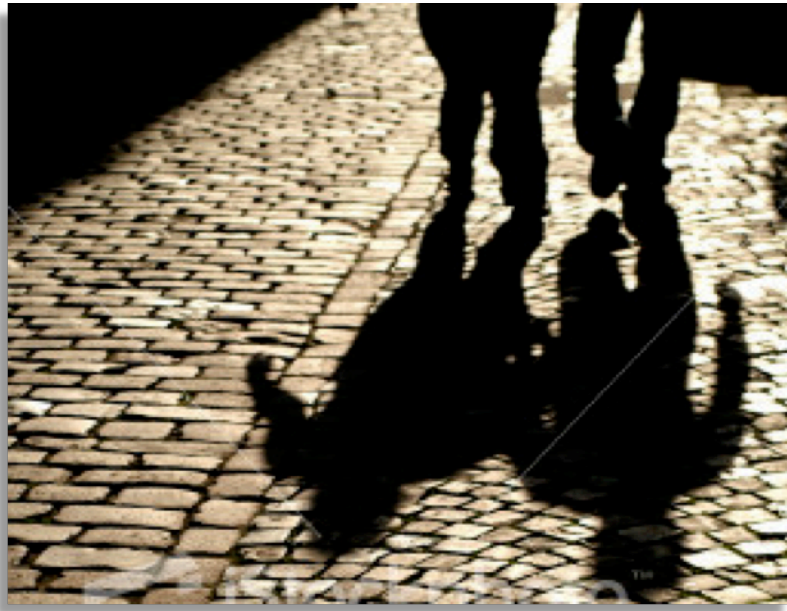


Sent like Jesus

SENT LIKE JESUS

Mission Partners Study I



T. M. MOORE

The Fellowship of Ailbe



Sent like Jesus

Sent Like Jesus
Mission Partners Study 1
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Welcome to *Sent like Jesus*

Welcome to the first in our series of Mission Partners Studies, *Sent like Jesus*. The six studies in this series include:

Sent like Jesus – If we really want to live, we have to live like Jesus.

To Fill All Things – Jesus Christ through you to your world!

Seasoned with Grace – Talking with others about the grace of God.

Lived Truth – Our mission begins with *being* witnesses for Christ.

Redeeming Culture – We can't avoid or escape culture, so we need to transform it.

Confident Witness – How to be bolder and more effective in sharing your faith.

As a participant in the Mission Partners program, you will be given access to these studies as you progress through the stages of your mission over the next six months.

We can only expect to know full and abundant life in Christ when we think of our lives the way Jesus does. He has sent us into the world in the same way He Himself was sent into the world. Our power for living the Kingdom life to which we have been called comes by understanding, embracing, and pursuing this calling in all our relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

Here are the assignments for Month 1 of your Mission Partners project:

Video: Your Personal Mission Field

Study: *Sent like Jesus*

- Tasks:
1. Identify your Personal Mission Field using the PMF Worksheet provided.
 2. Begin daily prayer for people in PMF.
 3. Learn and begin using names of people in PMF.

The Mission Partners program is designed to help you understand and make the best use of those daily disciplines that can allow you to follow Jesus with into more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

These studies are designed for use with a Mission Partner. For more information on the Mission Partners program, visit our website, www.ailbe.org.

We're pleased to offer the Mission Partners program, and the studies that go with it, at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe. Information on how to contribute to The Fellowship of Ailbe can be found at the end of this study.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Sent to Serve

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.
Philippians 2.5-7

Look to Jesus

A certain amount of confusion exists these days as to the meaning of the Christian life.

For some, the life of following Jesus consists in acquiring as much of this world's peace and prosperity as they can. Jesus is supposed to meet our needs, give us a sense of wellbeing, and enable us to live in happiness, waiting for our time to come when we can join Him in heaven.

Others seem to believe that being a Christian means belonging to a church and participating in its worship and life and perhaps in its programs and events. We look for a church where we can have plenty of Christian friends and Christian things to do.

For still others, being a Christian means standing for this or that moral or social position. Real Christians stand out in the public square and make their opinions known.

