



21 DAYS OF PRAYER

“ L I V I N G S E N T ”

AUGUST 9 - 29, 2020

OUR MISSION IS TO...

CONNECT ALL PEOPLE TO THE LIFE-GIVING
MESSAGE OF JESUS AS WE EXPERIENCE GOD,
FIND FREEDOM, DISCOVER PURPOSE, AND MAKE
A DIFFERENCE IN OUR WORLD

VISIT CTK21DAYSOFPRAAYER.COM SUBSCRIBE TO
DAILY DEVOTIONALS AND PRAYER CONTENT.

Praying Community

We are a praying community and we believe that when we pray, miracles will happen and God moves. Please join our CtK community to pray for our church, our community, our nation and one another. Having full anticipation for all that God can and will do, members from our congregation have prayed and worked throughout the summer to plan, write, and share devotions, prayers and celebration resources.

As a praying community we come together to ask God to help us "Live Sent," out in the world. As individuals, families, and communities we pray for our relationship with God to flourish throughout every aspect of our lives. Together let us each day set aside time to read and pray as a church family to seek to be His hands and feet.

Living Sent

Our theme for the 21 days of Prayer and Celebration this August is "Living Sent". In John 20:21-22 Jesus is calling and empowering us to go. "Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.""

Jesus calls us to have peace. Peace is a union with God, to rest in Him, to trust in Him, to know we are His. Jesus then says we must go into the world just as God sent Him. How is that? God came as Christ to live in the world, to walk in the world, to have His heart broken by what breaks the heart of God, to be incarnated in the lives of the people. We are called to live, love and act as Christ did, as sent by His Father. To do this He has given us the Holy Spirit – we cannot do anything for God without the Holy Spirit renewing us and moving through us. So, we as baptized Christians are called to live "Sent" lives. Like Jesus when He began His public ministry, once we are baptized, we are called to do the same. We become the "walking wet." Taking the message of God, the love of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit and sharing it out into the world.

Celebration

In this season we will not be fasting as a church, though you are encouraged to periodically fast to seek God's guidance and to draw near to Him. We are encouraging you to live in Celebration. Celebration is recognizing that we as people of God are to actively "live sent." When we are "living sent" we are celebrating what God has done in our lives through Jesus Christ and His empowering us by the Holy Spirit. We celebrate by returning to God what He has first done for us. As we live "sent lives" we must go out to live into other people's lives, to show the love of Christ. We must bring the love of Christ wherever we out go in the world. Our team has gathered dozens of ways to "live sent" in the world. You can do some individually, as a group, with your family or even with your community group, etc.... You may even come up with your own ways to "live sent" in the world!

2 Corinthians 5:20 calls us to be ambassadors of the risen Christ and we do this every day as we encounter others.

Using the list below, write down the ways you are living sent over these 21 Days of Prayer and Celebration, don't be afraid to talk about it. Talk with your family members, your community group members, your neighbors, and friends. Another good idea is to write it down in a journal. Doing so allows you to share with yourself what it feels like to "live sent". We would love to collect these stories and experiences so if you feel led to, please share your thoughts or ideas with Pastor Bill at bill@ctkcharlotte.org.

As you look to begin your journey, our prayers and blessings are with you and may you find connection to the One who has sent us all. May you grow deeper in the love of being sent by our Lord, may you make "living sent" an ongoing life style through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Possible Ways to Live Sent

1 Peter 4:8-10 *"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

I am "Living Sent" by the following ways:

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We would love to hear about your experience and journey through pictures and written experiences so that we can celebrate and walk with you! Feel free to email your experiences to Pastor Bill at bill@ctkchrlaotte.org

