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? We cannot understand Scripture without examining its intent. So ask some common discovery questions: *Who wrote it? Who were the intended readers? Why was it written? What would have been some of the application points by its readers in their day?*

N-NOTICE THE THEN, NOT THE NOW.

Too often, the Bible is read through the lens of the now, rather than through the lens of the then. We must notice the circumstantial and social background of each part of Scripture. There are multiple tools in books, on the web, and through apps to help you do this. So, do not just ask what the Scripture means now, but also ask, *What did it mean then?*

S-STORY THE SCRIPTURES.

God has invited us into His story. Therefore, now that we have processed Scripture trying to understand it in its original context, we need to be able to articulate it as story. The appropriate question here is: *How would I summarize this Scripture in story form to demonstrate how it fits God's overarching story?*

E-EXPERIENCE THE SCRIPTURES WITH EVERYDAY QUESTIONS.

Jesus said that all the Law and the Prophets hang on two commandments—loving God and loving our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). He also said that His followers are to teach or share with others all that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20).

Therefore, in your attempt to make sense of the Scripture you

are reading, close this section of this study by reflecting on three key questions.

How should I respond to God's love for me?

How does His Word expose my selfishness, and how do I love others as Jesus loves me?

Who do I know, believer or non-believer, who could also be encouraged by this Scripture?

We hope following this acronym will help the Bible make sense to you.

WHY GOSPEL FLUENCY MATTERS

Why should gospel fluency matter? Because we are sent to speak Christ's language to a world whose hearts hum the gospel tune, but they have yet to have someone offer the words of the gospel song to them. We must be fluent in the Scriptures to be able to do this, to be able to translate the gospel into each conversation and every circumstance.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

FIVE RESOURCES

Here are five resources that have been significant to me in my ongoing growth toward gospel fluency.

- A Cross-Reference Bible enables you to read a similar story or message elsewhere in the Bible
- *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson
- *The Story of God's Love for You* by Sally Lloyd-Jones
- *A Walk through The Bible* by Lesslie Newbigin
- The IVP Background Commentaries of the Old Testament and New Testament

AS WE GO

Unless we live sent to make disciples with Jesus, we will not become fluent in the gospel and His Word. Why? Because we will never do anything more than read them for ourselves. That's the genius of the Great Commission. Jesus knew that our teaching all that He commanded would over time make us fluent in His teachings, and enable us to express His language easily, articulately, and accurately. May we be able to translate the gospel into our own lives as well as to the searching who welcome us into their lives.

As you prepare to move to Chapter 11, ask the Lord to help you connect gospel fluency to your everyday words and deeds.

gift the gospel is, how much I need it, and how desperate the whole world is for its news.

How about you? If you are uncomfortable sharing the gospel, explain why in a few words.

Let's consider how we can practically, confidently, naturally, and effectively share the gospel in our daily conversations and everyday friendships. Before we do, let's look at the "must"—the confidence, power, and revelation of the gospel—according to the apostle Paul.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Church must not be a retreat center. It was and is intended to be a people advancing God's kingdom on earth. We can't advance when we disengage. That was Paul's message to the Roman Christ-followers. We proclaim bad news instead of good news when we, as redeemed sinners, don't engage, embody, and share the gospel with neighbors and nations.

People do not need a Christian runners group as much as they need Christ-followers to engage in their local community's runners group. People don't need a Christian Café as much as they need ongoing relationships with Christ-followers over a cup of coffee at the local café. People don't need to read another Christian bumper sticker as much as they need relationships with Christ-followers honest about their own need for the gospel.

This was Paul's point with his letter to the Romans.

TO LOVE ALL ROMANS AND ALL INHABITANTS

I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish (Rom. 1:14).

Paul set up his reminder and rebuke to the Roman church by using a combination that is not common in his other letters. Usually, Paul

wrote, “both to the Jew and the Greek.” However, in his rebuke, he is attempting to reconnect the retreated Roman church with the two groups that made up the Roman culture around them—those **Greeks** with a true Macedonian or Roman heritage as well as those **barbarians** with whom the Greeks, prior to the installation of the Roman Empire, lived in constant conflict. Paul stressed that Jesus called him to those Gentile pagans, that Jesus loves them, and that He wants the Roman church to love them, too.

Wise and **foolish** should simply be understood as those with understanding as well as those without understanding that life’s purpose is not found selfishly, but selflessly.

Paul wrote that he was **obligated** to them. The Greek word can also be translated *must*. This was a “must” for Paul. Jesus had called him to deliver the gospel to the Gentiles, and the gospel compelled him to bring light into their darkness.

Explain why sharing the gospel is or is not a “must” for you.

YOU NEED THE GOSPEL, TOO

So I am eager to preach the good news to you also who are in Rome (Rom. 1:15).

Paul is subtle here. He is foreshadowing where he is going with this letter. The Roman church needed the gospel as much as the Roman culture. In verse 14, Paul highlighted all inhabitants of Rome who had yet to believe that God so loved the world. Now, in verse 15, he highlighted the great need for those who have already believed to constantly be reminded of the gospel they have believed.

Paul wrote that he was **eager to preach the good news** to them. This is an understatement. The latter half of the Book of Acts emphasized Paul’s desire to take the gospel to Rome. “Eager” can also be translated *greatly desire*. This was not a natural desire, but a supernatural desire, given to Paul by God, compelled by the very gospel he believed. Remember, if the gospel of Jesus is not compelling you, then the gospel of Jesus must not be very compelling to you.