Some people are more rigorous in their understanding of the life of discipleship, while others are more *laissez faire* in their approach – to each his own, as it were.

Such confusion and conflict should not exist among those who claim to be followers of Christ, for Jesus Himself has taught us how to understand the life of faith: He said, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (Jn. 20.21).

Look to Scripture

The key to following Jesus therefore begins in a clear understanding of precisely *how* the Father sent Jesus – for what purpose, with what kind of focus, according to what plan and procedures? Why did Jesus come to earth? What did He do, and how did He do it?

We must not draw our understanding of what it means to be a Christian from our own best ideas, the culture around us, the wisdom of men, or the longings and needs of our hearts. If we want to follow Jesus – really follow Him – we'll need to look to Scripture in order to discover how the Father sent Him among us those many years ago.

As we do we'll discover that following Jesus is an adventure of spiritual life and power that can bring new focus, power, and purpose to our lives. Jesus came to earth as Man on a mission from the Lord, and this is how He is sending us to the world as well.

Deepest needs, highest hopes

When we look to Scripture we find that, overarching all that Jesus was sent to be and do is His calling as a servant. Jesus was sent for many different purposes, as we shall see. In essence, however, He was sent by the Father to reach people at the point of their deepest needs and provide them the means for realizing their highest hopes.

Jesus told His disciples that He had not come to earth to be served, but to serve, and He gave up His divine privileges, perquisites, and priorities in order to serve the purposes of God by serving others (Mk. 10.42-45). The true followers of Jesus will be those who emulate Him in this calling.

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Whoever you are, wherever God has placed you, you're not there in order to maximize your own advantages. You have been sent into this world to deny yourself, take up your cross every day, and follow Jesus along the hard road of loving others and serving them with His grace and truth. We can't meet everybody's needs, and we can't meet all the needs of those to whom Jesus sends us week by week. But we can learn to reach out to others through prayer, conversation, thoughtfulness, kindness, and love in ways that will cause people to seek a reason for the hope they experience through us (1 Pet. 3.15).

Jesus served the world in order to bring salvation to it. The Good News of the Kingdom of God is that He is still bringing salvation to the world, and He is doing so through people like you and me.

Full and abundant life in Christ means going to others with a view to serving them for His Kingdom and glory. Jesus was a Man on a mission, and so are we.

For reflection

1. What do you suppose it takes to keep focused on Jesus as we go, sent like Him, into our world each day?
2. What are the greatest obstacles you will face each day in seeking to go to the world as a servant?
3. Write a prayer that you can use to seek the Lord's help in enabling you to go as a servant to your Personal Mission Field:

Next steps: If you have not yet done so, work through the Personal Mission Field worksheet provided with the first video in the Mission Partners series. Begin praying for the people you identify as those to whom Jesus is sending you.

Prayer:

2 Sent for the Kingdom

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6.33

Servants of the King

The followers of Jesus Christ understand that they have been sent to this world with a purpose. We’re not here by chance, and we don’t exist merely to gratify our every want or satisfy our every whim. Christians have been sent to the world as Jesus was sent, and this applies to every moment of our lives, every day.

As those who have been sent like Jesus, we must not live our lives like pin balls in a board game, rolling and tumbling from here to there, crashing and careening around, with no apparent purpose except to ring up as high a score as we can before we go down the hole and it’s “Game Over.” We are people with a purpose, and that purpose is defined by the example of the Lord Jesus Himself.

“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (Jn. 20.21). We are sent to the world just as Jesus was sent. In the first place this means that we are here according to the purposes of God to serve Him and others (cf. Phil. 2.5-11). But we will only serve others with God’s wisdom, truth, strength, and grace as we devote ourselves to seeking the rule and power of King Jesus in every aspect of our lives.

We are citizens and ambassadors in the Kingdom of God, and we enter into Jesus’ power and rule as we embrace His priorities as our own.

Priority one

Jesus’ highest priority when He sojourned among us was the Kingdom of God. Jesus preached the Kingdom, taught it, exemplified it, bound the devil so that He could plunder his holdings and bring them under His rule, translated His followers out of the kingdom of darkness into His Kingdom of light, and instructed His disciples to make the Kingdom of God their highest priority in life (Matt. 12.22-29; Col. 1.16; Matt. 6.33).

