



ten:02

— CHALLENGE

Travis Hartjen & Stephen Sohns

A 20 day journey into the harvest field through Luke 10:02

www.ten02Life.com

Thanks for taking the challenge. We believe that today is a great day to start to pray for the harvest.

We invite you to set an alarm on your watch or phone to go off at 10:02 to be reminded to pray for the harvest every day. The harvest is all around us. May the Lord of the harvest send workers like us into those fields.

And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Luke :10:2 (ESV)

About the Authors



Rev. Travis Hartjen is an Apostolic Church Planter in the DFW area. He has helped plant two churches, Tangible Grace in Allen, TX and The Grove Church in Argyle, TX. He is currently working on two new church plants, The Table in Little Elm, TX and another in the Avondale, TX area.

Travis started ministry as a DCE in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and worked with jr. high and sr. high students. He has spoken at numerous youth gatherings, district gatherings, and training events. He transitioned to church planting in 2008 and continues to share the hope of Jesus with all. He is also a co-host of the podcast Known Legacy that focuses on helping men come alive in the life that God has given them.

Travis is a co-founder of Groundbreakers to Harvesters, a church planting movement that partners with churches by equipping families to cultivate relationships with their neighbors and join in the Apostolic Church Planting Movement.

Travis and his wife, Tara, currently live in Argyle TX with their four children.

About the Authors



Dr. Stephen Sohns is Senior Pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Spring, TX. He and Ursula have served this Congregation since 1990. The book, "The Great Sending," 10-02 Harvest Prayer and **#WeCanDoMoreTogether** continue to be important influences in the congregation's development as a mission sending center.

"The Great Sending" provides a Theological/Biblical foundation for each person being sent into where they work, live, play and eat and to intentionally look for where God is at work.

The ten02 Harvest prayer focuses our eyes on Harvest Workers for His Harvest. We are each workers and we also need more workers who want to plant churches.

#WeCanDoMoreTogether is a slogan (and even a t-shirt) that gives us a platform as a community leader with police, fire department, elementary schools, and assisted living facilities right around us.

Dr. Sohns and his wife enjoy working with PLI, PALS, Planting Networks, Leader Coaching, and Travel. Life is enjoyed with three sons, a daughter-in-law and Steve's parents.

FORWARD

A couple of years ago my younger brother moved from State College, PA, home of Penn State University, to central Texas. He and his wife moved back so that he could lead worship and community groups at our church plant.

As we got rolling with figuring out how two brothers might work together at the same church, I noticed something peculiar. Every day at 10:02am his phone would go off. After stopping the alarm, he would bow his head for a few seconds, then jump right back into conversation. This happened every time we were together at 10:02.

Finally, one day I asked what the deal was with 10:02. He shared the story of an ecumenical gathering of college ministry leaders at Penn State. They shared this verse, Luke 10:2, "And he [Jesus] said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" Other members of the group had set their alarms to pray at 10:02 as a reminder. He asked me to join in with the alarm and the prayer.

Since then both our alarms go off at the same time. We shared it with our dad, a pastor, who in turn shared it with the church planting network with which we are all connected. During our zoom calls with this network whoever is talking when phone alarms start going off is the one who prays. We now start church at 10:02, each week praying for harvest workers in our neighborhoods and with connected churches.

It is incredibly simple. A phone alarm. I have mine set to play Psalm 46 by Shane and Shane. Each time I get through the first few lines:

Oh, come behold the works of God, the nations at His feet
He breaks the bow and bends the spear
And tells the wars to cease

This is the God we are praying to, the Lord of all creation. The one who ends wars and ushers in peace. When that day comes I want to be joined by as many people as can be. 10:02 is my simple reminder to pray for harvest workers.

I pray that the Lord would send harvest workers into His fields.

I pray that the people in my church would be sent as harvest workers.

I pray that the Lord of the harvest would prepare the fields.

I pray that that same Lord would use me as a worker in His harvest.

These devotions will call you to the same thing. To pray those prayers. To look not only at the people around you but at yourself. To pray for church plants, established churches, friends, family, co-workers, and ask that they may all be workers in the harvest field.

So, will you set an alarm with us?

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part:01

Travis Hartjen
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Day 1: The Call (Mark1:16-20)

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." - Mark 1:17

Imagine what a life changing moment that was for the disciples when Jesus looked at them and said, "I choose you." All of their plans, dreams, and ideas about what the future held for them was flipped upside down. Nothing for them would be the same. How exciting and terrifying at the same time.

This is the call that Jesus has given to all of us, His Disciples. He invites us to lay down our dreams, our desires, and follow Him on this eternity-changing adventure of fishing for men. Don't miss the reality that the disciples were just average joes like you and me. There was nothing special about them other than their willingness to follow Jesus wherever he called them to go.

That call to go is our call as well. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus continues this invitation to His followers. He tells the twelve to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God has come in Mark 6. In Luke 10, he tells the 72 to go before Him. Then, in Matthew 28, he tells us all to go and make disciples. You and I are a sent people who go with the Holy Spirit that was given to us at our Baptism. We have all that we need to follow Him today.

To be sent by the one who created us is exciting! Who better to know us, our passions, our shortcomings, our baggage, and our gifts than our Creator?

When I was called to be a Church Planter, I pulled a Moses and came up with a plethora of excuses why it should be someone else. I wasn't trained, I wasn't an ordained Pastor at the time, I had a young family, and I had a safe and

secure job as a DCE. Why would He send me on this crazy adventure? After lots of prayers and conversations with trusted counsel, I realized that the creator of the universe knew what He was doing. I finally said what Isaiah said, "Here I am. Send me."

Have you said that yet? Have you had that honest conversation with Jesus? Have you told Him your excuses and surrendered to His calling? Have you said, "Here I am. Send me?" That is where this journey begins for you and me. It begins with the posture of being willing to lay down our nets and go. There are many places and ways that we are sent. Some are sent as prayer warriors for the mission. Some are sent to be on the front lines, building relationships with those who don't know the Good News. Some are sent to fund the mission in extraordinary ways.

Reflection: Today, take time to have a conversation with Jesus. Let Him know the fears and concerns you have and ask Him, "Where are you sending me?" Write down what you hear from Him and begin to move in that direction.