THE GOSPEL FOR ALL

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

The **gospel** must not be hidden or sheltered away. Jesus did not die on the cross, rise again, and invite us into His life to hoard abundant life, but to invite others to join us. Paul wrote that he was **not ashamed** of the good news. The typical Greek lexicon defines the word used here as “to experience or feel shame or disgrace because of some particular event or activity.” Paul is passionately asserting that those who have believed an undeserved gospel must live unashamed of that gospel. The idea is similar to what Jesus taught in Luke 9:26—“*For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and that of the Father and the holy angels.*”

To be ashamed of the gospel is to disgrace Jesus. It's like being ungrateful for someone who saved your life. You wouldn't think of it. Paul's saying that he was unashamed was a subtle rebuke of their disengagement from the Roman culture. Their choice to retreat was keeping them from delivering the only news that had the **power** to transform the people around them. The word *power* suggested the image of a force that, when activated, had the potential of completely changing whatever received the activity of that force. For the Roman church, therefore, to go inactive with that kind of power or force would be a shame. Paul is calling them to live unashamed rather than living in such a shameful way as to keep the gospel to themselves.

What makes the gospel so powerful is that not only is it a truth that transforms us, but it also is a truth that is unique, even surprising—that the righteous God would give His righteousness to the unrighteous. What kind of God does that? Only the God who is love, good, and gracious enough to give His righteousness to the ungodly (Rom. 4:4-5), with a singular expectation—believe that He actually wanted to give it.

How does knowing that you've been made righteous through faith in Christ compel you to share the gospel?

FROM FAITH UNTO FAITH

For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

Not only is the gospel the power of God, it also reveals the **righteousness** of God. The God who gives His right to the wrong is the only One who is always loving and fully good. He is the only One righteous (Rom. 3:10). This declaration is such significant news for a world so focused on being more and doing more.

First Corinthians 1:23 says the gospel is a stumbling block. This metaphor is founded in the confounding thought that our attempts to be more and do more will never make us right with God. Why? Because the righteousness of God is not about His doing right and expecting us also to do right. Paul made this plain when he said that **the righteous will live by faith**. Because of God's faithfulness to His beloved, even though we were not faithful to Him, we can live secure in His unconditional, undeserved love by believing that, through Jesus, we have right-standing with Him. We get to now and forever live in His presence.

What the gospel reveals is that God's righteousness is not about His perfect moral rule-keeping, nor that He expects that from us. Rather, the gospel is about His perfect, gracious love, and that He desires to share it with us, forgiving us for our sinful and selfish ways. Man's sin and man's standard were both nailed to the cross.

I have often heard my dad say that God's righteousness is about His loving, righteous purposes. He is always right because He is always love and always acting in love, even when He disciplines (Heb. 12:3-12). The Jews saw God's righteousness in this way.

The gospel reveals God's righteousness because it reveals His mission to gift His love, goodness, presence and, righteousness to the world. We are graciously invited to simply believe that is what He is up to.

Our own human effort does not result in righteousness. It comes only as a result of placing our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. He is the source and provider of righteousness. **From faith to faith** points to faith as our initial response to the righteousness of God that was revealed in the gospel, then to the ongoing, fully-reliant-on-Jesus direction of our lives.

Explain what “to live by faith” means in your daily, ongoing life.

FIVE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

You may be wondering, *I thought this lesson was about practical suggestions for sharing the gospel, and yet there are only a few words at the end of the lesson that offer the how-to's to do so.* That's a valid concern. So, please consider this comment:

We will never communicate our own need for the gospel or share it with those who need it, unless we pray for understanding; then, over time, grow to conversationally make known the God that the gospel reveals, as well as why it is such good news for all of us.

The way we have typically been trained to share the gospel may be one of the main reasons why we feel so uncomfortable about it. The common methods are straightforward and blunt, and give answers that are intended to convince.

On the other hand, Jesus' sharing of the gospel seemed to be more gracious, cause questions, and offer the space for the hearer to discover. What if we were more gracious, took our time, listened well, welcomed questions, gave the space of grace, and even shared why the gospel is so significant in our own everyday lives? The following five practical suggestions for sharing the gospel are best practiced in this way.

SCRIPTURING

“Scripturing” happens when His Word becomes our word. It enables us to share the message of the Bible in the flow of our conversations rather than force it into a conversation. As we keep growing toward gospel fluency, Scripturing happens more and more.

For example, someone shares with you that they are struggling in their marriage. You could say, “I will pray for you.” Or, you could just invite them to a Bible study that focuses on marriage. Both approaches are good things. But consider the additional option of Scripturing. It offers access to someone who may not know how relevant the Bible’s truth really is to their situation.

Here’s one way you may respond to what they’ve shared of their struggle: “You know, I struggle in my marriage at times, too. It is healthy, but only when I choose to take the initiative to love and forgive, and to give into my spouse, giving my spouse the chance to respond to that love. It is hard, because I often feel like I am justified to be mad, and not to give love or forgiveness. But our marriage doesn’t work when I do that.”

What you are doing is basically sharing what Ephesians 5:21-33 says, but in your own, personal words.

Another example. Let’s say that someone shares with you that they are walking through a very difficult time. Life doesn’t make sense right now. You validate them, asking more questions, listening with compassion and desire to understand their situation.

Then, at some point, you say something like: “I heard someone say the other day that they knew there is hope in life and a God who cares because they were looking for a job and found one. I wondered to myself, *Would they have still thought there is hope and a God who cares if they hadn’t gotten a job?* I have to remember how walking through hard times refines me, which is ultimately for my good and my growth. I need to warn myself of the complacency of comfort. I also have to remind myself of the last time I was in a difficult season and how much I didn’t like it. But how, when I came out of it, I looked back at how I had endured, how my character was stretched, and how hope became more real and assuring. It was really hard. And I really didn’t like it. But I had to think what potential trials might produce in my life.”

