

## 6. Send

The word “send” is one of the most challenging words in the Scriptures. All of us who claim to be children of God have been and are “sent” on a mission. It is the responsibility of each one of us to determine where our heavenly Father wants us to go and what He wants us to do.

Although the word “send” is not as uniquely Johannine as some of the other words we have studied, it is, however, another key word in John’s writings. It, along with “abide” (the subject of another chapter), is more prevalent in John’s writing than is true of any one of the three *L* words frequently associated with John: “life,” “light,” “love.” “Send” is found approximately sixty times in the Gospels and frequently in the other Johannine writings.

There are two major words translated “send.” One is *apostello*, found approximately 130 times in the New Testament. It is prevalent in all the Gospels and in Acts. It is found three times in Paul’s epistles and also in 1 John. All of the latter refer to the fact that God sent His Son. *Apostello* is found twenty times or more in each of the four Gospels. Seven of the times it is found in the Gospel of John are in chapter 17, which is a record of the prayer of Jesus.

*Apostello* is found frequently with a prefix. For example, *exapostello* is found nine times in Luke’s writings, three times in the Gospel and six times in Acts. The noun form, *apostellos*, from which we get our word “apostle,” is

found eighty times in the New Testament, thirty of these in the Book of Acts.

The other major word translated “send” is *pempo*. It is found approximately twenty-five times in the Book of Acts. *Pempo* is a predominantly Johannine word. By my count, it is found thirty times in John’s Gospel as compared to only ten times in Luke, four times in Matthew, and once in Mark. It is used in Acts twelve times and fifteen times in the Pauline epistles, with five of those in Philippians. In addition, it is found once in 1 Peter and five times in Revelation for a total of eighty-one times in all the New Testament.

These two words for “send” or “sent” are sometimes used synonymously. Generally, however, there is some distinction. *Pempo* is a more general word. *Apostello* is used in an official or authoritative sense: “send” on a special mission or for a particular purpose. In that connection it is interesting to note that Jesus, in the Lord’s Prayer, recorded in John 17, used the term “send” or “sent,” as indicated before, seven times. Every time it was a form of *apostello*.

As previously suggested, the word “send” or “sent” is prominent in the Gospel of John. In the very first chapter, John the Baptist is introduced as follows: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (John 1:6). How wonderful if it could be said of each of us, “There was a man (or woman) sent from God whose name was \_\_\_\_\_.” It would be doubly wonderful if after a life of service, where the Lord leads, that our colleagues and those whose lives we had touched could honestly and appropriately say, “There was a man (or woman) sent from God whose name was \_\_\_\_\_.”

We want to use the remainder of this chapter to look at a particular passage of Scripture, asking some questions about it. It is the last time the word “send” or “sent” is found

in John's Gospel. On the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection when He appeared to the disciples, He greeted them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19), a customary form of greeting. He then showed them His hands and His side, possibly as proof to them that He was the crucified and resurrected Christ. "Then the disciples were glad ["overjoyed," NIV; "thrilled with joy," WMS] when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). Then it was that Jesus said to them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you ["I am sending you," NIV]" (John 20:21).

Likely you have had an experience when some particular Scripture suddenly came alive for you. That happened to me years ago regarding the record of this experience of the disciples with the resurrected Christ. I can still visualize where I was seated. Someone read or quoted those words of Jesus, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you ["am now sending you," WMS]." I asked then, and I have continued through the intervening years to ask, *What did He mean when He said, "Even so I send you?"* I have come to three or four conclusions.

### **A Sense of Being Sent**

The deep conviction by Jesus that He had been sent by the Father gave Him a sense of holy urgency. The word "must" was frequently on His lips. His word was, "We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Just as Jesus had a deep sense of having been sent, likewise we, His followers, should have a constant and deepening sense or conviction of having been sent by Him. This should be true not only for the missionary, the pastor, the specially called ones, but it should be a part of the experience of every child of God. And, like Jesus, it should and will give us a sense of holy urgency.

I never will forget the conviction that struck me when I was about forty years of age. All of a sudden, the idea hit me that what I was going to do for the Lord and my fellowman I had better be busy about doing it. Even if I lived out my three-score years and ten, they would be gone before I knew it. I can testify now, from the other side of the three-score years and ten, that the longer one lives the faster the years seem to slip by. Time is too precious to waste. We need to keep busy about the work of the Lord, seeking to contribute what we can to His Cause and Kingdom.

The preceding does not mean that we should keep ourselves under constant press. We do not have to become “workaholics.”<sup>1</sup> We may discover that we accomplish more for the Lord and for His Cause if we work reasonably relaxed. It will be a relaxation, however, that is derived from being conscious of His presence and of seeking to do His will.

