

## Backwards

Created to Live Sent Message Series  
Week One

### Welcome

Today I'm excited to launch with you into the six week message series, *Created to Live SENT*. We want to discover God's best for us and we want to fulfill our purpose in life.

We are connecting the Sunday messages with our Community Groups to give opportunity for you to discuss what you are learning and to share with one another how God is at work in your life and your group.

At the end of the message series we are putting what we are learning into practice. We will host a Celebration Sunday where we want to hear from you. We will eat together, share fun stories of growth and celebrate baptisms. We will also participate in a Serve Day when we go into our community to live out the love of Jesus. We will be His hands and feet to give a tangible expression to our community that He loves us and desires a relationship with us.

I hope you will dive into the opportunities for growth. We are all reading the book, *backwards*, to help us to be on the same track. The chapters we read each week will support what we are learning at our gatherings and community groups. Daily devotionals are available to apply the learning to your own life on a daily basis. Just sign up online and they are delivered into your inbox daily for your convenience and reminder. The details are on an insert so you can dig in and go deeper.

These next six weeks will help us discover God's best and live on purpose and on mission. I'm excited and I believe you will love what we are doing together! Let's get started.

### Backwards

Do you ever have the sense that something's backwards; it's not working for you and you don't know why? We've all had that feeling!

I want to read you a story from the book we are reading together, [backwards: Created to Live SENT](#). This is the book we will study together.

EXCERPT from *backwards*:

*If you will go with me I want to take you back in time to the beautiful Caribbean ocean. Picture with me a sky with no clouds in sight. There are tropical breezes blowing and the ocean is an incredible color of blue. It almost looks unreal it is so perfect. The surf is up and it is another day in paradise.*

*Only life wasn't working so well for me, or for my wife Belinda. We set out with eight other couples to kayak along the coast of an island and to enjoy a leisurely day surrounded by absolute beauty. What could be better than that?*

*I'm sure I listened to the details of how to get the kayak off the beach and avoid capsizing when the first set of waves crested near the shore but we couldn't agree on what we just heard. The surf was loud and adrenaline was pumping. Belinda was nervous because she didn't swim well. I felt overconfident because I grew up in Alaska where I spent a lot of time in a canoe. I knew we would be just fine.*

*As we pushed off from the shore I said, You paddle on the right (her strong side) and I will paddle on the left. The first big wave came at us and she paddled frantically on the right and then switched to the left. I tried to correct her verbally and offset her choices by padding opposite her only that didn't work so well because she kept changing and I didn't know which way she was going next. I tried desperately to guess and keep us headed straight into the first big wave. Do you want to guess what happens if you are sideways to the wave as it crests near the shore?*

*We hit the first wave and the bow went straight up in the air. The surf splashed in our faces. We went down the other side with incredible speed and somehow we made it past the first wave upright. We were off on a great adventure! Life is good! We could do this!*

*Then the struggle for control set in. We argued about how to steer the kayak and who should take which role. I complained that everyone else seemed to have it figured out and notice--they were cooperating. They were even smiling and enjoying the experience. That didn't help. We were falling to the back of the line which was a problem for me. After some animated discussion Belinda decided she had enough and quit paddling altogether. I think she said something to the effect that, If I was so great I could just do it myself. And I said something like, That would probably be an improvement!*

### ***Dead in the water***

*Dead in the water; that's what happens if you don't paddle. Then the sea takes you where it wants you to go. This was not good!*

*We made apologies and started again. We tried harder. We tried a LOT harder. It was hot now. The sky was a beautiful but there were no clouds. The fun factor was fading fast. We were far from shore and Belinda kept reminding me the water was deep. What if we capsized? Belinda doesn't swim. That's what life jackets were for I reminded her. We couldn't go back now anyway and our guide was way out ahead of us. If we didn't find a way to keep up we would soon lose sight of everyone else. Besides finishing last wasn't an option in my book! What do you do when you are dead in the water?*

*We started working together, quit complaining and worked up a good sweat. Practice makes perfect right? Not so much! But we did improve enough to steer in the general direction. Over time we began to catch up with the others. We were probably the oldest*

*couple but this was a hour and a half trip and some of the younger ones were not as motivated as we had become. I started counting how many were ahead of us. If we made it a race it could be more fun right? Belinda wasn't buying.*

