



# SendOne

DEVOTIONAL

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**“The hope of Christ is too powerful to allow us to live short-lived, pleasure-seeking lives.”**

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**—PAUL DAVIS**

ABWE President

# ABWE SendOne Devotional

This devotional is *dangerous*.

This seven-day biblical journey is intended to help you and your church pray through God's heart for the nations, asking that you might be able to send a missionary from your midst out into cross-cultural ministry. But it's more than that.

As you seek to be a faithful sender with the body of Christ, maybe God is singling out the church's most vital volunteer to go. Maybe it's a close friend, your pastor, or a dearly-loved family member. Maybe that person is you.

We believe engaging this devotional is worth the risk. The glory of God is infinitely satisfying in the face of all loss. May the Lord bless you and your church community in your faithfulness to follow his call.

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## DAY 1. Send Your Best

**It's easy to think of missionary work as a second-rate ministry.**

We would never say that out loud, but it takes little effort to let missions work fall by the wayside in our churches. Out of sight, out of mind. Moreover, missions can feel as though it is shoehorned into a church's "real" ministry work. "After all," we reason, "if Timbuktu were meant to be our priority, God wouldn't have called us to plant a church in Cleveland."

Luke recounts the story of a church that discovered the solution to this problem in Acts 13:1-4:

"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:1-4)

This passage has several important things to say to churches today.

**God sometimes gifts a church in order to send.**

Think of the most gifted people in your church. Teachers. Leaders. Pillars of your community. Reliable volunteers. Consistent tithers.

"There were in the church ... prophets and teachers." These individuals were highly gifted in expositing God's truth and instructing the church in that truth.

Imagine a famous Bible teacher. Who is your favorite? Perhaps you heard them on the radio when you were young, or you read one of their books when you first became a Christian. Now, imagine they became a member of your church. How excited would you be? They could teach Sunday School. Endless pulpit supply. You could have long spiritual conversations over coffee.

Now, imagine that God called them from your church to the other side of the world.

It would be hard to give up, wouldn't it?

That's what God called this church to do—to send out their most gifted, honed, skilled teachers to preach Christ to the nations, trusting that God would raise up more leaders in their church.

### **Sending isn't losing. It's growing.**

The church at Antioch didn't argue with the Holy Spirit. They sent. Willingly.

Why? Because they understood that sending a missionary isn't losing that missionary— rather, it is growing God's work through their church.

There is also a reason why, after God spoke to them, they didn't immediately stop their church service and send Paul and Barnabas off in a hurry. They were already “worshiping the Lord and fasting.” Then, after God spoke to them, they continued “fasting and praying.”

It was as though they said to themselves, “Gathering together in worship is important—so important that God has called us to send

you to do what we are doing right now with completely new people.”

**Every missionary should have a home church, and every home church should have a missionary.**

Note also that the church didn’t just “send” a missionary; they laid their hands on them and sent them off. This is important.

They gathered around those they were sending. They showed support. They showed the kind of solidarity that missionaries need when they are sent.

Every missionary should have a local church that supports them, not only financially, but in prayer, solidarity, and encouragement. And every church should have a missionary that is taking what God is doing in the life of the local church and extending it out into new places.

**Will you follow in Antioch’s footsteps? Pray about sending one such missionary from your own church to some of the world’s least-reached who have never heard the gospel. Offer God your willingness to send your best and brightest to a new place on behalf of the King. This is a prayer he is sure to honor.**

## DAY 2. Pray for Suffering

Too often, we equate obedience to the Lord with instant, photogenic success. But in Scripture, suffering is a clear mark of faithfulness.

Don't let the title of this section fool you. We aren't advocating that you actually pray to suffer. There's enough pain in everyday life; we don't need to ask for more.

But when it comes to missions, you should pray for the suffering—especially for missionaries—that they will endure hardship well, display Christ in weakness, and persevere in God's calling on their lives.

The Apostle Paul speaks to this very issue in 1 Corinthians 1:9-11:

“Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.” (1 Corinthians 1:9-11)

We can draw multiple applications from Paul's letter here.

### **Ministry without prayer support can feel crushing.**

Imagine God calls you to overseas ministry. You busy yourself with fundraising, traveling from church to church, and training with a missions agency.

But you don't have one particular church that is home. You don't have one place where all the elderly ladies are praying for you. You don't have one pastor you can call in crisis at 2 a.m. local time and hear, “I'm praying for you.”

We all suffer, but without prayer support, we suffer alone, and our pain is vastly more acute. Prayer partnership is a critical reason missionaries need deep relationships with a home church. Paul himself felt the stress of ministry: “Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.”