Jesus came to earth in order to bring the eternal rule and power of God to the world in a new, more intimate and personal, and more fruitful and transforming way.

The Kingdom of God is a realm of spiritual power where the ascended Christ exercises dominion by His Word and Spirit in the hearts of people and, through them, into every aspect of their lives and times. Jesus taught us to pray for the Kingdom to come increasingly on earth, after the pattern of how it exists even now in heaven (Matt. 6.10). Seeking the Kingdom of God must, therefore, be the defining template, the guiding project, and the commanding vantage point for everyone who earnestly desires to follow Jesus.

The Kingdom we seek

Paul summarized the Kingdom this way: “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.” (Rom. 14.17, 18). The Kingdom of God is a realm of righteousness, where the beauty, goodness, and truth of Jesus flourish and abound. Righteousness describes the *character* of the Kingdom, the stamp of its presence and the benchmark of its progress.

The atmosphere of the Kingdom is drenched in and suffused with peace, as all who enjoy citizenship there rest in the sovereign power of Christ and in their mutual care and concern. Peace – with God, in our own souls, with others, and with the creation itself – is the *condition* spawned by the abounding righteousness of Christ’s rule.

Such an environment abounds in joy, which is the *consequence* of Kingdom righteousness and peace. The joy of

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the Kingdom is enduring joy which no change of circumstances can evaporate or erode.

This is what we seek; this is why we have been sent. Jesus brought the Kingdom near to the people of His generation and to all the generations to come. And He has sent us on the same mission, beginning right where we are.

We seek the Kingdom by studying its character in the Scriptures and praying earnestly for it to be established in our own lives. We long to see the goodness of Lord come to light in and through us, and we wait patiently on the Lord for this to be so (Ps. 27.13, 14). Day by day we envision the outworking of the Kingdom in our spheres of influence, as we draw on the power of the Spirit and work to bring Jesus' righteousness, peace, and joy to the people and places we have been sent.

If you are follower of Christ, Jesus has sent you to seek His Kingdom. For only in the Kingdom of God, as we grow in righteousness, peace, and joy, will we have the will and strength to serve others with love of Jesus.

Your claim to belong to Jesus will be only so many empty words until seeking the Kingdom of God is the highest priority in your life.

For reflection

1. What is the Kingdom of God like in heaven? What is it like to be there? See how many different ways you can describe the Kingdom in heaven. How does this affect the way you pray for the Kingdom to come here and now?
2. Jesus was sent to earth to "bring near" the Kingdom to the world. What does "bringing near" the Kingdom mean for you in your Personal Mission Field?
3. How can you make seeking the Kingdom a more constant and pervasive priority in your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Next steps: How can you improve this work of seeking the Kingdom of God in your daily walk with and work for the Lord? Talk about this question with your Mission Partner.

Prayer:

3 Sent to Seek the Lost

“...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19.10

Lost citizens

The Kingdom of God is that realm of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit of God in which the servants of Christ prove and improve their discipleship by ministering His grace and truth to everyone around them. This is why Jesus was sent to the world, and it's why He sends us as well.

As His disciples serve others in His Name, Jesus begins to be more visible in the world. His resurrection is validated and proven, and the reality of His rule and power presses upon and affects every area of life. The effect of this can be to engender the prospect of real, lasting hope in the hearts of those we serve.

God advances His Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven, through the prayers and exertions of His Kingdom citizens, all of whom once inhabited a kingdom of darkness and sin, but now belong to Jesus by grace through faith (Col. 1.16; Eph. 2.8, 9).

Yet many who will one day perform similar roles in advancing the rule of Christ remain in the darkness of unbelief. And it is the duty of all the followers of Christ to emulate their Savior and King by seeking the lost and leading them into the Kingdom of our Savior.

Lost All Around

Doubtless, some will respond to this challenge by saying, “But I don't know any lost people.” That may well be true of you. As research has shown, the longer one is a believer in Jesus, the more all his most meaningful relationships tend to be forged with like-minded people.

