

2020 Global Ministries Conference
Fellow Workers for the Truth
“In a Manner Worthy of God”
III John 5–8
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March 1, 2020 • Evening Sermon

This has been an amazing conference and now we have the opportunity to culminate our time with the Lord's Supper. I will open this study by looking at III John which we have been in for this mission's conference. This is the Word of God.

III John 1:1–8 says [1] *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.* [2] *Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.* [3] *For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.* [4] *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

[5] *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are,* [6] *who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.* [7] *For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.* [8] *Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

[9] *I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.* [10] *So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.*

I want to focus in on a particular phrase in this study which is ‘in a manner worthy of God.’ What does that phrase actually mean? We will look more at the Scriptures and think through exactly what the implications are of sending someone in a manner worthy of God, but first I'd like to give you a little background on John's epistles.

This is John's third epistle and was likely written at the end of the first century. Together with his previous epistles he instructs the believers among a number of strong themes, like to walk in the truth, keep themselves free from sin, to abide (dwell) in Christ (to live and move in Christ), to live in light of eternity and to love one another which is repeated many times in the epistles of John. To live in light of eternity he is saying to live in Christ's eminent return for all those who have named the name of Christ He will come back to take us home to be with Him and we are to eagerly anticipate that return. So these are some of the major themes that are regularly repeated in the epistles of John.

Some key phrases we've heard throughout our mission's conference is that we would be fellow workers for the truth and that our missionary partners are workers for the truth. When we send them on their way we have the opportunity to participate with them, lovingly pray for them and support them as we are partners in the Gospel truth with them so we become fellow workers with them.

We have also heard the phrase ‘in a manner worthy of God’ a lot during this conference. It is that we would send them out in a manner worthy of God and most of them have left already, they have been sent out. It has been a fantastic celebration to do this as we saw the flags representing the countries we have missionaries being sent to and laid our faith promises pledges before God and at the feet of these missionaries. These are the beautiful feet of them that bring

Good News (Isaiah 52:7). The symbolism is so rich to see this. Many were weeping as they did this as well as some of the missionaries. This partnership is such a beautiful gift.

Another phrase we have heard repeated during the conference is that they were 'sent out for the sake of the Name.' It is for the Name that is above every name – the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful privilege we have that we are called by His Name, as children of His, Christians, to live for His glory. So we had the opportunity to send the missionaries out as fellow workers of the truth.

So what does it mean to send someone out in a manner worthy of God? As I was praying through this study I was thinking about this a lot. So what does that look like? For those who know me I have a pretty big imagination. I have been dreaming about all these different things as I have been preparing for this study. For some of you who are reading through the Bible in a year you are probably just past the point where you have been reading all about the tabernacle. The children of Israel have been wandering in the wilderness and God gives the command to Moses on Mount Sinai and all the specifics of the tabernacle – what it is to look like, the types of wood, the gold overlay, the hooks etc. down to the clothes the priests had to wear and how they had to consecrate themselves. They had special garments made by skilled craftsmen.

My imagination was just so rich as I was thinking 'Maybe that's what means to be sent out in a manner worthy of God' with really fine clothes with gold laced through them in purple and blue linens. Now we didn't do that to our missionaries as we sent them out, so what does it mean to send them out in a manner worthy? I was thinking about my own practical experience in my family when at times we would send our kids somewhere. Think about the times with your children when you sent them out somewhere.

Some of you may have sent your kids off to camp. I have seen this in our own camp Briarwood when the kids go off. They look like eagle scouts because they have so much gear, equipment, sleeping bags, water bottles and snack that would probably feed them for two months, even though they're only going for a week. They were just loaded down with all this good stuff because it's the first time mom is letting them go off to camp. So then I was thinking maybe that's what it looks like to send out in a manner worthy of God – with all these provisions like a boy scout would have.

One of the most profound times in my family that I have had is when we sent our children off to college. Perhaps some of you can relate to that where you pray for your children but certainly if they have been raised in a Christian family it is something you do regularly for them. You pray that your children come to know the Lord at a young age and that they would walk with Him but then it comes time for the big test when you're about to send them off to college. You help them pack bags and have done all your Walmart trips to make sure they have the provisions they need in college. Yet behind the scenes there is a lot of praying – praying God will watch over them.

