

# Call and Mission

Bible Background • MATTHEW 10

Printed Text • MATTHEW 10:1–15 | Devotional Reading • MATTHEW 15:21–28

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: RECOGNIZE the disciples' mission in Matthew 10; IDENTIFY challenges that we might experience in fulfilling Christ's mission for the church; and PREPARE for greater participation in the mission of the church.

## In Focus

The members of Lakeside Church called themselves congregants, but Pastor Roberts was uneasy with this language. It bothered him that people thought the church was a place for releasing personal problems as opposed to being a community where all could participate in community service, social justice, and worship.

After a few weeks of teaching discipleship, Pastor Roberts thought it would be time to put teachings into practice. "We are disciples and we are called to make more disciples and do greater works for the kingdom of God," he explained. "Church is not just a slot machine or a microwave; everyone has a role to play. Today, we aren't going to have worship as usual. We're going to have a special Evangelism Day. We are going to reach out and invite people to come worship with us. If the people want to know more, then tell them more. If not, then keep it moving. Those who have the true desire to come will."

Together, the disciples of Lakeside Church went out into the community, shared the Good News of Jesus, and invited more people to worship. Some refused to hear what they had to say, and others received them well. The following Sunday, fifty new people came to church and thirty joined.

*How could you see yourself more as a disciple of Jesus Christ? Although there are challenges, what are some of the rewards in making more disciples?*

## Keep in Mind

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matthew 10:1, KJV).

## Words You Should Know

**A. Disciple** mathetes (Gk.) — Learner who is under a teacher.

**B. Apostle** apostolos (Gk.) — One who is sent out on a mission, an ambassador of a sender.

## Say It Correctly

**Alphaeus.** AL-fay-uhs.

**Bartholomew.** bar-THAHL-uh-myoo.

**Canaanite.** KAY-nuh-nait.

**Gomorrah.** guh-MORE-uh.

**Lebbaeus.** LEB-bee-uhs.

**Thaddeus.** THAD-dee-uhs.

## KJV

**Matthew 10:1** And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.  
2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;  
3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;  
4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.  
5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:  
6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.  
7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.  
8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.  
9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,  
10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.  
11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.  
12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.  
13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

## NIV

**Matthew 10:1** Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.  
2 Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (also called Peter), then Andrew (Peter's brother), James (son of Zebedee), John (James's brother), 3 Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew (the tax collector), James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus,  
4 Simon (the zealot), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).  
5 Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: "Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans,  
6 but only to the people of Israel—God's lost sheep.  
7 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.  
8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!  
9 Don't take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins.  
10 Don't carry a traveler's bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.  
11 Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town.  
12 When you enter the home, give it your blessing.  
13 If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing.  
14 If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave.

## The People, Places, and Times

### The Disciples.

The disciples in today's text are Jesus' inner circle, those who were willing to drop everything and walk with Jesus. The Gospels portray the disciples as those who were dedicated to Jesus, although they were often slow to learn and quick to retaliate—not unlike the rest of us. Since God used such unlikely people to turn the world

upside down after Christ's resurrection and the advent of the Holy Spirit, we should be encouraged, especially in times when we may feel we do not merit the title of disciple. In today's lesson we see that in spite of immaturity and imperfections, the disciples had a strong desire to learn from Jesus and follow Him, and Jesus entrusted them to share His message and ministry.

## Background

Jesus continued His public ministry throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of heaven, and healing all types of diseases and sicknesses. His fame and reputation grew throughout the lands, drawing crowds of thousands of followers everywhere He went. Jesus' message was consistent: He came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). As Jesus' reputation grew among those oppressed and maligned, so did the number of His enemies. The religious leaders who should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah were particularly uncomfortable with His popularity, miracles, teaching, and authority. Jesus and His five disciples were teaching that the kingdom of heaven is the fulfillment of God's promises: where justice prevails and where God favors the meek. Driven by His compassion and concern for the "sheep without a shepherd," Jesus prayed to God for more laborers to send into this plentiful harvest of souls in need of salvation (Matthew 9:36–37). God added more disciples in answer to Jesus' prayers for more workers.