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Day 2: Go Where He Sends You (Luke 10:1)

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where he Himself was about to go" -Luke 10:1

Where are you being sent? I remember when I first got my driver's license, even just going on errands was pure joy. I didn't care if it was to the store, to get gas, or to pick up a friend. It was always fun to get in the car, turn on the radio station I wanted to listen to, and have the freedom to go wherever I wanted. Don't get me wrong, I would eventually get to the destination, but I would often take the long way there. I just loved the freedom that driving gave me. Looking back, I also loved the fact that my parents trusted me enough to send me. They trusted that I would pick up what they needed, and would return with the car in one piece. I think it was that act of trust that gave me the confidence to fulfill the task at hand.

In the same way, God is sending you into the harvest. He doesn't send us out alone. He sends us out with the Holy Spirit who is there to counsel us, guide us, and remind us that we are sent. So, do you know **WHERE** you are being sent? Maybe the better question is, do you know **WHO** you are being sent to?

As much as Jesus loves His creation, He loves the people of His creation even more. Both those far from Him and those already a part of His family. His love for all of His people is why he became flesh in the first place. It is this love for a restored relationship with His people that led Him to the cross to pay the price for our rebellious hearts and our sin. As His children, baptized in Trinity, we are now invited to join with Him on this redemptive mission.

You have a unique mix of gifts, passions, and hobbies that take you into unique settings to hang out with different people. Diving into that mix will help you discover to whom Jesus is sending you. Is there a coffee shop you like to frequent? Is there a team you are a part of? Is there a hobby you enjoy that can be done or shared with others?

It is when we invest time in places and spaces outside the church that we begin to see whom Jesus is sending us to. Begin to pray for the people that you hang out with who don't go to church. Invest more of your time hanging out with them, sharing life with them, and always be watchful for the Spirit working in their lives. As 1 Peter 3:15 says, "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

Reflection: Identify where or to whom you believe God is sending you. Begin to pray for them and organize your schedule to intentionally spend time with them, trusting that the Spirit is already at work there.

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Day 3: The Buddy System (Luke 10: 1)

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go" -Luke 10:1

Hurricane Harvey was a beast when it made landfall near Houston in 2017. The amount of rain that fell as it stalled out over Houston was almost unprecedented. As a result, the flooding was extensive. Many areas in Houston that had never flooded now found themselves under feet of water and many people who thought they could ride it out in their homes now found themselves stranded and in need of help.

Living in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area and having family in Houston, I was keenly aware of the devastation. On a whim, I texted about 10 of my non-church buddies to see if anyone had a Jon Boat and if they would be interested in heading down to help out. If I am honest, I was hoping that no one would reply to my text, however, one guy did. He had a boat and the passion to help out.

He swung by and picked me up at 6:00 am. We had no idea where we were going, what we were doing, or how it would end up. But, we were on the road to Houston. During the 5+ hour drive down, we experienced fear, anxiety, and a lot of opportunities to turn around. It would have been so much easier to let someone else do it. However, neither of us wanted to be the one to quit or let our nerves get the best of us. Because we were in it together, we had an unspoken commitment to see it through.

There is something that happens in the heart of man when you do something with another person. You find strength you didn't know you had, a determination to not quit, and a will to see things through. It is this reality that Jesus tapped

into when He sent the 72 out in pairs. Jesus knew that alone, they would find clever ways to delay or to talk themselves out of what lay ahead. But with a partner, you just keep going.

We live in a world where many are stranded and in need of spiritual rescue. They are beginning to see that what they thought was safe and secure is now shifting sand and their world view is under water. Jesus sees this and hears their prayers for help. He is mobilizing His church, sending His children into this ripe harvest field with the Good News that rescue has come.

Don't go it alone. God has someone that He desires you to partner with on this rescue mission. Someone who will encourage you, share the burden with you, and that you can celebrate with you as you see the Spirit move and do what only the Spirit can do. It may be a friend at church, a spouse, or someone you are about to meet. Invest in that relationship. Start to do life together, praying for those whom Jesus is sending you to. The mission is too important and the journey too long to do it alone.

Reflection: Who do you think God is calling you to partner with? Have a conversation with them and invite them to this amazing rescue mission.

NOTES:

Day 4: Time to harvest (Luke 10:2)

"And He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." -Luke 10:2

Growing up we had a corn field in the back of our house and I loved it. Every spring, we would see the farmer come around and prepared the fields, then plant for the year. We would not see him again for a few months as the corn just grew. Around the 4th of July we would walk the fields with the corn rows about knee high, amazed at how it grew all on its own. In the fall, we would play hide and seek in the field, running up and down the rows, only to have it harvested in late fall.

Looking back, I am amazed at how the whole process just worked. With little input from the farmer for most of the summer, the corn just grew and continued its march toward maturation then was harvested. I know the farmer was working hard that whole time. He was getting things ready, repairing equipment, managing other fields and doing what he had to for the best possible harvest. When the time was right, he would reap the rewards for his hard work and patience.

In a similar way, we look for the work of the Spirit in the hearts and minds of those around us to know when the harvest is ready. Remember, we are NOT the ones who save, bring change, or bring forth confessions of faith. This is the work of the Spirit. But, like the corn that grew and matured for the harvest, we can learn to look for the signs in people's lives that the Spirit is at work and join the Holy Spirit there. In a book titled "I Once Was Lost," the author lays out five different thresholds that people will journey through as they move from no faith toward faith in Jesus. First, they move from distrust to trusting Christians, then they become

curious about the life and beliefs of Christians. Next, people who are not journey with Jesus become open to change in their own life or belief systems. Finally, they begin to see themselves seeking after God. It is here that faith takes root.

I find it helpful in knowing where people are on their faith journey, being able to identify how God is calling me to join Him. If it they are struggling to trust God, the Church, or Christians, I dive into spending time with them, being transparent and looking for ways to serve them. If they are curious, I ask questions and answer any that they may ask me. When they are open to change, I invite them to join me as I seek to follow Jesus so that they may taste and see how good Jesus is.

It is the Spirit that is working in the hearts of the people around us. It is His work and His work alone. How amazing that he would invite us to join Him in that work, seeing firsthand how he brings people healing and hope. Our task is to ask, "What does the Good News look like to them? Then, with the help of the Spirit, join Him there, being tangible Good News to them by what we say and what we do.