Ways to Celebrate During Our 21 Days and Beyond

- 1.** Be a door holder today. Everywhere you go, hold the door open for the people coming behind you.
- 2.** Share the coffee love. Buy a cup of coffee for the person in line behind you.
- 3.** Look for someone lonely or sad. Not everyone is having a great day. Offer a smile and ask how you can bless them on the spot.
- 4.** Pull up a chair, sit with someone who does not have the desire/motivation/ability/health you do, make it happen today.
- 5.** Hand out flowers
- 6.** What job in town goes unnoticed? Show up with treats for them!
- 7.** Grab a trash bag and clean up the street or block where you live.
- 8.** Write and deliver a handwritten note to your neighbor, for an extra amount of care show up with a treat.
- 9.** Send a meal gift card to someone who is sick, to a young family, to someone who needs a break.
- 10.** Invite one or two or a few college students, young professional or international student over for dinner or brunch this weekend.
- 11.** Call a friend to go on a prayer walk
- 12.** Call Charlotte rescue mission and go serve food
- 13.** Invite a neighbor/s over for dinner or lunch and get to know them
- 14.** Volunteer to serve at the church food pantry
- 15.** Pick a friend and go for a walk/hike and thank God for his nature and glory
- 16.** Take store bought snacks to the police or fire department
- 17.** Invite someone over who is a different ethnic group and have a cookout or dinner
- 18.** Deliver care packages to your neighbors
- 19.** Offer to mow the lawn, do some light gardening for someone who is older or needs some extra help.
- 20.** Write a note to your child's teacher thanking them for the hard work this last year or as school begins send your child's new teacher a not encouraging them.
- 21.** Go to a church worship service that is mainly a different ethnic group to experience different ways to worship
- 22.** Seek out the elderly in your church, take them out to coffee to hear their story
- 23.** Invite an older woman to a younger woman's or mom's small group with the focus to learn from each other
- 24.** Throw the ball or Frisbee in the evening as a family or friends
- 25.** Invite another family with you to go to the park
- 26.** Offer to babysit a younger couple's child so they can have a date night with free babysitting
- 27.** Play a sport with a younger child in neighborhood, they look up to older students
- 28.** Start a can drive at your church/school/other group
- 29.** Write encouraging messages on your driveway or sidewalk with chalk. Do the same for your neighbors.
- 30.** Hang a sign in front of your home supporting healthcare workers, minority groups, or first responders.

- 31.** Reach out to your neighbors when you go to the grocery store and offer to pick up essential items.
- 32.** Make sure your elderly neighbors or friends can safely get their prescriptions from the pharmacy.
- 33.** Take time to read and reflect on systemic racism and your role in the social justice movement
- 34.** Surprise a neighbor or friend with fruit from the farm stand
- 35.** Organize a book or puzzle swap with friends and neighbors
- 36.** Surprise a neighbor or friend with their favorite coffee drink from a local coffee shop
- 37.** If you have children, encourage them to send notes and artwork to friends, family, and neighbors.
- 38.** Write notes and make artwork to be distributed at a local nursing home
- 39.** Intentionally seek out books written by black, Hispanic, Asian, or other minority authors for yourselves and your children
- 40.** Make yourself available to your neighbors to help them collect mail when they go out of town
- 41.** Offer to wash a neighbor's car or sweep their porch
- 42.** Write letters of encouragement to members of the class of 2020
- 43.** Write a note of encouragement to a community group leader, volunteer, pastor, staff member at the church.
- 44.** Write a note to a person who has influenced you in your life. It could be a coach, teacher, neighbor, the man/woman down the street.
- 45.** Find a nonprofit in town to serve with. Some we have served with are Samaritan's Feet, Beds of Kids, and Charlotte Men's Shelter. There mired was to serve in the Charlotte area, go online and check them out.

What other ideas do you have?

Ephesians 6:18 "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,"



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DAILY PRAYERS, DEVOTIONALS AND SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 29:7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

God sent the Israelites into exile (banished them) to a city in which they did not want to be. God instructs them to seek the welfare of the city into which they'd been sent. This meant praying for and working for the good of the city in which they were held captive. I'm sure that if I were in their shoes, I wouldn't want the city that was holding me captive to prosper... in fact, I'd probably be wishing the worst upon them. But Jeremiah shares God's words with his people, ... if it prospers, you too will prosper.

What is your idea of being "sent" by God? If it's going to a place where you're always comfortable and being with people you're extremely comfortable around, I would ask you to rethink this concept. Christ doesn't only call us to pray for the people, cities or situations we support or love most. The places that need the most prayer and work are often the ones that hold us captive. And it's possible that God himself could have sent us to that place, just so that He could use us to transform it for His glory.

Sometimes it's hard to make sense of the places that God sends us to and the things we go through, but the most important thing is that we put our trust in Him, even when it's difficult or doesn't make sense. He is working, and He knows what He's doing.

I encourage you today to find new rhythms in trusting and obeying God, especially in the places that are most difficult to you.

Lord, thank you for who you are... a good, merciful, and loving Father to us. I pray you would empower and embolden us to live our lives for you, especially when our circumstances aren't ideal. Through difficult times, I ask that you would comfort us, grow us and use us to transform wherever we are for your glory. We put our trust in you.

Amen.

Matthew 20:28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

When I ponder on this verse, one thing that comes to mind is "choice vs right." Christ had the "right" to rule on earth with His sovereign power. Similarly, we have the "right" to many of the luxuries of this life. However, Christ came to this earth as a helpless baby and spent his life humbling himself and serving the most hated or marginalized sectors of his community. We in turn must take his example and choose to humble ourselves before the Lord of host first and then walk humbly with the Lord as we encounter this world.

