



### "Community in the Sending Out of Members"

**Idea:** God works through the church to raise up and send out missionaries.

**Intro:** As we have been examining the concept of biblical community this summer, we have been using a working definition of community as that of "a unified body of individuals" or *one-together*. In our study we have discovered that community exists and is desired in this world because creation follows the pattern of its Creator. God is a communal being who exists in three distinct Persons as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They dwell together in perfect community, equal in being but subordinate in role.

The Triune God created all that there is; therefore, creation bears His mark of community. What we see, then, in the universe is that every part has its counterpart. This is most beautifully seen in the creation of mankind. Adam was the very first human created. God formed him from the dust of the ground and breathed life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). God also fashioned the woman Eve from Adam's rib, and the two of

them became a perfect reflection of the glorious community existing within the Godhead. Adam and Eve enjoyed the beauty and responsibility of overseeing God's creation without any shame (Gen 2:25).

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve's perfect community with God and with one another was destroyed when they sinned against the Lord by eating from the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve died spiritually and they would eventually die physically. Despite their rebellion, God still pursued them. God covered Adam and Eve's sin and promised that a Messiah would come to put an end to sin. God furthered that promise in the call of Abram and the establishment of Israel as He called out a people to Himself through whom the Messiah would come. That promised Messiah came in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. God the Son came to man. He lived a perfectly holy life, and He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. The work, which Jesus accomplished on the cross and in the grave, made possible the restoration of man to the community for which he was created.

**Inquiry:** As we have learned, the people who repent of sin and place their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ are brought into the household of God. They become part of the community of faith called the church, sharing a common life in Christ. They dwell in *community*. The believers who make up the church are a unified body of individuals who are one together in Jesus Christ.

The early church presents a beautiful picture of what this community looks like. In a few weeks we are going to look at the birth of the early church in Acts 2. Today, however, I am going to jump ahead and look at Community in the Sending Out of Members because in a few minutes Allison Etheridge is going to share with us the call on her life.

Last Sunday, in our study of the Person and Work of Jesus we learned that He saves us individually, but we are not saved for individualism. Upon salvation each believer is immediately

incorporated into the body of Christ. The Bible knows nothing of a believer in relationship with Christ who is not also in community with the body of Christ. This reality is equally true in the calling and sending out of missionaries. What we find modeled in the early church is community in the sending out of its members.

Read Acts 13:1-3; 14:24-28.

These verses teach us some principles regarding the responsibility of the community of faith in the sending out of its members. These are principles that we need to understand, embrace, and apply in this local church.

### **1. The Church affirms the calling of God “to go.”**

Paul received his vocational call to ministry when he received the call to salvation (Acts 26:16-18). In Acts 9 we see that Paul immediately began preaching the gospel in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). He went back to Jerusalem and disputed with the Hellenists, preaching boldly in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:29). Paul knew that Jesus had chosen and called him to take the gospel to the nations, yet his ministry between Acts 9 and Acts 13 is largely a ministry focused on preaching the gospel to the Jews. Up to this point, Paul had not stepped out and answered the call to take the gospel to the nations.

As great of a preacher, church planter, missionary, and theologian as the apostle Paul was, he never did anything outside the authority and affirmation of the church. I think sometimes we may miss this fact. We may think that Paul could and did whatever he wanted to do, but that is simply not true. The apostle knew God’s calling on his life, but he waited for the church to affirm that calling and send him out.

Application: Today, you may sense God stirring your heart to serve the Lord in some capacity. You may

sense Him leading you to vocational ministry, to serve as a missionary, or even to go on a short-term mission trip. The calling that you sense in your life is awesome and special. Just remember that your calling needs to be affirmed by the church. This is God's protection over your life.

## **2. The Church sends its members.**

Read Acts 13:3.

Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas were among the prophets and teachers in the Antioch church. They were a part of the pastoral staff team, serving the body of Christ. They had a heart for ministry and preaching the Word of God. One day during a time of worship and fasting, the Lord told the leaders and the church that Paul and Barnabas were to be sent out as missionaries.

The calling came to both the individuals being sent and the church that was sending.

Application: Church we have a divine responsibility to take serious the sending out of our members for the work to which they have been called. Today, we have folks who have been called out from our church who are serving in India and Sweden. And we have a young lady who believes the Lord has called her to spend the next year on the Arabian peninsula serving Christ by studying Arabic and working with Muslim women.

When we send out our members:

- We participate in their ministry.
- We partner with them through prayer.
- We provide for their needs.

### **3. The missionary is accountable to the Church.**

Paul and Barnabas fully understood that they were a part of a local community of faith. When they returned from the mission trip, they immediately desired to report to the church all that the Lord had done through them (Acts 14:27). The church was a participant, partner, and provider in their ministry. Thus, they were responsible to the church.

Both the church and the ones who are sent out need to remember this important principle of responsibility. The missionary is sent out. He or she is not a lone ranger out doing his or her thing. The church, likewise, is not detached from the missionary. They are partners in the work of the gospel. Therefore, when a mission team or a missionary comes back to report of what took place, the church ought to rejoice to hear all that God did through their partnership.

**Conclusion:** As we seek to dwell together in biblical community and understand what it means to be OneTogether in missions, we need to understand these simple principles. The church affirms the calling of God to go. The church sends its members. And the missionary is accountable to the church.

In just a few minutes Allison is going to come and share with us about the calling of God upon her life. Church, I encourage you to listen intently. Ask God to speak to you regarding Allison's call. Ask God to reveal how you can partner with her through prayer and provision. Then, at the end we will have a time of affirmation as we commission her to the work of the gospel.