Reflection: Do know you where your friends are on the journey? What does it look like for you to join them where they are?

NOTES:

Day 5 The workers are few (Luke 10:2)

"And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." -Luke 10:2

Paul is one who went to the harvest. He was constantly seeking where and to whom Jesus was sending him, and he would go. There were times he wanted to go to certain communities but Jesus would close the door. That never changed the fact that Paul understood that wherever he was, the harvest was plentiful. In a new community, he would build relationships and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Even in prison, Paul would proclaim the Good News. He worked tirelessly in the harvest field.

At one point, he had a travel companion named Timothy whom he worked with, taught, and trained as a worker in the harvest. As Timothy grew in the knowledge of truth, it became apparent to Paul that Timothy needed to be sent out to train others for the harvest. Paul would write to Timothy from time to time to encourage, correct, and give him advice on how to handle things going on in His community (1 & 2 Timothy). In Paul's second letter to Timothy, Paul reminded him "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5)

Timothy needed to be reminded to "do the work of an evangelist." Why? Maybe it was a word of encouragement from Paul or maybe it was a word of wisdom because mission drift had set in. While Timothy was focused on this work at first, maybe he had become distracted by the many opportunities and challenges that ministry and life can bring. It happens to all of us. Our calendars get packed, our time becomes scarce and we can get burned out or become distracted.

Is this the reason there are so few workers? Maybe. The good news is that this is not a salvation issue for us. God's love for us does not hinge on our obedience or disobedience to Him, as hard as that may be to believe. Even with that reality, he invites us to join Him on this mission. To go and invest in the people he is sending us to, not only for the other person, but for us as well.

Greg Finke in his book, "Joining Jesus," says it this way, "Starting is what stops most people." Would you agree with that? Moses didn't want to start and Jonah didn't want to go where God was sending him. Yet, after their conversations with God, they followed and saw God do amazing things. The workers are few, but God goes with those He is sending.

Reflection: What is keeping you from starting this journey? Is it fear, time, trust? There are many reasons we might not start the journey Jesus is sending us on. Take some time to wrestle with that. What are the roots of these issues? Offer them up to God, see what His answer is.

NOTES:

Day 6: Pray, Pray, Pray (Luke 10:2)

"And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." -Luke 10:2

We are a praying people. It is an act of faith to offer up our prayers to God. Often our prayers are for situations we are dealing with. It may be family concerns, health problems, or even decisions we are facing. How good is it to know that God has promised to hear our prayers in both the big and little things.

Here, Jesus reminds His followers to pray to Him for the harvest. This is a posture of serving others as we begin to intentionally and relentlessly pray for people who don't know Jesus.

If I am honest, this is often an area that is lacking in my life. Not prayer, but intentionally praying for the harvest and for the workers that Jesus is sending out. It takes discipline that I am lacking in my heart and mind. Yet, this is one of those commands from Jesus that He asks us to be faithful with and this is the goal of this whole study, that we would be a people who regularly pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers into the field.

Paul reminds us that it is not a flesh and blood battle that we are in, but a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). He also invites us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 17), and pray about everything (Philippians 4:6).

It is in prayer that we see God at work. It is in prayer that we see God work in us, pruning us and opening our eyes to see what He is doing.

That is why we are inviting the Body of Jesus, the Church to take the 10:02 challenge. Imagine the whole church praying for God's harvest at 10:02 every day. He does not need our prayers to accomplish His tasks, yet He invites us to pray. To pray earnestly to the Lord. There is an urgency to this prayer. A sense of desire, a longing for the Lord of the harvest.

Reflection: Daily and with intense conviction, let us pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. If you have not done it yet, set an alarm on your watch, phone, or computer to go off at 10:02. When the alarm sounds, pray earnestly for the harvest.

NOTES:

Day 7: Ask (Luke 10:2)

"And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

If you have ever spent time with a toddler, you know one of their quirks is the ability to ask questions. They will ask the question "why" over and over again until the only proper response is "because I said so." They ask about the world around them, always digging in for more knowledge, more information to better understand the world they are living in.

The ability to ask questions and to make requests is one of the things that set a part from the rest of God's creation. We are an inquisitive people. We long to know our family history to better understand where we come from. We ask questions about how the world works, how our bodies work, how relationships work. We seek, we ask, we discover.

In Luke 10:2, Jesus invites us to pray and ask something specific, that the Lord of the harvest would send more workers into the harvest. Why? Why would that be the request? He could have asked for hearts to be turned to Him. He could have encouraged us to ask that our churches would grow. He could have encouraged us to ask for anything. But He didn't. He tells us to ask for more workers to be sent into the world.

Maybe the goal of having us pray for this is that it puts the harvest on our radar, so to speak. If we are praying for the harvest on a regular basis, we begin to think about it more and more. Then, as we think about it, we begin to see ways that we can become a worker in the fields.

An interesting thing happened to the disciples in Mark 6. Jesus is moved by compassion to teach the people that have gathered around Him. As He is teaching, the disciples notice that the people are hungry and that they are in a desolate place without the resources to provide for the people. They decide to bring this problem to Jesus. They had identified the problem and desired Jesus to do something about it. "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." (Mark 6:35,36)

Jesus' response to them is, "you give them something to eat." (Mark 6:37)

When the needs of the harvest become known, when they are on our radar, he will often invite us to join Him in doing something about it. What an amazing gift that Jesus would give us a chance to see His work in such an intimate way.

Reflection: As you have been praying for the harvest, what are some of the needs that are being put on your radar? How is He asking you to join Him in that harvest?

NOTES:

Day 8: Go Your Way (Luke 10:3)

“Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves”

There are typically two types of people when it comes to taking a trip. On one hand you have the type of person who will plan, prepare, pack days before it is time to leave. They know where and when everything is supposed to happen. On the other hand, you have the type of person who packs the morning they are to leave, spending precious time looking for old emails that have tickets, reservations, and other important details. Somehow, these two types of people often marry each other.