### At-A-Glance

1. The Disciples (Matthew 10:1–4)
2. The Mission of the Twelve (vv. 5–10)
3. Worthy of the Word (vv. 11–15)

## In Depth

### 1. The Disciples (Matthew 10:1–4)

Jesus established His front-line mission team with twelve men from all walks of life. Among the disciples are four fishermen, a zealous political activist, and a tax collector. These were ordinary men who became extraordinary because of Jesus. They had diverse backgrounds and experiences: Some were outcasts of society, some were despised, and at least one was greedy and self-absorbed. But the one characteristic they had in common was their willingness to follow Jesus.

The men were called to be disciples—from the Greek word meaning "learner" or "follower." They were learning from Jesus how to be strong ambassadors for the kingdom of heaven; they were following Christ Jesus in the transformation of lives. Jesus' twelve disciples had special significance to the Jewish audience. In a historical context, twelve is tied to God's covenant with His people—Israel started out as twelve tribes headed by twelve patriarchs. Now, God was bringing in a new kingdom for His people, one in which those who repented and followed Jesus would "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

*When Christ calls you to follow Him, how do you respond?*

### 2. The Mission of the Twelve (vv. 5–10)

Jesus charged His disciples to emulate His own ministry. He was sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24) and referred to those in the crowds who followed Him as "sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Remaining faithful to God's covenant with Israel, Jesus sends the disciples to go only to the Jews in this instance, although later commands them to go to the Gentiles. Centuries before, the Jews had been

chosen to tell the world, including the Gentiles, about the reign of God (Isaiah 49:6; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:23). The disciples were to: deliver the message that the kingdom of heaven is near; perform the tasks of healing the sick, raising the dead, curing diseases, and driving out demons; and trust God, taking no money during their mission. Finally, Jesus sends them out with a principle of generosity to follow as they minister to others. He reminds them to freely bless others as God had freely blessed them.

*How has God prepared you for your assignment? How will you bless others as God has blessed you?*

### **3. Worthy of the Word (vv. 11–15)**

The disciples were instructed to minister to those worthy to receive the proclaimed Word. The worthiness of a person was determined by their willingness to hear the Good News of the kingdom of God. Turning disciples away was equivalent to rejecting the Messiah. Jesus also prepared the disciples for anticipated rejection. If they were not welcomed, Jesus told them to leave and shake the dust from their feet, a gesture that was triggered by people making the wrong choice not to receive Jesus. He told the disciples that those who rejected the Word would be worse off than Sodom and Gomorrah, cities destroyed by God for their wickedness. Jesus offers the opportunity for salvation to all of us, and He cautions us not to ignore His call. The opportunity may not come again.

*Are you receptive to the teachings from God? How do you respond when others reject your efforts to share Jesus' teachings?*

#### **Search the Scriptures**

1. What authority did Jesus give to the twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1)?
2. Who were the disciples instructed to avoid on their mission (v. 5)?
3. What were the disciples to do if a home was deemed worthy of receiving God's Word (v. 13)?
4. What were the disciples to do if a home did not welcome them (v. 14)?

#### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. In the text, Jesus gives the church the mission of making more disciples. How are you contributing to the mission of the kingdom? Has anything prevented you from living out the mission and the call to make more disciples?
2. How do we make disciples in the 21st century? How do we deal with it when people reject our message today?

#### **Liberating Lesson**

Once we commit to following Jesus and walking in our purpose for Him, we must also be prepared for criticism and disapproval. Often, this negative feedback can be debilitating and cause us to doubt our call and purpose. We need to be aware that sometimes criticism and judgment against us really has nothing to do with us. Although some criticism is unavoidable and sometimes hurtful, we can encourage ourselves to remember that God is our defense and vindicator, to keep our peace, and to pray for those who unjustly criticize us. Criticism can be a blessing or a curse, depending on how we respond to it.

