



Words

TO LIVE BY

Go

JANUARY 2021

GO

Definition: *move from one place to another, travel, leave or depart.*

Why not start off the year with a short, simple word. It sounds easy, right? Go will probably be the shortest word to live by and yet one that is so full of meaning it will leave you challenged for the rest of your life. This word was given as a command by God in the Old Testament and continued to be given by Jesus in the New Testament. I believe the word, go is starting to be overlooked in the church today. It is a word that can make you feel slightly uncomfortable because it usually calls you out of your comfort zone. As you read thru this devotional remember to look to Jesus as your example in living out each word. My hope is that the word, go will be one that you apply to your everyday life in this new year of 2021.

The next four weeks you will compare stories from scripture that focus on the word, go. In each story God used this word to commission people by commanding them to go.

WEEK 1 - ABRAM

My husband and I are frequent users of the google maps app when we are traveling. When we first moved to Northern MI I used it all the time so I wouldn't get lost. We like to know where we are going and even be given the ETA (estimated time arrival). We have a lot of faith in this little app and its directions. This reminds me of the first man you will meet and read about who was commanded to, go. Abram was a man of great faith who loved God deeply. His story starts in Genesis 12:1-9,

"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan."

Notice the immediate obedience of Abram. He didn't question God at all. It simply says, *he went*. Put yourself in Abram's shoes. Probably the one thing you would like to know is where you are going, right? Google maps would come in handy right about now. But God didn't tell Abram where he was going, only that he was supposed to go to a land that God would show him. So literally God was Abram's google map. God eventually revealed Abram's destination but his ETA wouldn't be for many years.

How many of you have that great of faith in God that you would be willing to do what Abram did? I would like to answer yes, but honestly I think I would have a lot of questions first. His

wife, Sarai, along with his nephew, Lot, and the people they had acquired went with Abram. There is a lot of faith going on here. They were all willing to go and risk everything to follow God's plan for their lives over their own. Can you imagine the amount of pressure Abram may have felt leading his family and possessions to an unknown place? He didn't let that stop or discourage him.

After God commands Abram to go, He makes this covenant of blessing with Abram. Here is where you can start to trace this blessing forward into the new testament. You will find the ultimate blessing that came thru the line of Abram was, Jesus, your Savior.

"When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negev."

As Abram is going, God appears to him again revealing His plan to give Canaan, the promised land, to him. The very next thing you read is of Abram building an altar to the Lord. This was a way in which he worshipped the Lord. It was as if he was praising God for being with him every step of the way. Abram fully believed that if he kept trusting God, he would receive every blessing God was promising him. Then it says he moved again and when he had pitched his tent, what do you find him doing? Building another altar to the Lord. The relationship that Abram had with God is so encouraging to read about because you can see the amount of trust he had in God. The last verse tells us he continued to journey on. Abram kept going until he reached the promised land.

Aren't you glad that Abram obeyed God's perfect plan for his life? Abram was commanded to leave the comfort of his home and his familiar life to follow God's plan which ultimately brought about your greatest blessing, Jesus. Jesus did the same for you. He left the comfort of His home in heaven with God the Father to come and save you from the punishment of your sin.

If you have not yet placed your faith and trust in Jesus alone for your salvation, do it today. Repent of your sin and believe on Jesus death and resurrection for you. Romans 10:13 says,
"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

As a follower of Jesus choose to obey His last words when He commanded in Mark 16:15,
"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."

Living out those words may require you stepping out into the unknown, away from your comfort zone. Always remember that when God sends you, He goes with you. God will never

call you to something and then leave you or forget about you. At the end of your life, it will all be worth it, if it was simply being obedient to Jesus command to go.

Missionary to China, Hudson Taylor said,

"The great commission is not an option to be considered, it is a command to be obeyed."

WEEK 2 - JEREMIAH

Would you describe yourself as someone with a tender heart? If so, have you ever felt embarrassed by that quality? How many of you would say you have a tender heart for lost souls? Two of my closest friends growing up were not Christians. I prayed and prayed for my friends day in and day out that they would come to know their need for Jesus. Many times those prayers were full of tears as my heart was so burdened for them. I shared Jesus with them and invited them to church and youth group. As we grew older and went our separate ways in life, I'm still reminded to pray for them because I don't believe that they have placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. I have to fight back the lies that it is a lost cause and impossible for them to receive Jesus. I still get emotional when I think of lost people who don't know Jesus.