Of course, we must not say this with any smugness or a belittling tone, but with compassion and honesty about our own struggles. By doing so, we would have shared the basics of Romans 5:1-5 with that person.

That's what Scripturing means.

STORYING

For hundreds of years, people have been passing along stories in Scripture through oral storytelling. Even today, it continues to be an important way to communicate God's Word with people who have never heard about Jesus. Bible storying can be useful in small groups, personal or family devotions, and especially in sharing the gospel with others in conversation. As you tell a Bible story to someone, you're opening the door to a conversation about Jesus.

Instructions and several video examples of Storying can be found online at <http://brentwoodbaptist.com/stories/>. This is an incredibly effective gospel-sharing tool that you should not skip over. Take the time to check it out.

THREE CIRCLES

The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has provided an app for smartphones. Search for "Three Circles" or "Life on Mission" in your app store. This resource when shared can then be viewed and processed by someone as well as shared with a friend of theirs who might be searching, also.

THE WELCOMING WORD

Similar to Scripturing, a person whom you have befriended where you live, work, and play seeks advice from you. Thus, they are welcoming you to share a word with them. You share from your growing gospel fluency into the specific need in their life. Sounds too simple, but it is prime time to share the gospel with someone.

PERSONAL STORY

I would suggest that the best way to share the gospel with someone is simply to tell them your own story of how the gospel came to bear in your life and how it continues to do so—nothing fancy, just

honest, transparent, and vulnerable. Opening up about your own need for the gospel will help them open up to see their need.

Keep in mind that a combination of these suggestions might prove to be very effective in sharing the gospel. For example, telling stories from the Bible that relate to your own personal story may create a stronger connection and understanding for those with whom you are sharing.

Prayerfully and carefully try to decide which of these suggestions for sharing the gospel seems most comfortable to you. Record your decision here.

Which of these suggestions seems most difficult for you to employ in sharing the gospel? Consider asking God's help to overcome your concerns and to show you how you could effectively use this suggestion.

AS YOU GO

I hope this lesson provided more than the same ways you've already heard about sharing the gospel. I hope that you were reminded of the gospel and realized how significant it can be to someone when we work through our discomfort and take the courage to translate the gospel in whatever way it is needed most for that person's specific circumstance.

May the gospel of Jesus freely flow into our conversations rather than be forced into our conversations. May we live sent!

List the names of three people where you live, work, or play who are welcoming you into their lives. Pray for opportunities to share with all of them soon.

NOTES

ORIENTING MY LIFE AROUND CHRIST'S MISSION

WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Just as Paul had a heart for people to hear the good news of Jesus, we, too, must orient our lives around participating in Christ's mission in the world.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**
ROMANS 1-2, 10

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**
ROMANS 10:1-15

**MEMORY
VERSES**
ROMANS 10:15

WAKE UP TO YOUR SENT IDENTITY

Several years ago, I taught a conference on "Living Sent" in Phoenix. A year later, I taught it in Lake Yale, Florida. That day, a 72-year-old lady approached me with tears in her eyes. She said, "I never knew what abundant life in Christ was until I started living sent after hearing you speak in Phoenix."

She told me that she had been a stranger to her neighbors, disengaged, and absent from her neighborhood. Her whole life consisted of work, going to church, eating, and sleeping. But that day in Phoenix, God's Spirit awakened her to a sent identity she had missed her entire Christian experience. She then determined to do three things—find a church near her home, befriend her neighbors, and make disciples with Jesus.

"Change is never easy," she said, "but this has been so worth it!" Now, she attends a church a few blocks from her home, has made

friends with neighbors, and seen two of them become believers.

I wept with her and hugged her, rejoicing at the power of the gospel embodied by a sinner-made-saint.

Sometimes all it takes to become a disciple-maker is to actually engage with Jesus in His activity of disciple-making. That kind of engagement, however, often requires a certain orientation toward spiritual practices that you may not have previously employed in your walk with Christ. It may be a drastic change or a subtle shift. It may involve some philosophical and theological overhaul. Whatever it is, in this lesson, we want to highlight the need for orienting our lives around Christ's mission in the world.

OUR MISSION OR THE MISSION OF GOD?

Over the last 12 years, I have witnessed many people shift away from a self-absorbed focus of wanting to be good for God toward a Christ-centered focus of trusting His gift of righteousness, and then being compelled to go with God to deliver the news of His goodness to others.

Paul's Book of Romans was written to draw believers toward and into this Christ-centered focus.

WHY PAUL WROTE ROMANS

Paul's specific purpose for writing Romans was not so that we could consider it to be a systematic theology book. Instead, Paul wanted the Roman Christ-followers to direct their lives around the sent rhythms of Jesus. They were judging the Roman culture instead of loving the Romans. Paul rebuked them, calling them to engage rather than condemn.

Romans was written both to remind us about and to compel us with the gospel. Consider chapters one and two. Paul reminded them of the power of the gospel. Then, he listed a bunch of folks who had denied the creation-declared truth of the God of love. He rebuked the Roman Christ-followers for forgetting that God's kindness leads the lost and searching to repentance. They had retreated, hoarding the gospel, and arrogantly judging the culture around

them. When we give more of our energy to creating Christian subcultures rather than embodying the gospel in the midst of the world's culture, we do the same thing.

