

Matthew 10: Jesus and His Disciples (Followers)



SABBATH—JULY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Leviticus 25:8–54; Matthew 10; John 10:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘So don't [do not] be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows' ” (Matthew 10:31, NIRV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Jesus, the world's greatest Teacher, gave instructions to His disciples (followers) before sending them out to witness. What principles (rules) can we learn from His words for our use today?

JESUS KNEW THAT AN IMPORTANT PART OF HIS JOB was to train a group of His followers to continue His mission (special work). So now, they were taking a tour of Galilee—preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus knew it was time to send out His 12 disciples on their first missionary¹ trip. The disciples were to receive their first hands-on experience as missionaries.²

The disciples had received a very special education from the greatest Teacher the world has ever known. They had seen in Jesus a living example of the principles that guide the universe.³ They had seen the perfect model (example) of how humans (people) should live.

The disciples had been with Jesus for only a year or so. But they had walked and talked with the One who was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, KJV). The time finally had come for the disciples to practice what they had learned. First Jesus gave the disciples special instructions. Then He sent them out.

This week we will study Jesus' words to His disciples as they went on their mission.

1. missionary—having to do with the special duty or work that a church sends a person or group to do.

2. missionaries—persons sent out by a church to spread its religion in a foreign country.

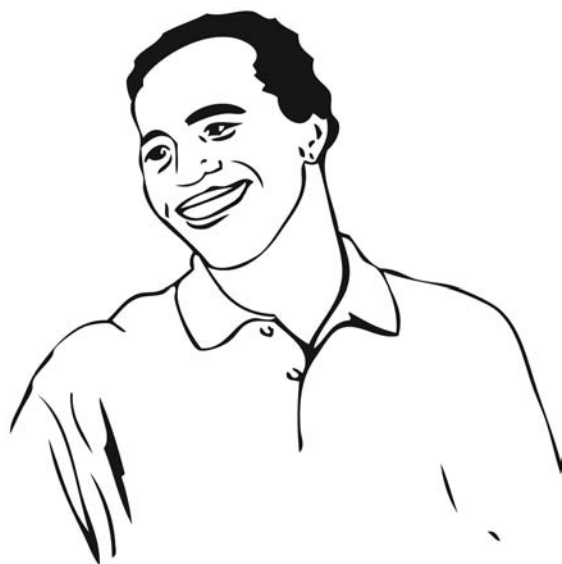
3. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces of nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

SUNDAY—JULY 27**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR (Matthew 10:7)**

Read Matthew 10:7. What does it mean that the “kingdom of heaven” is near? What is your understanding of the “kingdom of heaven”?

A kingdom is the land under the authority (control) of a king. God’s kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, includes both geographical (a certain part of the earth or of a place) and spiritual areas. At one point Jesus even said, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, KJV).

What does the “kingdom of God is within you” mean? How are we to understand this idea?



The kingdom of heaven is inside your heart.

John the Baptist began preaching that the kingdom of heaven was near (Matthew 3:2). The New Testament clearly points to Jesus as Israel’s promised King. He was to fulfill all the hopes and prophecies⁴ of the Old Testament. (Read Luke 1:32, 33.) But the people were expecting a political king who would establish a real political kingdom. They hoped He would free them from the Romans.

The kingdom that Jesus preached about was far different. It was not going to come when the Romans were defeated. The kingdom of heaven was now. Now people could see Jesus, hear His words, and learn the principles (rules) that lead to salvation and heaven. Now the people could learn to follow Jesus’ example of how to live. Now they could understand how the principles of God’s government work in real life. Now they could choose to become part of that kingdom. Now they could have the promises of the Holy Spirit, of victory over sin, of hope for eternal (forever) life.

In what ways are you now enjoying and using the rights of living in the “kingdom of God”? What opportunities (chances) and promises do you still fail to use?

MONDAY—JULY 28**MISSIONARY INSTRUCTIONS (Matthew 10)**

In Matthew 10, Jesus commands

4. prophecies—messages from God that tell what will happen in the future.

the Twelve to go out and do missionary work. Read over the chapter and then answer the following questions:

What does Jesus mean by telling the disciples to be wise as serpents (snakes) and harmless as doves (verse 16)? How can we use these words in our lives today?



Jesus told His followers to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

What is the one thing Matthew 10:2–4 tells us that all of Jesus' disciples had that was the same? What does that tell us about the need to be sensitive to different cultures?⁵

What special powers did the disciples have? Without these pow-

ers, how can we still minister (help) and witness to the world?

How did Jesus prepare His followers to be received by the people? What lessons can we learn for ourselves from those words?

TUESDAY—JULY 29

GENTILES (NON-JEWS) AND JEWS (Matthew 10:5, 6)

How are we to understand these words in Matthew 10:5, 6 about witnessing to all the world?

