

## SESSION 12

# SENT

CHRISTIANS OFTEN SPEAK of Christ “sending” us to the world with the gospel. But where does this sending start? Not with the Great Commission but with God Himself. The Bible portrays God the Father sending His Son, God the Son sending His people to the world, and the Father and the Son sending the Spirit to empower us for mission. We are a sent people who are being formed in the image of our sending God.

### STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read the main passages for this study, recording your insights and questions:
  - ▷ John 8:18; 14:26; 16:5-11; 20:19-23
2. Review the Teaching Plan (pp.127-130).
  - ▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group’s particular needs.
  - ▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.
3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp.131-136).
  - ▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
  - ▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
4. Pray for the Lord’s guidance as you lead your group through this material.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE...

1. *The Father sends the Son (John 8:18).*
2. *The Son sends His people (John 20:19-23).*
3. *The Father and the Son send the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:5-11).*

# SESSION 12

## TEACHING PLAN

# SENT

## CONNECT

### OPTION 1

Recount the writer's experience with a mission in the Dominican Republic. The man who began this mission would admit he was not the first missionary to Cielo. God was (p.131).



*Have you ever thought about God as a missionary? Why or why not?*

Emphasize the missionary heart of God as you summarize the lesson (pp.131-132).

### OPTION 2

For this option, show students the following video from the International Mission Board. To access the video, go to our website at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources). Click on Spring 2015, Session 12.

After watching the video, discuss the following questions with students before turning to the transition part of the session.



*What did you like about the video? What did you think about the comment, "What's going to last? One summer with your friends at the beach, or sharing the gospel with people who don't know?" Why do you think these students took time out of their summer to go on a mission trip?*

### TRANSITION

Christians often speak of Christ "sending" His church to the world with the gospel. But where does this sending start? Not with the Great Commission but with God Himself. In this session, we will see how the Bible portrays God the Father sending His Son, God the Son sending His people to the world, and the Father and the Son sending the Spirit to empower us for mission. We are a sent people for sure, and God has always intended us to be. We are being formed in the image of our sending God.

## SENT TO US

*God the Father sent His Son into our world. Jesus came for a very specific purpose: to show the world the Father, and to heal our broken relationship with God. The Son was sent in order that we might be brought into right relationship with our loving Heavenly Father.*

► *How does knowing that God sent His son encourage you in mission for Him?*

## CALLED TO GO

*When we place our faith and trust in Christ, we are immediately called into mission for Him, as David Brainerd was. As the Father sent the Son into the world to bear witness, those who are called children of God are sent by Jesus into the world as His witnesses. May we live as a sent people who desire to spread the truth of God's peace to all.*

► *How can you use the gifts God has given you to serve the body of Christ?*

## CONVEY

### ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE...

#### 1. THE FATHER SENDS THE SON.

Point to the apostle John's writings to show that our mission is not just an act of obedience but one of reflecting God Himself. Read John 8:18, and use John's use of "sent" verbs to prove that God is a sending God (p.132).



At this point, consider using the story "Sent to Us" in the Personal Study Guide (p.101) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*What is the significance of Jesus referring to Himself again and again as "sent" by the Father? Why do you think John emphasized this truth so much?*

Communicate that the Father sent Jesus into the world to make Himself known so that we would know eternal life and everlasting joy in Him. The sending God adopts those who believe in Jesus, making God our Father (p.133).



*How might the picture of "sharing your Father" with those who are not yet part of God's family influence the way you share the gospel?*

#### 2. THE SON SENDS HIS PEOPLE.

Set the context for John 20:19-23. Then ask a volunteer to read the passage. Emphasize our need for peace with God in order to carry out God's mission for us to others (pp.133-134).



At this point, consider using the story "Called to Go" in the Personal Study Guide (p.103) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.

Show how Jesus demonstrated the foundation of our peace with God—by showing His scars. With this victory won, Jesus then proclaimed His disciples as sent, just as the Father had sent Him.



*If Jesus was sent to save that which was lost, why shouldn't Christians be surprised to discover they are similarly being sent to tell others about the One who saves?*

Consider how Jesus was sent and how we can resemble Him as sent. Assign groups of 3-4 one summarized passage from John's Gospel and allow 3-5 minutes for groups to answer the corresponding question(s). Then call on each group to share responses for the benefit of the other groups.

Transition to the last point by noting how we might wonder how our congregation could ever fulfill such an important role, but we have help, or rather, a Helper (p.135).



*How does peace with God lead us to have peace with one another?*

### 3. THE FATHER AND THE SON SEND THE SPIRIT.

Explain how insurmountable the task of living on mission can seem and indeed is. Thankfully, the Father and the Son send the Spirit to guide and empower us. Read John 14:26, and clarify the role of the Spirit in our mission (pp.135-136).



