

Principles for an Effective Missionary, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 10:5–7

Code: 2277

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 10:5-15 is our text for this study: "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 not; but go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor copper in your purses, nor a bag for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet a staff; for the workman is worthy of his food. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go from there. And when ye come into an house, greet it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 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. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."

A. The Theme of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's message is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah--God in human flesh. He is the promised King, Savior, and Deliverer. He came to fulfill the promises and covenants of the Old Testament, and to redeem the world.

1. The verification

In the first nine chapters of his gospel, Matthew amassed evidence verifying his claim about Jesus. Christ's genealogy, birth, the homage He received from eastern kings, His threat to Herod, and His preaching, teaching, miracles, power, and words prove that He is the Messiah.

2. The responses

Chapter nine concludes with some responses to those truths.

a) Of the people Matthew 9:31 says, "They, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country." Christ's fame began to spread everywhere. b) Of the leaders However, the Pharisees said, "He casteth out demons through the prince of the demons." The religious leaders concluded the opposite of what was true. Yet verse 35 says, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."

3. The transition

An important transition occurs in Matthew 9:36: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint." The people were beaten and bruised by their own leaders, who had imposed on them a false, legalistic system of religion that denied the truth of God. Verse 36 explains they "were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

On seeing the vastness of the multitude and how lost they were, Jesus remarked to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (v. 37). "Harvest" is a reference to God's ultimate judgment. He could see this mass of lost, disoriented, weary people moving like sheep to the slaughter. He realized there were few who could warn them, and that He had to enlist others to assist Him. So He asked the disciples to pray for more workers (v. 38). Then in Matthew 10 Jesus makes them the answer to their own prayers. There is great integrity in prayer when you are willing

to be the answer--and the disciples were.

B. The Training of Jesus' Disciples

Jesus then called His twelve disciples to Himself and gave them power to minister. Matthew 10:5 says, "These twelve Jesus sent forth."

1. The mission

The disciples didn't have the qualifications you'd think they would need to change the world. But it wasn't what they were that was important, but what God made them. In the process of their training, Jesus molded them into what they needed to be to change the world.

Jesus was sending His disciples on their first training mission. For a few short weeks they would taste what they would inevitably experience as a way of life. I think of the twelve as the original missionaries--they were the first ones Jesus ever sent out.

2. The motive

As we just saw, Jesus was motivated to begin this training mission because of the inevitable judgment of mankind. Paul had the same motivation, saying to the Corinthians, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

Beginning in Matthew 10:5 our Lord instructed the disciples for a short-term mission. Included in His instruction is timeless information that would benefit them for the life of their ministry. It also stretches beyond them to every person the Lord sends out.

Matthew 10:5-42 can be divided into three parts: the task of the missionary (vv. 5-15), the reaction to the missionary (vv. 16-23), and the cost to the missionary (vv. 24-42). We'll begin our study with the task.

I remember reading one critic of the church say that he thought Jesus had more class than most of His agents." One of the tragedies of contemporary Christianity is that people who claim to represent Jesus Christ don't represent Him at all. If we're going to touch the world with the reality of Christ, we must understand what He told His first representatives.

I. A DIVINE COMMISSION (v. 5a)

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them."

A. The Call of Christ

The apostles didn't volunteer (although they were certainly willing to go); they were commissioned. They were like the prophet Jeremiah, to whom the Lord said, "Before I formed thee ... I ordained thee" (Jer. 1:5). The disciples were sovereignly called by God. They were under orders.

Mark 6:7 is a comparative passage that tells us Jesus sent them two by two. He had important reasons for doing so. They would be companions in times of possible loneliness, strength to one another in times of temptation, and an encouragement to each other in times of despondency and persecution. They could relieve each other in the matter of preaching and healing. And it was well known to them that according to Scripture, anyone's testimony--including Jesus'--was to be confirmed by two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6).

For a few weeks the apostles were official ambassadors of Christ. They, like the apostle Paul, were given the ministry as a "stewardship" (Col. 1:25, NASB). That was such a serious responsibility that Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). He had been given a divine commission.

1. A direct commission

The disciples received a direct commission. The Lord told them to follow Him. That was clear enough. They didn't put out fleeces and pray for the Lord to show them signs (cf. Judg. 6:37-40).

