

Study 1 - SENT... for his glory

Introduction

Jesus said to his disciples in John 20:21, **“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”**

What do you think the disciples were sent to do?

Who did God send to you so that you would hear and believe the gospel?

1. John Piper and John Stott argue for the glory and worship of God as the primary goal of evangelism and mission.

‘Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.’ [John Piper, Let the Nations be Glad, Second Edition, p17]

‘The highest of missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission [important as that is], nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing [strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God...], but rather zeal and passionate zeal – for the glory of Jesus Christ... Only one imperialism is Christian... and this is concern for his imperial Majesty Jesus Christ, and for the glory of his empire.’ [John Stott, Romans, BST, p53]

How do the following verses confirm the glory and worship of God as primary in witness and mission? Take time to read and reflect on these God-centred verses. How do these verses change how you think about mission?

Romans 1:5

Romans 15:8-9

Romans 11:36

Isaiah 43:6-7

Isaiah 43:25

Psalms 67:3-4

Psalms 47:6-7

Psalms 96:4

Psalms 117:1

Matthew 5:16

John 12:27-28

John 14:13

John 17:1

1 Cor. 10:31

Eph.1:4-6

Eph.1:11-14

2 Thess.1: 9-10

1 Peter 2:12

1 Pet.4:11

3 John 1:7

2. Worship is the **goal** of witness and mission but it is also the **fuel** of witness and mission. You will not commend to the world what you don't cherish in your heart.

The psalmist says in Psalm 73:25-26,

**“Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.”**

The apostle Paul says in Phil.3:7-8

“ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ”

What is at the centre of your affections?

What things get in the way of a life totally committed to Christ and his purposes?

What can you do personally and through your group to ensure that Christ is at the centre of your affections and that you live for the glory of God?

3. John Piper writes,

‘God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him’.

When we delight in God’s presence, when we like to be around him, when we treasure his fellowship, when we adore him with all our hearts, when he is our everything, then he uses us most profoundly to bring glory to himself.

How have you seen this truth played out in real life?

Prayer

Pray that as you live out your life as a sent one of God, that people you meet will glorify and worship God.

Study 2 - SENT... with a message of grace

Introduction

Discuss. Do you agree that Christianity is different to any other religion? What is it about the message of Christianity that makes it different to any other religion?

How would you respond if someone asked what is the 'core idea' of Christianity, the central purpose?

There is no other religion like Christianity for at its very core is the message of the Gospel; a message of grace. This week we will make sure we understand and know what we are sent *with*.

A little 'test' – what is important?

As briefly as you can share with the person next to you the *contents* of the gospel message.

Looking at the following passages how do they remind us of the need to know and tell the gospel message of grace?

Romans 1.16

1 Corinthians 1.18

Romans 10.17

Gospel, means 'good news,' so to tell the gospel is to tell the good news. In Mark 1.15 Jesus comes announcing, *the Kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe.* Why is this good news and how does this relate to being *SENT for the glory of God*?

Foster might be helpful:

'This good news was not a message concerning how an individual might get to heaven. Rather, it was the news that the kingdom of God was coming in the ministry of Jesus.' [Tim Foster, *The Suburban Captivity of the Church*, p.13]

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15.1-6

Paul is reminding the Corinthian church of the gospel, the good news. Using this explanation what is *the Gospel*?

Read Romans 1.3-4 & 2 Timothy 2.8

Paul does a similar thing in outlining the gospel. What is similar and what differs? Did you notice a consistent title for Jesus?

Read Acts 2.22-36 & Acts 3.12-21

These are the first ever 'gospel talks'. How do these talks relate with Paul's descriptions we have read?

What these passages show is, as John Dickson puts it:

'Telling the 'gospel', then, involves *recounting the deeds of the Messiah Jesus*'

[John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, p.115]

The gospel is about telling people that Jesus is Lord, and that this is good news!