But saying you don't *know* any lost people is not the same as saying you don't have *dealings* with lost people every day. You may not know them, either by name or at any meaningful level of relationship, but that doesn't mean you don't see them regularly, interact with them frequently, and don't have abundant opportunities to seek them for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom.

You do. We all do. Lost people can be found in every area of our lives – neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, communities, even in our churches.

Lost people are all around us, and some of those lost people have been marked out by the Lord for citizenship in His Kingdom. It may well please the Lord to use us as their port of entry home.

Seeking the Lost

Lost people are dead in their trespasses and sins, as Paul observed (Eph. 2.1-5). They are not sensitive to the presence of Christ in the 10,000 places He plays each day (Hopkins). They have little interest in the Word or ways of God. And they tend to be caught up in the spirit of the age, and can be tossed about and carried about by every wind of fancy or folly that blows into their sails.

It's not our place to judge, condemn, or ignore the lost. Rather, we have been sent, as Jesus was, to seek them.

Our responsibility is to be sensitive to those who are still dead in their trespasses and sins and to make every effort to serve them, that they might have the opportunity to know the Lord. How do we do this?

Seeking the lost begins in praying for them. We can all do this, and there is no excuse for not doing so.

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Indeed, the Apostle Paul instructs us to pray for “all” people (1 Tim. 2.1-3), and praying for the lost people we meet each day is a good place to begin.

Start praying daily for the lost people you already know. Then, make a determined effort to get to know the people you see day by day, week after week. Learn their names, take an interest in their family lives, hobbies, backgrounds, hopes, and dreams. Become an excellent listener and a consistent affirmer. This will improve your prayers for these people and begin to endear you to them as one who seems genuinely to care.

Be alert to opportunities to serve the lost around you – an encouraging word, a thoughtful deed, a bit of wise or timely counsel. Develop a conversational relationship with the lost in your life, and then look for ways to turn those conversations from mundane to more spiritual matters (we’ll have much more to say about this in subsequent studies in this series).

If you begin diligently to *seek* the lost, the Lord Who also seeks them through you will enable many of them to be found by you – and some of those to find their way into the Kingdom of God.

For reflection

1. How did it come about that you, a lost citizen, found your way into the Kingdom of God? Briefly outline your experience of coming to faith in Jesus:
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = “Intentionally and Consistently”, evaluate the present state of your seeking the lost at this time. Why did you choose the number you did?
3. Suppose, over the next few months, you wanted to move that number one or two digits closer to 10. What would you have to begin doing in order to accomplish that result?

Next steps: Review your Personal Mission Field to make sure you’ve included there any lost people you see week by week. Note them on your worksheet, even if you don’t know their names. Then make a point to learn their names and to pray for them on the days you expect to see them.

Prayer:

4 Sent to Make Disciples

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” Matthew 28.19

Few but powerful

Jesus was sent to earth from heaven with a very special mandate – to bring near the Kingdom of God, to bring the grace and truth of God to the world of lost men, so that they might know the saving mercy of the Lord.

In order to accomplish this daunting mission, Jesus might have done many things. He might have raised an army, started a political party, invented television and gone onto prime time throughout the Roman Empire, started a college or charitable foundation, or any of a thousand other things.

He chose instead to make disciples. And not many, just a few, but real, committed, engaged, growing, and effective disciples. Making disciples was Jesus’ way of fulfilling His calling as a servant to bring near the Kingdom and seek the lost.

The disciples Jesus chose followed in His footsteps and sought out others to serve in becoming disciples of Jesus as well. The process of making disciples has been the commanding work of believers in every generation; it remains the unchanging plan of Christ for redeeming the world.

As you are going

We who have been sent to the world as Jesus was sent must also embrace the work of making disciples as a central thread of our Kingdom-seeking lives.

In the Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples, as the Greek literally has it, “As you are going” you are to make disciples. “Making disciples” is the imperative; “as you are going” describes the context in which we fulfill that mandate.

In other words, making disciples is not something we do only in a program, in classes and conversations held at our church. Making disciples is our calling as we are going along in every area of our lives. In each of our lives are lost citizens waiting to be reclaimed for the King, and existing citizens who need to be encouraged in their walk with and work for the Lord.