Paul explained everyone's need for the gospel in chapters three through six. In chapter seven, he admitted to the shame of his own sin along with the undeserved worth of the gift God gives to us. He concluded that confession with, *Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 8:1). In chapter eight, Paul explained how grateful we should be for God's willingness to adopt us as His children. But then, in chapters nine through eleven, Paul inserted an illustration that likely stepped on the toes of the Roman church in a surprising way.

These three chapters convey how God invited the Jews to be His people and to make Him known among the nations. However, Paul asserted that the Jews took this privilege for granted as a right. Feeling like an exclusive people, they sought to establish themselves as the most righteous, most deserving of all people. As a result, they forsook the gospel, and, instead of delivering the good news of God to the world, they wasted their lives on the mission of perfect performance. They failed to engage with God on His mission.

WHY THE ROMAN CHURCH DID NOT WANT TO BE LIKE THE JEWS

1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation! 2 I can testify about them that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3).

Paul's heart was for the Jews who **disregarded the righteousness from God** in Christ and tried to establish a righteousness of their own through the law. Paul knew this way of life too well. He shared his story of laying down his law-earned trophies in exchange for a grace-gifted life with Jesus (Phil. 3:1-11).

Paul's desire was for the **salvation** of the Jews. He admired their **zeal**, but diagnosed it as woefully misdirected. They disre-

garded what God was doing in Jesus, delivering His righteous news and clarifying His righteous purposes. Instead, they sought to **establish their own righteousness.**

Paul was basically challenging the Roman church to not be like the Jews. Instead, he hoped they would orient their lives into the righteous purpose of God.

Describe ways you have attempted to establish your own righteousness before God.

WHY THE ROMAN CHURCH NEEDED TO REMEMBER THE GOSPEL

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law: The one who does these things will live by them. 6 But the righteousness that comes from faith speaks like this: Do not say in your heart, "Who will go up to heaven?" that is, to bring Christ down 7 or, "Who will go down into the abyss?" that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. 8 On the contrary, what does it say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim: 9 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation (Rom. 10:4-10).

In contrast to how the Jews tried to establish their own righteousness, faith in Christ leads to salvation for those who **confess . . . Jesus is Lord and believe** in their hearts **that God raised Him from the dead.** Here, Paul was highlighting how the gospel should be compelling the Roman church.

Jesus was **the end of the law.** Paul was not saying that Jesus made the law unnecessary. Rather, the word *end* could also be translated "completion." Jesus completed the law, translating it for

humanity inside the context of the righteous purpose of God as seen through the lens of the gospel.

The message of **righteousness that is from the law** was one of “try to be good enough” and “try not to be bad.” Paul wrote, in contrast, that the message of righteousness from faith was “you can’t be good enough but God is” and “you’re not too bad for God to forgive” (vv. 6-8). This gospel message of righteousness from faith was brought near to us by Jesus.

The message of faith Paul was proclaiming invited a confess-and-believe response, not a duty-and-works response. One believes what God has already written on his or her **heart**, and then is compelled to make that gospel truth known with their mouths. This heart and mouth response evidenced outwardly the **salvation** Christ had freely written inside of them.

Paul was challenging the Roman church to orient their lives around the **righteousness that comes from faith** message, and then to proclaim that gospel to the Romans in the hope they would believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths.

What would you say to unbelievers who think that doing good works will get them into heaven?

WHY THE ROMAN CHURCH MUST ENGAGE ROME WITH THE GOSPEL

11 Now the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on Him will not be put to shame, 12 for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call on Him. 13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things (Rom. 10:11-15)!

Paul then offered a pointed rebuke—the church must engage Rome with the gospel, or else the culture around them would never be any different. People hear the good news of Jesus as Christ-followers are sent out to communicate it.

Paul reminded his readers that the gospel must be preached both to Jews and Greeks. It is a gospel message freely and graciously gifted to all who would believe.

Paul then asked two very convicting questions—**how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him?** Paul was rebuking the church for disengaging itself from the sinful culture around them, hoarding the very gospel the Romans needed to hear and see.

Paul then put the finishing touch on his gospel-centered rebuke of the Roman church. In verse 15, he quoted Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15, calling the Roman Christ-followers to direct their lives away from selfish retreat into sent rhythms with Jesus, announcing **the gospel of good things** to the Roman culture.

jot down ways you might direct your life away from self, allowing you to share the gospel with unbelievers.

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR LIVING SENT

Here are some suggested essential practices that can help us to become a sent people together with Jesus.

FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL

When we focus on the gospel, we are reminded of our own need for it and, thus, are compelled to share it with neighbors and nations. Furthermore, we become captivated all over again with how undeserved the gospel is, becoming grateful and willing to adhere to Jesus' sent rhythms.

EVALUATE LIVING SENT STATUS

We often need to determine if we are living sent. How are we living sent? What is keeping us from doing so? What might we have to change in order to live sent? Do we have unbelieving friends with whom we can share the gospel?

PRAYER ALIGNMENT

Are we praying with others who are striving to live sent? We need care from others for our personal needs as well as the encouragement to actually make disciples with Jesus where we live, work, and play. We need to give others that care. So, we pray, "Lord Jesus, with whom do you want me to live sent (besides Him, of course)?"

MISSION-RELATED PRAYER

Ask Jesus, "With whom and to whom do you want us to live on mission, so that we might grow together, encouraging and provoking each other to make disciples where we live, work, and play? Who among those we encounter daily will welcome us into their lives? What nation do you want us to pray for and go to in partnership to make disciples?"

