

Fuel for the Fire / Sending – Values 6

As we have learned and are learning – sending in the church family – costs – our heart, our time, our money.

When sending costs so much - what fuels sending?

Sending your kids out costs a lot! In jest and in seriousness, we say that sending out our kids will save us money? And at some point – maybe, maybe it does?!?! But in reality, it costs a lot to send out your kids from your home before & after they leave! **Before:**

1) It costs money. Everything you do as a parent that prepares your son/daughter to leave your home costs money. You will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to feed, house, clothe, entertain – and this does not include the vital things you will do to prepare them to leave like: educate, train in daily life, mentor, etc. Things that happen best on vacations, trips to the pool or zoo, outings for frozen custard, team sports, practicing with them for a recital, or helping them learn to drive. All of these things cost \$\$\$.

2) It costs time. Every one of these things is hours upon hours – that sometimes you complain about but you would never exchange.

3) It costs your heart. Every one of these things involves success, failures, joy, pain, tears, laughter – that costs your heart.

This is just the cost that leads up to the sending and then they are gone and again we jest and are somewhat serious – this will save me money, time, or my heart - but it does and doesn't. Because it costs when they leave as well. After they are sent out, it costs:

1) \$\$\$. College or job training is not cheap. There is health insurance, car stuff, & food you seem to supply even after they are out. And, how many of you have borrowed money from your parents as adults or used theirs to help with a car, a house, a loan. And I keep hearing about how they come back even after they are gone and again live under your mortgage, eating your food, etc.

2) Time. You still spend time solving problems, talking, counseling, encouraging, loving, supporting - after the leave.

3) Heart. Do you think you will worry more before or after they are gone? Will you pray more before or after they leave? Will you hurt for them less? Rejoice less? No. Sending your kids costs before they go & after they go! **But what fuels sending when it costs so much parents?** Is it just that we have to send, because they are going to leave anyway? Or, is there something else – a bigger reason for sending. **In God's design, sending is a key purpose of the family. And, it is a huge and vital purpose for God's family.**

God commands us to go and make disciples. This means 1) we must be sent and 2) we must send disciples into the harvest to plant seeds of the gospel and engage others with the life of the gospel. God commanded the early church, to go to Jews and non-Jews near and far with the hope of the Gospel. The local church in Jerusalem, where Jesus began the church – had been slow to send out the body to engage anyone but Jews. Even more – they really were not leaving Jerusalem in this endeavor. Eventually, God allowed persecution to send the church, but this was not plan A. The church in Antioch we read about in Acts 13 - would take the lead as the chief training outpost for the first century church sending many to engage every culture in their city, their country, and the nations around them.

This was a local church that most church historians believe fluctuated between 50-75 at its greatest number. Yet, most believe they were directly responsible for sending out many who started over 50+ plus churches. This doesn't take into account their impact in Antioch and the many individuals who came and went in this transient city. And just like sending kids, it would cost this little church a lot. So ...

How did this small church become a major sending church that helped spread the gospel and make disciples through many nations? As we continue in our "VALUES" series, today we are going to look at our value of "Sending" & specifically try and answer this question - **When sending costs so much – what fuels sending?**

When we ask this question – we are asking: "What fuels us going to our neighbor? What fuels you and I – giving up our comfort and following God to places like Guatemala, India, or to be sent out with a church plant? What fuels us as a body to send out our own to plant churches or be missionaries near and far? And – What fuels us to give and give sacrificially so this VALUE isn't just something that looks good in our membership class or on a poster hanging from the wall in our building? In short – **When sending costs so much – what fuels sending?**

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

01. Prayer - fuels sending.

- Prayer was becoming a way of life to this church family – not just a means to an end.