1 Corinthians 15.3-5 gives us a good outline for these 'deeds'. We will build on these as we go. Firstly, Paul starts by saying *that Christ...* The title 'Christ' in this gospel outline recalls Jesus' credentials as the Messiah. And so, we start:

... Jesus is Lord

2. Secondly, what does v.3b point toward and why is this an important part of the gospel message?

Paul twice refers to events that took place 'according to the scriptures'. What does this mean and why would he draw attention to this fact?

Read Ephesians 2.4-9 and Romans 3.21-26

Briefly look at the preceding verses of these two passages, what is our position without Jesus?

Looking at these passages, what did Jesus death achieve and how is salvation accessed and acquired?

How does Jesus death and Paul's words in Ephesians and Romans set the Christian gospel apart from all other religions?

... ***died for our sins according to the scriptures to offer grace***

3. In v. 4 Paul expresses that Jesus was *buried* and was raised. Have you ever drawn attention to the fact that Jesus was buried? The gospels give time to detail his burial. Why would this be important?

... **was buried**

4. Paul goes on to discuss resurrection. Read 1 Corinthians 15.14 why would this message be incomplete, or *useless* without the fact that Jesus was raised?

What does the resurrection demonstrate?

... is risen:

5. Christianity is much more than 'blind faith', it is about things that happened. How is what Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15.5-8 a helpful reminder for people today?

... was seen

'The Gospel' according to 1 Corinthians 15

1. **Jesus is Lord**
2. **... died for our sins to offer grace**
3. **... was buried**
4. **... is risen**
5. **... was seen**

There are numerous ways we can remember this message of grace, *Two Ways to Live* and *The Bridge to Life*, you might like to check them out.

Tonight see if you can share with the person next to you the basic message of grace that we have taken from 1 Corinthians 15.3-6. As we go throughout this series we will consider when and how we can use this message. Tonight it is important we are reminded exactly *what* this message is.

Pray

What does being reminded of the contents of the gospel prompt in you personally? Take some time to consider how the message of grace has impacted your life.

Pray for opportunities to share this message and ask that you might be prepared.

Study 3 – SENT... on our knees

Introduction

It's tough being on God's mission. It's tough taking the message of grace to a sceptical and disinterested people. That is why God has given us his Spirit [Study 5] and prayer. John Piper puts it this way,

'Life is war. That's not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer owes largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a walkie talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief... Prayer gives us the significance of frontline forces and gives God the glory of a limitless provider. The one who gives the power gets the glory' [Let the Nations be Glad, p45]

Why do Christians often fail to pray for the lost and for gospel opportunities?

Share a story of when you witnessed God answer your prayers and a person became a Christian.

1. What is the focus of the Lord's prayer in **Matthew 6:9-10**?

What does 'your kingdom come' mean and why is it so important?

2. Read **Matthew 9:35- 10:5**

How did Jesus respond when he saw the crowds?

v36

v37-38

How should we respond when we see lost people all around us?

Bill Hybels writes,

‘Prayer is an unnatural activity. From birth, we learn the rules of self-reliance as we strain and struggle towards independence, and frankly prayer flies in the face of all that...To people like me, who are fond of racing down the fast lane, determined to make it on their own, prayer can seem a really annoying interruption.’ [B. Hybels, Too Busy Not To Pray, p13]

How do Jesus’ words in Matthew 9:37-38 help us to slow down and see things differently?

3. Read Colossians 4:2-4

How would you measure devotion to prayer?

What does it mean to be watchful?

What does this passage teach us about the content of prayer?

Where have you seen open doors to the message this week?

Have you had a chance to proclaim the gospel this week?

4. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

There is a logical connection between verses 1-2 and verses 3-4. Why is it good for Christians to pray for ‘all people’?

5. Read Ephesians 6:17-20

What does it mean to pray ‘in the Spirit’? How does verse 17 help us understand this phrase? [Think also about what it means to be filled with the Spirit in Eph.5:18]

Why does Paul encourage his readers to be alert in verse 18? What does he want them to be alert about?