**God uses hardship in ministry to teach hope.**

Paul was also able to see God’s purpose in the suffering (probably because his home church was praying for him): “But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.”

Suffering on the missions field will press everyone, but it will inevitably crush those who aren’t covered in prayer and who don’t view suffering through the lens of God’s sovereign control. Paul knew this better than anyone.

**God desires supporting churches to pray for their missionaries.**

When you pray for missionaries, pray that God helps them to ground their hope in his deliverance, his work, his plan, and his purpose for hardship—to bring hope to the lost and even to fellow missionaries.

**Pray that missionaries would not be crushed. Pray that even when they feel the sentence of death, they would taste resurrection power.**

**Pray that God deepens their sense of calling.**

**And if you don’t currently pray for a missionary, perhaps you could pray with your church about sending even just one out from among you.**



## DAY 3. Desire for the Lost to Be Saved

**God desires for the lost to be saved. Do you?**

It's easy for us, as Christians, to be as immersed in Christianity as a fish in water. The church can be such a great source of joy and hope that it's easy to lose contact with the lost—to become so removed in proximity from those who need Christ that we forget they need Him.

The Apostle Paul exemplifies someone who is immersed in building a church, but who is driven by his heart to bring the lost to Christ:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.read more.”

(Romans 10:1-4)

Paul is explaining several important truths here that are fundamental to a church’s calling and mission, as it relates to cross-cultural ministry.

**Good intentions aren’t saving.**

As Christians, we know this.

Being a good person doesn’t save you from the wrath of God. Being a nice person doesn’t save you: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

What does that mean for you and your church? It means that someone must bring the gospel to those who don’t know about Christ.



Lack of knowledge is a spiritual epidemic, and Christ is the medicine. The only things needed are people to faithfully to respond to God's call.

**God's intention is to teach the lost about Jesus Christ.**

In our culture, to speak “my truth” is to trump any other objective truth claim. People pretend to be certain about all sorts of religious claims. Many religious people are zealous. Well-intentioned. Many of them even do fantastic humanitarian work. The Apostle Paul observes a similar problem within the Jewish community of his day: “For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:2-3).

Zeal is amazing. Zeal motivates thousands of organizations to feed the hungry, help the orphan and widow, and care for the elderly.

But missionaries of Jesus Christ are the only ones doing everlasting work—digging in the ground of eternity.

Every full belly will be empty. Every rescued child will age and die. Every humanitarian effort—good and biblical as they are—will be undone.

But preaching Christ will never be undone. That's what God is calling your church to do across the world. That's what God is calling your church to do in sending a missionary.

**The desire for God to save the lost through missions is holy.**

We often wonder how a good God could allow such great suffering to happen in the world—much less allow billions of unbelievers to perish in Hell.

And yet, when those in our church desire to enter full-time missions work, we treat that desire as an oddity. How foolish of us.

But the Apostle Paul is desperate for his unsaved community to come to Christ: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.”

Would you pray for that same desire to burn in your heart and the hearts of your church members?

**Would you pray that God would raise up and convict one person from your community to burn with zeal for bringing Christ to a people who need him desperately?**



## DAY 4. Put Real Boots on the Ground

What do missionaries *do* anyway?

Imagine a paratrooper who drops into enemy-occupied territory in a warzone. What does he have to do to survive? Everything.

Certainly, the paratrooper receives military support. Artillery. Airstrikes. Recon. Intel. But he will ultimately be the man to kick down the doors, pull innocents out of buildings, and bring the citizens to safety.

Missionaries face a similar situation in gospel warfare. They need financial support. They need prayer. They need resources. They need to be able to plan for their future the way a conventional career would afford them.

But there is a real sense in which missionaries must be trained all-around to do “everything” else themselves. And at the end of the day, in spiritual combat, they have a simple calling: they must preach the gospel themselves. Boldly. Verbally. Faithfully.

Paul articulates a similar mindset in Romans 10:13-14:

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:13-14)

There are critical truths here for churches to reflect upon as they consider sending a missionary.

**The gospel is essential to salvation.**



If the gospel weren't essential, missions wouldn't exist. It wouldn't be necessary. But the gospel is essential. Therefore, missions is an urgent and important endeavor.

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”  
What's the implication here? Those who don't call on the name of the Lord will not be saved.

Paul sees this as a crisis. And he is a man on a mission to bring the message of Jesus Christ to as many cities, peoples, and tribes as possible.

And from the pages of Scripture, Paul still charges our church—from now until the return of Christ—to carry on his work. At the root of his mission is the unchanging truth that Jesus Christ is “the way and the truth and the life” and that “no one comes to the Father” but through him (John 14:6-7).