Today you will meet a prophet named, Jeremiah. This man was described as someone with a tender heart. He was even given the title of, *"The Weeping Prophet."* This was because Jeremiah's heart was so heavy for Israel to turn and repent of their wickedness. Here is the first time you can see a relation between Jeremiah & Jesus. Just as Jeremiah wept and lamented over Israel and their need for repentance, so Jesus wept over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-39 and Luke 19:41-44.

Jeremiah spent 40 years of his life telling Israel of the judgement that was to come, but they did not listen. The book of Lamentations is a series of laments that Jeremiah wrote about the fall of God's people. When God chooses to use a person He does not erase their personality. After all He is the one who gave it to them. God wants to use that person's sanctified personality to bring Him glory. Look with me at Jeremiah chapter 1.

"Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, I am only a youth; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.' Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'" Jeremiah 1:4-10

You just finished reading the call of Jeremiah. Look back at the beginning of those verses and notice when Jeremiah was consecrated as a prophet to the nations. It was before he was even born. Jeremiah tried to disqualify himself because of his age. God contradicts Jeremiah's words by speaking truth to him. God called Jeremiah to go and speak His words of judgement to Israel. He assured Jeremiah not to be afraid because He was going with him to deliver him. Keep in mind the word deliver as it will be referenced again. Then God says He will give Jeremiah the words to say.

Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes here. Do you feel inadequate to carry out this command to go just like Jeremiah did? Do you question if God really knows what He's doing by choosing you? Wouldn't you want to know ahead of time what you are to say? I know I would. God knew all the thoughts and doubts Jeremiah was having. This seemed impossible to Jeremiah. God wasn't going to let those thoughts and feelings discourage Jeremiah from being obedient to the call. D.L. Moody once said, *"God doesn't expect the impossible from us. He wants us to expect the impossible from Him."* Continue on in chapter 1 with me.

"And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see an almond branch.' Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.'

The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, 'What do you see?' And I said, 'I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.' Then the Lord said to me, 'Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.'" Jeremiah 1:11-16

I don't know about you, but if this was the message I was told to deliver I would be, *shaking in my boots*. This was a message of judgement against the cities of Judah because they had forsaken God. Do you know who else is guilty of forsaking God? You. This problem of sin from back in Jeremiah's day is still rampant today. Look at yourself and the world around you. Isn't it true, that you are worshipping other things in the place of God, including the work of your own hands? That is sin. You are guilty of breaking the very first command from Exodus 20:3, *"You shall have no other gods before me."* Keep reading to see how God finishes up chapter 1 with Jeremiah.

"But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you." Jeremiah 1:17-19

God tells him to take action immediately. This is where followers of Jesus can sometimes get too comfortable and lazy with this command. It's easy to think if you just wait a little longer, someone else is sure to step up and answer the call. God doesn't give Jeremiah time to think about it. Immediate action is required and the same is true for you. Jeremiah was being sent by God to deliver this message of judgement for Israel's sin, but, he was not going alone. When you are obedient to God's command to go, you won't go alone either. God leaves Jeremiah with some encouragement in the last few verses.

Notice the relation between Jeremiah and Jesus. God sent Jesus here to this earth to deliver a message of judgement for your sin as well. Instead of you having to pay the punishment your sin deserves, God chose out of His love for you to punish His perfect Son, Jesus in your place. Jesus died on the cross for you.