What does Paul urge the believers to pray for him as one of those sent out by Christ to preach the gospel? [v19-20]

6. In Romans 10:1 Paul tells us that it was his practice to plead with God on behalf of people who do not yet follow Jesus [Jews, in this case]:

‘Brothers my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.’

Who do you pray for to be saved? Who will you start praying for?

As a SENT person think through your sphere of influence and begin praying.

Family

Friends

Work/Uni/School

Sport and recreation groups

Neighbours

Strangers

Other

Study 4 - SENT... to eat and meet with sinners

Introduction

'... eating has been a central Christian practice since the beginning of our movement. And not only eating sacramentally, as in the Eucharist, but missionally as a way to express love to all.'

[Michael Frost, *Surprise the World*, p.43]

1. What does it mean to share a meal with someone in our culture? Think about other cultures, what does sharing 'the table' with people communicate?

How and where do people meet in our society?

Throughout our studies we have seen that we are a SENT people for the glory of God. Paul states it directly in 1 Corinthians 10.31-11.1; this is a passage we will return to throughout the series.

2. From 1 Corinthians 10.31-11.1, what is Paul's primary purpose in all that he does and who is the example that he follows?
3. Let's look at Christ's example, read the following and discuss what these passages tell us Jesus was doing:

Mark 2.15-16

Luke 7.37-39

Luke 15.1-2

Luke 19.1-10

4. Lets look closely at the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.

Why did the people mutter? What does this communicate about their attitude and heart toward Zacchaeus?

How does v.9-10 show Jesus attitude and heart toward Zacchaeus and others just like him?

5. In two separate groups, have one group read Mark 2.13-17 and the other Matthew 9.9-12. Discuss the key events.

Return and share the motivating factors in Jesus actions in these two accounts.

We are to be a people, like Paul, who follow Jesus' example despite there being barriers. We have seen in Matthew, Mark and Luke that Jesus was one who came to meet and eat with sinners, but this wasn't without opposition nor difficulty.

What barriers are there for Christians when it comes to eating and meeting with people outside the church?

As a people SENT like Jesus, we follow His example so, we are to eat and meet with sinners. To help us overcome some of the barriers we will look specifically at each, **meeting** and then **eating**.

Meeting

In order to think practically about *meeting* with people, answer the following questions:

Where do you interact with people from outside the church?

What matters to the people you know that don't attend church?

How can you find other opportunities to meet? What things can you be involved in OR how can you change your perspective?

Many of us have spaces, places and opportunities that we can already meet with people we may just need to be a little more intentional.

How can you be more intentional in demonstrating love?

Read 1 Corinthians 9.12-23.

How does this passage express Paul's 'embodiment' of the message of salvation? Reflect on the barriers you expressed earlier, are there any that you have control over?

Eating

In order to think practically about *eating* with people, answer the following questions:

When and where do you eat?

Who is at your table when you eat? Why are those people at your table?

How could you 'extend' your table?

You may have been thinking individually but we want to be doing this as a church, as a body of believers – how can your group, some of your friends, and the church more broadly create opportunities to 'eat' with people?

Mike Frost suggests developing a habit of 'eating with three people every week', as a way of not only being missional, but walking in the footsteps of Jesus, basically what we've been calling the SENT life.

How could we start to take on a habit like this? As a sent people we are SENT to eat and meet with sinners. Take some time to develop a commitment each of you will make over the coming weeks/this year. Write it down and as a group keep a list to return to, this is a practice we don't want to forget.

Eg - I will eat lunch with someone at work twice each week.

'Jesus didn't run projects, establish ministries, create programs, or put on events. He ate meals. If you routinely share meals and you have a passion for Jesus, then you'll be doing mission. It's not that meals save people. People are saved through the gospel message. But meals will create natural opportunities to share that message in a context that resonates powerfully with what you're saying.'

[Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, p.89]

Pray

Ask God for opportunities to meet and eat with people from outside the church. Ask for wisdom in identifying the spaces and places you already have that you might be more intentional in those settings as well as being able to discover new avenues.

Pray that God might use these moments as motivating factors or opportunities for the gospel message of grace to be shared.

Study 5 – SENT... with power to proclaim

Introduction

I [Ange] recently sat in my office with a person wanting to confess his sins to God. In the process I was able to explain the gospel using the **Two Ways to Live** tract and urged the person to consider repenting of their sins and trusting in Christ. I was also recently in the home of another person from the community where I was able to explain how to become a Christian using **'The Bridge to Life'** presentation. Often though we are only given 30-60 seconds to answer people's questions about Christ or some spiritual issue.

Give an example of a recent opportunity to answer someone's question about Jesus or a spiritual matter.

Read Acts 1:1-11

1. What evidence is there that the disciples did not understand the kingdom that Jesus set up?
2. The apostles were not to rely on their own strength in the work of mission. Jesus promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them.

How would the Holy Spirit give them confidence in the work of witness and mission?

What was going to be the result of the Holy Spirit coming on them?

Read Acts 2:14-47

3. Briefly summarise the main points of Peter's sermon on who Jesus is and what he has accomplished [v14-36]

4. What was the result of this Spirit empowered first sermon [v37-47]? What most impresses you about the life of this early Christian community?
5. Although all Christians receive the power of the Holy Spirit and are to be evangelistic in their general orientation some people are gifted as evangelists. The word literally means *gospeller*, that is, *one who announces the gospel*. [See Ephesians 4:11; Acts 21:8, Col.4:3-4 – Paul as a missionary/evangelist asks for open doors and that he might declare the gospel clearly]. Evangelists will be marked by a keen desire to tell the gospel to others and relate well to those who do not yet believe.

Who are the evangelists in our church? In your home group? In your specific ministry?

How can we identify, equip, and mobilise gifted evangelists [who then take a leadership responsibility for the church's evangelism]?

6. **'While evangelism is an essential gifting for all churches, it isn't a gifting given to every believer. Believers...were to pray like crazy and to conduct themselves, in word and deed, in such way to provoke unbelievers to question their beliefs and enter into an evangelistic dialogue.'** [Mike Frost, Surprise the World, p4-5]

What do the following passages teach us about the role of every believer in evangelism? Explore what it means in practice.

Col.4:2-6

1 Pet.3:13-16

Pray

Pray that as a SENT person you will be wise and genuine in sharing the gospel.

Study 6 – SENT... as salt and light

Introduction

There are people in the world that will never open a Bible or visit a church. But these same people will come into contact with Christians, listen to their speech, watch their actions and consider their good works.

In what ways have Christians made a positive contribution to society so that people have stood up and taken notice?

Read Matthew 5:13-16

1. These verses follow the Beatitudes [Matt.5:1-12]. Jesus implies that people who recognise their spiritual poverty and are characterised by mourning, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity, peacemaking and faithfulness in persecution can have a profound influence in the world. How do people who exhibit these characteristics showcase God's love and glory?
2. Before refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat from rotting. Salt was also used to add flavour. What then does Jesus' statement 'You are the salt of the earth' tell us about society and the church's role in it?
3. What has been in the news recently that indicates society is rotting and decaying?
4. What are some of the practical ways we can function as salt [prevent decay, add flavour] where we live and work? [v13]
5. What might cause Christians to lose their saltiness?

6. Jesus' second statement is 'You are the light of the world' [v14]. How does the church's role as light complement its role as salt?

7. Why might we be tempted to hide our light [v15]?

8. We are urged to let our light shine that people might see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven. [v16].

John Dickson writes, **"These words are fascinating and unexpected. The Lord here insists that the world will be brought to its knees before God through the 'good deeds' of his people... As good deeds are done by Christians as a community, light shines and others are drawn into the worship of God."** [The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission, p89, 91]

What 'good deeds' are being done regularly in our church?