While our calling may not be to give our physical life as a ransom, there are many ways we are sent to serve and be given as a ransom. When we point ourselves to God, we become less and he becomes more. When we serve in his name, with His Word as our guide, we become enabled by the Holy Spirit to do the counterintuitive thing and die to ourselves.

For example, in this broken world we have all been wronged at some point. While we have the right to be angry and settle the offense, we must choose to forgive. In doing so we please our Father.

We must go out into the world and serve our Father by serving others, according to his Word. Our obedience will increase His kingdom which is what Christ commanded us to do!

While serving may come in a more visible form such as overseas missions, there are countless ways you can serve in your community that may not be as obvious. Kindness is a service. Loving the children is a service. Caring for the mistreated (prevalent in our country today) is a service. My challenge to you is find ways to serve in your community that may not be conventional, but just as important to God based on His scripture.

Lord, my God and my redeemer, I thank you for stepping off the throne when you had no reason to do so. Thank you for taking on the gates of hell for me when I was yet a sinner. Please help me to love you with my heart and my actions. Humble my heart when I feel pride and remind me of your ultimate sacrifice when I shy away from serving due to discomfort. But most of all, let my actions be acceptable in your sight and let your kingdom and glory increase.

Amen.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Living sent. We go because Jesus was sent and we follow in His steps.

When I think about being sent, I get a real sense of anxiety. What even is living sent? How can I fit yet another thing on my to do list? When I hear big “churchy” phrases like living sent and going out into the world, I find the phrases to sound confusing and full of hard work.

Lucky for us, Jesus gave us a magnificent display of how to live sent. Well, now you are thinking here he goes with more Sunday School-like answers. Jesus’ entire life seemed dedicated to travelling and spreading God’s word, which is correct, but this is a completely achievable goal for you in your life as well. As Jesus is praying by himself in John 17, he simplifies His entire ministry. Jesus did His ministry simply in the world. Wherever we are in our lives, we are called to be salt and light. This does not mean we have to stand out on a corner yelling **REPENT TO JESUS!** or even necessarily “go out” at all. You can live sent in your daily environment. Simply let Jesus’ light shine through you! As Christians we don’t need to escape the world or avoid sinful people, we are called to stay constantly yoked with God and let **HIM** lead us in whatever environment we are in. By spending more time in Christian community, meditating on the word, and talking to God, we can let God use us in our work spaces, schools, and everyday communities. Living sent just like Jesus is a heck of a lot easier than we think and you don’t even have to change your schedule. Let’s dig into our faith more as a church and live sent using God as our guide.

Thank you, God. Thank you for making your desires for my life so very clear and so very simple. Thank you for sending me. I ask that you please continue to show me your ways, that you continue to light my path, and that you continue to give me opportunities to live sent. Please remind me often that wherever I am, I am always in the perfect moment to share your word, spread your love, and shine your light. I lift this up in Your Son’s precious holy name.

Amen.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Let's say you were **SENT** to a new grocery store to buy dinner. How would you know exactly what to buy? How to get there? How to get back? Or how to pay for it? To know all these answers, you would have to **ASK** the person who sent you, and you would need to **LISTEN** for the answers. It's the same when God sends you anywhere. You have to pray about where, when, what, who, and how He wants you to serve. You also need to listen. It may be hard to trust God when going somewhere new or meeting someone for the first time and sharing the Gospel with them. But no matter what, it is important to remember that God has a specific plan for you.

We should celebrate. Because of God's plan, we don't need to worry about what's going to happen or if we don't have all the answers. Let's take for example, a trust fall. A trust fall is when one person falls blindly backwards, trusting that the person behind them will safely catch them. A trust fall may be a little scary, but if you have confidence in the person catching you, it will be fine. So whenever we are nervous or worried about something, we just need to trust that God has our back. God hasn't failed us in the past and He won't now. And because He has caught us in the past, we can rest assured He will catch us in the future, even if it feels uncomfortable. This is exactly what Jeremiah is stating in the verse above. Our future doesn't have to be scary because God has proven himself trustworthy to us before.

Thank you, Lord, for having a plan for us! And no matter what troubles we're going through, we can trust that there is a bigger plan and you have everything under control. I pray that all those who are scared or uncertain about something, that you bring them comfort and peace. Thank you for always being here for us when we need you.

Amen.

Exodus 3:10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

We are called upon to speak freedom to people in slavery, just as Moses did for the children of Israel. But, what does slavery mean in our world today?