In today's lesson, Jesus sends the disciples out as materially poor messengers who were entirely dependent on God and the generosity of others. They would face criticism and rejection from some of those they visited even though they were truly messengers of the Master. It is important to recognize that Jesus was homeless, and the disciples who followed Him were sent with no material possessions but had access to the kingdom of God. Some would have rejected the disciples and missed the power of God showing up in their lives simply because they were fixated on how the messengers looked or bothered by sharing with strangers. We must be cautious not to write off those who appear to be materially lacking as less important or not worthy of our attention, because God could be positioning them to be His messengers and ministers of His love and power for us.

## **Application for Activation**

Jesus called His twelve disciples. He did not draft them, or bargain for them, or even accept them as volunteers. Jesus chose them to serve Him in a very special way. He used their gifts, experience, knowledge, and obedience to transform lives and proclaim the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus calls us today, and we, too, can choose to follow Him.

- Know that God can use anyone, no matter how insignificant he or she may appear to be.
- Remember that God does not always call the qualified, but He will always qualify the called.
- Rejoice in the knowledge that God's message of salvation is for all people, regardless of race, gender, or national origin.
- Bless others. God has freely showered us with His blessings, and we should generously give of our time, love, and possessions.

## **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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## **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## More Light on the Text

### Matthew 10:1–15

**<sup>1</sup> And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. <sup>2</sup> Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.**

As He traveled around Galilee, Jesus spoke about the need for more workers in the kingdom in light of the enormity of the harvest (Matthew 9:35–36). As an initial response to that need, Jesus empowers the twelve disciples to extend His ministry. The twelve are the beginning of a stream of workers in the church who will continue the work of proclaiming the presence and displaying the power of the kingdom of God. Matthew’s first mention of “the twelve” leads parenthetically to the listing of their names prior to their instructions.

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The disciples’ apparent common characteristic was that none of them was privileged or from backgrounds of high socioeconomic status. They were ordinary people with neither academic attainments nor social pedigrees and advantages, but through Jesus they would do extraordinary things. Doubtless, the Lord sees in every person, not only what that person is, but also what He can make her or him. These disciples were chosen not only for what they were, but also for what they were capable of becoming under Christ’s influence and in His power. Therefore, no one can say, “I have nothing to offer.” We all have something to offer to Jesus, and He can transform and use it for His glory and greatness.

The disciples were able to support, protect, and empower each other better than if each went alone. There is definitely an allusion to the Law where at least two witnesses were required for an evidence to be credible (Deuteronomy 19:15). Furthermore, by staying together in smaller rather than larger groups, the disciples were able to maximize their reach. Timeless principles for discipleship and missions appear here. We need each other, someone with whom we can be close in fellowship, ministry and accountability.

The choice of twelve disciples is symbolic particularly in the correspondence of its number to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. 19:28) and in its suggestion as the fulfillment of the hope of Israel. That they were twelve might also suggest that Jesus pulls together a community of followers, in conscious opposition to the current leadership of Israel, as the new recipients of God’s revelation and grace.

Here the Twelve are called apostles for the first and only time in Matthew with reference at once to the immediate minor mission and to the later great one. The Greek word *apostolos* (ah-POE-stow-loce, literally: one who is sent out) refers generally to one sent on a mission, who represents and shares the authority of the one who sends. It is used here with specific reference to the original twelve apostles. The force of the word here is “commissioned,” in this case by Christ. As apostles, they are the envoys of the Lord, with profound implications for their life, ministry, and message. The disciples— who had been with Jesus for some time—had touched, talked, shared, communed, prayed, meditated, and fellowshiped with Him. They had shared and been taught the Scriptures by Him and probably had been taught how to preach and teach. They had certainly witnessed His preaching and teaching and how He went about both.

It is also noteworthy that the Twelve are called disciples in verse 1 and apostles in verse 2. This is probably to highlight or accentuate that we must first be learners before we become teachers—first taught of God, before being sent of God. Even so, we must remain as disciples regardless of our calling. Discipleship is lifelong, and not a mere three-week instructional program.