My wife is the planner in this situation. She is the one who has the clothes laid out days before the trip, looking at the weather for any updates and is making sure everything has been freshly washed and folded. I, on the other hand, pack the day we leave, often forgetting important items like toothbrushes, socks, or a swim suit, even though the trip is to the beach. If it were up to me, we may never actually get on the road because if I am totally honest, I am never ready to leave when it is time. Regardless of who you are in this situation, when it is time to go, it is time to go.

It is interesting that right after Jesus invites the 72 to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the field, He tells them to go their way. He reminds them that this is not their idea, this is not their plan but it is His plan. He is the one who is sending them.

I think he knows our tendency to delay, to want more information, and to understand the plan better. We can come up with excuse after excuse on why now is not the right time and if we had just a little bit more info, then we would go. In the business world, this is called paralysis by

analysis and it keeps people from doing what needs to get done. In the church world, we call it the frozen chosen.

As the story is shared in Luke's Gospel, it is clear God doesn't give them much information. He doesn't answer all their questions or lay out a detailed itinerary, but He sends them anyway.

Something amazing happens when we set out on a course like Abraham did when God called him to leave everything and follow God to the promised land. We can only follow Jesus because we don't know for sure where this is going or how it will end up. It is in these moments that our faith is girded, our prayers are focused and intense, and we must fully rely on Jesus and His Spirit.

And at the end of the journey, who gets the credit? Jesus does. It was He who sent us, it was He who provided for us along the way, and it was He who did amazing things throughout the journey.

Reflection: Write out some of the reasons people use that keep them from going? How has Jesus overcome those reasons throughout the Bible?

NOTES:

Day 9: Send in the Lambs (Luke 10:3)

“Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”

When it is fall in Texas, there is nothing like Friday night lights. Schools around the state gather together at the football stadium to cheer on their team. The band plays the national anthem, the cheerleaders get the crowd amped up and the tension on the side lines can be cut with a knife. Soon, two teams will meet on the field to see who is bigger, faster, stronger, and has the better plan. From the trenches of the line to the pass routes run by the fastest guys on the team, young men face off against each other to see who will win the battle.

To be the best, one must spend hours watching film, lifting weights, working on technique, and learning what it is to be a team. There is no hiding, and excuses are not accepted. In front of your family, your friends, and the fans in the stands, every individual's performance is on display. A missed tackle, a dropped pass, a missed block is seen by all with a cheer or a gasp.

We spend a great amount of time and energy to train to be the best at what we do. We spend hours working on being the best at our vocation, our calling. We work hard at being dominant at what we do.

This doesn't sound at all like the posture of a lamb. Lambs are kind of dumb, lazy creatures that are prey in the animal kingdom. Why would Jesus send the 72 out as lambs and not as warriors or fighters?

Lambs must rely on the shepherd to survive. They are not capable of defending themselves, of rescuing themselves, or even providing for themselves. It is the Shepherd who is

charged with this. The Shepherd is making sure the lambs have can find food. It is the Shepherd who stays up at night to make sure the lambs are protected, taking on the wolves who would otherwise attack and devour the vulnerable sheep. It is the Shepherd to leads them and leaves the 99 to find the one who has wandered away.

As we go into the harvest, we have the Good Shepherd who goes before us. He is the one who will protect us, provide for us, and watch over us. We are called to know His voice, to follow where He leads, and to trust that He is a Good Shepherd, even when the wolves are all around us.

The harvest is a dangerous place. Praise God that we have a Good Shepherd whose name is Jesus.

Reflection: Spend some time today with the Good Shepherd and thank Him for all the ways He has provided for you.

NOTES:

Day 10: Rely on the Spirit (Luke 10:4)

“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.”

The Bible is full of accounts of men and women who stepped out in faith and had to rely on God to do what only God could do.

Abram was successful where he was. He had a household, livestock, comfort, and by all accounts, the blessings of being where he was. Yet, by faith, he stepped out on a journey to follow God wherever He led him. Abram trusted the Spirit to guide him to the promised land.

Moses, when it was time to deliver the Israelites from the tyranny and slavery of the Egyptians, stepped out in faith over and over again. He was led by the Spirit to raise his staff with the Red Sea before them and the Egyptian army behind. He followed the Spirit when he crafted a bronze serpent and attached it to a rod, lifting it up so all who looked upon it were healed.

Rahab, being led by the Spirit, put her and her family at risk when she hid the spies and helped them escape through the wall.

Joshua followed the Spirit when he marched around the city of Jericho day after day, trusting that the Lord would deliver the city into their hands.

David, led by the Spirit, stepped out on to the battlefield with only a few smooth stones and a slingshot to face the Philistine champion.

Shadrack and the boys followed the Spirit when they refused to bow down and worship the king, knowing it would result in fiery death. Then they were delivered in a miraculous way.

Peter followed the Spirit when he laid down his nets, his livelihood and the way he provided for himself and his family, to follow Jesus.

God does amazing things when His people step out in faith and trust the Spirit. They are not sure where it will go or how it will end. At those moments, there are no certainties, only the Spirit to provide for them and be with them.

Jesus asked the 72 to go on this journey and not to take money, provisions, or anything extra "just in case." He was asking them, and us, to trust the Spirit to show up and do what only the Spirit can do.

Reflection: What step of faith, trusting in the Spirit, is God inviting you to take?

NOTES:

part:02

Stephen Sohns
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Day 1: Greet one on the road (John 9:4)

"We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work."

It can certainly be said that Jesus, "The Sent One," never let distractions get in the way of His Sending. His ultimate purpose of being Sent was His primary directive from the Father and particularly given His three years of walking with His disciples. These were three years of focusing on being Sent and sending others. Everywhere He went, every person He met, every story He told, every village, and every teaching was drawn from the sending of His Father. There was no time to waste.

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth." John 17:14-19

This prayer has often been called the "High Priestly" prayer of Jesus to indicate His care for His disciples and His intercession given to the Father for them. But reading the whole prayer through the lens of "So I have Sent them into the world" would make us consider this as a "Sending" Prayer. Jesus focused on His disciple's well-being, their unity, and cleansing with Truth to all be supporting their "Sending." Jesus was not going to be distracted by anything except the mission of the Father. Likewise, He desires His disciples today to be absolutely intentional about every moment as a "Sending" moment.

