

## Sent for Relationship

### Opening Discussion:

How would you answer if someone asked you, “What do Christians mean when they talk about *missions*?” (Consider all the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why?)

*Allow small groups or tables a short discussion time to begin thinking about this topic with no expectation of having a formal answer.*

*It may be worth pointing out the various definitions from Merriam-Webster and how these have changed over time.*

*1: a specific task with which a person or a group is charged [including a military mission, space mission, or a company mission]*

*2: CALLING, VOCATION  
Her mission was to be a teacher.*

*3: a body of persons sent to perform a service or carry on an activity*

*4: a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith or carry on humanitarian work*

*5 obsolete: the act or an instance of sending*

### Part 1: Relationship in Creation

Our God is a God of relationship. *In His creation, we see His relationship with His creation.*

Genesis 2:18 – “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

*He created humans to be in relationship with one another.*

Genesis 3:8a – “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”

*He created humans to be in relationship with Him. He came and visited with them in Eden and spoke with them face-to-face.*

Discuss: What types of relationships do we see in the Garden of Eden? Describe these relationships.

*We see God’s relationship with His people which is close and intimate. We see people created for relationships with each other, relationships which are perfect and open - “fit” for each other. Elsewhere in Genesis 2, we also see people’s relationship with creation, a relationship of caretaking, and God’s relationship of perfect caretaking for creation.*

## Part 2: Sin Breaks Relationships

Genesis 3:8b – “And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Matthew 15:8-9 (Is. 29:13) – “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”  
*Sin continues to break that relationship and the LORD bemoaned this.*

Matthew 23:37 – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

Discuss: How have you seen sin break relationships in your own life or the lives of others? Consider both broken relationships with other people and with God.  
*Take any answers but encourage participants to be honest and specific. Sin is not just a matter of abstraction or arbitrary rules. It has real, personal consequences in our lives and between us and God.*

## Part 3: God Wants His Family Back

*God wants his family back. The LORD wants the relationship restored, and so He becomes a sending God. He knows that with the relationship that is broken, HE must do the sending. He must come to mankind.*

*It begins with Adam and Eve. He comes into the garden and seeks them out. He could have very easily pushed the restart button on creation, but He loved Adam and Eve (and us!) so much that He came to them.*

Genesis 3:9 – “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

Discuss: How is Genesis 3:9 a word of Gospel?  
*This is pure Gospel. Even before the promise of a Savior, we see that God sends himself to Adam and Eve. “Where are you?”*

*Then in Genesis 3:15, He promises the Savior who will repair the broken relationship.*

Genesis 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring: he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Discuss: Have you ever lost a child momentarily or been estranged from a family member? What was that like?

How does it affect your view of God and missions to think of Him as a Father trying to bring His family back together? How does it affect the way you think about unbelievers if they are our lost siblings?

*This is an intensely personal view of God and His Mission. It's not about a jealous God demanding worship but a loving Father longing for and seeking after His children. And if we are God's children, then our longing for mission is a longing to see our lost brothers and sisters brought back into the family! How can we not long to see our family reunited?*

#### Part 4: A Sending God

Throughout the rest of Scripture we see God sending prophets, judges, kings and others.

The sending of Christ: *This is the peak of God's sending work!*

John 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

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

The sending of the Holy Spirit:

John 14:26 – “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 15:26 – “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

The sending of the Church:

John 17:18-23 – “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

John 20:21 – “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’”

Discuss: What difference does it make to see God's sending of the Church into the world in the context of all these other sendings?

*Sending is part of the very nature of God. From the time Adam and Eve sinned, God knew He would have to be the one to act to restore the relationship. When we, as the Church, go out as part of God's Mission, this is not our work and not something we do on our own. We're not going anywhere God isn't already at work. We go as one piece of God's*

*sending work throughout time and creation! We fall within the sweep of His hand.*

### Part 5: The Word Mission

Our English word “mission” comes from the Latin word “send.”

- *Mittere* is the verb form. We see this in the word “intermittent” as in “not continues sending.”
- *Missio* is the noun form. We see this in our word “mission” as in “the mission to the moon.”

In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the word “mission” is used in its different forms 990 times in all kinds of ways, but often with God sending (and not just sending people).

Jeremiah 9:16 – “I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will **send** the sword after them, until I have consumed them.”

Joel 2:19 – “Behold, I am **sending** to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.”

Amos 8:11 – “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will **send** a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”

Psalms 111:9 – “He **sent** redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!”

**Conclusion:** Mission is God’s sending work for the sake of reuniting His family. God – who sent the prophets, who sent His Son, and who sends the Holy Spirit – is also sending the Church for the sake of restored relationships.

### Now what?

- Spend some time praying for lost siblings, both those you know by name and those you have not yet met. Pray also for God to align your perspective of mission to His.

### **A Luther Quote to Ponder:**

*“For whatever remains of your life, live as those sent by Christ. It is the office of everyone to instruct his neighbor, etc. And this power is not given clergy alone ... but to all believers. When you have performed this highest work, seek to become Christ’s apostle, to serve all people, so that they may come unto God as you have.” LW 69:336*