*Given that there was plenty of time we did eventually catch and pass every kayak except one and I was pretty proud when we caught that last wave and coasted onto the beach. The guide grabbed the front of our kayak to steady it so we could get out and with an astonished look on his face exclaimed, In all my years I've never seen that before. You made the whole trip going backwards! How did you do that?*

*Good question! No wonder it was so hard! Just so you know both ends of the boat came to a point. Evidently we were supposed to get in the kayak facing the shore and when we pushed off turn toward the waves. We just got in facing the waves and took off. I guess we should have listened to our guide more closely! There is a lesson here I'm sure. Suddenly the struggle for the last 90 minutes began to make a lot more sense.*

***Life seems harder than it should be***

*Perhaps you know the feeling that life sometimes seems harder than it should be. Maybe you missed the details or someone else in your world isn't cooperating but what appeared to be a rather simple and fun exercise of living has turned into an unexpected ordeal. (this is the end of the excerpt from the book backwards: Created to Live SENT.*

Can anyone relate?

**What if you have it backwards in life? What if you think you are supposed to be leading in life and in reality you were designed to follow?** (the highlighted text are designed to be slides)

It's normal to live your life believing you were born to be in control. We start from the cradle forward thinking that life is all about US. That serves us well in the beginning. Life is about having what we want and the freedom to do as we please, right? That's what brings happiness?

*Have it your way*, that's what the commercial says.

*You can't please everyone so you got to please yourself*, the song says.

We live in a *me first* world.

**How's that working for us? How's that working for you?**

Not so well! There is a problem. When everyone thinks that way before long you find yourself arguing, competing, and complaining with others who believe the same thing. After we've BOTH tried harder AND threatened to quit in life we eventually come to the place where we are dead in the water.

### Made for More

I'm not the fastest or brightest student of life, or kayaking, but I've come to an astonishing discovery **I am made for more** than that! And you are too. There is a better way!

Life, like the kayak, works better when you turn around and go the direction the Guide advises. You slice through the water. Steering is incredibly easier. Your efforts are more productive, you get along with others better and you enjoy the journey.

### Repent

The Greek word for *turn-around* is **mataneo**. That is what needed to happen in the kayak in the story. Ultimately, it is what we need to do in life. We turn around and go the other direction. We turn from living a self directed life to live a life that is SENT. **The old English translation of the word mataneo is *repent***. Literally, it means to turn around, one hundred and eighty degrees, and go the other way.

### Acts 3:19

The disciples said this about finding your way back to God. ***Repent of your sins and turn to God so that your sins will be wiped away.*** Acts 3:19 NLT

### SENT

**Today we begin a six week series that describes life as God intends it to be, the series is *Created to Live SENT***. Let's turn around from the self directed life to discover we are made for more. Let's embrace the life God always intended for us. Let's discover purpose and meaning and in the process learn to live SENT.

Our mission is to lead people to discover real life in Jesus. But what does it mean *to be like Jesus*? We probably aren't going to walk on water, feed 5,000 from a couple fish and loaves and raise the dead so **in practical terms what does it mean to be like Jesus?** I suggest that it means to live a life that is repurposed to live SENT.

We live in a reality where we are tempted to act like *it's all about us*—that is a life directed by **Self**. But the life Jesus lived and the one He invites us to follow Him into is a life that is **SENT**.

### The Tug of War

**A tug of war goes on in our lives to decide whether we will live for self or whether we will live SENT.** That is a tug of war we need to win or it will ruin our life.

It is certainly true that from the cradle forward we wake up every day thinking of self but it is also true that every one of us carries inside us the very breath of God. In Genesis 2 the Bible says God breathed into Adam the very breath of life. Since every child gets its' first breath of oxygen through the umbilical cord—**you have the breath of God within you.**

The breath of God leads us to lead a different kind of life a life that is other-focused, a life that is **SENT**. This series is about living for this higher purpose.

It might sound and feel backwards BUT *what if this is how it was meant to be and when we go our own way that is what's backwards?*

### **Roger Swanwick**

One of my best friends in the early days of Indian Creek was a guy named Roger Swanwick. He would tell you he gave the self-directed life a go. He fought in Vietnam and lived to tell about it. He got out, grew his hair long, turned to drugs, dope and sex. He lived with his girl friend in the back of his van and he thought life was good. Until he ran out of money! His so called *friends* started stealing from him. He woke up in places and didn't know how he got there. Eventually even his girl friend was ready to leave him. The self-directed life always has a way of unraveling.