The ministry is not a profession; it is a calling and a commission from Christ. Those who choose to be ministers without a true call and commissioning of the Lord will find themselves ministering primarily in their own strength. Such people will also find their heart empty, feeling the constant pressure of having to come up with ideas and programs through human ability. Jesus not only called the Twelve to a mission, He also gave them power to do it. The same principle holds true today: Whom God calls, God equips. Christ gave His messengers power (NLT: authority). The Greek word for authority is *exousia* (ek-soo-SEE-ah), which involves the right to regulate or control the activities of one or more individuals. Your equipping may not be completely evident before the ministry begins, but it will be evident along the way. The authority and power given by the Lord has nothing to do with social position, wealth, fame, or earthly dominion. The Lord's servant is given power to reach and help people. This is an important lesson for the motives and actions of God's servants, both lay and clergy. Here the authority is over "unclean spirits," a designation that is often used for demons. The Greek words *nosos* (NO-soce) and *malakia* (mah-lah-KEE-ah), translated respectively as disease and sickness, are similar; although the latter is more general, both describe illness. The point is simply that Jesus has invested the disciples with power over every kind of ailment whether physical or spiritual.

**<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: <sup>6</sup> But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

When Jesus "commanded" (Gk. *paragello*, pah-ron-GHEL-low) the Twelve, His giving them orders has important significance. Among its several usages is the idea of a military command. Obedience is not an option. The nuance of this word compared to its synonyms brings out the continuing nature of these commands. These are the things anyone who calls himself an apostle must do, not just some commands Jesus once gave to these twelve men.

Jesus now tells them where to go, and where not to. Their mission is restricted to the lost house of Israel. At first sight, limiting the mission to Israel appears to contradict or conflict with the Great Commission in 28:18–20 where the command extends to all nations and all people. There is no contradiction. As Jesus soon says, there is an anticipation of the disciples going into Gentile territory (10:18). Here it is a matter of strategy and priority. Jesus' commands fit the larger pattern of His own ministry prior to His death. They also match the missionary priority Paul maintained throughout Acts and articulated to the church of Rome (Romans 1:16). The "lost sheep" of Israel does not refer to a portion of the nation but to all the people (cf. Matthew 9:36; Jeremiah 50:6). The sending of these twelve was a conscious expansion of that work. Now the work of Jesus was being done by many more than simply Jesus. God's plan was to reach the whole world, but beginning with Israel. There was certainly enough work to do among the lost sheep of the house of Israel to keep the Twelve busy until God directly commanded them to expand their ministry. They have a clear, limited objective.

**<sup>7</sup> And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. <sup>8a</sup> Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:**

Having identified the people to be reached by the mission, Jesus now clearly spells out the mission's purpose. The fundamental objective of the mission is to proclaim the dawning of the kingdom of heaven. The disciples were not to go to entertain; they were to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom. The verb for preach (Gk. *kerusso*, kay-ROO-so) has thus far been restricted in its usage only in connection with the kingdom (Matthew

3:1–2; 4:17, 23; 9:35). The disciples both had a message to preach and a power to display. In this, they were truly followers of their Master. They must go in confidence, expecting God to work.

They are to go to the lost, the distressed and the poor. Often the poor, the needy, and the marginalized respond most readily to the Good News, while the affluent isolate themselves.

The command to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom is followed by four imperatives in verse 8. Healing of the sick, raising of the dead, cleansing of lepers, and casting out demons are part of the Good News of the kingdom—indeed, it is that which they exemplify and symbolize. Matthew has given examples of each of these from Jesus' own ministry (cf. in order: 8:15; 8:3; 9:25; 8:32). There is no indication that the commands were intended or originally understood in any other way than literally (cf. the raising of the dead in Acts 9:36–43; 20:7–12). There is also no indication that these miracles have ceased with the first disciples. No scriptural warrant exists to suggest that this authority has been permanently withdrawn. It is wise for Christians today to both believe in God's power to do such miracles through His people, while remaining careful and not too quick to believe unsubstantiated reports of such miracles.