All disciples are called to the task of making disciples as the normal expression of their daily life with the Lord. Making disciples is a way of being, living, relating, and serving others in the world. Just as for some people “doing business” is a way of life, and everyone they know is either a client, colleague, customer, investor, or prospect, so for the followers of Christ “making disciples” defines our outlook and attitude toward the people in our lives.

Making disciples is a lifestyle to whom all are called who follow Jesus. It’s what Jesus did when He was sent to serve the world, bring near the Kingdom, and seek the lost; and it’s what we who follow Him must do as well.

Three challenges

Looking at the example of Jesus, we can see that the work of making disciples involves three great challenges: giving people something to *see*, something to *desire*, and something to *do* in order to realize God’s purpose and promise for their lives.

In order to help people become disciples, we need to *point them to Jesus*, so that they can see Him in all his compelling glory. Jesus is the goal of discipleship, not church. We want others to see Jesus in us, and to see in

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our lives what *following* Jesus looks like – how we use our time, the way we relate to others, how Jesus affects every area of our lives, and so on. As the old hymn puts it, we may be the “only Jesus” some folks ever see. We must strive to make sure they see Him increasing in us in all His beauty, goodness, and truth (Jn. 3.30).

Second, we need to help people develop a *compelling vision* of what following Jesus can mean in *their* lives – what they can hope to know, experience, become, and achieve as one of His followers. Following Jesus is *Good News*, and our challenge in communicating this Gospel is to put that Good News before people with enthusiasm, clarity, and relevance, so that they can see the *promise* of forgiveness, the *hope* of eternal life, and the *wonder, joy, and great satisfaction* of citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

Finally, we need to encourage and equip people with the resources, skills, aptitudes, and opportunities they will need in order to *work out their own salvation* and lay hold on the promises of discipleship. The life of following Jesus begins with an act of faith in response to the grace of God’s Good News. And this is precisely the way the life of faith continues, grows, and bears fruit. As often as we can, we need to encourage and equip the disciples in our Personal Mission Fields to take up the calling of discipleship faithfully and fruitfully in every area of their lives.

Sent to the world with the Good News of the Kingdom, Jesus went about making disciples to join Him in this mission. We, too, are called to make disciples. Let’s make it a way of life.

For reflection

1. How would you define the word “discipleship” as it relates to following Jesus? What is a disciple? What is it like to live as a disciple?
2. What is the “Good News” of the Kingdom of God? How would you try to help someone see that the Jesus and His Kingdom are Good News for them?
3. Who are the disciples in your Personal Mission Field? How might you pray for them concerning their callings as disciples of Jesus?

Next steps: To date, what have been the most consistent things you have done to help others become disciples of Jesus? Can you see any areas where you need to improve in this effort? Talk with your Mission Partner about this question.

Prayer:

5 Sent to Build the Church

“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16.18

The Body of Christ

“I will build My church...” Thus the Lord Jesus declared His agenda to His disciples, making it clear to them that He intended to fulfill the work He began. As the Apostles and first disciples came to understand, Jesus was sending them and all His followers to carry on that work after He was gone.

Jesus said He would build His Church, and He insisted that not even the cleverest counsels or most aggressive assaults of hell would be able to keep Him from realizing this objective. Jesus made a start in His day, as we have seen. And the book of Acts proves the promise of Jesus that, once He departed to the Father and poured out His Spirit into His followers, His disciples would do even greater works than He had done, (Jn. 14.12).

All disciples of Jesus are members of His Church, His Body. Typically, we express that “membership” by associating with a local church, where we learn to serve, seek the lost, and make disciples. That not all churches function this way, and not all members of Christ’s Body are as committed to local churches as we might hope, does not negate the Lord’s plan or rewrite His agenda. As Jesus was sent by the Father to begin the work of building His Church, so He has sent us, His followers, to continue that work in our own churches, according to His purposes and plans.

Unity and maturity

We build our local church together as we help it grow into a mature expression of the living Lord Jesus Christ in our community. Local churches increase in Christ-likeness as they grow in unity and maturity in the Lord.