The dictionary says, *a slave is a person who is excessively dependent upon or controlled by something.*

I know a lot of people like that... controlled by an addiction, their partner or spouse or their job. In so deep that they believe there is no way out. Shackled to that situation beyond control, believing it will never stop and that there is no end. But there is a way out...turning to God. Having faith, praying, knowing that He will open the doors to move you out of bondage and into freedom.

Listen to that calling from God, as He sends us out to speak to those that do not have a voice. Have courage to sit down and start the conversation. Let them hear how great our God is and help them to break the chains that are binding them so tightly.

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us our freedom. Help us to have the courage to speak Your word and be like Moses... leading those who are burdened to freedom. To hear You, to listen and know that You will always be there in our time of need.

Amen.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

I love to look at this great promise that was given to Abram and know that I am here today because of God’s faithfulness. One part that I often overlook, however, is the action that God required of Abram.

He had to get up and leave his home to an unknown destination. He didn’t even know where he would be going!

Abram may have been scared, but he knew his God to be a faithful God. We see many thousands of years later that God was true to His word and God will always be true to His word. This GO command is still very active for each of us today. We have been called to go. God is the great orchestrator and has a grand plan to reconcile us all to Him. But, as with an orchestra, each must follow their own role so the collective sound is perfect. While God may be calling me to one place, He may be calling you elsewhere. The place may be physically far or immediately in front of you. It may look like joining a ministry in church, starting a business, or taking a front seat in the fight to the many injustices in our community/world. What we do know is that He will need to be your strength to complete your calling.

Our fear has never been the validating factor of God’s calling. Just like Abram, we are called to go to the unknown land. While our reward may not be founding a great nation, His promise of help and protection are very real.

My challenge is for you to seek where God is calling you. Pray, read His word, and speak with spiritually mature confidants to confirm His calling. Then get up and go.

Heavenly father, I am sorry for not trusting you fully with my life. Please help me with my disbelief. I want to go as you have called me. Remind me of your promises and authority. Show me the way because I want to go. Be my strength.

Amen.

Mark 6:7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

God didn't design humans to be alone- He knows we're better together. Two are better, stronger, and more abled than one. That's why God created Eve for Adam, and that's why Jesus sent the Apostles out in pairs. We are made to be together with others, even though some things may seem easier to do solo. Our lives, nor our ministries were intended to be solo-missions. In fact, Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit so that we would never have to be alone as we live our lives for Christ. We have a Helper who is always with us, and we also have the Church.

It's obvious that aloneness isn't God's desire for us, especially as we spread the gospel.

Christ has called us to live on a mission, and that mission is to spread the Good News of the gospel. That means going out into the world and reaching the unreached. We often think of the "unreached" as foreign people, tribes across the world, but we might just overlook the people in our own neighborhoods or workplaces who have never heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

If sharing the gospel is a new concept for you, or maybe you aren't sure how to begin "living sent," I encourage you to grab a mentor or a friend. Remember that two are better than one!

Father, thank you for your love and your sacrifice for us. If anyone feels alone in their walk with Christ, I pray you would send them a partner/friend to walk with on their journey of faith. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit and brothers and sisters in Christ so we don't have to face life alone. Fill us with your Spirit, God, and urge us to share the life-giving truth of your Word with others, changing the world around us for your glory.

Amen.

Philemon 1:3-7 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

The MSG version of verse 3 says "I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other believers."

I just love this version because I want my love for Jesus to **BRIM** over to others, wherever I go and in whatever God asks of me. It should all be driven by my love for Jesus. When our motivation is to please **HIM**, it becomes easier to overlook the flaws of others. We may believe a person is not worthy enough or too flawed to deserve our love and grace, but thankfully, God allows us to live sent lives for **HIM**, not for people.

At the time I am writing this devotional (at the end of June), I am preparing to become a living kidney donor. I do not know the person who will receive my kidney. I know nothing about them, their age, gender, or medical history. I simply know that God has asked this of me and I love **HIM**. And that is enough. I am thankful for all He has done for me and I want to honor Him with complete obedience. Many times in the past, He has sent me to Guatemala to do mission work; however, this summer, He is sending me to an operating room in Atlanta. My prayer is that the recipient does **NOT** thank me. I also pray that anyone who hears of this surgery thanks **GOD** for sending me. The Bible clearly asks us to share with others, to show love, and to be more like Jesus. We simply need to trust God when He sends us. We simply need to brim over with love for others because that's how God loves us. God may not send you to a third world country to preach His love, and He may never ask you to donate an organ, but He will send you exactly where He wants **YOU** to do His work. You just have to be willing to go and to love, and may all who hear of your love in action, praise and thank God!