At this point, consider using the story “Not Alone” in the Personal Study Guide (p.104) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*What are some ways we forget and need to be reminded of what Jesus actually taught His followers?*

Read John 16:5-11, and show that the Spirit is not only with us but He goes before us to convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment and to prepare hearts to hear about Jesus.



*What does the Spirit promise to do in us? Why is this important?*

## NOT ALONE

*Being alone is difficult, and is experienced by everyone at some point in life. But as believers, we are never truly alone because we have been given the Holy Spirit. He indwells us, teaches us, and instructs us. When we come to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit enters us, and He remains with us forever. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, you will never be alone. The Holy Spirit will always be with you.*

► *How can you find comfort in the knowledge that you're never alone because the Holy Spirit will always be with you?*

## NOTES:

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## COLLIDE

Christians, despite their age or background, are a group of people sent on mission. As you'll see throughout this session, the Bible testifies that God is not passive, and neither are His people. God has pursued His people by the sending of His Son, and now we are sent to display the love of God through gospel proclamation.



*How has this lesson challenged you to share your faith with others?*

This theme of being sent is a great point of emphasis for students. As this lesson states, the church is not a place or event—contrary to what many students may think. Instead, the church, comprised of followers of Jesus, are foreigners that are sent to live, interact, and love the people in the land they find themselves in.



*How does this truth change the way you view yourself? Your church? Your youth group?*

If one truly believes this—if this is truly a part of one's worldview—a change in behavior and lifestyle will follow. If students believe they are sent to be on mission and that this world is not their own, then they will be less inclined to fall in love with the things of this world. Students who consider themselves to be saved and sent by God to share the gospel will feel an urgency to see others saved as well.



*Who can you begin to share Christ with?*



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at  
**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](https://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit  
**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](https://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**

## SESSION 12

by Jason C Dukes

## EXPANDED LESSON CONTENT

## SENT

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, THE FATHER SENDS THE SON, THE SON SENDS HIS PEOPLE, AND THE FATHER AND THE SON SEND THE SPIRIT.

## OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER



On the outskirts of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic is a Christian mission. It's a church that runs a school and a medical clinic. The name of the village is Cielo, which means "heaven," and a glimpse of heaven is what I saw among the Christians there.

I was present when they built the clinic to give an impoverished community accessible healthcare.

I was present when the Christians met for their first worship gathering in the upstairs room above the clinic. Like a scene out of the Book of Acts, people sat in the windows and on the roof next door, intrigued by these

Christians who cared about the education of their kids and ministered to their sick.

I was present the night they had their first rally, an event designed to challenge the men of the community to put away their passivity and actively love their wives and kids.

But I didn't start this mission. Someone else did. I was invited to visit long after the mission had moved from idea to reality. It all began when a Christian took the initiative to love this community. It began with someone who saw himself as one sent by God.

I met the man who was the initiator, but he would not agree with that label. In his mind, he was not the first missionary to Cielo. God was.



*Have you ever thought about God as a missionary? Why or why not?*

The apostle John understood the missionary heart of God. He emphasized God as the initiator not only in his Gospel but also in his letters and in Revelation. "We love because He first loved us," he wrote (1 John 4:19). The Lion of Judah initiated salvation by becoming the Lamb who was slain.

## VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

God is both sender and sent in Christ. God, the Father, is the source of mission. He sent His Son, who embodies God's mission and accomplishes it. God's mission is then extended and applied through the ministry of the Spirit, for it is the Spirit who calls, equips, and empowers the people of God.<sup>1</sup>

—Ed Stetzer

God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is a sending God. God is by nature a missionary who has always had a mission to make His name known and who now invites us to join in His work.

## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*Almost every page of the Fourth Gospel breathes with a passage in which Jesus expressed who He is in terms of His sense of being sent, His sense of mission. He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him (4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40). He came not to speak his words but the words of the Father who sent Him (7:16-18; 8:26-29; 12:49; 14:24; 17:8). He came not to do His own work but the work of the Father who sent Him (4:34; 5:36; 9:4). Jesus acknowledged that His very life rested with the Father who had sent Him (4:34; 6:57). The sending in John speaks to the very heart of the gospel. 'For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him' (3:17).<sup>2</sup>*

—Francis Dubose

## ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE...

### 1. THE FATHER SENDS THE SON (JOHN 8:18).

In the beginning, God created human beings in His image. When we rebelled against Him, that image was shattered but not totally destroyed. When we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus for salvation, God begins to transform us into the image of His Son. We begin to reflect His image once again.