Now, what was Jesus sent into the world to do? What are we, His followers, sent to do?

### **To Do the Father’s Will**

The words of Jesus Himself were, “. . . I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

You will remember the occasion when the disciples left Jesus sitting on the side of Jacob’s well while they went to the city to buy food. While they were gone, there took place the striking conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. It was to her that Jesus revealed, seemingly for the

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<sup>1</sup> The origin of the term “workaholic” is credited to Dr. Wayne Oates, seminary professor of pastoral care and after that a medical school professor. He was an author of many books, including *Confessions of a Workaholic* and *Workaholics: Make Laziness Work for You*. See <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/26/us/wayne-e-oates-82-is-dead-coined-the-term-workaholic.html>. Accessed 02/20/2024.

first time, that He was the promised Messiah. The woman left her water pot or jar at the well and went into the city to report her conversation with Jesus. She raised the question: “Can this be the Christ?” (John 4:29).

When the disciples returned, they “besought him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat’” (John 4:31). Jesus “said to them: ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know’” (John 4:32). They thought possibly someone had brought Him food, but He was not talking about that kind of food. He “said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work’” (John 4:34). By doing the will of the One who sent Him, He was accomplishing His work.

So it will be or should be for each of us as redeemed children of God. We are sent to do the Father’s will and hence to accomplish His work. Our first question in every time of decision should be, *What is His will for my life at this particular point in time?* His will may seem to change later, but the surest way of knowing and doing His will later is to be within His will at the present time.

Most of us had better be satisfied to take one step at a time, knowing that our Father will give us the sense of His presence and will reveal to us His will when we need to know it. He has done it in the past; He will do it again. Let us never forget that many times He will speak to us in “a still, small voice [“a gentle whisper,” NIV; or “a low murmuring sound,” NEB],” as He did to Elijah in the mouth of the cave (1 Kings 19:12).

### **Redeem Man**

Jesus was sent into the world to redeem man. We, His disciples, are sent to be a redeeming influence among men. There is not as much in the Gospels about Jesus being sent to redeem man as we might expect, though. The Gospels record, in the main, the things He did and the great truths He taught. As the record moves toward the end of His life, the

Gospels give major space to the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. These were the very things that were so central to His redemptive work. The epistles of Paul and the general epistles give more emphasis to an interpretation of the reasons for His coming, including a major emphasis on His redemptive ministry.

There are, however, some verses in John's Gospel that emphasize in various ways the redemptive work of Christ. For example, there is that wonderful verse sometimes called "the little gospel": "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is followed immediately with the statement: "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). Jesus Himself, on a later occasion, expressed the same purpose for His coming: ". . . I did not come to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47).

There is recorded in Luke 19 the striking incident of the visit of Jesus in the home of Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector and a rich man. Jesus was a self-invited guest. The fact that Zacchaeus climbed up a tree to see Jesus suggests that Zacchaeus was anxious to see Him and prepared to some degree for the visit. He must have been quite impressed when Jesus said, ". . . I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5). Zacchaeus doubtless was well acquainted with the attitude of the Jewish people toward a chief tax collector. Their complaint, possibly to the disciples of Jesus, was, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner" (Luke 19:7). Let us not condemn them too harshly. There is a tendency on the part of some church members to complain when the pastor and/or a member of the church staff goes into the homes of certain individuals in the community.

Zacchaeus, in the presence of Jesus, stood and said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold” (Luke 19:8). This was doubtless a promise rather than a statement of what he had been or was doing. It was from that background that Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:9-10).

Paul, in writing to Timothy, said, “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners [“among them I stand first,” NEB; or “of whom I am the worst,” NIV]” (1 Timothy 1:15). Notice the tense of the verb “I am.” Paul, after years of fellowship with the resurrected Christ was still deeply conscious of the fact that he was a sinner. Part of this conviction doubtless stemmed from his pre-Christian life when he had persecuted the church. However, a child of God who is sensitive to the indwelling Christ will be sensitive to his or her failure to live up fully to the expectations of the indwelling Christ. Our main emphasis, however, in this section is that the purpose of the coming of Christ was to save sinners.

We cannot save sinners, but we can be instruments of His to bring the unsaved to the One who alone can save them. The most effective ways to do this are to pray for the unsaved, to be a friend to them, to love them, to cultivate them for the Lord, and to live a consistent Christian life. You may ask, *What about witnessing to them?* Many of us need to do that more consistently. The effectiveness of our verbal witnessing will be determined, to a considerable degree, by the quality of life we live in contact with the unsaved and people in general.