2. An indirect commission

In our case God is more indirect. Young men going into ministry will often ask me, "How do I know if I am called to the ministry?" I think there are three criteria by which you can know.

a) A strong desire if you delight in the Lord, He will give you the desire of your heart (Ps. 37:4). First

Timothy 3:1 says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." That implies men will desire the office. God puts the same desire for ministry into men's hearts today.b) Confirmation from the churchYou might think you're called to preach, but others might not think so. You need to have the confirmation of the church. That's what Paul was alluding to when he said to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift of God that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. 4:14).c) An open doorIn 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul says, "For a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me."You need to determine if you have the desire, the confirmation, and the opportunity for ministry. If you do, and your heart is fixed on that goal, it's likely you're being called by God.

B. The Command of Christ

According to Matthew 10:5, Jesus not only sent the disciples but also commanded them.

1. Defining the command

a) In secular Greek textsThe Greek word translated "command" (parangello) basically speaks of giving orders. But in tracing the word through its usages in the Greek language, we find several shades of meaning.(1) Its military senseParangello was used to describe a superior giving orders to an inferior--a command issued to soldiers. It's a definitive statement that requires obedience.(2) Its legal senseParangello was used of summoning a man to court. He is bound by a legal injunction to obey and respond.(3) Its ethical senseParangello was also used to speak of teaching morals and ethics. When you learn what is ethically right, you are bound to obey it. It becomes a matter of integrity.(4) Its literary senseParangello was used in connection with the rules of grammar, oratory, and literary composition. It defined exactly how something was to be done.(5) Its medical senseParangello was used of a doctor's prescription for a patient.Each of those instances binds a man to a response.b) In the New TestamentIn the New Testament parangello is used approximately thirty times, often as a term for instruction. Jesus used it to instruct a leper (Luke 5:14), to command an evil spirit to come out of a man (8:29), to instruct Jairus (8:56), and to command His disciples (9:21). In Acts it is used of the Sanhedrin's command to Peter and John to stop preaching (4:18; 5:28, 40), and of the Pharisees' command to observe the ceremonial law (15:5). Paul used it in his instruction to Timothy regarding widows (1 Tim. 5:7).Your commission is from the Lord. You are a soldier and He is the commander. You are in court and He is the judge. You are the student and He is the teacher. You are the patient and He is the doctor.

2. Determining the response

More than anything God wants your obedience. The missionary is not a chef; he's a waiter. God doesn't want you to make the meal; He just wants you to deliver it to the table. We are servants under a divine commission.

All of us have been commissioned in some sense--some officially as evangelists and pastors--but we all are bound to obey Christ's call to represent Him in this world. The effective missionary realizes he is under divine orders. He is committed to obeying the Word of God.

II. A CENTRAL OBJECTIVE (vv. 5b-6)

"Go not into the way of [belonging to] the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not; but go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The disciples weren't to go near Gentiles or Samaritans. At this particular time Jesus was limiting the gospel to a specific place and people--but it wasn't a permanent command. This plan illustrates how God gives people a central focus and very clear and limited objectives. It's been well said that self-styled Messiahs are always megalomaniacs. They want to win the world and win it now. Some people see their ministry as so vast that it's nothing more than a big birdbath--a mile long and an inch deep! However, our Lord wants us to have focus in our ministry.

A. Regarding the Gentiles

1. Matthew 8:5-12--When Jesus entered Capernaum, He was approached by a centurion whose

servant was sick (vv. 5-6). A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded a hundred men. I believe Jesus brought not only healing to that Gentile's servant but also salvation to his household (v. 10). Then Jesus said, "I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom [many Jewish people] shall be cast out" (vv. 11-12).

The Lord has made it abundantly clear that He will reach Gentiles. Isaiah 49:6 and 54:1-3 say Jerusalem will carry the message to all the nations.

2. Mark 16:15--Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

B. Regarding the Samaritans

The Jewish people of Jesus' day despised the Samaritans. It was one thing to be a Gentile--no one could help being born a Gentile. But the Jews viewed Samaritans as corrupt half-breeds because they were a mixture of Jew and Gentile. Intermarriage is an unforgivable crime in the minds of many Jewish people even today. But Jesus didn't think so.

1. The woman at the well (John 4:5-42)

The first person recorded in Scripture to whom Jesus announced He was the Messiah was a Samaritan woman living in the city of Sychar. She had many husbands, and at the time was living with a man who wasn't her husband. Yet it was to her He revealed that He was the Messiah.

2. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

When Jesus taught how we should love our neighbors, He used a Samaritan as an illustration. However, the Samaritans weren't perfect. They did many things to inflame the hatred of the Jews. For example, about twenty years before the time of Christ, the first-century historian Josephus tells us they stole into the Temple in the middle of the night during Passover and threw dead men's bodies about the Temple enclosure, thus polluting it (Antiquities of the Jews 18.2.2).

C. Regarding the Israelites

1. The apostles' ministry to Israel

I see three reasons Christ limited the disciples' ministry "to the lost sheep of ... Israel" (Matt. 10:6).

a) Israel's special place

The Jews were God's chosen people. The covenants, the promises, and the law were given to them. According to God's plan, they were to be offered the kingdom first. John the Baptist came to them and said, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). That meant it was imminent and available. Then Jesus Himself came and said likewise (Matt. 4:17). Now Jesus was commanding the disciples to give the people that same message. Had the Jewish nation embraced their Messiah, His internal rule in their hearts and His external rule on earth would have come together at that time.

The Jews were the people through whom the rest of the world was to be blessed (Gen. 12:3). John 4:22 says, "Salvation is of the Jews." That doesn't mean salvation was only for them; they were to be emissaries of God's grace to all. Jerusalem was to be where the nations came to see the Messiah, and the launching point for world evangelism.

The disciples were to go to the people of Israel first. That was Paul's priority, too (Rom. 1:16).

Although he was a missionary to the Gentiles, he always went to the synagogue first.

b) The apostles' background

The disciples hardly were up to the task of reaching their own people, let alone trying to reach the Gentiles and Samaritans. They couldn't instantly overcome their lifelong biases and prejudices toward them. With the exception of Peter's declaration to a God-fearing man named Cornelius (Acts 10) and Philip's witness to an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), no one made a dent in the Gentile world until the ministry of Paul.

Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, zealous for the law, and trained under Gamaliel--a highly respected rabbi. He also came from a Gentile area and was familiar with Gentile culture. As a result he was able to bridge the gap in reaching the Gentiles. However, the disciples weren't up to that--they didn't have the background so they couldn't build the bridges. If they had gone to the Gentiles or

Samaritans first, they never would have been able to come back to the Jews. The Jews would have written them off as those who concocted a Gentile-Samaritan religion.

c) Jesus' focused objective

Any good commander knows he has to limit his objectives, especially when the possibilities are so varied. Therefore Jesus gave the disciples a specific target: "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6; cf. Matt. 9:36).

2. Jesus' ministry to Israel

Jesus never went to the Gentiles Himself--His ministry was almost exclusively to the Jews. In Matthew 15:24 He says, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They were His focus while He was on earth.

Clearing Up a Frustrating Ministry

One thing that will frustrate people in ministry is not having a clear objective. You can easily become diverted without one. I have gone to mission fields and talked with missionaries who have been on the mission field a long time. I find that many of them are doing a little of everything, and I wonder if they are accomplishing anything. They don't have a clear objective. An effective ministry will have a clear objective. Know your gifts. Discover what God has equipped you to do and follow the desires of your heart.

My grandfather taught my dad and my dad taught me that most people never do anything well. If you do one thing well, you will be way ahead of most. Find the one thing God wants you to do, and do it. While I'm frequently approached by people to do various things, I have to remember that God has called me to preach.

Certainly there are other needful areas of ministry. But the Lord will take care of them through the efforts of others. He's not asking any one person to do it all. If you take care of the depth of your ministry, He'll take care of the breadth of it. In a church with many ministries, many people find themselves lost in the middle. They eventually do nothing or a little of everything. That isn't the plan. Do one thing, and do it well!

Our Lord clearly kept in mind the focus of His ministry:

a) John 5:36--"The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do." b) John 4:34--"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." c) Matthew 9:13--"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Effective ministry requires focus.

III. A CLEAR MESSAGE (v. 7)

"As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

A. Declaring the Message

The kingdom of heaven can be seen three ways: in conversion, when we enter the kingdom; in consecration, when we live out the kingdom (cf. Rom. 14:17); and in consummation, when the kingdom comes to earth in its millennial form.

Jesus taught His disciples that He is Lord and that everyone needs to submit and obey. After His resurrection, Jesus taught them things pertaining to the kingdom for forty days (Acts 1:3).