Being formed into the image of God matters for our mission as Christians. Why? Because it means that mission is not just something we do as an act of obedience; mission is an act of reflection. We are participating in something that reflects God Himself. When we are on mission, we reflect the loving heart of God, a God who sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).

God is love, John tells us (1 John 4:8), and based on what we see in Scripture, love imagines. Love takes the initiative. Love gives. Love acts. Love sends. The apostle John saw love firsthand, and that's why one of the primary themes in His Gospel is the sending nature of the God who is the source of love.

In a heated exchange with the Pharisees who opposed Him, Jesus linked His mission to God's. We see Him describe Himself as “sent by the Father” in John 8:

*I am the One who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me. (John 8:18)*

In his Gospel, John used the word “sent” or “send” or “sending,” mostly as verb forms, nearly 60 times, significantly more often than the other Gospels. Of these 60 occurrences, 50 of them refer to how the Father sent the Son. Of the other 10 or so, half are about Jesus sending His followers, 3 are about the sending of the Spirit, and two are in reference to John the Baptist.



*What is the significance of Jesus referring to Himself again and again as “sent” by the Father? Why do you think John emphasized this truth so much?*

John stressed the “sentness” of Jesus as a way of linking Jesus’ mission to God’s greatest desire—to make Himself known in all the world so that, in experiencing His glory, we would know eternal life and everlasting joy. Emphasizing Jesus’ “sentness” is one way that John reminds us of God’s love

## VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

As we center our ministries on the gospel, we rediscover the missionary God who seeks to save sinners.<sup>3</sup>

—Alvin Reid

and goodness. After all, God loved the world in this way: He sent His one and only Son (John 3:16).

When we follow Jesus, the One sent by God, we are sharing in the delight of the Father's love for His Son. The Father who sent the Son is now shaping those of us who believe in Jesus, forming us into a "sent" people. In obedience to the Father, Jesus came to deliver and embody His Father's everlasting love.

Think of it this way: Jesus' mission was, in essence, to share His *Abba* with us, to bring us back into the arms of the God who sent Him. Jesus made us His brothers and sisters, adopted through grace as sons and daughters of His Father. The sending God plans and saves and loves and adopts.



*How might the picture of "sharing your Father" with those who are not yet part of God's family influence the way you share the gospel?*

## 2. THE SON SENDS HIS PEOPLE (JOHN 20:19-23).

The Father "sent" the Son. This is the truth that runs throughout John's Gospel. But near the end of the Gospel, after Jesus is raised from the dead, Jesus applies the same language to His disciples. The Father sent the Son, and the Son now sends His people.



*If Jesus was sent to save that which was lost, why shouldn't Christians be surprised to discover they are similarly being sent to tell others about the One who saves?*

Before we read the passage, let's set the stage. John's mentioning it was "the evening of the first day of the week" is a possible allusion back to the garden of Eden, where in the freshness of God's original creation, God would walk with Adam and Eve in the coolness of the evening. This time, however, it is God the Son appearing to His disciples in the freshness of God's new creation, on the evening of His resurrection.

What were the disciples doing? Hiding. How did they feel? Fearful. What were they overcome with? Insecurities and anxiety. How does Jesus come near to them? Offering peace. In the previous session, we looked back at God's question when He was looking for Adam: "Where are you?" Now in this passage, we see God find the sons of Adam and impart His peace. Let's read:

*In the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" Having said this, He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." After saying this, He breathed on them and said, "Receive*

### VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Making Himself known is God's purpose in creation and His purpose in redemption...The whole Bible presents a God of missional activity, from His purposeful, goal-oriented act of Creation to the completion of His mission through the redemption of all Creation in the new heavens and new earth, and the creation of a new humanity in Christ, redeemed from every nation on earth through the blood of the cross.<sup>4</sup>

—Christopher Wright

*the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:19-23)*

Peace with God is the prerequisite to being sent out by God. We cannot fulfill our mission until we know we are forgiven, until we know we are with Him, secure in His presence, growing in His grace. God secures us by His love and then sends us out to share His life.



*How does peace with God lead us to have peace with one another?*

After Jesus declared peace to the disciples, “He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” Jesus offered them peace and then showed them how such peace was available—His scars. Through His death, Jesus had won the victory for His disciples. His scars were the marks of love, a sign of peace that would flood the hearts of His followers. No more hiding in insecurities and fears! No more thinking the hope of the Messiah had vanished once again! No more struggling to wonder whether God really loved them and was good! No wonder they rejoiced.

Then Jesus said the words again, “Peace to you!” What followed is a phrase that defines the purpose of the church: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” As the Father sent Jesus to clarify His Word, His message to Israel, so Jesus now sends us to the whole world. The presence of Jesus, the resurrected One, is the basis for our mission.