Dear Jesus, I pray that others see my love for you. I pray that this love brims over in my life, in my words, in my actions, in my care for others, and in any sacrifice you ask of me. May we seek to trust you with the **WHERE** when you send us to new and sometimes frightening places. May we obey the **WHAT** when you ask to do the uncomfortable and sometimes painful. Help us remember love can do the impossible. Today, we celebrate love; we celebrate life; we celebrate you, God, by loving others.

Amen.

Esther 4:14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal poison for such a time as this?

As we live sent, we were made for this time. Just as Esther was made to help deliver her people, you are made for more, you are not made to remain silent.

King Xerxes of Persia and his assistant Haman had been planning a decree to kill all the Jews their empire. Many Jews fled to surrounding areas to stay alive, although a few remained in the empire. Two of these Jews were Esther, the bride of King Xerxes, and Mordecai, Esther's cousin. Their goal was to persuade the king and Haman to retract the murderous order. After the king and Haman declared the order, Mordechai rushed to the city gates where Esther was. He knew they had to continue persuading to get the order repealed. Mordecai was outside the city communicating with Esther who was with the king. Esther 4:14 explains how Mordecai was encouraging Esther to continue speaking up and following God's will in the face of adversity. We can learn a lot from the words and actions of Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai acknowledges God's power, as he says if Esther doesn't make the change, God will use someone else, but then her immediate family might die.

Have you ever considered that maybe God has led you to this exact moment in your life for this exact opportunity? As God's church, we need to speak up and seize each day and opportunity. Esther's purpose was to save the Jewish people and Mordecai provided her with encouragement and accountability. As a church, Christ the King should come together and seize every calling and opportunity, because who knows, today might be the day you answer the calling God put on your life. As we live sent, we should not be silent, shy, or delayed in God's calling. As Mordecai modeled, we should hold each other accountable and be bold to carry out the calling like Esther. At the end of the book of Esther, the order is repealed and Haman is hung on the very gallows that he built for Mordecai (kind of gruesome I know, but nonetheless a powerful, God-ordained ending). Through support, accountability, and boldness we can fulfill great callings and change the world we live in right now.

Thank you, Lord, for the voice and the accountability partners you have given me here on earth, and please guide me to use both to fulfill Your calling on my life. I ask that You help me stay laser-focused on my God-ordained purpose so that I can act when You call me to act, and I can encourage when You call me to encourage. Please let my actions, choices and words be bold and powerful so that people see You though all I do. Thank you for loving me dearly.

Amen.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

You can't go out and live sent if you can't even get out of your head. Yes, I am part of God's Holy Nation, but my earthy life gets in the way and some days I can't get passed myself. I have days when I make plans, but, of course, they never go as I think they should. They can go sideways or even off the rails. And, when that happens, I may get mad, angry, sad, disappointed or down. It can even take me to a really dark place. It gets trapped in my head, swirling around, never stopping, replaying over and over until I say **GOD MAKE IT STOP!!** In those times, I get down on my knees and really talk to God... pouring my heart out and asking, even begging, for His help. God has given me a gift...Mercy. He forgives me of all my sins, helping me to move out of that darkness into His light. Coming out the other side always makes me stronger... stronger in my belief and my love for God. With that strength, I can go and do God's work sharing my story, struggles and internal conflicts. I can also help others put their burdens onto God and see how great He is.

Dear Lord, thank you for always being there for me, to take up all my burdens and give me never ending mercy. I am blessed to be one of your chosen people and to be able to share that with others.

Amen.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Living sent isn't just a one and done type deal. It is your whole life. It's your home, your family, your friends, your work, your school... everything! When we truly do *love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might*, it will overflow into every area of our lives. However, as humans, it's not always easy to keep our love for God and the idea of sharing Him with others at the forefront of our minds.

We must remember that loving God comes first. Loving Him with all that we are is how we cultivate a heart that is ready for a sent lifestyle. Even if it is uncomfortable at times... even if you have to write it on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Don't take the command to love Him lightly. Do all that you can to remember it. It is the very reason that we are alive, and it should be the sole purpose for our lives.

Father, you are holy. Thank you for all that you have done and thank you for who you are. Today I pray that you would forgive me for not loving you first and loving you properly. Show me how I can live my life loving you more and sharing you with others. Guide me today and every day in love and truth. In Jesus name I pray.

Amen.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-8 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed-God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you.