Then there is all the helpful advice you give them like the first Sunday you need to get into a good church, with good fellowship and a good Christian community. Make sure you declare the moment you get on that campus that you're a Christian and you're not going to do any of that nonsense that everyone else is doing in all the dorms. You send them off prepared, ready to go, ready to defend their faith and kind of set them in the best possible light. When we sent our kids there was also a few tears and it wasn't just mom but me especially when I hugged my baby girl as we sent her off in her dorm. We walked away and said 'Lord, she is in Your hands now.' What a special moment that was! Maybe that's what it looks like to send missionaries out in a manner worthy of God.

As I thought of all this I thought ‘No, we’re not going to go with our imagination to think about what is a manner worthy of God’ for we’re going to look at the Scripture. We have great examples in Scripture because Jesus Himself spent three years with His Disciples training them, discipling them and spending time with them. Then He sent them out so let’s look at a few examples from the Bible.

Luke 9 talks about Jesus sending out the twelve. What did He send them out to do? He sent them out proclaiming the Kingdom of God and He sent them with His authority and His power to heal. Luke 9:1–6 says [1] *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, [2] and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. [3] And he said to them, “**Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.**[4] *And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. [5] And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” [6] And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

Interestingly, He told them to take nothing for their journey which seems exactly opposite as to what my imagination was going to that we would send them out well supplied like a boy scout or like sending a child off to college with all their provisions. This was the opposite of the way Jesus sent out the twelve. This makes you think a little bit on what He said to them. I believe He wanted to send them out so they could see the provision of God and that would require the faith of God to go out and experience what they were about to experience in their ministry.

In Luke 10 we see the time Jesus sent out the 72. Luke 10:1–12 says [1] *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. [2] And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. [3] Go your way; **behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.** [4] Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. [5] Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ [6] And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. [7] And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. [8] Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. [9] Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ [10] But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, [11] ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ [12] I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.*

It says He was sending them out as lambs among wolves, wow! Here in the state of Alabama we usually hear about two major universities that go head to head in every single sport known to man. Briarwood seems to get really excited about that no matter what the game is but when these two universities face each other there is a lot of interest here yet it’s interesting to think about a lamb versus a wolf for it doesn’t seem like a fair competition, does it? Lambs don’t have any way to defend themselves and Jesus sent His out as lambs among the wolves. He sent His Spirit with them for sure and He sent them on a mission to be clear but it certainly doesn’t seem like a fair fight. It certainly wasn’t where my imagination went to that they would be fully supplied with everything they might need, but Jesus did that because He was going to be with them.

We also see how Jesus sent them in Mark 6. It is similar to Luke 10. Mark 6:7–13 says *[7] And he called the twelve and began to **send them out two by two**, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. [8] He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— [9] but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. [10] And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. [11] And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” [12] So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. [13] And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.*

Jesus sent them out in pairs. He sent them with another believer, a fellow disciple Jesus had been pouring into for several years as He taught them, walked with them, shared experiences with them and was in the synagogue with them. In this text it seems a little counterintuitive, doesn't it? Yet how amazed were the Disciples and the 72 when they went out like that as Jesus had sent them. What did they do? They came back and reported all kinds of things. They were amazed at what God could do because they weren't trusting in their provisions or all their fancy things they could manage but they trusted in the living God who sent them out.

I believe that is getting closer to what we mean when we say send them out in a manner worthy of God – filled with faith, filled with obedience to Jesus Christ, trusting in the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit that sends us out into missions. The Word of God even tells us to relax even when we don't know what we're going to say. Luke 12:11–12 says *[11](Jesus said) And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, [12] for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.* He will supply the words for you when you need them. It is amazing to think about that level of provision and the confidence we can have in Him.

In John 17 Jesus sends His people out in His high Priestly prayer with prayer. This is quite an intense prayer. Jesus is about to be arrested in the garden of Gethsemane and the Disciples couldn't even keep their eyes open for they kept falling asleep showing that their heart was willing but their body and mind were weak. Yet Jesus is there praying His high Priestly prayer. Here are just a few snippets from that prayer.