Be aware that if you pray this prayer, you must be willing to adjust to the ways Jesus will answer. It will not be comfortable, nor will it always line up with what you hope He would say.

SENT PRIORITIES

Living sent has to form and filter our priorities. When we have sent priorities, our lives are not lived for what we are becoming. Instead, we live for the sake of what Jesus wants to make others become through us. This may require a shift in our sent priorities, such as our church campus activities and how much time we spend with other believing friends.

I am not suggesting that we take the lost world on alone. I am simply suggesting that we may need to ask an honest question: If I never hang out with people who are not believers, how would I ever make disciples of Jesus? Another question is just as important: If I only hang out with non-believers of Jesus, how will I remain encouraged and cared for enough to go with Jesus to make disciples?

DISCIPLE-MAKING SCHEDULE

First, our schedule cannot be so full of Bible studies that we never have time to serve with and sit around a table with those who are searching. Second, our schedule cannot be so full that we cannot hang out with people who are searching.

INDIVIDUAL AWARENESS

What opportunities do you have to go with Jesus to make disciples without consequence on other people who are dependent upon your presence in everyday life? What could you actually commit to doing with little consequence to those same people? When we over-commit or think doing more is better, we become less intentional to live sent. Or, when we under-commit, get used to our independence, and become self-absorbed, we can easily lose our sent calling. Either way, a constant awareness of what our sent rhythms could actually be will help us not hyper-relate or isolate.

MARRIAGE ON MISSION

What about married couples joining God on His mission? This does not necessarily mean going to another country. Learning to give grace and gospel to one another as a married couple prepares you to become a highly effective translator of the gospel. Marriage should be a living representation of the way Christ loves and forgives us. Our vulnerability about the way the gospel comes to bear in our own marriage may be the most effective way we could share the gospel with those around us.

PARENT TO SEND

Moses called Hebrew parents to *write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children* (Deut. 6:6, MSG). Parenting with a behavioral modification approach does not get God's truth inside of kids. It just dresses kids up with good outward behavior. Confession and repentance are rarely practiced in this parenting approach.

What if we grew kids with grace and sent kids with the gospel? What if we did not just correct behavior but emphasized confession? Instead of giving consequences for bad behavior, what if we

gave opportunity for forgiveness? What if we punished a little less and called our kids to pray for Jesus to help them a little more? What if we de-emphasized their need to get it right, and, instead, emphasized their need to rely upon and rest in the One who got it right and gives His right-ness to them?

This parenting approach doesn't guarantee our kids will be sold out to Jesus. But at least they would have a better chance of being aware of their own need for the gospel and resolved to make disciples with Jesus.

GRANDPARENT TO MULTIPLY

I have noticed a significant commonality among churches who are in desperate need of renewal. At some point along the way, the culture of mentoring the next generation was lost. John wrote, as an old spiritual father and grandfather, *I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth* (3 John 4). As we age, we are not to make church about preserving our preferences, but, instead, to be the church focused on developing leaders and making disciples of the next generation. Grandparents have the chance to set the tone for every church with regard to whether it will be a sinking church or a sent church.

AS WE GO

May we reject what hinders us from joining God on His mission, and direct every aspect of our lives around the mission of Jesus. May we be faithful to care for other believers and be cared for by other believers who are living sent. May we direct our everyday rhythms to live sent where we live, work, and play.

What hinders you from joining God on His mission?

How can you direct every aspect of your life around the mission of God?

Describe ways you care for others, and allow others to care for you, so that you can truly live sent.

BECOMING AN ANSWER TO JESUS' PRAYER

WHY STUDY THIS LESSON?

Jesus sends His followers into the world as the Father had sent Him. Believers are on mission with Christ and with one another to reach the world with the good news of Jesus.

**BACKGROUND
PASSAGE**

JOHN 17

**FOCAL
PASSAGE**

JOHN 17:18-26

**MEMORY
VERSE**

JOHN 17:18

NOT OUR PRAYER, BUT HIS

I used to pray for revival and spiritual awakening until, in 2007, I was totally wrecked by Jesus' prayer in John 17. I came to understand that the one thing that will usher in God's work among us is to become an answer to His prayer, not mine or yours.

As we wrap up this study of "The Sent Rhythms of Jesus" and "The Sent Rhythms of His Followers," let's examine how our surrounding culture could be dramatically transformed if the followers of Jesus would fully commit to maturing toward unity in Christ around His gospel mission.

IMAGINE IF

What if the church focused on one purpose—to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples with Jesus? What if the church did not try to keep members, but sent them out with an awareness that when they make disciples, those new disciples will want to live like the

Sent One they now follow? What if the churches of a community were unified behind Jesus to accomplish His purpose? What if we collectively applied Philippians 2:1-11? What if churches put the interests of other churches above their own?

Too idealistic, you say?

WHAT I AM NOT SUGGESTING

I am not suggesting that churches begin to care about unity more than Jesus. Jean Vanier wrote:

Community means caring: caring for people. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says: "He who loves community destroys community; he who loves the brethren builds community." A community is not an abstract ideal. We are not striving for perfect community. Community is not an ideal; it is people. It is you and I. In community we are called to love people just as they are with their wounds and their gifts, not as we would want them to be. Community means giving them space, helping them to grow. It means also receiving from them so that we too can grow. It is giving each other freedom; it is giving each other trust; it is confirming but also challenging each other. We give dignity to each other by the way we listen to each other, in a spirit of trust and of dying to oneself so that the other may live, grow and give.¹

Unity is not unanimity. It is not everyone in the same boat. Unity is not everyone thinking or teaching the same things. Unity is not the elimination of all distinctiveness. It is not everyone always getting along.