**<sup>8b</sup> freely ye have received, freely give.<sup>9</sup> Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,<sup>10</sup> Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.**

The blessings of discipleship come solely by grace and as such must be similarly imparted (v. 8b). Jesus charged His disciples nothing, and He expected them to minister unto others without charge. This is the foundational principle for the commands that follow. Disciples were to be dependent on God, not on their own wealth or possessions, for necessities. There is to be no charge for the proclamation or the accompanying healings. As the disciples received “freely,” so they are to give freely. All the resources the disciples need—money, travel provisions, and extra clothing—will be given to them (v. 11) by those who accept their ministry (vv. 9–10). The disciples are not to profit from the Gospel, but their basic needs are to be met. Accordingly, they are not to take with them money (silver, gold, or brass) for their belts or even bother with the ordinary things a traveler takes along: a knapsack (KJV: “scrip”), an extra shirt, a pair of sandals, or a staff. They are to be totally committed to the cause and its urgency, and in that total, unrestricted commitment to rely exclusively on the provision the Lord will make through those who receive them (cf. 6:25–34). They should expect God to meet their needs, without taking undue concern for their own needs. Furthermore, they should expect that God would normally meet their needs through the inspired hospitality of others.

Matthew emphasizes the simplicity, austerity, and urgency of the mission. The point of Jesus' strictness is not to leave His disciples deprived and defenseless but dependent on others for their nourishment in every area of life. We must recognize that there are Scriptures that recognize dependence both on others' support and on one's own resources earned through a different trade (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1–18; Philippians 4:10–19). One must not draw a line in the sand here. Decisions must be made based on what advances the Gospel in an honorable way in any given context. Doubtless, a serious danger of paid ministry is that preachers will tailor their message to suit their financiers or benefactors. Even though the Twelve could expect the people they serve to meet their needs, they should never require payment in order to meet their needs. The foundational principle was “freely you have received, freely give.”

**<sup>11</sup> And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. <sup>12</sup> And when ye come into an house, salute it. <sup>13</sup> And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. <sup>15</sup> Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.**



As they enter each new location, the disciples must look for those who are “worthy.” “Worthy” in verse 11 is the same word translated “worth” in verse 10 and “deserving” in verse 13. Here, worthiness does not imply a moral quality but openness to the message and ministry of the disciples. Such “worthiness” referred to here is demonstrated by the receptivity shown to the disciples and their message. In light of verse 14, the term must refer to the response of welcoming the disciples, not to any necessary merit or virtue in the individuals. The worthy person is the one who provides hospitality to the disciples, and they are to remain with that person during the time of their ministry in that community. Such people will provide the characteristic hospitality given to friends and respected people who traveled in the ancient Roman world: good food and a bed. This hospitality proved vital, given the generally nefarious state of public lodging—hotbeds of theft and prostitution.

The apostles are to approach all communities in peaceable ways and for peaceful purposes. If they are not received, they are to withdraw. The disciples were to be prepared for a mixed response to their message. Not all would receive the Good News; indeed some would be hostile toward it. God will deal with the hard-hearted cities who refuse to come to Him, just as He will provide for those who serve Him. Shaking the dust off the feet was an established symbol of rejection among many Gentile nations whenever they returned from foreign lands. This symbolic action by the apostles is now applied to Jewish cities. Rejecting the disciples’ message is seen as a serious sin, indeed, worse even than the gross rebellion of Sodom and Gomorrah in Old Testament times (cf. Genesis 18:20–19:28). The increasing culpability of such rejection probably stemmed from the fact that God’s revelation in Christ was that much more clear and immediate. Jesus’ strategy and attitude for dealing with those who reject His followers and their message is still appropriate for Christians today: Do not take judgments into your own hands but leave the fate of those who reject the message of Christ in the hands of God (v. 15).

# Daily Bible Readings

## MONDAY

Jeremiah, Prophet to the Nations  
(Jeremiah 1:4–10)

## TUESDAY

Ananias Welcomes and Baptizes Saul  
(Acts 9:10–19)

## WEDNESDAY

Paul Called by a Vision  
(Acts 16:6–10)

## THURSDAY

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve  
(Mark 6:7–13)

## FRIDAY

A Great Harvest but Few Workers  
(Matthew 9:35–38)

## SATURDAY

Handling and Surviving Persecution  
(Matthew 10:16–25)

## SUNDAY

The Twelve Chosen and Commissioned  
(Matthew 10:1–15)