John 17:6,11–14 says *[6] “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. [11] And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. [12] While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. [13] But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. [14] I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

This prayer of Jesus is an equipping prayer, entrusting them to His holy, loving Father that they might be in the Father just as He is in the Father and that they might be where He is. This is quite a prayer! I think we get a real sense of what it means to send someone out in a manner worthy of God when we look at Jesus' shepherding prayer for His Disciples that were going to come under severe attack, who were these lambs among the wolves. They were sent out and many were mistreated and harmed for the sake of the Name. Jesus has said it so well here that these people in the world have mistreated Him and so they will mistreat His people, His

followers who are in the world. This is exactly what took place as you read in Acts and beyond as the disciples scattered spreading the truth of the Gospel. Some scattered in fear, worry and doubts yet Christ was with all of them. He sent them out in a manner worthy of God.

In John 20 Jesus had resurrected from the grave and He sent them once again. John 20:21–23 says [21] *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. [23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*

Do you see the kind of empowerment that Jesus sent them out with? I think that is really getting to the heart of the matter about sending out someone in a manner worthy of God, that He would send them with all the provisions they do need but it’s not what our minds might think. It is the Spirit of God, the Word of God, the gifts of God, and all the armor of God. This is how He sends us out but it’s among an enemy in the world that hates us because he hated our Savior and mistreated them. This is how we are sending out our missionaries.

So they need our prayers and our attention to be focused with them. There is a great prayer in Colossians 1 that I want to challenge you to be praying for our missionaries. This is the prayer Paul prays to the church in Colossae and he particularly mentions Epaphras, one of our fellow servants. Colossians 1:3–12 says [3] *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7] just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8] and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*

[9] *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Paul goes on in this prayer but I would encourage you and challenge you even as an application to this study that you would commit to pray this prayer for the missionaries that God is sending out in your church. This is one way you would send them out in a manner worthy of God.

So in closing I would like to share with you a few practical applications of what it means to send someone in a manner worthy of God. When we take the Lord’s Supper here at Briarwood we are instructed to come not worthily or trusting in our own righteousness as if we’re worthy to come to the Table but we are to come in a manner worthy. That means we come prepared, having been forgiven, having confessed our sins, repented and that we do this work before we come to the service where we partake in the Lord’s Supper. So what does that look like for our missionaries and some practical applications?

One is that you would send your love and care to them. In today’s world we have so much technology that you can even have face to face conversations with them through various technology devices. It’s a miracle of modern technology. You can pick up your phone and talk with missionaries in Zimbabwe, Africa, or New Zealand and it’s incredible that we can do that

today. By the way though make sure you check time zones because I've had that go bad not thinking of that when I make a call to someone. It's amazing what we have now to express communication with our missionaries.

Continue to fulfill the vows you have made for faith promise as you trust God by faith to provide all that you have entrusted to Him. Give sacrificially. Give systematically. Give supernaturally as the Lord enables, but send them out with your provision from the church.

Finally, prayer – send our missionaries out with prayer. I would say use the prayer in Colossians 1 but I'd also challenge you to pray five simple things. If you're someone like me you have a hard time keeping track of a lot of things just think of the five fingers on your hand. One, pray for their families – that God would bless them, grow them, walk in His ways, know Him and that their children would be obedient. Pray for their loving relationships they have left back home that they are now so far away from.

Two, pray for the missionaries faith – that they would have faith to trust God for all the experiences they are going through right now at this present moment. Three pray for their finances. Many of them are behind in their support or have supporters on fixed incomes and can no longer support them. Pray that they would be well supplied and that God would meet them where they are. Four, pray for the mission field where they are, whatever country they are serving in. Pray for the government of that country, the people of that country and the missionary's ministry in the field there and that God would open doors in this country for them.

Fifthly, pray for their fruitfulness – that God would increase the fruit of their ministry and that it would be a joy for them to serve. Pray they would see the fruit of their labors and that God would be blessed and increase all that they're doing in keeping with their ministry and their stewardship. Pray God would bless those 10, 40, 60 and 100 fold and their effectiveness in Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we pray that here at Briarwood that we would continue to send out our missionaries in a manner worthy of God. Father, would You put them regularly on our hearts and minds that we would pray for them, encourage them, write to them and communicate with them and that we would send care packages and that we might use our finances to give to them? But most of Lord, help us to pray regularly and faithfully for each of these sent ones to the glory of God our Father, Amen.