I just started lacrosse for the very first time this summer. I had been playing soccer since I was three, but felt an inner desire to start a new sport. So I prayed, and that's when I remembered I had a lacrosse stick in my garage and decided to try this sport. In the process, I met a new friend on my street who also plays lacrosse, and we have quickly become great friends and fishing buddies. That is when God helped me realize that He may be using lacrosse as an opportunity to send me out to a new group of friends and teammates. Going to another country might be one person's mission *field*, but there are many *fields* out there. I have been to Guatemala five times with my family, and I love serving there. However, we are only able to go for a few weeks of the year. God is now giving me the chance to have a mission *field* that is right here in my community... on the lacrosse *field*.

As an athlete, I would love to please my coaches with my skills in lacrosse. But, as a follower of Christ, like the verse says above, I am **NOT** looking for praises from people. I strive to please God wherever He sends me. So, today, look around to see what *field* God is sending you to and celebrate those opportunities to love and pray for the people near you.

Dear Jesus, help us see the mission fields you have placed us on. Give us the courage to step in and help the people around us. Teach us new skills that help us be successful on whatever field you send us. Remind us to not count success as the world counts it, in games won or lost, but as you count them, in lives saved. May you be glorified in every way.

In your Holy name, Amen.

Matthew 5:43-44 You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

It is easy to live sent with those we love – but how do we live sent with people we hate, struggle with, or who irritates us?

As I was pondering clever ways to open this devotion, I considered using a popular clip from a movie, book, or story that everyone could relate to. I even spent twenty unsuccessful minutes searching Google before I realized there are very few modern-day examples of this high calling in Matthew 5. What Jesus asks of his followers goes against everything the world teaches us (as I saw first-hand from the minimal number of examples I could find). The calling is more than a simple anger management exercise God wants us to practice. God tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us as a calling for us to be different and set-apart from the world. Only Christians, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, can use the power of God to accomplish the incredible feat of praying for and loving our enemies. As humans, we think we can handle it, while God sits on his mighty throne and chuckles at us and our self-reliant sense of control. When we keep hate in our heart, it is as if we are trying to serve our own justice. Instead, we are called to lean on the One who holds and gives all justice. Jesus isn't telling us we have to be best friends with the people who irritate us, He is asking us to look at them from a different perspective. God asks us to think about someone you hate, an enemy, someone who bugs you, or someone who has hurt you and see them as someone who was created in God's image. They may have made some sinful choices or actions, but haven't we all? And, God is the real judge of their sins. I know that living with and loving our enemies is tough and can feel like a daunting task. However, we must keep in mind that we are all children of God who have a great calling on our lives. Our main job here on earth is to show the world God's love. Let's let God be the just God He is and forgive and pray for those people in our lives who we struggle to be around.

Dear Lord, thank you for continually calling me to a higher ground, and to a better, more grace-filled life. Thank you for holding me accountable to your truth and your design. Thank you for putting challenging people in my life so that I can have the opportunity to love like You love. I ask that you help me see You in the people I struggle with and I ask that You help me love and forgive them the way that you love and forgive me every day. Lord help me love my enemies. I ask these things in Your Son's precious holy name.

Amen.

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

In many team sports, certainly in most businesses, diversity of skillset is very important to the success of that team or business. If those with diverse skillset do not collaborate well... the diversity has lost some of its value. It is only within the collaboration of diversity where we discover the true value.

Paul talks about the parts of the church and how it comes together to form the body of the church (1 Corinthians 12:12), the bride of Christ! When Christ died on the cross, He opened a way for all who call His name and repent to be a part of His church without exception. If Christ, our Lord and savior, died for each and every one of us, we must accept His gift.

In medicine, if a part of the body is rejected by another, we call that a sickness. Let us strive not to have any sickness in the body. The body, the church, has a long history of this sickness but we do not need to let this sickness continue. With love and forgiveness, we can mend the wounds. While we are being sent out into the world to make disciples, we are also called to be one among the body and love one another. Anything short of this is not according to the will of God. As Christ says directly, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34,35).

As Roman 5:8 states, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Our love and acceptance do not stop with the body, but it extends to the world, according to His Word. While acceptance and love are not to be confused with agreement and permission, we must walk the fine line to love and accept non-believers.

I encourage us to look deeply into our own hearts to see where we can do better at accepting other ethnicities, worship styles. etc. We should accept other members of the body unless this person believes against Christ's teaching. In which case we must correct them in love. Let us also love those outside of the faith as Christ did for us before we accepted Him.

Father, you created me uniquely, intentionally, fearfully, and wonderfully. I thank you for who I am and more for who You are. Please place in me the heart to love all others as you created them in the same manner. Even though we have failed you, you still love us and chase after us. Grant me the same reckless and unexplainable love that would have you send your son to die on a cross while I was yet a sinner.

