

WEEK 1

YOU ARE SENT (JOHN 20:19-22)

*Adapted from JD Greear's message called "You Are Sent"

Who can tell me what is written over the glass doors in the lobby of our church? "You are now entering your mission field." Why did we put that there? Because some of Jesus's last words to His disciples, before he ascended back to heaven, was *"You are sent."*

John 20:19–22 "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

That statement – "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" – is an EXTREMELY important statement because Jesus's primary identity throughout the Gospel of John is "the Sent One." In fact, the next time you read through the Gospel of John circle the word "sent" any time it appears you'll find it more than 60 times!

And now, before He ascends back to heaven, Jesus passes on that identity – "the sent one" – to us! To *every* Christian. Everything else we do as followers of Jesus flows out of that baseline identity – you are a child of God, and you are sent.

In the book of Acts, Jesus puts it this way...

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Think about this: Of all the things that Jesus *could* have said here – he could have said: "You will be my worshippers;" or, "you will be my prayer

warriors; "my Bible-studiers," my "justice-advocates" – all of those would have been true, but he chose to say, "You will be my WITNESSES."

Now, maybe that intimidates you. Maybe you're thinking, "*Witness? I don't know how to do that! I don't even know where to start.*" We'll get to the "how to's" in this series, but first, here's Jesus's promise to you:

Matthew 4:19 ... "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

NOTICE: Jesus didn't say, "Follow me and MAKE YOURSELF into a fisher of men." He said, "If you follow me, this is what I will do in you."

John 15:16a [Jesus says] "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit..."

You may feel like you don't have much potential; like you are spiritually incompetent; like you'll never make that much of an impact; but Jesus says, "I have *chosen you* and *appointed you* to go and bear fruit." And the same power that opened the eyes of the blind and walked on water and multiplied the loaves the fish will accomplish that promise in you.

So, in this series, Dan and I want to unpack for you what it means to live a SENT life. We want Jesus to fulfill that promise in ALL of us.

1. SENT people recognize God's role and their role in the Great Commission.

SENT people understand that *God* has a role, and *you* have a role, and both are indispensable because God designed it that way. For example...

- **God is always at work around us, drawing people to himself.** Bringing others to Jesus is not on you – only God can do that. And Jesus says the Father is always at work drawing people to himself...

John 6:44 [Jesus says] "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."

I can't tell you what a huge relief that is to me. I'm not responsible for producing spiritual life in others. I don't bear the weight of creating interest in them. That's *God's* work.

- **God continually invites us into his saving work.** It's true that God is doing the work in them, but he chooses to do it through us! Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), and we're the ones who sow the Word into people's lives.

Just like Jesus said he was SENT to join the Father's work, we are sent to do the same. God is always at work around us drawing people to himself, and he invites us into his saving work.

So, SENT people recognize *God's* role and *their* role in the Great Commission.

2. SENT people trust that God will use them wherever He has placed them.

In Acts 17 the Apostle Paul says...

Acts 17:26–27 “And [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”

Paul says that God has sovereignly arranged the location of people and nations so that others can hear about God and seek him. For example, God has put you at this place (allotted boundaries), at this time (allotted period) for a reason. In other words, God placed you in your particular family, in this particular town, at this particular church, at this particular time in history, so you could...

- 1) Hear the gospel and sense that God is drawing you to himself to be saved (some have answered that call, and some have not).
- 2) Be SENT to your school, friends, team, club, neighborhood, family, coworkers – even to the ends of the earth to tell others about Jesus.

Illustration: JD Greear

*Pics of his podcasts on back of handout

About a year and a half ago, there was a young woman standing in his kitchen that he had never met– at least, he *thought* he hadn't...

He said: She was one of my daughter's new small group leaders and they were at our house for an event. So, I introduced myself to her and she smiled and said, "We've actually met before. You obviously don't remember this but a couple of years ago we were both at RDU airport waiting for a 6 am flight to ATL. You sat down near me, and as we waited to board the plane you noticed I was reading a book by Richard Dawkins (a famous atheist) called "The God Delusion," and you said something like, "That's a lot of heavy reading this early in the morning." And then you said something like, "Are you trying to figure out if God is really there or not?" And I can't remember what I said but you shared your story of how you came to know Jesus. (I didn't tell her I was a pastor, of course; I never tell people that because they get all weird). She said, "I thought, "This is a little random," but I had been thinking about how to know if God is there and if so how to know him, so I thought it was curious. She said "We went to get on the plane, and I sat like 2 rows behind you. I was bummed because I had forgotten my headphones, and somehow you struck up a conversation with the guy next to you and you shared the same story of how you came to know Jesus with him, but you went a lot deeper into who Jesus was and why he came. And I don't know if you know this, but you really don't have an INSIDE voice, which means you were basically sharing all this with all 4-5 rows around you. At this point I was annoyed, because I had no choice but to sit there and listen to you. Finally, we landed in ATL, and my only thought was, "I can't wait to get to ATL Bread Company and get some breakfast. When I get in line I hear someone talking ahead of me and I look up and it's you again. I was so annoyed, but the lady in front of you had two kids and she was having the hardest time finding her money to pay and you said, "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of yours" and you paid for her and her kids. So, I thought, "Well, this guy doesn't know how to use an inside voice on a 6am flight, but at least he's not a total jerk."