Unity is differing opinions moving toward one goal. Unity is everyone in his or her respective boat floating along in a similar direction. It is everyone filtering what they are thinking and teaching through the same purpose. Unity is the beauty of how our distinctiveness does not dull our effectiveness but sharpens it. Unity is the gospel-compelled reconciliation of a conflicted, selfish people.

Unity indicates when the gospel has been embodied by a people together. Unity among Christ-followers validates the uniqueness of the Christ we follow. Followers of Jesus must value unity around

Jesus, because of Jesus. Not for unity's sake, but for the gospel's sake, that the world might believe in the One who was sent.

Explain why you think or don't think a unified church as a whole in a city is even possible in American church culture.

What might have to change for unity around the gospel of Jesus to become a reality?

A PRAYER FOR UNITY

It was the night before Jesus carried His cross. The weight of divine glory was colliding with the weight of the world's sins. The people Jesus had journeyed with were now the subject of His prayer. Near the end of His prayer, Jesus turned from intercession to commissioning. He prayed:

"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

THE MISSION OF JESUS IS NOW OURS

In his paraphrase of the Bible—The Message—Eugene Peterson says that God gave Jesus a mission in the world, and, in turn, Jesus gave His followers a mission.

What is this mission? Based upon Jesus' teachings and commands to His followers, the mission involved loving God, loving one another, and loving neighbors. It was the mission of making His Father known (John 1:18).

Jesus' mission to clarify what His Father actually thought of the people He had made was now becoming the mission of His followers. A new command was even given for this purpose of clarifying God's love for an unloving world, so that they might be surprised by such an unconditional love (John 13:34-35). God had chosen

to trust those with a tendency toward selfishness and divisiveness to, instead, be transformed toward selflessness and reconciliation. He did this in order to demonstrate how much He loves the world, sending those who believe God had given the underserved gift of His Son's righteousness to help those who have yet to believe.

Our mission, like that of Jesus, is to love like His Father loves so that people who don't believe they are loved might trust and know God's love, and, thus, begin to give His love away. Make sense? Short and sweet, as we unite to live sent together to deliver the gospel, people will believe in the One who was sent to reveal the gospel.

On a scale of 1 (least) to 10 (most), what is your level of commitment to carrying out the mission God has given you?

MADE FOR HIS MISSION

"I sanctify Myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:19).

Jesus next voiced a dedication prayer. He used the word **sanctify** for Himself and applied **sanctified** to His followers. The way Jesus was sanctified must be different than how we are sanctified, because we typically understand "sanctified" as the process of someone not holy being made holy. Since Jesus was already holy, it may be appropriate to understand this word in another way, which the original language allows us to do—to be dedicated for a purpose.

Jesus was declaring that the Father had dedicated Him for a purpose, for the mission He prayed about in verse 18. Now, He was praying to dedicate us for the same purpose. Jesus said He would make His followers to *fish for people* (Mark 1:17), and that's exactly what He was praying for here. He had been sanctified to sanctify His followers for their involvement in the dedicated purpose of God.

How did Jesus sanctify us? His answer is by the truth. Whenever you see "truth" in the New Testament, remember first that Jesus declared that He is *truth* (John 14:6). Also, remember that the truth

is the message of the gospel. Through His life, death, and life again, Jesus made what was not holy to become holy for His holy mission to declare His undeserved, forever love.

Does it seem to you that we struggle to exist as the church for the dedicated purpose of making learners of this truth? I don't want to look in His eyes one day and try to explain that even though I knew the purpose for which He dedicated me, I just had a lot of trouble dedicating myself to it. As His church, all of our disunity, infighting, and unwillingness to let His gospel bring a purposeful reconciliation among us was just more than we could handle. Surely, He would understand. He had just been too optimistic in His dedication efforts. That excuse is not going to cut it.

Let's be blunt. Would Jesus have hung on a cross dreaming of a redeemed church that involved isolated, consumer-driven institutions strategizing for more events and attenders, building more facilities, and ignoring both the lost and the saved, all the while focusing on their interests?

Jesus clearly hoped for more than that. He even prayed for it.

What hinders you most from carrying out the Lord's commission to make disciples?

WE'VE BEEN DEDICATED, TOO

"I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message" (John 17:20).

Jesus prayed with an understanding that His followers, whom He had dedicated for His mission, would actually go and make disciples resulting in new followers. He prayed for those who would believe in Him because of the witness of His first followers. Jesus prayed for you and me. We are a part of the group that has believed because of the enduring **message** of those first followers. We are also dedicated for His mission.

UNITED FOR A REASON

*“May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You.
May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me”
(John 17:21).*

Then Jesus prayed for oneness among His followers so that **they all would be one**. He went on to specify it was oneness like Jesus and His Father are one. They have a oneness completely selfless, compelled by one love, focused for one purpose, and distinct, yet united. Our oneness is a possibility because of what God did for us and what He wants to do in and through us—**May they also be one in Us**. This oneness wasn't just for the sake of oneness. It was for a very transformative reason—**so the world may believe You sent Me**.

UNITED TO MAKE THE FATHER KNOWN

“I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one” (John 17:22).

Jesus next prayed, **“I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one.”** First, Jesus was giving us the mission of making known the Father's love in the same way He was sent to make known His Father's love. *Glory* is a “make known” word. Secondly, when the Scriptures refer to the glory of God, the implications are always about the revealed presence of God among us.