I have found it helpful to have a few practices that help me stay focused on the “Sending” moments. When I go out to eat with friends, family, and especially fellow pastors, I want to remind myself that we are not just going out together for a good time, or to conduct church business as we sit at the table. God has sent us to that restaurant for this this special time (Kairos time). This is the time to “work the works of Him who sent me while it is day” (John 9:4). What is a simple way to be aware of those around us and intentional in our conversation with those who serve us, or sit near us?

Do you pray together before your meal when you are eating out? I hope so. Please do, as a simple witness that we offer thanks to God for food. You can add one more thing: Ask your server if they have any prayer needs that you can add to your prayers. Ask them to be specific. I have found that some will thank you and give you their prayers as they turn your order in. Others wait patiently for us to pray right there for our meal and for them. They share pictures of their kids, parents, and family. Rarely do I find that they won’t share a prayer request.

Reflection: Go out to dinner and ask your server if you can pray for them. By the way, tip well. Don’t stand on behalf of God in prayer and then tip poorly. Show generosity in prayer and thanksgiving for their service. It’s part of being Sent.

NOTES:

Day 2: Look for People of Peace (Luke 19:1-10)

"Today salvation has come to this house"

Zacchaeus is one of those stories that everyone loves to hear and tell. Children can connect with Zacchaeus immediately because they know what it's like to try and see something through a sea of legs and backsides. As we grow into adults and we are able to be welcomed into conversation and see what's going on, we often forget those days that we felt ignored and on the outside looking in.

In our world today, I hear stories all the time of people, and their families, who were hurt by the church. They felt belittled at some point by well-meaning people in the church. Perhaps this person was doing something wrong, or they were self-excluding themselves, or they were simply carrying around other hurts that showed up among a Christian congregation. But, is it fair to say that their feelings are valid and that someone needs to find them in the crowd and speak to their heart? At times these wounded people are shut off from Jesus and His church. Other times they are open and willing to find someone who will care for them and listen to their story. When this opportunity arises, listen without defensiveness. Simply listen and engage them where they are.

Zacchaeus knew that he was out of place that day and he certainly knew that no one wanted to spend time with him or let him into their circle. But Jesus was watching for people like Zacchaeus all the time, and that day He was specifically searching him out. As we know, Zacchaeus was ready. He was what we call "a Person of Peace." He was someone who was open to the Gospel of Jesus and/or open to inviting others to come along and listen to what Jesus had to say.

When we arrived at a church 30+ years ago, I met a man who was born Jewish. He married a member of the church and attended worship nearly every Sunday with his family. He also attended adult Bible class every week. He was our best greeter for new people. He would tell them, "I may not believe this myself, but you need to come to my Bible Class. It's the best group of people and they really like to study the Bible." Every year he would attend the men's retreat and challenge people to try and convert him; however, he would continue to say that he just couldn't believe in Jesus. His family of origin really weren't good Jews, so how could religion be meaningful for him? We did trust the Spirit was working because why else would he keep showing up.

Long story short, 28 years later the Spirit completed His work. This same man, who would not and could not be converted by his church friends, had a greater One working on Him. He now professes Jesus as His Savior, and I baptized him with his entire family in attendance. Your challenge: God converts, but you can find someone that you can walk with now. Maybe even for the next 30 years. Don't be discouraged that they are fighting Jesus or feeling left out. Focus on what the Spirit is doing in His Harvest.

Reflection: Write the name of an old friend and begin to pray for them every day

NOTES:

Day 3: The Worker is the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...”

We just talked about the fact that the Spirit works despite appearances. God’s Sending Mission of Jesus meant that He sent us. He did not send us alone but the Father and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us in our sending. As God’s heart for the World beats through us, we find that His heart beats more loudly in us too. Paul describes this heartbeat as His gift of faith resulting in fruit for His sending. Galatians 5: 22-26 says, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”*

It is the Holy Spirit who propels us as His sent ones and simultaneously transforms us by the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther described this sending as, *“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”* These words are so comforting to help us realize what God has done for each of us. But it doesn’t stop with us. Luther goes on to describe that the Spirit continues to call, gather and bring others to faith! Verse 25 of Galatians 5 says, *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”* We can’t stay behind while the Spirit is moving. It can feel good to step back and feel loved, but this being loved means that we are sent. Keep up...God is on the move.

In 2017, we were displaced from our home because of Hurricane Harvey. Thirty-eight inches of water throughout the house sent us away from our home for six months of tearing down and building back. It also sent us into our neighborhood as we returned home. One couple, I'll call them Ben and Beth, was also decimated by the flood. Their belief about their life story was that God was out to get them. They saw this as one more example of God shaking His fist at them and saying they were no good. Unfortunately, these beliefs also meant that they were negative, challenging to be around, and frankly cantankerous.

We believed God sent us to them and that our stories overlapped so that we could show and share God's love. The fruit of the Spirit was providing love, care, understanding and sometimes ignoring certain things that they said or did. They told us many times at the beginning, that they could not believe in God and provided many reasons they felt that way. They moved away recently, but it was fascinating that their God story began to change before our eyes. I heard one time, "We are people of faith" and them seeking prayer needs from us. As they left, they introduced us to realtors, workers, and friends as "amazing" people who had stepped in for them.

This was a situation in which the Spirit connected them to the God who had always loved them and allowed tragedy to be an opportunity to see Him for who He is. Are there people that are difficult to be around? Maybe they are hurting and need you to spend intentional time with them. A neighbor, a family member, or someone you met at the ball field with the kids. Look at them as God does. They are the 10:02 harvest.

Reflection: Identify a difficult relationship and pray for it. Pray that God's love would shine through as you navigate this difficult path.