### **Sending is essential to making that salvation available to others.**

Having established the necessity of the gospel, Paul walks the Roman believers through the logic of sending:

People need to hear the gospel.

... But how are they going to hear it if no one goes? ...

... And how is anyone going to go if they aren't sent? ...

Paul's point is clear: There is a direct correlation between the number of people who have an opportunity to be saved and the number of churches who send missionaries.

Does your church or ministry's vision or philosophy of missions reflect this truth?

**Churches that care about the lost send missionaries.**

The local church should be busy in the work of sending. In an ideal scenario, your church should have at least one missionary that it fully supports as an extension of its own local mission.

That missionary should have a passion for evangelism, a gifting for industriousness and self-motivation, and a solid conviction about the exclusive and saving work of Jesus Christ.

**Have you sent boots on the ground?**

**Are you directly connected with missions work  
going on right now?**

**Are you working to meet peoples' real-time need  
for the gospel in every nation?**

## DAY 5. Send the Right Person

It's one thing to support missions as a gesture. It's another to treat missions as a spiritual *investment*.

When it comes to your financial investments, who would you trust oversee them? Just anybody? Hardly. You want to trust the oversight of your retirement to someone who has a track record of success, knows what they're talking about, and will show up consistently to do what needs to be done.

The same thing goes for your spiritual investment in missions. You want to send someone who will stay for the long haul to create lasting gospel partnerships, plant a church with a legacy of disciple-making, and train qualified spiritual leaders.

Paul articulates several critical traits of a trustworthy gospel worker:

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:1-16)

Let's unpack what Paul is saying here.

### **Send someone who displays the power of God.**

Don't send someone who struggles with deep insecurity.

If they are driven by their ego, and are always trying to prove how

good they are at all things “ministry,” this is not the person you want to send as an ambassador for Christ to another culture.

Send someone who has enough humility to say: “I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Send a strong, convicted person who won’t exchange the gospel for something else.

This may seem to conflict with the previous point. It doesn’t. Along with humility before Christ comes a conviction and strength in the message of Christ.

It’s easy to fold under the pressure of evangelistic conversations to get soft on the gospel. It’s easy to sacrifice truth for the sake of building relationships—even in the name of sharing truth. It’s weird logic, and many missionaries fall prey to it.

But Paul wasn’t a folder: “...I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Paul’s motivation was not the latest Tony Robbins talk, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, or any other self-help fad. His was a deep-rooted conviction concerning the sufficiency and necessity of the message of Christ for salvation. Paul hammered that point over and over, even in the fires of persecution. And that hammering forged the solid foundation that began the church in Corinth.



Send someone who trembles in their search for truth.

Paul boasts in his trembling, not because he wants to seem overly spiritual, but because he wants the Corinthians to know how seriously he takes the truth of the gospel.

Preaching the gospel wasn't simply one facet of a networking strategy Paul used. The gospel was the beating heart of his life's work. He wanted all to see: I take this seriously. And I take the mission of getting people to understand it just as seriously.

**Here's the question: does your church have men and women like this? If not, could your church raise up such men and women? And not only this, but—since Paul hoped “to be sent on by” the recipients of his Roman epistle (Romans 15:24)—if your church did see such individuals raised up, would you be willing to send them away to another culture rather than hoarding them and their spiritual fruit on the homefront?**

## DAY 6. Real People Desperately Need Christ

Wherever the gospel goes, it transforms hearts and, inevitably, whole societies tend to shift in their thinking. But Christless cultures, tragically, make way for injustice and abuse.

Paul knew this, which is why he instructed Titus to establish elders in every church who met a certain standard of character. He explains:

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:5-9)

There are several principles that Paul is applying here. Let’s explore them.

### **Where the men go, the culture goes.**

Note that the apostle establishes that biblical elders must be men. Men drive their families. Studies have found that when dads go to church with the family, it significantly increases the likelihood that the children will continue on in the faith.

Men are the driving force in the direction of both their households and, as a result, oftentimes culture in general. This is why Paul

understood that the men who were set up within the church had to be men who wouldn't take advantage of the resources and opportunities of the church, but would rather invest in them, create them, and leverage themselves to increase the integrity and ministry potential of the church.

### **Lost cultures need Christianity to establish virtuous men.**

This is one of the most impactful ways that Christianity changes the cultures to which it is introduced. As hearts become subject to Christ and his law, Christian faith gives men a vision of masculinity that is responsible, family-oriented, Godward, strong, and virtuous. Without such men, societies suffer.