When Jesus declared that He was giving the same glory to His followers that God gave to Him, He was saying that the way God is revealed through Him is the same way God is revealed through His followers because of our oneness in Christ.

List ways you think the members of your church are kept from being united to make the Father known.

WHY OUR UNITY ACTUALLY MATTERS

I would suggest three specific reasons why our unity actually matters based upon Jesus' prayer.

BECAUSE OUR UNITY IS CATALYTIC FOR THE WORK OF GOD

"I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:23).

Because we have been invited into relationship with the Father and Son who are One, we, too, can **be made completely one**. The **world** will then believe in the One who was sent because of our oneness, and the world will know they are **loved** by the Father in the same way the Son is loved by the Father.

Don't miss this. When the church of Jesus is maturing toward oneness in Jesus, then the revealed presence of God, who is Jesus, is made known. This is the catalyst for people believing in the One who was sent. Another way of saying that is: this is the catalyst for the work of God.

Jesus said in John 6:29: *"This is the work of God, that you believe in the One He has sent."*

Notice that people believing in the One God sent is the work of God. Jesus prayed we'd be completely one so that people would believe in the Sent One. Therefore, our becoming completely one is the catalyst for the work of God coming among us in our community and in the world.

BECAUSE OUR UNITY AFFIRMS THE MESSIAHSHIP OF JESUS

24 "Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they will see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world's foundation. 25 Righteous Father! The world has not known You.

However, I have known You, and these have known that You sent Me" (John 17:24-25).

Jesus then affirmed the divine desire to be "God with us." When we dwell with Jesus, we see He is the beloved Messiah come to deliver us as planned from before the foundation of the world. In verse 25, Jesus takes it a step further, calling upon the character of God as **Righteous Father**, as a Deliverer and Redeemer. The world did not realize that this was how the Father was righteous, but these first disciples, after having been with Jesus, realized He was *Messiah, the Son of the living God* (Matt. 16:16). This prayer implies that the unity of His followers affirms His messiahship.

Why do so many people seem to struggle to believe in Jesus as Messiah? Could it be because of the disunity of His so-called followers?

When I was in Jerusalem in 2011, I became friends with Moshe, a Jewish learner and teacher. He told me many Jews might possibly consider Jesus to actually be Messiah if, among other things, His followers actually lived as one with the Father as Jesus did.

Why don't we?

Is it competition? Pride? Insecurity? The only way we have known it to be? Is it just too hard now? Have we given up trying to be unified, because we have simply found it too difficult to do the hard relational work of allowing the gospel to come to bear in our differences and conflicts?

We need to beg God for mercy and seek the Spirit's power so that we can become the answer to the prayer of Jesus. How can we say that having people believe in Jesus is important if we are not willing to be hurt in taking the risk to be reconciled in unity around the mission of Jesus? How can we be cross-bearers if we do not strive for unity? Unless we surrender to being made completely one, then we are following, not the gospel of Jesus, but a gospel of personal preferences.

We mock what Jesus has done in us and can do through us if we are not willing to put in the hard work of becoming completely one. We are able to do this not because of our own will and effort, but because of the resurrection power of Jesus made available to us by the presence of His Spirit. Lord Jesus, help us!

What personal preferences are keeping you from being one with Jesus and other believers?

BECAUSE GOD HAS ALWAYS DESIRED TO DWELL WITH US IN ONENESS

“I made Your name known to them and will make it known, so the love You have loved Me with may be in them and I may be in them.” (John 17:26).

Jesus closed His prayer telling His Father He had come and done what the Father sent Him to do—to make **Your name known to them**, and that He would continue to **make it known** in the future. Why? So that the love the Father has for His Son may be graciously shared with humanity, and so that He Himself **may be in them** (dwell with them).

This is what God has always desired. This is the end toward which God is at work. In Revelation 19 through 21, we see God’s activity culminating in a Holy City, referred to as His bride, which implied that the coming heaven will be the believers He has been uniting into His dwelling.

AS WE GO

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, help us to become an answer to the prayer You prayed in John 17. Help us to unite to join You on mission to deliver Your good news, to make disciples with You, becoming Your sent church together so that the world may believe in the God who was sent. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done in our community and among the nations as it is in heaven. Amen.*

¹ Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 35-36.

NOTES

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HELPFUL WEBSITES FOR BIBLE STUDY

www.myWSB.com | www.biblegateway.com | www.e-sword.net | www.blueletterbible.org

To view or purchase Foundations Curriculum Resources visit us at www.equippedchurch.es

To learn more about the JourneyOn Network of Churches and/or JourneyOn Resources email us at info@journeyondiscipleship.com or visit us on the web at www.journeyondiscipleship.com

The Sent Rhythms of Jesus



THE SEARCHING

THE 12 APOSTLES

inviting along those who welcome us into their lives

serving while inviting the lost to serve with us

ONGOING SERVICE

SICK | SEEKER | POOR

ONGOING CONVERSATIONS

DEBRIEFS | TABLES | AS THEY WERE GOING



hearing to become gospel fluent, making His Word our words

conversing about what we experience while translating the gospel into our lives

ONGOING LEARNING

LISTENING | TEACHING | LIVING

MULTIPLY

"I assure you: The one who believes in Me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." — John 14:12



Reorienting our lives to make disciples with Jesus daily

Remembering the Gospel | Demonstrating the Gospel | Declaring the Gospel | Clarifying the gospel

The Sent Rhythms of His Followers



THE SEARCHING
WHERE WE LIVE, WORK, & PLAY, AMONG
NEIGHBORS & UNTO THE NATIONS.