B. Confusing the Message

I grieve in my heart over the befuddled condition of Christianity today--our message is anything but clear. On a plane trip to a pastors' conference in Chicago, a pastor sat next to me and gave me a demonstration regarding our muddled message. He wrote several things on a piece of paper. He handed it to me and said, "What does this say?" The paper had scribble written on top of more scribble. I said, "I don't know what it says." He then said, "What was my original message to you?" I

said, "I don't have a clue." He said, "Take a piece of paper." I did. He said, "Write, Christ. That was my original message. On top of that write, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Pentecostal, Charismatic, dispensational, fundamentalist, liberal, Protestant." He gave me about twelve other things to write. He said, "If you gave that to an unbeliever, he wouldn't know what the original message was." That's our problem: we don't give the central message.

The message of Christianity can seem confusing when listening to different preachers. Many of them preach all kinds of doctrine. The average unbeliever who turns on the television finds such a disparity that it's virtually impossible for him to know the real message.

The Confusion of Bigotry

I was traveling with a team in Mississippi preaching Christ in black high schools at the time that Martin Luther King was assassinated. One night after finishing an assembly, we visited with a family in a rural area. When we left, we noticed someone following us.

We were in the middle of nowhere on a dirt road about ten miles from where we were staying. Suddenly blue lights started flashing behind us and the car pulled up beside me, so I stopped the car. A great big man wearing a sheriff's badge got out and said, "You went through a stop light." I said, "There are no stop lights around here. You must be mistaken." He said, "I'm not mistaken. You went through a stop light." I said, "I didn't go through a stop light." He then reached for a club in his belt and I said, "You're right--I went through a stop light." I wasn't going to argue about it! He then said, "Follow me. We're going to the jail."

We followed him for ten miles to the jail. He took us in and collected our money as collateral. He asked, "What are you telling kids in your school meetings? Do you tell them about civil rights?" I said, "No." Then he asked if we were telling them about marches, protests, or boycotts. I said no to all those things. Then I said, "We're telling them about Jesus Christ. We would be happy to tell you about Him, too." He said, "I'm already the Sunday School superintendent. I don't have any need to hear about Him." There were many people like him in that area who called themselves ministers but were not talking about Christ and the kingdom of heaven.

Satan is not stupid. The best way to render the gospel of no effect is to make sure no one knows what it is.

C. Being Committed to the Message

Our message is: the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The rule and reign of God is imminent and available to every person. Our focus must not change from that. I wish every time we opened our mouth something about the kingdom came out. We don't know how long we have before the Lord comes, so we need to be proclaiming the kingdom with urgency.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the main theme of Matthew's gospel? What evidence did he give to verify his claim?
2. How did people respond to the truths about Christ?
3. What does the harvest refer to in Matthew 9:36? What did Jesus want to do regarding the harvest (vv. 9:37-38)?
4. What motivated Jesus to send the disciples on their training mission?
5. What is one of the tragedies of contemporary Christianity?
6. Why did Jesus send the disciples on their mission two by two?
7. The disciples received a direct commission from the Lord. How can you know if you are called to the ministry today?
8. What are the different meanings of the Greek word parangello? Explain each.
9. Why is it important that the call of God be binding on our lives?

10. What was God's plan for the Gentiles?
11. What did the Jews have against the Samaritans?
12. What are three reasons Jesus sent the disciples only to Israel and not to the Gentiles or Samaritans? Explain each one.
13. Why was Paul able to be so effective in presenting the gospel to the Gentile world?
14. What was the central objective of the ministry of Christ?
15. What is one reason people become frustrated in their ministries?
16. What is the message Christians need to be preaching to the world?
17. In what three ways does the kingdom of heaven come to man?
18. Why ought there to be a sense of urgency in communicating the message of Christianity to the world?

Pondering the Principles

1. Perhaps you want to know if you're being called into a particular ministry. Review the three criteria for knowing the call of God (see pp. 4-5). Do you have a strong desire for this ministry? Are there others in your church who believe you are capable of handling the demands that the ministry would require of you? Do you have the time and availability that this ministry would require? Take those questions to God. If you answer affirmatively to all those questions, God may well be calling you into that ministry.
2. Jesus Christ commanded all Christians to be His witnesses in the world. Have you regarded that command as binding on you, or have you thought other Christians can do the witnessing? Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. What is the ministry God has given to each of us? How should we be representing Him to the world? What do you need to begin to do to start fulfilling that role?
3. Do you find you don't have clear objectives in any of the ministries you are involved in? To help develop a central objective, answer the following questions: How has God equipped you in the area of spiritual gifts (see Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)? What do you desire to see accomplished in your ministry? What opportunities do you now have to minister to others? Based on your answers, where should you direct your energy? Once you determine your direction, stick with it!

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