Amen.

Mark 2:3-5 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him, and when they had made an opening they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

In this passage there are multiple people who are answering the call of God. On one hand, we have the paralytic man. And on the other, we have the four men who brought him. This passage makes us question... who showed the greater leap of faith? The paralytic man who just knew that if Jesus were to see him, he would be gifted with something immeasurable, or the four who carried him on this journey knowing that a blessing would follow. There have been so many instances of God calling and sending someone. The hard part about being sent is answering that call to go. The Call can be completely out of your comfort zone and sometimes not even feasible with your understanding. But God finds and makes a way. I am not a prophet so I can't give you the step by step manual on How to Live in God's Purpose, but I do know that the first step is saying **YES!** By accepting the duty that God has given you, your life will be enhanced in countless ways. And I promise that blessings will flow just as the verse says... ***Son, your sins are forgiven.***

Heavenly Father, we thank you for being with us. We are a broken people, we have sinned and we continue to fall short. But you love us still. We wake up each morning by your grace. We thank you for continuing to use us as you see fit. We ask that you continue to place us in positions that allow us to sing the glory of your name and to further make disciples in Christ. We are children lost in the darkness that is this world, but we know that if we hold onto your unchanging hand everything will be alright. We are here, members of your kingdom, and we thank you for loving us.

Amen.

1 John 4:9 In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His own son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

Imagine this... You're standing in a beautiful, verdant garden flourishing with life. Lush green foliage surrounds you, and you can practically see the plants growing before your eyes. A soft sprinkle of rain begins, gently misting the surface of the earth with small droplets of life-giving water. Who makes all of this life possible?

God sends the rain to nourish gardens. He supplies the necessary sunshine, rain, and rich soil to allow life to flourish. But, we are responsible for planting the seeds, weeding the garden, and harvesting the vegetables that grow. As God's hands and feet, we are extensions of the Master Gardener, placed here on this earth to till the soil, sow seeds, nourish the sprouts, and watch as they flourish into fruitful and mature plants.

Our responsibility as Christians is to care for the garden around us, our family, friends, and community. We till and fertilize the soil by being genuine examples of Christian behavior and love; we sow seeds by sharing the gospel with others; we nourish the sprouts by fellowshiping; and then we watch as beautiful, mature relationships with God grow, producing fruit and dropping seeds of their own.

I know, as an introvert myself, that it can be incredibly hard to take that first step and talk about your faith with your peers. That's why Paul tells us in 1 Timothy to set an example through our speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Our words, by themselves, are just that... **WORDS**. But when paired with actions, we are acting as extensions of the Master Gardener, planting and tending to the garden around us. We live in and through God's love, and just like God sent Christ to the earth, so Christ sends us out to the ends of the earth to share the life-changing Gospel with everyone we meet.

Dear Lord, help us to tend to your garden, to live sent as we share our faith with our family, friends, and community. Help us to represent you as your love shines through our lives. Let us watch as our communities rise up and grow, maturing in their faith. Let our faith be fruitful and multiply as we strive to be your hands and feet in a hurting world.

Amen.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Many of us have heard the phrase at some point... *if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all*. The Bible has its own version. There is much power in our words, whether we intend them or not. In today's age of technology our words travel much farther than before with less context than before. It is more important than ever to watch our words.

While one may be quick to call someone sensitive and decry a culture of political correctness, I implore us to follow Christ's example. When He spoke, He was very intentional about the words He used and who His audience was. He was the master of matching His impact with His intent. As Ephesians points out "but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs." **According to their needs** cannot be lost in the verse. It is important that we know our audience so that our words can have the full impact that we desire which should always be for the building up of others.

We, of course may have slip ups, but we need to remain intentional in the delivery of our messages which should always be the gospel. The message of the gospel is fully about Christ and His perfect love. His chase after us, a fallen people. The gospel is about grace, mercy, and reconciliation. Love will abound when we focus on the message of the gospel in all of our words.

I challenge you to think about the person or group you are speaking to instead of what may make you feel better. This may be harder than containing a raging fire, but again, love abounds.

Heavenly father, let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. I pray for your words to become mine. With a word you created existence. Let my word be a giver of life and hope. Let my words only bring sight to your kingdom. Give me wisdom when not to speak and correct me even when I do not speak by my thoughts are impure. I love and trust you to be faithful in this.

Amen.

Jeremiah 30:19-20 Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small. Their children shall be as they were of old, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all who oppress them.