Can you think of examples where the good deeds of Christians have brought people closer to God and even trust in Christ?

"When denominations, congregations or home groups ask: 'How can we better care for the sick? How can we meet the needs of the poor? What more can we do for the elderly? How can we foster peace?' and so on, they are not only asking questions of obedience: they are asking questions of mission. They are searching for fresh ways to be and to convey, the light of God's glory in an unbelieving world." [John Dickson, The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission, p96]

Are there new 'good works' that we should be involved in as a SENT people so that we shine as the 'light of the world'? Is there something that your home group or ministry group can do in 2017?

Study 7 - SENT... to be like Christ

Introduction

What was Christ 'like'? If you were to try and describe Jesus' behaviour and how people responded to his behaviour, what would you say? Approach these questions as though you're speaking to someone who knows little to nothing about the Bible or Jesus.

Jesus' life, his ministry and his behaviour were 'beautiful' and 'attractive'. People listened and watched him and were drawn to him. By his behaviour he demonstrated what life in the Kingdom of God is like and it is a wonderful thing!

Discuss:

Throughout this series we have been considering what it means to be a SENT people, revealing the Kingdom of God and promoting the gospel.

What have been some ways we 'promote the gospel'? Can we promote the gospel 'without words'?

1. Read 1 Peter 2.12

What does Peter encourage the people to do and what is the result?

Have you witnessed or experienced the reality of other factors, such as behaviour and deeds, playing a role in bringing people to faith?

In the following passages we will see that our behaviour is an important factor in defending and promoting the gospel as well as demonstrating the kingdom of God.

2. Read Titus 2.1-10

Can you identify where Paul suggests that Christian behaviour is a defence against criticism and then also a promotion of the gospel?

Make a list of the behaviours Paul encourages and identify the reasons Paul gives.

Frost suggests that, 'nothing would be more questionable in the first century than a slave who loved his master, or a self-controlled young man, or an old woman who didn't engage in slander.' Why would he be drawing attention to this, as he puts it, 'questionable' behaviour?

Dickson makes the following comments about v.10

The word 'attractive' in verse 10 is kosmeo, from which came the English word 'cosmetic'. The word means exactly what you would expect, 'to beautify.' This is a lovely idea. The gospel is beautiful on its own, of course: the news that Christ died for sins and rose as Lord is fantastic. Nevertheless, it can be beautified, says Paul. The good lives of believers can enhance the gospel's appearance in the minds of those who hear it.

[John Dickson, The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission, p106]

How does the list in Titus 2.1-10 'beatify' or 'enhance the gospel's appearance'?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 4.16-17 and 11.1

Paul uses the word 'imitate,' what does imitate mean? Who or what do you try to imitate most? What things impact your behaviour?

In both passages Paul urges the people of Corinth to 'imitate him.' In the first passage he also mentions sending Timothy. What is the purpose for sending him?

Just like Jesus, who Paul imitated, we preach and then provide an example – our lives are an attractive apologetic; our behaviour promotes the gospel. What prevents us from being people who can point to one another, or even ourselves as examples of Christ and his teachings?

Ghandi is famously quoted to have said:

'I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.'

Given what we have read in 1 Corinthians, why is this an issue for the church?

Would it be fair to say that Christian behaviour can be 'unattractive'? What could cause Gandhi to think this, could others think the same way?

Bringing it together:

We have seen that our beautiful behaviour and good deeds can promote the gospel, even being 'attractive' as we live like Christ.

We must remember we are SENT to be *like Christ*, NOT to be *attractive*. How can we compromise the gospel by trying to simply be 'attractive'?

Look again at Titus 2.1-10, how does this passage help us ensure we are being attractive like Christ, and not simply attractive?

Make a list of truths preached from God's word and then provide an example of beautiful behaviour to match:

Eg. Teaching = forgiveness beautiful behaviour = ??