Many of us – me included – just pray when we need -as a means to end. God tells us to ask – but when all we do is ask in prayer ... *Well when you treat your grand father like Santa – he begins to understand you really love his stuff more than him. It doesn't make him love you less – he just realizes you are a little selfish. You love yourself more than him. When we just pray only to get, we don't know our generous heavenly dad's heart – and this kind of prayer alone will not fuel a generous heart that sends.* However - When prayer starts to become a way of life – at different times and different ways we pray: *to say thanks, to worship, to be with God, to adore, to hear – this kind of prayer fuels sending in powerful ways.* Let's learn from this family – how to fuel sending thru prayer.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting

Fasting – is a way to pray that allows us more time to pray as we give up something – food, media, etc.

This church seemed to live a life of prayer that went beyond just praying when they needed an answer.

Notice: They weren't asking God to speak and tell them – “who should we send.” *BUT* – “while they were fasting” – God did speak. And - **the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart ...**

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

This phrase – then after- tells us this – they prayed and fasted more even after God spoke.

If God interrupts my prayers – which doesn't happen often- but if he did – I wouldn't keep praying. I would be bouncing around and telling everyone in ear shot – who wouldn't think I was crazy – I think God said ...

But this group of believers - even after God spoke, they continued to fast and pray more before they laid hands on them (which is more praying) – to send them off. **This wasn't a means to an end – it was a growing way of life that fueled sending.**

“When prayer starts becoming a way of life - even though sending is costly - prayer will fuel our sending.”

Now let me be completely honest: prayer is not a way of life. It is part of my life – but not a way of life – **BUT, I want it to be – do you? Can we together ask God today, to move in us to begin to make this a way of life?**

Ask me who the most humble generous people I know in my life and I will tell you about 3 people – who have moderate to little money but are generous beyond belief. Bob Taylor was a friend, and one of the pastors at a church in Texas I came from before we moved here 20 years ago. Praying – was a way of life. Prayed everywhere. Use to bother me secretly. But then – I saw his generosity, his humility, and how he provided for so many youth and adults to be sent to camp and mission trips – and I started to see a connection. Prayer wasn't a show for him to make much of himself or even a tool to say I care – he wanted to know God and for others to know God – so he prayed – a lot. Ray Ortlund is an A29 pastor in Nashville. Simple, humble, prayer beast – his little church has sent out 20 + church plants, 1000's of people and over 50 long term missionaries. He is always starting over in his church he says – because they send so many. My dad – has prayed for years for missionaries, for me – and provided for the same. What all 3 of these men have in common is this – prayer is a way of life. I have heard them all pray and none of them are eloquent prayers or really powerful. Buildings don't shake – but they pray and pray and pray – and send, and send, and send – because I believe prayer makes us humble and generous people. Will you join me in asking God to move in us – to begin to make prayer a way of life? Now?!?!

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said,** “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **3 Then after fasting and praying** they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

02. Submission to the Holy Spirit - fuels sending.

I believe these two (prayer and the Spirit) are intertwined like cinnamon and sugar. You need both of those two to make yummy cinnamon rolls and anything yummy that has cinnamon in it. Cinnamon by itself will just pucker your lips and suck all the moisture out of your mouth and make you say – yuuuueckkkkk. I know because as a youth minister this was one of things we got kids to down in competitions (a giant spoonful of cinnamon). Takes both cinnamon and sugar.

They were beginning to live a life in submission to the Spirit through prayer.

What does this practically look like and how does it help fuel our sending.

2 ... the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **3 Then after fasting and praying** they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

• **We submit to the Spirit's rule – “Walk with me this way.”**

The Blind Skier – passed over two skiers – one following another. As we came directly over them on the ski lift – saw and heard the wildest thing. The skier in the back was giving directions – loudly – to the skier in the front: left, right, left, right – straight – left, right. And as we passed by them I saw to bright orange vests on them that said blind skier. I was stunned. This lady was skiing blind – totally trusting submitting to the voice of the guy behind her giving her direction. This is a phenomenal picture of submitting to someone's rule or lead.

The Holy Spirit – God said – set apart these two guys for my work. God gave them a command and they would obey. This is ultimately what it means to submit to His rule. But, submitting to anyone's rule: a teacher, a parent, a boss, a ski instructor when your blind, ... or God - is often more complicated than just obeying. Back to the text-

3 Then after fasting and praying

Why? Why did they continue to fast and pray more after they heard?