Shortly after this I witnessed an amazing transformation. Roger and his wife, Donna (yes, he married his girl friend) found their way back to God and then discovered the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17.

### **2 Corinthians 5:17**

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun.* NLT

Roger and Donna discovered that what they couldn't do on their own--the presence of Christ could do to change them from the inside out. They not only chose to be faithful in attending church. They loved it. They wanted to grow and couldn't get enough. They found something that satisfied their souls. They started serving in the youth group. Before long Roger was appointed as the manager of a finance company and still later he became president of a bank. They were devoted to becoming disciples. Now their lives had purpose and meaning. They went from living for self to living the life SENT.

### **The Diagram**

Maybe a picture will help. To *become like Jesus* looks like this. A person loves God, loves people and lives out the love of Jesus. This is how we become like Jesus Christ. It is a framework for living. Beliefs and behaviors characterize each one of these descriptions.



### **Love God**

The first dimension of becoming like Jesus and living SENT is depicted in the top right arrow in the circle (green) and describes the life of one who desires to love God and live in relationship with Him.

**Matthew 22:37**

Jesus said that the first Great Commandment was to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.* NLT

When we love God all of life is an act of worship because everything is dedicated to Him. It is about a relationship not a religion. Loving God is not a list of do's and don'ts it is about getting to know God better and better—not just know about Him. We will talk more about this in the weeks to come.

**Love People**

The bottom right portion of the circle (yellow) describes the life of one who loves people. This person lives life in community. They understand that we are created not to live life alone but that we are better together.

**Matthew 22:39**

*The second Great Commandment is equally important Jesus said: Love your neighbor as yourself.* **Matthew 22:39 NLT**

There is a lot more to that and we will explore it in the next few weeks but let's move on to the third portion of the circle.

**Live Out**

The left part of the circle (blue) depicts the life of one who lives out the love of Jesus. They believe Jesus when He says things like:

**Acts 20:35**

*It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Acts 20:35 NLT

And

**Matthew 25:40**

*When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me.* Matthew 25:40 NLT

This person allows Jesus to live through them to impact the lives of others.

**SENT**

The center of the circle (red) describes what happens when all three components come together. We live SENT. When we are actively seeking relationship with God and living loving others as well as looking for ways to express that love as Jesus did, then we are living most like Jesus.

The person who lives SENT has all three circles working in unison. We love God, love people, live out are not linear. They are interconnected.

It is not unusual for someone to have one component working but is a little deficient in the other two. Or one might even have two going most of the time but one area needs growth. If we took a poll today we would probably find that it would be a different one or two for each of us.

Sometimes we place a high value on exploring faith or living in community or even serving with the exclusion of the other components, any of these combinations without the others is incomplete.

When we are living the life that is SENT Jesus shows up! It is here that the kingdom of heaven kisses earth and earth becomes more like heaven.

Jesus was referencing this when He invited people to follow Him.

**Matthew 4:19 NLT**

*Jesus called out to them, 'Come follow me and I will show you how to fish for people.'*

A life that is outward focused is a life that is SENT. An encouraging part of this, I don't want us to miss is that our part is to *Come and to follow*.

His part is to change us and enable us to live a life that is SENT. You can't do it on your own but if you allow Him He will give you both the want to and the how to so you are new from the inside out.

Jon and Glynis DeWitt are great examples of two people who turned from living for self to living lives that are *SENT*.

**Jon and Glynis DeWitt**

When I first came to know my friends I often saw Jon and Glynis at my neighbor's pool. Jon was the life of the party. He'd play pool volleyball with a beer in his hand and a quick quip that kept everyone laughing. Every time I talked with Jon he was kind but it was clear that he didn't think he needed God.

What looked like fun and success on the outside was actually eating him up on the inside. He later admitted that much of the chasing after good times, women (before Glynis) and money was a cover up for the emptiness he felt inside. Jon and Glynis hit bottom when their relationship deteriorated to the point that the future for them looked bleak. Life is all about relationships, isn't it? When they aren't working we are miserable. Jon and Glynis were miserable.