Look closely at your life and your behaviour and after answering the following questions, pray. You might like to use these questions to inform your prayers directly:

What or who do I imitate? Why?

What are the motivating factors in *my* decisions?

Is my behaviour beautiful, an 'attractive apologetic' for the gospel?

Pray

Before praying, read John 20.21-22.

It would be easy to forget that v.22 follows and try and do this all in our own strength, but we too have been given the Holy Spirit who transforms making us more like Christ.

Ask God that he might make your day-to-day walk beautiful that in all things you are seeking to live a life like Jesus.

Pray 1 Peter 2.12 for one another.

Study 8 – SENT... to welcome and praise

Introduction

‘At heart I am an evangelistic preacher and writer; these are my skills and passions. But I can honestly say that in the years I worked as a local church pastor, I saw as many visitors join God’s people through the regular Sunday service as I did through my more deliberate evangelistic preaching and programs. It was a humbling experience for an evangelist. I am more than ever convinced that getting our church praise right, by which I mean making it gospel-focused, heartfelt and intelligible to all, is a vital expression of our commitment to promoting the gospel.’

[John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, p170]

Does this ring true to your experience? Have you seen this take place at Narwee or a previous church?

Read Psalm 96.

1. The gathered worship of God in ancient Israel was understood, in part, to be a declaration of God’s power and mercy within an earshot of God’s people. [See also Ps.57:9-11; 66:1-8; 108:1-5]. Ancient Jerusalem was a bustling international city and Jewish synagogues were scattered throughout the Mediterranean. Many people would be close enough to hear the songs. The second Jerusalem temple [the one standing in Jesus’ day] had a court specially built for the Gentiles. This allowed the pagans to learn and take part in Israel’s praise of the one true God. We know that in the first century numerous synagogues attracted great crowds of pagans who were attracted to the religious ceremonies and many were being converted.

What things would the visitors/pagans have learned by listening in to Psalm 96? [& Ps.57:9-11; 66:1-8; 108:1-8]

2. In **1 Peter 2:9-10** Peter describes what Christians ought to do deliberately rewording **Isaiah 43:20-21**, a passage all about temple worship [or failure thereof].

What are Christians to do?

Where should they do it?

Tim Keller [Worship by the Book, p218] writes,

“God is to be praised among all nations, and as he is praised by his people, the nations are summoned and called to join in song. This pattern does not essentially change in the New Testament, where Peter tells a Gentile church to ‘declare the praises’ of him who called us out of darkness. The term cannot merely refer to preaching but must also refer to gathered worship.”

If gathered worship is one way to promote the gospel, think and talk through the following:

The reasons visitors come to our church

The things that should happen so that they can hear and respond to the gospel

The things that may keep them coming

The things that may stop them coming back

3. Read 1 Corinthians 14:23-26. In this passage Paul provides a concrete example of a visitor overhearing our public worship and as result turning to the Lord.

Paul expects non-Christians to visit our gatherings. What type of speech does he commend?

What is the missionary significance of normative, intelligible, congregational messages?

4. Time and time again at Narwee we have witnessed people visit our services – for a baptism, a dedication, a youth service, Easter, Christmas, with a Christian spouse, at the invitation of a Christian friend, after receiving a food hamper, having heard about the church, etc. and been converted. These visitors need genuine love and welcome and encouragement as they pursue knowledge of God.

Are there new people and visitors that you could love and support?

Are there people that you can invite to hear the praises of God being declared?

Pray

Please pray for these people and for what happens at our Sunday gatherings.

‘I would go as far as to say that, over time, the number of visitors in our church services is directly proportional to the level of enthusiasm felt by those who regularly attend... If I am thrilled, challenged, rebuked and uplifted by the prayers, songs, creeds, readings and sermons I hear on Sunday, there is every chance I will feel confident mentioning church in conversation and inviting friends to join me there one Sunday.’ [John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, p165]