In Ephesians 4.11-16 the Apostle Paul outlines the process by which local churches grow in unity and maturity. Unity and maturity are the marks of healthy, growing churches. Churches realize increasing unity as they learn together to focus on the Lord’s vision, live within the teaching of His Word, encourage and share together in His Spirit, and stimulate one another to grow and bear fruit for Him (Heb. 10.24).

When believers are bonded together by their profession and their lives, they grow as a community in discernment (“no longer children”), in their ability to speak truth in love, in sharing together in the work of the church, and in loving God and neighbors. Thus they become *as a community* a living and potent expression of the resurrected and reigning Lord.

Churches that are growing in unity and maturity in the Lord become salt, light, and leaven for Jesus and His Kingdom in their communities. Jesus said He will build His Church, and as His followers, building His church must be a primary concern for us as well.

Building the Church

But how shall we build the church of the Lord?

Paul tells us plainly in Ephesians 4.11, 12: We “all come” to greater unity and maturity in the Lord when church leaders equip the believers in their churches so that they, in turn, can do the works of service, seek the lost, and make disciples. Thus Paul outlines the process by which local churches grow in unity and maturity as Jesus builds His church through our labors together.

Building the church is not just the responsibility of the pastor and lay leaders. Every member of the church must present himself to be equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ – gaining the mindset and heartset to serve,

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learning to care for and reach out to the lost, and taking a hand in encouraging and equipping others for the life of discipleship. Only as the members of the congregation respond to Jesus' having sent them to serve, seek, and make disciples will the church grow in unity and maturity; and only as pastors and teachers focus their labors on making disciples will such church-building disciples begin to fill the pews of our churches.

We have been sent like Jesus to build His Church, beginning with the local congregation to which we have united ourselves for worship, disciple-making, and mission. We are not free to define "church growth" on our own terms, or to adopt means of "growing" our church that neglect, avoid, or replace those outlined for us in the Word of God.

All believers are called to build Christ's church. Church leaders must make a deliberate effort to equip church members – *all* the members of the church – to take up in their own lives those works that build the church and help to fulfill the agenda Jesus is pursuing even now. Thus we may expect to know the blessing of the Lord as we follow along the path He walked when He was sent among us.

For reflection

1. How does building the local church relate to the other reasons for which Jesus has sent us into the world?
2. The local church is both a *sign* and an *outpost* of the Kingdom of God. Explain:
3. What are some things that can prevent or hinder local churches from growing in unity and maturity in the Lord?

Next steps: How do the leaders of your church define a healthy, growing church? That is, what are they hoping to realize for your church as evidence the church is growing? Talk with one or two of them about these questions.

Prayer:

6 Sent to Redeem and Reconcile the World

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5.20

The whole cosmos!

Jesus was sent to the world because God loved it too much to let it die a miserable death of sin and self-destruction. The whole world – the *cosmos* – is the object of God's redeeming grace and Christ's reconciling love.

The very familiar and much-loved John 3.16 insists as much. Jesus explained that He was sent to the world because God loves the *cosmos* – the whole, vast creation – and He is determined to bring reconciliation and restoration to His world by redeeming and sending a people for His glory. The world and its peoples groan under the burden of sin and unbelief. Jesus was sent to redress this sad situation through His life, death, resurrection, and reign (cf. Rom. 8.20, 21).

As Jesus was sent out of love for the creation and everything in it, so we, too, have been sent to the world, that we might take up the work of reconciling all things back to God. For this purpose, Paul says, we are ambassadors, sent to *people* with the Good News of reconciliation through Jesus, and sent to the *world* to redeem and reconcile it to God.

Thus we, together with other citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom, work to recover the world from the grip of sin and restore as much as we can to the goodness and uprightness of God.

Good and upright

The world was originally created good and upright. “Good” – which occurs over and over again in Genesis 1 – describes the world as God sees it. A good world is one that pleases Him, fulfills His design, refracts His glory, and can thus serve as a platform or stage on which to advance the purposes of His economy.