inviting along those who
welcome us into their lives

serving while inviting the least
to serve with us

**ONGOING
SERVICE**
HEALTHCARE | EDUCATION | POVERTY

**ONGOING
CONVERSATIONS**
TABLES | AS WE GO | RELATIONSHIPS

learning to become gospel fluent,
making His Word our words

conversing about what we experience
while translating the gospel into our lives

THE CHURCH

FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER | REMEMBERING THE GOSPEL
GATHERING TO ENCOURAGE | SENDING TO LOVE

**ONGOING
LEARNING**
WORSHIP | LIFE GROUPS | BIBLE STUDY

MULTIPLY

SENT TO MAKE DISCIPLES ELSEWHERE RESULTING
IN NEW CHURCH STARTS, RENEWED EXISTING
CHURCHES, NEW PEOPLE-GROUP CONGREGATIONS,
AND AT TIMES NEW REGIONAL CAMPUSES



Reorienting our lives to make disciples with Jesus daily

Remembering the Gospel | Demonstrating the Gospel | Declaring the Gospel | Clarifying the gospel

ABOUT THE WRITING TEAM



Jason Dukes, pastor, author, and church planter, wrote the 13-lesson Foundations study on *Living Sent*. He is on staff at Brentwood Baptist Church, serving as Church Multiplication Pastor.

Jason is the author of *beyond MY church*, *Live Sent*, and an e-book, *Say No to Discipleship?* He was a contributor for *The Gospel Project* published by LifeWay Christian Resources, and *On Mission* magazine published by the North American Mission Board. He helped to start ReproducingChurches.com and HouseBlendCafe.com.

Previously, he served as youth pastor, First Baptist Church, Dyer, Tennessee, pastor to college students at First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, and church planter/founding pastor at Westpoint Church, Winter Garden, Florida. Jason was also lead pastor at First Baptist Church, Booneville, Mississippi.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, and a Master of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife Jen live in Nashville. The couple has three boys and four girls.



Linda Lawson Still wrote the teaching plans for this Foundations study. She has written content and teaching plans for numerous LifeWay Christian Resources publications, including *Explore the Bible* series. She has also written the teaching plans for the Foundations studies on *Spiritual Practices*, *God's Unfolding Story*, and *Loving Well*. She was employed for 31 years at LifeWay, retiring in 2002 as Director of Communications.

Linda has been married to her husband, Pat, for 40 years. They are members of ClearView Baptist Church in Franklin, Tennessee, where she is the co-teacher of an adult Bible study class. She is a veteran of more than 26 mission trips in the United States and many foreign countries.

A native of Missouri, Linda accepted Christ as her Savior at the age of eight at First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri. She is a graduate of William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, and holds an M. A. degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. Since retiring, Linda enjoys freelance writing for Bible study curriculum and feature articles for magazines.



David T. Seay served as content editor for this sixth Foundations study, *Living Sent*. He has a rich and varied background as a church staff member, (pastor and minister of education), content editor for Sunday School-related materials at LifeWay Christian Resources, training conference leaders, and concluded his 24-plus years of service at LifeWay as editor in chief of *Mature Living* magazine. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1965-70, achieving the rank of captain.

David holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Texas Tech University and a Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Melva, reside in Franklin, Tennessee. The couple has two daughters. Laura is an assistant professor at Colby College, Waterville, Maine, and Kathryn works with Wycliffe Bible Translators in West Africa.

He is active in his church, Brentwood Baptist, Brentwood, Tennessee, where he is a deacon and serves as class president and assistant teacher of an adult Bible class. David also served a 4-year term on the church's Staff Resource Team.



Curtis Honts edited the teaching plans for *Living Sent*, bringing many years of editing and writing experience to the project. Most of his 21-year career at LifeWay Christian Resources has focused on adult Bible studies, including editing *MasterWork*, January Bible Study resources, and leader commentaries for *Bible Study for Life* adult study guides.

He was on staff at College Avenue Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas, during seminary studies, served as minister of education at Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas, and later as pastor, Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Benton, Arkansas.

Curtis holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion from Oklahoma Baptist University, a Master of Divinity degree and Master of Religious Education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife Toni have grown twins, a son and a daughter. Curtis and Toni serve at the Springfield Baptist Church, Springfield, Tennessee, where he teaches adult Bible studies and serves as a deacon. He has participated in five medical mission trips to Haiti.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The Bible calls it “the good news,” the message about Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. The gospel message is a summary of God’s work through Jesus, at His initiative, and our response to that work, which leads to salvation.

To help us understand what God has accomplished through Jesus to save us, the gospel message always includes four key elements:

God: *God rules.* The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. *Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17*

Man: *Man sinned.* We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. *Romans 3:23; 6:23*

Christ: *God gave Jesus.* God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. *John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9*

Response: *We respond in repentance and faith.* Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. *John 14:6; Romans 10:9-13*

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS?

When you respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ, everything changes. Your next steps of faith include:

Professing Your Faith – When something this life-changing happens, your first response is to tell others. You declare your faith in Jesus by telling the story of your salvation to others. Most people begin by sharing their decision to follow Jesus with their closest family and friends and with a pastor or minister.

Baptism – Baptism is a powerful outward symbol of the inner change that has happened. It is a lived-out picture of the death of your sin and your new life with Christ.

Join the Church, a Body of Believers Following Jesus Together – Jesus designed the church for every one of His followers to have a place to grow in what they believe, a place to belong to a community of faith, and a place to become more like Him.