Jesus’ words here echo the prayer He uttered the night before He died: “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18). Eugene Peterson paraphrased the verse in this way: “In the same way that You gave Me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world” (MSG).

Don’t miss the significance of these words. Jesus is inviting us to participate in the same mission in which He participated. His Father sent Him, and He now invites us on mission with Him, sending us with His peace, commanding us to love others and speak the truth with grace.

If we are sent to the world like Jesus was sent to Israel, we ought to consider the question “How was Jesus sent?” Let’s walk quickly through the Gospel of John and examine the nature of Christ’s ministry. As we do so, we should consider the ways in which we can better resemble Christ.

In John 1, Jesus was sent to take up residence among us (v. 14). The Word took on flesh.

How can we as Jesus’ sent ones take up residence with and among those who need God, representing Christ in the midst of a dark world?

## VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

If you want to follow Jesus, you must follow Him to the ends of the earth, for that is where He is going... We cannot think of God without thinking of Him as a missionary God.<sup>5</sup>

—Robert Speer

In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus that He was not sent to condemn but to save.

Consider what we do as the church. Is the overall message one of condemnation or salvation? How can we change or improve our witness?

In John 4, Jesus clarified where and how God can be worshiped, and He had this conversation with someone who was culturally foreign and not “above reproach.”

How willing and supportive are we of taking risks and crossing boundaries in how we deliver the gospel? With whom can we cross those boundaries?

In John 13, Jesus washed feet and offered a “new command” of love.

How well is our church doing in loving our neighbors as ourselves? What would it look like for us to love others the way He has loved us?

In John 17, Jesus prayed that His followers would be united so that people would believe in the One who was sent and so that people would know the love of the Father.

How well are we cultivating unity among the followers of Jesus in our city such that the work of God might be evident among us (John 6:29)?

Understanding that the Father has sent the Son, and the Son has sent us as His people is far from being merely an intellectual exercise or an impractical theological idea. The implications of this truth, as we have seen, are many. If you're like me, you may wonder how in the world you and your youth group could ever fulfill such an important role! The good news is you have help. More specifically, you have a Helper. To that truth, we now turn.

### **3. THE FATHER AND THE SON SEND THE SPIRIT (JOHN 14:26; 16:5-11).**

The task of living on mission together seems insurmountable at times. If we are honest with ourselves, we know how fragile and frail our faithfulness seems to be. We falter and fall, get back up again, and move forward in and

## **VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY**

As the Son is loved by the Father and yet is sent to suffer, so also the disciples are loved by the Lord, who nevertheless sends them into the world to suffer.<sup>6</sup>

—Gregory the Great

with the love of Jesus. The good news is we are not sent out alone. The Father, who sent the Son, and the Son, who sends us, promises to send the Spirit to guide and empower us. Let's look at Jesus' words:

*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. (John 14:26)*

Why do we need the Spirit of God? Because we are a forgetful people. We need the Spirit's reminder of Jesus' teaching so we can be empowered to live in His love and share the good news with others. Jesus' role was to clarify the Father's intention, to reveal God to us. The Spirit's role is to be present with us always, constantly reminding us of what the Son was sent to clarify.



*What are some ways we forget and need to be reminded of what Jesus actually taught His followers?*

The Spirit not only reminds and teaches us. He also convicts the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. Take a look at what else Jesus said about the Spirit:

*“But now I am going away to Him who sent Me, and not one of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ Yet, because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: About sin, because they do not believe in Me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (John 16:5-11)*

## REFERENCES

1. Ed Stetzer, *Finish the Mission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 114.
2. Francis Dubose, “The Pilgrimage of New Life,” in *The Mission of God Study Bible*, eds. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 1115.
3. Alvin L. Reid, *As You Go* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2013), 30.
4. Christopher Wright, “The Metanarrative of God’s Mission,” in *The Mission of God Study Bible*, eds. Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, 1131-32.
5. Robert Speer, quoted in *The Contemporary Christian*, by John R. W. Stott (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 328.
6. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 26, quoted in *John 11–21*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVb in *Ancient Christian Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 360.

The Spirit's presence benefits us on mission. He goes before us to convict people of sin and turn their hearts toward repentance. He convinces people that the forgiveness of Jesus is real and effective. He goes with us to keep us on purpose and on mission. He goes behind us to undergird our efforts in reaching others.



*What does the Spirit promise to do in us? Why is this important?*

## CONCLUSION

The New Testament refers to the church 140 times. Not one refers to a place or an event. Not one uses the preposition “in” or “at” or “to” or “from.” Therefore, please remember, that we do not go to church—we are the church. So go this week and be the church.”