Jon found his way back to God. One night he spent several hours on his face in his basement crying out to God for forgiveness and for help to reconcile with Glynis. God met him there with open arms and his relationship with God was reborn. Jon was a new man inside and out. He's still the life of any party, but the party that is his life, now has a new purpose.

I'll never forget the Monday morning when we heard a knock at our front door at about 8:00 o'clock. It was Jon. *What am I supposed to do?* He asked.

I, too, was confused because I didn't know the back story yet. We invited him in and he began to describe the changes that had occurred in his heart. He wanted everyone to know the new life he had found in Jesus. He was ready to go door-to-door telling everyone!

We prayed together to seal his commitment and then we asked God for direction. I wish you could have seen us! We were two grown men hugging and wiping tears of joy! I encouraged Jon to tell his own family first. There may be a time for door-to-door later or maybe there would be a better way.

That is not the end of the story, Glynis, Jon's wife, was skeptical. She wanted to see if the change was real. Would it last? She kept her distance for weeks but the change was so deep and profound that she wanted to find her way back to God too. She found my wife, Belinda, one Sunday and poured out her heart to God. She experienced forgiveness so profound it overwhelmed her! She accepted amazing grace and received a peace all at once in a time she will never forget. Glynis now finds joy serving alongside Jon leading an Alpha group. Her greatest joy is mentoring other young women to turn around and find what she found in relationship with Jesus.

Jon knew he was sent to tell others but it wasn't by knocking on doors in our neighborhood. He started putting together a daily devotional he emails to anyone interested. The last count I heard he had over 2,000 people receiving the *devos* as he calls them. Many of those people pass the daily devotionals of encouragement to live life with Jesus on to a network of friends and the chain reaches around the world.

Discover the relationship Jon and Glynis found! Admit you can't do it alone. I say it this way, *I can't but He can!*

Will you say that after me?  
*I can't but He can.*

He won't wrestle control away from you. If you will reach for Him, you'll discover He was already there reaching for you.

### **Closing**

I wonder if today isn't the day where you decide to turn your back on the self-directed life and put your life in the hands of the One who says follow me, *I'll show you a better way to live. I'll show you how to become all you were meant to be. I'll teach you how to live a life that is Sent.*

### **John 20:21**

Jesus said, *As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.* John 20:21 NLT

Start by turning around, turn away from self. If you find yourself thinking, this is harder than it was meant to be. You are right. If you ever wonder, *Is there something more?* There is! You were made for more!

Take a step toward god today. It is not complicated; it is as simple as the ABCs.

**A Admit you need God**

**B Believe Jesus is the Son of God and invite Him to be your Leader**

**C Confess you've sinned and ask for forgiveness**

### **Prayer**

Jesus, we admit today that we need you. Left to ourselves we tend to look out for self instead of living a life that is full of meaning and purpose. Help us to discover the better way. Teach us to love You, to love people and to live out Your love. In this series may we experience living SENT and may it become a lifestyle for us.

If you are here today and you've not yet discovered real life in Jesus you can pray this prayer with me: Jesus I need you. I humbly ask you to forgive my sins and lead my life. I believe you are the Son of God and I invite you to become my leader. Take Your rightful place in my life and help me become the person You want me to be. Thank you for hearing my prayer and adopting me as Your child. Amen.

With every head still bowed, if you prayed that prayer today please tell one of our prayer partners that will be at the front of the stage at the end of the service. They will be glad to welcome you to the family and give you some resources to help you get started on the journey of following Christ.

For those who've accepted Jesus as your Savior and Leader maybe as we talked about the SENT circle today you realized you were stronger in one of the component parts than the other. Maybe, for example, you realized you are working pretty hard at learning to love God but there are some people you just can't stand and you know those relationships need to improve. Or maybe you love people but you haven't figured out yet how to use your gifts and serve. Would you pray today that you would ask Jesus to help you grow to be like Him—to love God, love people and live out His love. Ask Him to teach you to live SENT.

Amen

### **Next Steps**

- Visit the web site
- Commit to all six weeks of this series: *Created to Live SENT*
- Join a small group
- Read the book backwards: Created to Live SENT
- Invite a friend who is searching for meaning and purpose to come with you next week.