It was prophesied that this passage of scripture would be the Israelite's response to God's promise of restoration over them. The promise was that God would have compassion on His people and restore all that had been lost to them while they lived in captivity. How much more should we rejoice in what Jesus has done for us! His death and resurrection mean a life restored for those who put their trust in Him.

As we live our lives to share the Good News of Jesus, we must remember to always keep a heart of thankfulness. If we see through a lens of thankfulness for what Christ did for us, we will never have a reason to chase after vain things in hopes of finding fulfillment. In Christ alone is the fullness of joy, and when we live with this joy (especially in difficult times), it will be evidence to others of the work of God in our lives.

Father, thank you for who you are and what you've done. You are so worthy of my praise. You are so worthy of my life. Help me to trust in your promises for your people and for this hurting world. I will rejoice and be thankful, for you are good and your love for me is unending! Thank you Jesus! I love you, Lord.

Amen.

Psalm 38:9 O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you.

As living sent, we long for God, for others to know Christ, and for ourselves to grow deeper in Him.

We all have that one thing... that one thing in life that we wanted so badly... with our whole heart we wanted it, thought we deserved it, knew it was exactly what would complete us. It might have been a person we wanted to date, or a dream job, or a relocation to a perfect destination, or an addition to the family. But it didn't happen. There was no explanation, no logical reason, no simple way to understand or accept it.

Psalm 38:9 reminds us that God is with us always, even during those heart-wrenching times when we are longing, sighing, hurting, confused, or frustrated. He is with us during those times when it is difficult to believe that we are sent, that we are here on mission, that we have purpose, that we are here on His behalf.

During our journey here on earth, we are going to have times of longing for God, longing to see His face, hear His word, feel His comfort. We are going to have times when we are longing for others to know Christ, wanting them to be saved, to not suffer in darkness or loneliness. We are going to have times when we are wanting to grow in Christ and no longer feel stuck. *(insert dramatic music here!)* **But God.** But God knows our hearts, He knows our desires, He knows we are hurting, He knows our shortcomings, and He still loves us, He hurts with us, He has plans for us that are bigger than our wildest imaginations, bigger than our desires. In our struggles, He wants us to know He is on this journey with us and He has us, He holds us, and He will see us through it.

God, I Thank you for your ever-loving presence. Thank you for guiding my path and pulling me near when I try to stray or wander. Thank you for promising that You are with me during my longing, my sighing, my impatience, and my frustrations. I ask that You take my human desires and doubts and replace them with a longing for Your truth and Your promise. I lift this all up in Your Son's precious holy name.

Amen.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.

This extremely powerful verse has a promise AND a call to action. In this verse, the tense that is being used is extremely important. "His divine power HAS been given." This means that we have been filled with the Holy Spirit and have the power to act on His behalf to bring lost souls back to Him. God then acts through us and sends us where we are needed. This verse also confirms that we have all the tools we need to work on behalf of Him. How often do you feel conflicted about having tough conversations with people about religion? Have Faith! God has given you all the tools that you will need. Trust in Him. He will never leave you nor forsake you. This passage is all about confirmation. Live in that confirmation of Him who has claimed you and you will never fail.

Heavenly father we come before you with hearts filled with love. You have blessed us and continue to bless us. We give thanks for life, the freedom to enjoy it all and all other blessings. We thank you for Jesus and the sacrifice that He made for us to be closer to You. I ask that you continue to lead me, lead me to a place that will increase the followers of your name. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Amen

Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Let's celebrate the Lord together! In Christ alone is where we find our strength, hope, and joy. Yes, the Christian life is one full of denying yourself, picking up your cross and following Jesus (Matt 16:24), but it's also a life that is full of celebration in knowing what Christ has done for us. That's why it's called the GOOD News! There's a reason to rejoice in it. Though taking the narrow path may be difficult, God has promised us His strength as we endure this life and wait in eager expectation for eternity with Him.

The words of God are full of life and hope. As you live and share the Gospel and love of Jesus Christ with others, remember to do it with joy. The message of the Gospel is urgent, now in these times more than ever. Let's set an example for unbelievers by our constant joy and celebration of Christ. Don't be ashamed of your faith... be bold, confident, and courageous! Put all your hope, all your faith, and all your trust in Jesus. Rejoice! Celebrate Him! Praise Him! He is worthy of it all.

Lord, today we thank you for who you are! We praise you for being a loving and gracious Father to us. I pray that we would surrender our lives to you anew every morning. Give us confidence in you and your promises. Fill us with your strength and boldness to live our lives celebrating you, even if we don't feel like we have a reason to. Have my life, Lord. Use me and empower me to share your Good News. I love you, Lord.

Amen.



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