The only reason you can place your faith in Him alone to be saved from your sin is because He rose again on the third day, proving His power over sin and death. All of this is God's free gift to you. There is nothing you can do to earn it. Romans 10:9 tells how to accept this gift, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

To my brothers and sisters in Christ, you have been given the greatest command of all time to GO. Don't keep this message of Jesus and the need for repentance to yourself. Jesus commanded you to go and share it with a hurting and dying world. For some of you this may mean being faithful to share the gospel with your own children. For others it may require you to speak out more in your workplace. And still for some of you it may literally mean you leaving everything behind to go to another city, state or country to share the love of Jesus. His return is imminent. Will He find you being obedient and faithful to His parting command to go? Matthew 10:7 says, *"And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"*

Ask yourself this question, *"when is the last time I wept over a lost soul?"*

WEEK 3 - JONAH

Have you ever had a time when someone told you to go do something and you didn't want to do it, so you did something else instead? Probably all of you could answer yes to that question. Meet a man named, Jonah. He was given a command by God to go to a certain people and deliver a message. Jonah didn't want to obey because he thought he knew what the outcome would be, so he did something else instead. Many of you can probably recall his story quite well. Let's start right at verse 1.

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.' But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord." Jonah 1:1-3

There you have it. After Jonah heard the command God gave him to go to Nineveh, he didn't want to obey so he chose to go in the opposite direction. Jonah was trying to run from God's command and thought he could hide. There are times you won't always feel like obeying God's command to go. Be careful when it comes to your feelings. They can cause you to disobey what God is telling you to do. Read further to see how this plays out for Jonah.

"But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. So the captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.'" Jonah 1:4-6

Do you find it interesting that Jonah was able to sleep so peacefully in the bottom of the ship, knowing he was being disobedient and running from God? Once awakened, Jonah knew the reason for the raging storm. This was what God was using to get his attention.

"Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Therefore they called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.' So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging." Jonah 1:11-15

Jonah knew that the raging storm was because of his disobedience to God's command. Sometimes when you run from God, He purposely allows your life to be miserable so he can

get your full attention. In Jonah's case it was sending this storm that almost capsized the ship. What Jonah tells the men to do seems absolutely crazy. Throw him overboard? They tried to avoid it, but as a last resort end up throwing Jonah into the raging sea. Jonah may have thought that if they just threw him into the sea, he would drown and then never have to carry out God's command. You know what's awesome? God had a rescue plan in place when He sent the big fish to swallow Jonah whole. He was not going to let Jonah get out of fulfilling his command to go and preach this message to Ninevah.

In chapter 2, Jonah has a conversation with God. The fish vomits Jonah out onto dry land and then in chapter 3 God comes to Jonah again with the same command to go to Ninevah. This time Jonah obeys.

"Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.' When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it." Jonah 3

The people of Ninevah receive the message whole heartedly and turn back to God. God's plan was to destroy them if they did not recognize their sin, return to Him and repent. As you read the last chapter in Jonah, you find Jonah angry at God. Jonah believed the people of Ninevah should die for all the evil they had done and were doing. But he also knew the power behind the words of God as he spoke them over Ninevah. Jonah didn't want to go to the people of Ninevah and allow them to experience God's forgiveness. He was angry because he knew that God was gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love. The compassion of God was displayed in full force here.

Just as Jonah and Ninevah were recipients of God's grace and mercy, so you can be too. Romans 5:8 explains it well, *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* While you were still living in your sin, God sent His one and only perfect Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for your sin on the cross. Three days later, Jesus came back

to life proving His power over sin and death. This is how God showed you His love, mercy and grace. Will you repent of your sin today and receive Jesus as your Savior?

In this story you find the total opposite response to God's command to go. Jonah tried to run away from God thinking he could get out of what God was commanding him to do. Know this my brothers and sisters, you can never run from God. He will always be waiting for you and meet you wherever you try to hide, even if it's in the hull of a ship. Because God is all knowing, He already knew that Jonah was going to run from His command. That didn't stop God from teaching Jonah an extremely important lesson. Not only did God want the people of Ninevah to turn and repent from their sin, He also was going to teach Jonah thru it.

Have you ever tried to run from God's command to go? God loved Jonah enough to give him a second chance to obey. It wasn't for Jonah to worry what the outcome would be. It was only for him to be obedient to go and preach God's words. This reminds me of a quote from missionary, Mary Slessor, to Nigeria, Africa. Mary said, *"Christ sent me to preach the gospel and He will look after the results."*

WEEK 4 - ISAIAH

Think back to grade school when you were sitting in your classroom at your desk and the teacher asked for a volunteer. You eagerly raised your hand wanting to be chosen to do the important task. If you were the chosen one, you proudly carried out the task with a smile on your face. Today volunteers are looked upon very highly and lifted up for their service. Did you know that God is looking for volunteers to carry out His command to go? Are you as eager to volunteer to serve the Lord as you were to serve your teacher in grade school?