- **To be sure of what they heard so they could be in unity as a body.**

This church was about to send out their first team to start new works. Paul knew he had been set aside for this by God but I'm sure this church wanted to hear God affirm this. (We have had many come to us and say God said – and that's great, but God always affirms sending out of longer term missionaries thru the local church. Are they ready, are they equipped, are they qualified, is God in this?)

This team would need resources – resources this little church had but wanted to be sure they were stewarding and sending with the right people. How much, who to send with, - were all questions they might have asked in prayer as they continued to pray.

- **To be sure of what they heard because they were about to send out leaders they loved and valued.** *Let's be sure this is God and not our ambitions or desires or bad sushi because we are about to send out some of our best leaders that we love.*

Acts 13:1-3 (ESV) 1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. This was Paul's home church. He hadn't been sent yet. This place had built a great mass of leadership for such a small place. Why does God do this? So one place can have an embarrassment of riches in leaders. No – so he can send them out to lead in other places. Paul was part of this and so God was now ready to send them out.

"Part of the cost of sending as a church – is God sends out people we love and value."

Sending costs – people, good people, talented people, people we love, we care about and who are our friends. How do we send when it hurts? *We may do it once – but to keep on sending and be sent is not natural – it is hard – it can be so tough it stops the family from sending. (Maxedons, Bumgarner)*

Will after the Wishalls left with Timmy and Alex. "Just about the time I start to like people they leave. I don't want any more residents." We have sent out 9 church planters & started 8 churches. All of those families were a part of this body and had friends here who cared about them. We have sent out several people who moved to other countries to plant seeds of the gospel who were all a part of this family. And every time there was a cost before and after – money, time and most costly of all – heart! How do we fuel sending – when it costs so much!

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Don't ever romanticize sending in your own family or God's family. It is hard and costs so much of our heart. When they sent these two off – I guarantee you – there were tears – but there was also joy. So how do we do it where tears are mixed with joy? How do we fuel the fire of sending in our body – whether it is sending me, another daughter of our church family across the world, or you across the street to a neighbor who needs the love of Jesus?

- **We submit to the Spirit's love – "You are mine."**

When submitting to the Spirit's voice – to God's rule –hurts – the fuel that moves us to willingly follow our God, - is His overwhelming love for us in Christ.

Ran into our blind skier at the bottom of the mountain getting on a lift and overheard the man directing her lean over and say to her – great job honey – you are doing awesome! One more time, you can do it! ... You could see it in her body language. I really don't want to - but as he encouraged her with his love – he poured courage into her. What moved her to get back on that ski lift – his perfect and skillful directions that guided her down the hill? That allowed her to ski and got her down the hill, but what got her back up the hill ... was him.

When Jesus was sent to this earth, to you and I, to bring us to God by His life – it was love that sent Him.

John 3:16 (ESV) For God so loved the world that He gave his only son ... & what moved Jesus to go in chaos (des)

Matthew 3:16-17 (ESV) And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;

17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." It was the voice of God speaking his love over Him – before Jesus had ever done one work. This is God's overwhelming love.

It was this same love in the garden that moved Jesus to submit to the Father's will. Sending and be sent – is fueled as we submit to God's love for us that is given us to by his Spirit because of Christ's work not ours. And just like Jesus heard – I am well pleased. This is the voice we hear in us that we have to submit to. Romans 8:16 (NLT) For his

Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And, I promise this love will send us – to our family, to our neighbors, and across the world and it will move us to send others as well to know this love – even at great cost!

If we move as individuals – who live in fear of sending because it costs - few will be walking in the Spirit and few will be praying. And, we will become like so many churches of 500 who send only a handful and plant 0 churches. And, we will become good at gathering and marking success by how many we had here – gathered.

When we move together as one in the Spirit thru prayer – we see a church of 50 send hundreds and plant 50 churches (like Antioch did) – that God marked its success by going and how they sent. *Let's be that family church.*

When sending costs so much - what fuels sending?

"A life of submission to the Spirit through prayer – fuels sending."