The world was also created “upright”, as Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes 7.29. “Uprightness” seems to refer both to the character of the Lord God (Ps. 92.15) and to the proper relationship of all created things to one another. Jesus rules with a “scepter of uprightness” to reclaim the lost and fallen world and re-order and restore it so that God may be glorified in all things (Ps. 45.6; Hab. 2.14; 1 Cor. 10.31).

The Kingdom of God – and the local church as Kingdom sign and outpost – is the agency through which Jesus is working to redeem, reconcile, renew, and restore the world. In this life we should expect to make real progress in this effort, for we have been sent as Jesus was to bring the glory of God to light in all aspects of life in the world.

Restoration and renewal

When God made the world, everything was in its proper place; everything grew and existed in perfect harmony, and nothing threatened the wellbeing or fruitfulness of anything else.

Sin, of course, changed all that, as we see in Genesis 3 and 4. Since then the world has been alienated from God, and all its parts are subject to the follies of sinful, unwise men. But Christ came to equip and send us, as we are making disciples and building the Church, to return all of creation and culture to good and upright condition before the Lord (cf. Heb. 2.5-8). And even though now we do “not yet” see all things returned to “good and upright” status before the Lord, still, we see Jesus (Heb. 2.9), and seeing Him we recognize the form of beauty, goodness, and truth which we strive to realize in every area of our lives.

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We have been sent to work for the restoration of culture, the advancement of goodness in ethics and morality, the promulgation of beauty, and the preservation and stewardship of the created order.

As followers of Christ we cannot escape the stewardship of life, culture, and creation which is incumbent upon us, for we have been sent to the world precisely for this. Each of us has been sent to a Personal Mission Field, and to this point in our study, we have been focusing on the work we've been given to do in serving others, seeking the lost, and making disciples. We have focused, that is, on the *people* we see each week in our Personal Mission Field.

But our Personal Mission Fields involve not only people but *places* and the *culture* – artifacts, institutions, and conventions – that fill those spaces. Jesus intends to use us to shine the light of His righteousness, peace, and joy on, within, and through *all* the spaces and culture of our lives, so that His glory might be seen in them here, as well as in our lives.

This is a lifelong calling, and while we expect to make progress in redeeming and reconciling the world, we are not naïve. The task of reclaiming the world will always be a “not yet” project. But Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever; and, keeping our eyes on Him, we must daily run our race with joy, endeavoring to bring all things in our lives to good and upright status before our King.

For reflection

1. In what ways can you see that sin has affected the cultural, social, and ethical life of our society? Is it reasonable to expect that Kingdom people should be able to make a Kingdom difference in this situation? Explain.
2. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 10.3-5; Hebrews 2.5-9; and Revelation 21.5. From just these few verses, outline a statement reflecting your understanding of what is involved in redeeming and reconciling “the world” for Jesus.
3. How much of your life in the world – expressed as a percentile – is *consciously* involved in this work of redeeming and reconciling at this time? Explain.

Next steps: Make a list of all the cultural activities you are involved in during the course of a week. What does it mean for you to “redeem and reconcile” these activities to the Lord? Talk with your Mission Partner about this question.

Prayer:

7 Sent to Expose Sin

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." John 15.22

Necessary, but unpleasant

OK, you knew there had to be a catch.

Throughout this series we've been discussing the high and holy sending Jesus has appointed to us as His followers. We are sent like Jesus was sent to the world. Jesus was sent to the earth for many reasons, all of which are part of God's great redemptive plan to create a people through whom He would bring glory to Himself and blessing to the world. Jesus was sent to bring near the Kingdom of God, to seek and serve lost sinners, to make disciples, to build His Church, and to reconcile all of life back to God.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are sent for all the same purposes, all the same objectives as Jesus Himself. We're sent to serve others, to seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God, bring the lost to salvation and disciples to greater maturity and fruitfulness, to build the church, and turn the *world* rightside-up for Jesus Christ. What thrilling prospects such a calling extends before us! What a blessing and privilege to be so sent! And what excitement and joy we can expect to know as we follow in the path along which Jesus was sent to the world!

We are sent to the world as Jesus was sent. And that means we are also sent with the rather unpleasant but altogether necessary business of calling the world to acknowledge and repent of its sin.