In today's passage you will read about a time when God was looking for a volunteer. The man who volunteered and answered the call to go was Isaiah. You find his story in Isaiah 6.

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.'

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.' And he said, 'Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.' Then I said, 'How long, O Lord?' And he said: 'Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.' The holy seed is its stump."

This passage gives me chills every time I read it. Can you imagine being Isaiah and seeing this vision? The Lord in all of His glory being worshipped. Isaiah realizes who he is in all of his sin before the Lord. When you are in the holy presence of the Lord, your sin becomes so real to you. You recognize your unholiness. You have no good thing. Romans 3:10-12 speaks truth when it says, *"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."* That is exactly what Isaiah was seeing.

Then you read of the seraphim who flew to Isaiah with a burning coal, touched his lips and it said his sins were atoned for. Pastor David Guzik explains it well when he says, *"This was obviously a spiritual transaction. If one has a sinful mouth, it will do nothing to place a burning hot coal on their lips. That will not take away or purge their sin. Yet, the same principle works on our behalf in regard to Jesus' work on Calvary. Our sin was place upon Him, and He was burned with the fire of God's judgment. Yet because He was holy and righteous Himself, the fire of God's judgment did not harm Him; it only burned away the sin, our sin."*

The next part is where you read of the Lord asking for a volunteer. I just love seeing how immediate Isaiah's response was. It was as if he was saying, *I don't have much but I am willing to go.* Brothers and sisters that is all God wants from you, a willing heart. Missionary to Africa, David Livingstone said, *"If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?"*

Are you willing and ready to go? I ask myself that question often. In Bible college I remember every year during missions conference when the challenge was given for students to publicly come to the altar. It was there that they declared they were willing and ready to go to the foreign mission field. I struggled every year sitting in my seat, having a private conversation with God in my head that went something like this,

"Lord, you know I am willing and ready to go wherever you want to take me, but I just don't feel like You're calling me to the foreign mission field."

It was then in those quiet moments, sitting in the big Torrey Gray Auditorium that God quietly spoke to me saying,

"Precious, I do want you to go, but not to the foreign mission field. I want you to serve me with your whole heart here, in the United States of America. There are so many places here that need to hear of my gospel too. Are you willing?"

My response, *"Yes Lord."*

If you have been a follower of Jesus for years, my challenge to you is to never stop going. Move your feet. Read what God says about Isaiah toward the end of the book in chapter 52:6-7, *"Therefore My people shall know My name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" Did you see it? God said of Isaiah and also of those who bring His good news of salvation, that they have beautiful feet.*

Missionary David Livingstone also said,

"God only had one Son, and He was a missionary."

This is where you see Jesus live out this word, go Himself. He is your example. You have a problem called sin that you were born into, wanting your own way instead of God's way. The payment for your sin is death, but God the Father loved you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, on a mission to go down here to this sinful earth, take the punishment for sin that

you deserve by dying on the cross in your place. John 3:16 sums it up perfectly, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* All that is required of you is to admit your sin, repent of it, believe in Jesus death on the cross and resurrection from the dead and then receive Him as your Lord and Savior.

Jesus last words in Matthew were these, *"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 28:18-20

Perhaps the famous Nike slogan *"Just Do It"* is the perfect answer to Jesus great commission. Jesus was obedient to go on His mission because of His love for you. Will you be obedient to the great commission and go preach the gospel out of your love for Him?

Going cannot involve looking back. Read these three quotes by missionaries who were obedient to the great commission.

- Missionary to Ecuador, Jim Elliot said, *"He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."*
- Missionary to China, Hudson Taylor said, *"God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals who are ready to follow Him."*
- Missionary to Africa, David Livingstone said, *"I am prepared to go anywhere, so long as it is forward."*

What are you waiting for? What does it look like for you to go? This should be the highest honor for all followers of Jesus to answer, what I am calling, *The Great GOmission!*

"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 10:14