NOTES:

Day 4: Invest in people (1 John 3:18)

"Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth"

Don't we all love sermons that let us sit back and look at everyone else? We think of all the people who needed to hear that particular sermon and that God needs to do something about all "those people." Sometimes scripture preaches or teaches and sometimes it just pries into our business. Because we are Sent by God, we do have to look at scripture as true and faithful to every situation, including our sending. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, writes "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

Perhaps we could paraphrase this as "Put your money (or time), where your mouth is." Most of us love the idea of God's missional heart. We like to talk about missions and we like to support other people who "do" missions. But we miss the part that we are on a mission ourselves and it's God's mission. He wants His heart for the world beating through us. In this passage, the Holy Spirit indicates that loving in word and talk is not enough. In fact, our sending is through deed and in truth. It is interesting that God says that our deeds and truth are actions. Truth is not simply something that is a proposition or a statement, but a living out of our being sent. In fact, truth is shown when we live out the sending of the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Truth about Jesus is that He lived out life with people and He invited them to do Life with Him. He said to the disciples, "Follow Me." He brought others along to be in relationship and a new Life of Truth with Him.

Hurricane Harvey called us, and our church, to get involved with the community more deeply. For us, this meant spending time with more and more families. The last devotion described a couple that was hurting and bitter in

life. That was not God's only Sending. We were sent to some of our new best friends. This includes a couple I'll call Karen and Justin. They had just moved into their home as newlyweds and were spared having water come into their home by just a few inches. What a blessing they have been to us. We spend time over meals, time at the park, time with their son, and anticipating their next child being born. They are both working for a significant company in the area, they have gone through loss of loved ones, they have struggled through Covid like the rest of us. They are going through life transitions, they are our friends and they are Christian.

They watch for things. They noticed our intentionality with the couple mentioned in the Day 3 lesson. They see how we are connecting with Christians and people outside the faith. We love simply doing life with them because they are sharp, caring, and they love the Lord. We also see them as those who will continue to be sent in our neighborhood, even if we were to leave and move elsewhere. We don't spend time with them because we want something out of them, but we see the Spirit working in and through them and we're pleased that God allows them in our life. Who are your partners in life? Are you intentional about walking beside people who can connect those who are disconnected from Jesus or His church? Can you do more together with others who "get it?" Luke 10:02 says to pray for harvest workers. Who can work with you?

Reflection: Which neighbor are you called to partner with on this mission? Invite them over to have a drink or a meal.

NOTES:

Day 5: Accept Generosity (Nehemiah 1:5)

“Oh Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep his commandments”

WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER is a statement and a t-shirt at our place. We've been saying this and handing out t-shirts since 2017. It goes back to the Hurricane Harvey flood and God's Sending of our congregation. For years I had been asking our congregation, "If we were gone tomorrow, who would miss us?" The most oft made comment was, "Well we would!" That's good to hear, but not the point. Who in our neighborhood or community would notice that we were gone? In my travels, I've generally noticed that people are unaware of the church that is nearby to where they live and work. I know we can blame a non-Christian culture and a lack of interest in Christianity, but I wonder if we have self-excluded ourselves and backed into our own little fortresses while the world is undergoing change?

Jesus did not say that we should sit back and wait for people, but instead He Sends us (Luke 10:02) and He indicates, "While you are going...make disciples" (Matthew 28). What does it take to get out of our own way and go into our neighborhood around our church? I have a friend who has made it a practice to go into areas that were impacted by hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, and the like. He normally calls the local Lutheran Church to see how the community is doing. As he asks the pastor about the community and how the congregation is helping, the answer often comes back that "we are fine" or "only a few members were impacted." After redirecting the question again about the community and how the church is responding, the pastors often restate that everything is fine and they handled what little needs to be done. It is a bit

shocking to see how myopic we are in looking at only our own church and our own needs and overlooking those in need around us. Are we the same way? Do we simply sit back and assume that all is well because we were not directly impacted?

#WECANDOMORETOGETHER grew out of God sending us out after a hurricane. We not only saw the pastor's need, and the congregational family's needs, but also the needs of families of our early childhood school, the needs of neighbors, friends of the church, and even a public school. The only school in our district that was flooded was about a mile from the church. Before, we may have ignored the need while taking care of only our members, but God sent us to that school for the immediate and future needs of the teachers, students and families.

You can read the whole book of Nehemiah thinking it is about building a wall. But it's more than that. It is about families standing side by side to build a wall and defend one another, and to assist others in the process. It was a community effort coordinated to help the whole community. It was God's effort to preserve the faith; and for the faithful to declare the glory of God and connect the disconnected.

Today, our congregation still works with that same school. Mentoring students, feeding the faculty, providing exercise classes, praying for and with the teachers, and working on projects in the community. God sent Nehemiah to build, He is building through one congregation in the community. As God sent Nehemiah to build in Jerusalem, we pray that we are being sent to build community in our neighborhood.

Reflection: Where, or to whom, is God sending your congregation to? If your congregation was gone tomorrow, who would miss you? Look around your church and talk with

others about your community. Find a school, nursing home, apartment complex, police station, firehouse or other with which you can begin to build bridges.

NOTES:

Day 6: Heal the sick (Luke 10:2)

"Therefore Pray Earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His Harvest"

If your congregation was gone tomorrow, who would miss you? We have been talking about the Spirit throughout these devotions on the Sending of Christ. (More can be found in the book "The Great Sending: God's Heart for the World beating Through You" by WJ Sohns). We could ask the question, "Why does God need us?" I don't know that God needs us at all, but He joyfully includes us on His mission. His heart beats for the world, and He desires His heart to beat through us." What a privilege to have God send us out on His mission. As we pray those words of Jesus, "Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" we see many things going on here.

1. It's His harvest
2. He is Sending His laborers
3. Praying for laborers does not take us out of the equation of being a Harvest worker
4. Pray earnestly.

That word "earnestly" is very interesting. It means "with sincere and intense conviction." That word affirms the earnestness of God for the Harvest, for Laborers, and for Sending into the forefront. God is not messing around. As we can see, God is all in and He is wanting to bring us all in. When we are earnest, intentional, we begin to see the needs around us. Is it not interesting how much time Jesus spent with sick, hurting, and neglected people? Those considered "sinners" and unworthy of attention by the "clean people" of the church? Are they not around all the time? Why does Jesus seem to attract these kinds of people? Maybe He is looking for them! Jesus makes an

interesting connection in this verse. He wants to connect those who are sick (hurting) and the Kingdom of God. He isn't simply bringing physical healing for the sake of physical healing but tying needs of people to a greater opportunity. Jesus focused on the Spiritual needs of people as He also addressed their physical needs. They experienced God's presence and kingdom in their life.