### **Virtuous men love God, lead their families, and build stable communities.**

Paul lists many traits that men should have if they are going to be church leaders. But one trait summarizes the rest: "above reproach."

A man must be morally self-governing in the sense that he is personally submitting his dreams, desires, and decisions to Jesus Christ. This shouldn't be a man who must constantly be kept in check through rebuke, correction, and confrontation. He should be above reproach—this is a man whose conscience, private actions, and decisions could be entrusted to a position of authority in the church.

Do your missionaries have a vision for cultivating elders who have moral fiber? Does your church want to send a missionary to craft this vision in a culture that is lost and subject to the whims of evil men?

God's call equally applies to women—women who joyfully and industriously love their families are desperately needed on the mission field. It's easy to think that a desire to serve in ways that serve a church community should be utilized in one's home church. But maybe the best women in your local church are gleaming with God's call to bring his kingdom to foreign communities that are ravaged with lostness.

Would you prayerfully consider sending someone from your church who has this vision of sharing the benefit of good, Christian family men with the world?

## **DAY 7. Obey the Great Commission**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

People who are familiar with the Bible and active in ministry often assume the Great Commission. Make disciples, all nations, baptizing them... yada, yada, yada.

But we cannot assume that everyone in our church family even understands our Lord's basic marching orders. A recent Barna survey found that up to 50 percent of churchgoers could not identify or define the Great Commission.

Let's take a very close look at these critical words so that we can better understand Jesus' charge.

## **Go.**

Everything hinges on how you understand the fundamental command to go.

Does that mean ... that you should go? Or someone else? If every Christian is always going, nobody would ever staying—and surely Jesus isn't commanding all believers to be perpetual nomads. What else could it mean?

Could it mean that Jesus's disciples already fulfilled his command, since they "went"? Are we therefore off the hook? While it's true that Jesus was primarily speaking to the apostles, the Holy Spirit inspired these words of Scripture to be read by us all throughout church history for a reason. Since the rest of the verse hangs on this imperative clause, and there are still more than 2 billion people who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ, we can safely assume the command to "go" remains relevant to us.

The imperative "go" signifies that the whole church should be about the business going. This is why John Piper has famously remarked that every Christian must "go, send, or disobey."

But in order to send, you should have a game plan.

Where should you be sending? Does Jesus specify the place? Fortunately, he does: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." All nations. Not some nations. Not even one nation. All nations. This includes people groups, language groups, ethnicities, religious blocs, geopolitical nation-states—all of it. Since none are excluded from the

authority of Christ, none are exempted from the need for the gospel.

### **Make disciples.**

Jesus instructs us to “make disciples”—or literally, to “disciple.” Rather than understanding this as reflecting a certain missional selectivity, as though we are only to make disciples out of as segment of all the nations, the emphasis here is on totality of evangelism and obedience. We are to literally disciple the nations themselves.

This is very important. Discipleship obviously begins with evangelism. So, this command to make disciples includes the proclamation of the gospel. But it also includes showing up the next day, preaching again, equipping and mentoring those who have received Christ, and forming a local church.

There is no meaningful definition of discipleship that excludes the local church.

And there are no local-church-building missionaries unless the local church sends them.

### **Baptize them.**

Baptism isn't a mere optional accessory to salvation. It's a living symbol that Jesus Christ himself gave us to signify our death and resurrection with him. It's also a clear sign that Jesus is talking about planting organized local churches that practice the ordinances.

When we send missionaries, we aren't just sending nice guys to do nice non-profit work. When a church sends missionaries, it should be starkly distinguishable from an NGO. Both are working with poor and marginalized people, curbing the consequences of lostness. But the

missionary will be baptizing people. Only missionaries can bring the local church to where it does not yet exist. Nobody else will be doing this.

That's why it's so important to send a missionary—not just a Christian to do mercy ministry, but a missionary who is an extension of your local church, who can participate in extending God's church in the world.

**What are you doing to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus has issued his church?**

**Would you consider sending one of your best and brightest to the mission field?**

**Would you consider answering God's call to make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

As you close this week of meditations on the great missionary texts of Scripture, pray this prayer with us:

*Father, give our church a heart to reach the lost for Christ. Help us to hold in open hands the most gifted among us for the sake of your kingdom. Give us a vision for sharing the precious grace of Jesus Christ with local communities across the globe. Show us a clear path to meaningful missions work. Enliven our hearts with a passion to reach the nations with the gospel. We are your humble servants. Make our response as clear as your call: "Go." We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who came from heaven to earth to give himself up for us. Amen.*



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