Judge not?

In the churches today we're a little bit queasy about sin. We don't talk about it very much, out of fear that others might think we're condemning them. After all, as is frequently pointed out, Jesus said we should not judge or else we will be judged. Thus, specific indictments of particular sins, and accompanying calls for repentance, are not as frequently heard in the churches today as in previous generations.

In fact, however, Jesus never commanded us not to judge others. He simply said that we should be careful *how* we judge them, because we will be judged in the same way (Jn. 7.24; Matt. 7.1, 2).

In our relations with fellow believers we act as though the sins of others Christians were none of our business. Jesus didn't believe that, and neither did Paul (ask Peter, Gal. 2.11-21). In our relations with people in the world we act as if they might be able to find their way to peace with God without ever having to acknowledge that they – like us – are sinners.

All this dodging of sin does not comport well with Jesus' own mission. He made a career out of leading people to see their sins. And while most of them did not appreciate the effort, Jesus certainly never backed away from it.

Righteous judgment

But Jesus also said that we must judge with righteous judgment – the judgment that derives from and is consistent with the Law of God (Jn. 7.24; cf. Lev. 19.15, 16). As followers of Jesus Christ we must be bold to point out the sins of our contemporaries, summoning them to the bar of judgment according to the commandments of God, but, at the same time, holding out the saving hand of grace for all who repent.

This is a somewhat risky business because we're afraid people won't like us if we point out their sins (making sure, of course, to admit our own and to deal with them first). Indeed, Jesus promised that, if we follow in His steps, pointing out sin as He did, the world would hate us (Jn. 15.18). Great. No wonder we're so reticent

in this matter. Who wants to be hated?

But we must take on this hard calling, for no one will ever reach out for salvation *from* sin who has not first recognized himself as a prisoner *of* sin.

By our lives and our words, therefore, as we follow Jesus, we must expose the sins of this generation, always being careful to speak the truth in love. This work begins in our own lives, of course, as we daily, and moment by moment, wait on the Lord, listening for His Spirit to bring to light areas where we need to turn from sin and return to the Lord (Ps. 139.23, 24; Ps. 119.59, 60).

But our mission to the world requires that we shine the light of grace and truth onto the dark places where sin lurks in the hearts, slips across the tongues, and inhabits the works of the people in our lives. And, again following Jesus, we must turn over the sinful tables and drive out all the wickedness that pollutes God's good world and masks His glory from its inhabitants.

We've been sent to the world like Jesus, and Jesus exposed the sin of the world as part of His mission of service and love. We whom He has sent like He Himself was sent can do nothing less.

For reflection

1. What would you regard as a healthy practice of acknowledging and repenting of your sins? Put another way, how would you counsel a new believer to take up confession and repentance as a regular discipline in his or her walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Our world is reluctant to acknowledge such notions as "good" and "evil" or "right" and "wrong." Nothing, we are told, is cut and dried. How should a Christian respond to such a claim?
3. What would you consider as the absolute prerequisites for you being able to talk with others about their sins or the sins of our age?

Next steps: Exposing sin involves speaking the truth in love. Suggest some ways you can talk to others about the sin in their lives so that they might be willing carefully to consider your words. Talk with your Mission Partner about this matter.

Prayer:

Sent like Jesus

Next steps

Make sure you have completed each of the *Next steps* exercises before you meet with your Mission Partner to discuss the following questions. Below, list the *Next steps* efforts and results you'd like to share with your Mission Partner:

Questions for discussion

1. How would you summarize the overall mission for which Jesus was sent to the world?
2. In each of the areas, indicate specific ways your mission in the world reflects that of Jesus:
 - Serving:
 - Seeking the Kingdom:
 - Seeking the Lost:
 - Making disciples:
 - Building the Church:
 - Redeeming and reconciling the world:
 - Bringing sin to light:
3. In which of these areas do you *most* need to see improvement? What's one thing you could begin to do in *each* area in order to make progress in your mission?
4. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study about your mission to your Personal Mission Field?
5. How are you planning to put that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Prayer:

Sent like Jesus

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.