In Martin Luther's Explanation of the Lord's Prayer he asks, "What does this Mean?" Luther answers, "The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come among us also." God's Sending is to bring His kingdom to us and among us so that we NOW live under the power and grace of God. Not just someday, but now and fully in eternity.

#WECANDOMORETOGETHER As sent ones this looks like Jim making casseroles for the Constable Department for afternoon drop-off; Edna mentoring a little 5th grader and building a long-term relationship with the girl and her mom; Jennifer choosing to work at Pregnancy Assistance Center North; Brenda leading teachers in an exercise class before school; moms coming up to the church gym for exercise, community and prayer; buying pizzas from a struggling pizza shop owner to take over to the fire department; and working with a local businessman to provide for a homeless man who needs a step up.

Your challenge is to watch and listen. Don't assume anything about anyone! Often, those portraying that they have everything together are hiding what's really happening in their marriage, family and work. Those struggling in raising children need someone to come beside them. Single mothers need a babysitter, or a "big brother/sister" for their children. The possibilities are endless. This is an investment of time, and it may mean moving things off your calendar to leave time for meeting other people's needs. Some things can be simple, like cooking a meal, taking someone out for

coffee, mowing a lawn. Other needs may take greater commitment like “adopting” a family who is overwhelmed and making time to fill some of their needs. Some needs can be filled as an individual, and others need a team. God’s kingdom among us is you and I being sent to people with real needs.

Reflection: Who is someone you can invest in and use your gifts to be a blessing? Identify a person you can invest time and effort in. A neighbor, friend, co-worker, or family member. Pray for God to open a door in order that you can fulfill a felt need.

NOTES:

Day 7: Time to Move on (Matthew 7:6)

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs”

This is a strong statement! What does this have to do with Sending, God’s mission and God’s heart beating for the world through you? For Jesus’ audience, the dogs and pigs represented the undesirable people; the gentiles, the poor, the handicapped, the unclean. We learn some important lessons here for you and me and He may surprise us a little bit. Jesus was very intentional during his sending ministry on earth. He poured deeply into twelve disciples in order that they would be the initial “Sent Ones” from Jesus to the world. Admittedly, he had more who followed Him and that included the 72 that he sent out two by two; and we know he was even more intentional with the three closest disciples (Peter, James and John.)

The odd thing though, is that Jesus did not ignore the ones who would not listen. He doesn’t seem to follow his own words here. Think about how often He spoke to the scribes and Pharisees and gave parables that challenged their ideas about themselves and others? They were truly the outsiders and Jesus still reached out to them. Jesus had a heart for these self-righteous people and for those that they ignore. From Jesus we learn some important things:

1. We should harvest where the Harvest is plentiful; focus on where God is going and make sure to join Him there.
2. We realize that Grace was extended to us, and that we certainly would have been considered the dogs and swine in the eyes of the good Jews of the day.

Jesus turns around the idea of who we think would be worthy and who is most valuable in our eyes. I think over the

years of places our congregation has gone because of the sending message. We've been asked "Why" many times, Why go into prisons that house the worst of the worst? Why spend the weekend with rival gang members in the same room and talk about God's love? Why travel to El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala and Belize with wheelchairs to serve the handicapped poor?

In many countries, the local societies want nothing to do with those people, why should we? I've asked myself that when I see a pastor going around to grocery stores picking up day old bread, cakes and pastries and loading his van full and distributing them under bridges. He gives this food to people that I wish wouldn't keep walking up to my car with another sign in hand. Who am I avoiding because they look dangerous, smell too much, have sketchy stories, or make me feel that I just don't have time? I don't have answers for all of these, but I know working with other churches to house homeless families has been productive. Homes, job training and food went a long way. We distribute quilts to go to half-way houses, we find baby blankets for organizations helping women keep their babies or adopt them to another family.

Someone you know has a passion for something that is going on around you: human trafficking, foster care, children with disabilities, and much more. You can't do it all, but you can encourage your congregation or friends to help those making a difference? Who can you support with time or money that is making a difference in your city?

Reflection: Identify individuals or organizations you can support or encourage. Start planning tangible ways to support these people or organizations.

NOTES:

Day 8 Be an Ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."

Representing someone else can be either the hardest or easiest job in the world. In some ways it's easy, if I remind myself that I'm not the decision maker. I'm not the one who makes it happen, and it's not a reflection on me if it doesn't work. On the other hand, I can feel pressure because I want to do the very best for my boss, parents, spouse, or whomever I'm representing. It can feel like I'm carrying the weight of the world for them.

The great thing about this section from 2 Corinthians is that it consistently reminds us that God is at work. It is God who saves, God who calls, God who is rejected. We can go with confidence that we are obedient to the calling of being an ambassador and trust Him with the outcome. We could try and take on the weight of the job, but God continues to remind us that He has taken on the burden of the job.

Christ is reconciling the world to Himself and we come along for the ride of a lifetime, watching Him work. Not to mention, we realize that we live under God's wonderful Word and work. Reflecting on that, we can proudly say, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

I love team sports. In baseball, football, basketball, etc. I always talk about the team's success as a "we!" I have never hit one ball, caught one pass, or made one goal, but I will cheer and say "We won!" That's the blessing of being an

Ambassador for God in Christ. God is making it happen and He allows us to enjoy His “wins” in the lives of people.

I remember back to a church in Iowa where a dear woman in the congregation mourned that her son had rejected God. He was the well-known atheist of the County and he rather enjoyed being known as the guy who lived a wild life. I recall visiting her in her home. In her final years of life, she would talk about praying for this son, reaching out to him, and yearning for him to know Jesus. She prayed it would happen before she died. God answered her prayer, but not in her timing. When she died in her late 80s, he was just as far from God as ever. Something happened though. Maybe it was her funeral, maybe it was some life challenges, and maybe it was facing his own mortality while in the hospital. Whatever it was, the faithful prayers of a mother were answered. I was at a new parish, and a different pastor, who came along while this man was in the hospital, shared the good news. The son reconnected with Jesus. I imagine quite the heavenly reunion of this mother and son.