She goes on to tell him, "Fast forward 6 months. I'm sharing some of my questions about God with a co-worker of mine at Duke University, and I mentioned to her that I'd met this random guy at the airport and I shared with her some of the stuff you said. So this coworker told me that she was praying for me and she kept inviting me to her church. Eventually I came (mainly so she'd stop inviting me) and when we sat down, out on the stage walked... *you*. My jaw hit the floor. I said to my friend, "That's him. That's the guy!"

Fast forward another 6 months, I started attending regularly and I received Christ and was baptized. Then a few months later I began

| serving on the high school ministry team and now I'm one of the small group leaders for... your daughter.

Now, some of you hear that story and you couldn't imagine striking up a conversation like that with a complete stranger. You're not an extrovert. But remember: God doesn't call only one personality type to be witnesses. Your personality was designed specifically by God for his purpose, and *you* can reach people that an extrovert can't.

You see, for many of us (including me), we're more like Timothy in the Bible whom Paul tells...

2 Timothy 4:5 "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

You see, evangelism didn't come naturally to Timothy, and if I'm honest, it doesn't come naturally to me. For some people (like Dan and Tony) evangelism seems natural because they are extroverts. For others of us, we have to work at it – as Paul said, "Do the work of an evangelist."

So, SENT people trust that God will use them wherever He has placed them – in an airport, school, locker room, etc.

3. SENT people understand the necessity of prayer.

I don't just mean the importance of prayer; I mean the absolute necessity of prayer. In the Christian life, we don't pray and *then* start the work; prayer IS the work!

Illustration: The author of a book called "SENT" is a Christian English professor at Penn State (most professors there are decidedly anti-Christian). She says, before class, she'll walk through her classroom and pray over the empty seats, sometimes kneeling down beside the seat and praying for her students by name. She often prays a verse from Psalm 119: *Lord, turn their eyes from worthless things to you, the true God* (vs.37).

At the end of the semester, she got a message from a parent. In the message, the woman said, "My husband and I are coming into town and we would really love to take you out to lunch."

I knew their son, who was a typical frat boy. But he would come into class early, and one day, he said, "Do you and your husband have a great time tailgating at the football games?" Somehow in the conversation it came up that my husband and I are not heavy drinkers, to which he said, "Well then what do you do for fun?" I told him a few things and he didn't seem that impressed, but class was starting and that was it.

So, the semester ended, and his parents showed up during the break to take me out to lunch. The mom said, "We just wanted to tell you thank you. We almost lost our son last semester. We tried to raise him right, but then he came here to Penn State, and started partying and drinking all the time. But then a couple of months ago, he started talking about this Christian professor of his. He started driving home on the weekends to go to church with us. We had been praying that God would send someone to open his eyes to the truth."

I shared with them that several times a week I prayed that very thing for her son, as I did for several of my students – that God would turn their eyes away from worthless things, and when I said that she burst into tears. The husband, who had been quiet this whole time, said, "If you ever feel like you're not making a difference in your classroom, remember my son. We were so worried about him... and God sent YOU!"

You see, this Christian professor understands two things:

- 1) That her job – whatever it may be – is her mission field.
- 2) The absolute necessity of prayer – asking God to use *her* as he draws people to himself.

Have you ever thought about that? Someone in your family, class, team, club, friend group – even someone in another country – might be praying, "God, if you're there, send someone to tell me about you." And God wants to SEND *you!*

4. SENT people depend totally on the Holy Spirit.

Right after Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you," in **verse 22** he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus was showing them (and us) not only the importance of the Holy Spirit in being SAVED, but also in being SENT! You see, being SENT is not about doing great things for God;

its about yielding yourself to the Holy Spirit to be used by him. It means being perceptive to where he is at work around you and joining him.

Jesus said in John 5, "I never do things on my own initiative. I ONLY do what I see the Father doing around me." In the same way, *I am not trying to do things FOR Jesus, I'm trying to do things WITH him.*

You may think you don't have the potential or the ability to be a witness for Christ. But it's not about your ability or personality. It's not about what you can do for God, it's about what the Holy Spirit can do *in* you and *through* you!

Small Groups