We need in the contemporary period to be particularly careful that we do not manipulate people into premature, superficial decisions that will have little

permanent effect on or in their lives. Let us as individuals and churches never get so concerned about numbers that we bring into our churches individuals who have not been touched, convicted, and drawn by the Divine Spirit.

It is also possible that in our effort to win to Christ we need to depend more on the power of the Holy Spirit and less on special manmade methods or techniques. There may be and is a place for the latter, but they can and will become a curse if we substitute them for the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **Reveal the Father**

Jesus was sent to reveal the Father. We are sent to reveal Him and hence to reveal the Father. In the great statement of Jesus concerning the sheep and the shepherd, His concluding word was, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Philip, on one occasion, said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied” (John 14:8). A portion of the reply of Jesus was: “He who has seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). He then asked them and would ask us, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?” (John 14:10).

The writer of Hebrews reminds us, “. . . God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son . . . He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature” (Hebrews 1:1-3). He was the exact reproduction of the Father. Just as the seal of an institution on a diploma or an official document is an exact replica of the official seal of the institution or agency, so Jesus is the exact reproduction of the Father.

In the great prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17, He prayed, “That they [His disciples] may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us . . .” (John 17:21).



Now what specifically did Jesus reveal concerning the Father? He revealed His nature. If we want to know what God is like we examine the life of Jesus. He was God incarnate, or God in human flesh. We are supposed to be Christ incarnate. We should try as best we can to reproduce in our lives the kind of life that He lived. We do this most effectively when we turn ourselves loose in Him or turn Him loose in us. Kagawa, the great Japanese Christian of another generation, used to say that every child of God is “a little Christ.” You may not like that when you first hear it, but the more you meditate on it the more correct it will seem and the more challenging it will be.

Jesus also revealed the power of the Father over what He had created. That was one of the functions of the miracles. Not many if any of us would claim to have the power to perform miracles, but we can reveal the power of our heavenly Father to sustain and strengthen us in difficult times. Many of us may be able to testify that we are alive and functioning at least to a limited degree for our heavenly Father because He has touched us in some miraculous way in the past. We can participate at least to a limited degree in His miraculous work in the world through praying with faith, asking Him to step in in some unusual way. And we should remember some of the great miracles of our Lord that reveal His unusual power and His unpretentious way of touching lives and blessing those lives.

Jesus consistently revealed the Father’s attitude toward suffering, sinning mankind. He did this not only in miraculous ways but also by the fact that He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). This could be spelled out at considerable length. Let us mention a few things that He did as He went about doing good. He took the children in His arms and blessed them. He lifted the level of women, fed the hungry, and used His miraculous power to help the suffering. He had compassion on the multitudes and on individuals. He

wept over Jerusalem, but He also wept with Mary. How much of His life do we reveal as we touch the lives of others?

One thing Jesus did that we need desperately to attempt to do is to separate the sinner and his or her sin. He loved the sinner without overlooking his or her sin. There were no words of condemnation by Jesus for the sinner except for the self-righteous sinner. His word to sinners in general was the word He spoke in the Pharisee's house to "a woman who was living an immoral life" (Luke 7:37, TEV). His word to her was: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

Let us not forget that in a similar encounter, with a "woman who had been caught in adultery" (John 8:3), He added, ". . . Go, and do not sin again" (John 8:11). He did not and does not whitewash sin.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Maston spent considerable time on this word and others establishing the number of occurrences in the New Testament. What does his citing the number of occurrences mean for you?
2. Early in this chapter, Maston mentions God's *leading* in speaking of God's *sending*. How do you think these terms are related? Are these synonyms or expressions reflecting God behind us and ahead of us at the same time, for example? Do the terms require a different perspective to understand as well as engage each? What do these two verbs suggest to us about God's presence in our lives? How do God's sending and God's leading differ in their perspectives and application in our lives?
3. Maston notes not to waste time. How does one find and exercise one's sense of timing and pace day by day?

4. Is Maston's take on understanding to what, where, and why we are "sent" too abstract for making the idea of "sent" functional in our lives? How does it speak to you?
5. How can we make the idea of "sent" less abstract and more practical in our lives?
6. The origin of the term "workaholics" that Maston used is credited to Wayne Oates (see the footnote earlier in this chapter). How much of congregational life encourages workaholism?
7. Would you agree Maston's "tendency on the part of some church members to complain" (see under the heading "Redeem Man") is a subtle address of social prejudice? To what kinds of matters could such complaint be directed, or processed?
8. What are some applications from Kagawa's identifying each child of God as "a little Christ"? How does one refrain from becoming the extreme of being equal to Christ?
9. How do you react to the statement *hate the sin but love the sinner*?