It would have been easy for us to give up on this man because he wasn't our son. Perhaps there are those we encounter that we are unwilling or unable to reach. We can pray and anticipate that God has the right person at the right time to connect with each seeking person. You also may be that right person at some time. Are you ready? Is there someone you haven't seen in years? Is it time to write a letter, email or text and let them know that God loves them and so do you? Today, you may be their ambassador for Christ.

Reflection: Reconnect with an old friend. Send a text, write a letter, make the phone call. It might be the right time today.

NOTES:

Day 9: Joy (Hebrews 12:2)

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,”

We have all heard about the difference between happiness and joy. The feeling of happiness is a result of pleasant circumstances, whereas joy is the condition of something that lasts through happiness and sorrow. It is the presence of well-being. As we have been going through these devotions, we can begin to understand joy more and more. As we join God in His Mission, we are drawn to the heart of God beating for the world through us. We are not as concerned with our success, our reputation, or our happiness in the moment. Like Jesus, we focus on the enduring purpose of being Sent. The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus' joy in chapter 12:2, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Jesus' joy was not found in circumstances, fame, success, but in the living out of His sending Mission from the Father. Our joy grows more deeply as well when we see how God is including us in the greatest rescue mission ever. Our lives have eternal meaning for others and ourselves. God commissions, empowers and enables us to be on a sending mission. This became abundantly clear to me during the time I was going to school for my eventual B.S. in Accounting. I had it planned out so well. I was going to gain my degree, pass the CPA exam, go on for my MBA and serve the Lord with gladness through my future success in business. Had that been God's plan as well, He would have blessed my sending as an accountant. But God had a different calling for me which was for me to be a

pastor. While I was making my plans, God was setting His plan in place, waiting for me to catch up.

God kept sending people to me who were disconnected from family, friends and even God Himself. I discovered that I was much more fulfilled participating with connecting people to Jesus than doing accounting. Meeting my friend Peter sealed the deal. He walked in one day simply looking for a friend. He thought he'd stop at a church to find some friendly faces, and fortunately, the members of the Lutheran Campus Ministry were friendly and welcomed him. Over time, it became so much more for him. He met me and plenty of other students, and he also met Jesus. It was profound to see how he changed as he grew in faith. Seeing his life take such a radical turn changed how I looked at my calling. I would sing the old hymn, "Hark the Voice of Jesus Calling" that ended with "Here am I, Send Me, Send Me." It was more than the words of a song, it was the Holy Spirit calling to my heart to work in the role God had chosen for me, to be a pastor.

Pastors are not the only ones who receive the joy of seeing people connect to Jesus. In fact, the answer to the prayer for more laborers in the harvest is found in those who work in schools, hospitals, factories, police departments, and any other work place. Laborers for the harvest are neighbors, parents, friends. You are the ones who have boots on the ground. This harvest field is found where you work, live, play and eat. My joy comes from walking along-side people like you as you dig deeply into the Joy of Sending. Philippians 4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your

hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” It’s a blast to be on a mission from God!

Reflection: Make a list of the things that bring you joy. How can those things connect you to people who do not know Jesus?

NOTES:

Day 10 Celebrate (Zephaniah 3:17)

*“The Lord your God is in your midst,
A victorious warrior.
He will exult over you with joy,
He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.”*

There is nothing like a celebration party. If you are celebrating something with others, there is a movement that goes on with that celebration. An example is seen in the team after winning a Super Bowl. The stages progress as described here.

1. Pure Joy. After the Superbowl the confetti streams down, fireworks go off, hugs are shared. Players find their closest friends and family. Fans celebrate all over the city, country, and beyond.

2. Countless interviews. The players revel in recounting the steps along the way, telling person after person how they feel in the moment and how the season unfolded. They forget the pain and hardship of practice and any earlier struggles. Those situations become battle stories to celebrate.

3. The new normal. Players will re-tell stories for years on how the BIG GAME was won. The season, the games, challenges and joys leading to the victory will shape much of their careers and memories.

The ultimate victory story will be told someday in Heaven, but we have victory parties to share before that time comes as well. We celebrate baptisms, marriages, funerals, and seeing others come to faith. Congregations recount how they made a decision to plant a church and birth a new baby community to reach new people for Jesus. Early

memories of church plant launch teams include Bible studies in homes, opening worship in a school, strip mall, or maybe an outdoor bar. We recall those who came on board in the early days. The Sending Church celebrates every victory with the Planting Church, walking together through pandemics, money problems, people shortages, all while seeing God's provision.

I remember growing up in a church planter's home in the 1960s. People were coming through our home for Bible study and Kingdom growth classes. We regularly saw people learning about Jesus for the first time, people being sent to go out to make personal home visits around their neighborhoods (called Kingdom builders), and whole families being baptized. It was hard not to celebrate something every week, because God was winning victories in the lives of people.

Today, we have the privilege to be directly connected to four church plants that pray with us, work with us and encourage us as we encourage them. We, the sending church, appropriately use the term "WE" and "us" when talking about God building His kingdom through mission planting. Someone might think that we are "losing" those people who are sent to plant a new congregation. In fact, both the sending and planting congregation are sent in their role and each benefit.

Joy is multiplied for both the sending and planting church. It is really fun to go to visit the plants and meet people that I would never have known unless there was a new place to reach new people. It is true that different churches reach different people and more churches reach more people. Both the sending church and planting church find more "harvest workers" stepping up to labor in the harvest.

It begins with a prayer, "Lord, send workers into the harvest." It's a celebration to see how God is doing something brand new and He allows us to be a part of the celebration. At our place, we say this at the end of a creed we use, and it goes like this:

After the ascension, the Father and Son, sent the Holy Spirit to boldly make and call all followers of Christ to His holy apostolic church. A community of believers, who are sent to all people with power and strength, courage and gifts to proclaim the Good News. As they were sent, people believed. As they believed, they were sent. As they were sent, we believe. As we believe, we are sent. (Thank you John Hirsch)

Reflection: Individuals: What concept or idea from these devotions do you want to continue exploring? How do you plan on celebrating God's amazing work in the world? Congregations, Pastors and Leaders: Are you praying with other congregations nearby on how "We" can plant together?

NOTES:

Head over to

www.ten02life.com

and sign up to take the challenge. You can find daily video devotions there and find more information about Groundbreakers to Harvesters and the Apostolic Church Planting Movement

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