Jesus sent out His disciples. He clearly told them to go only to the Israelites, not the Gentiles (non-Jews). We might think of this as unfair. Why should the good news go only to the Jewish people? Why should everyone else not receive God's Word, at least at that time?

The answer is about being sensitive to other cultures. Jesus did not want the disciples to endanger their mission. As Ellen G. White writes, "If the disciples had first preached the gospel⁶ to these [Gentiles], they would have lost their influence⁷ among the Jews. The Jews were supposed to be the first to hear the message of God."—Adapted from *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 19, 1892. Ellen G. White also suggests that it would have caused

5. cultures—the ways in which people live, dress, think, eat, and socialize with one another.

6. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news of salvation.

7. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

the Gentiles to “war” with the Pharisees.⁸ Then this would have discouraged the disciples in their work.—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, July 18, 1900.

In our mission today, we must be sensitive to certain cultural⁹ practices. These practices may be misguided. They may be wrong. They might not be pleasant to us. But we cannot overlook them and be good witnesses.

What is Jesus saying in John 10:10 that can help us as we meet people who have harmful practices?

As followers of Christ, we need to be very sensitive to the cultures that we are working in. The last thing we need is to make others think that we are better than they are. If we have something better, we can point others to a more healthful lifestyle. Let our message and lifestyle show that on their own.

What part of your Christian lifestyle do you think others would like to have? What kind of message does your lifestyle send to others?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 30

A HOLISTIC¹⁰ MINISTRY (Matthew 10:7, 8)

Besides preaching the gospel, what else was involved in the disciples’ mission?

Jesus’ command to His disciples was not connected with just the spiritual part of life. Yes, the disciples were to teach and preach. But they were also to care for people’s physical (having to do with the body) needs. Sure, the most important goal for everyone is salvation¹¹ and eternal life. But that does not mean we should overlook the pain and suffering we find all around us.

When Jesus spoke in the synagogue (Jewish church) in Nazareth, He read from the book of Isaiah and made the words His own (read Luke 4:18, 19). He will help the poor, the blind, the suffering, and those in prison. But He also is going to preach “the year of the Lord’s favor” (verse 19, NIV). By this Jesus means the jubilee year (Leviticus 25:8–54). The jubilee year means that every 50 years the ownership of land was to be returned to the original owners.

What seems to be the main religious issue in Leviticus 25:8–54? What principle is the Lord teaching His people?

As Ellen White says, “The law was set up to keep people from becoming

8. Pharisees—a religious group of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s laws to be saved.

9. cultural—having to do with the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time.

10. holistic—having to do with the belief that the body, mind, and spirit of a person work together as a unit (as one) or as a whole. A holistic ministry (work done for Jesus) focuses on the total well-being of a Christian’s body, mind, and spirit in Jesus.

11. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

too rich or too poor.”—Adapted from *Education*, page 43. In the jubilee year, all slaves were also to be freed, and all debts were to be canceled.

Jesus teaches His disciples to have a balanced ministry. The disciples were to prepare people for the kingdom of heaven. But they were also to remember that the kingdom was already with them. So, they were to meet people’s total needs—including physical and social. By working to meet folks’ needs now, we can open them up to the real promise of eternal life.



By taking care of the needs of others now, we open them up to the promise of heaven.

How do you treat those who are not so fortunate as you? When is the last time you did something for someone out of unselfish mercy and concern?

THURSDAY—JULY 31

**DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEM
(Matthew 10:22)**

Much of Jesus’ speech to His disciples is focused on advice on how to deal with problems they will meet. The message they are to preach is about love and right living. But they will find people who will fight them. Jesus advises that the disciples should be prepared for attacks against them.

What is the important message to us in Matthew 10:22 and Hebrews 10:35, 36?

Jesus encourages His disciples to continue in spite of the attacks. The apostle Paul says, “We know that our suffering gives us the strength to go on. The strength to go on produces [leads to] character.¹² Character produces hope” (Romans 5:3, 4, NlrV). James writes, “Your faith will be put to the test. You know that when that happens it will produce in you the strength to continue” (James 1:3, NlrV).

In what ways can difficult times test your faith? How can you make your spiritual life stronger so that you will continue in your faith through these times?

Jesus tells His disciples that they should not fear difficult situations. They will be brought before governors (rulers) and kings to be His witnesses. “ ‘But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it,’ ” He says (Matthew

12. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the life choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

10:19, NIV). He promises that God will speak through them and give them the words to speak.

The book of Acts gives plenty of examples of what Jesus warned about. Peter and Paul and many others were taken often to the rulers to give reasons for their actions. Each time they spoke boldly of their faith. Jesus tells the disciples that God cares even for sparrows and that He has numbered (counted) “the very hairs of your head. . . . So don’t [do not] be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows’ ” (Matthew 10:30, 31, NIV).

What is Jesus promising us in Matthew 10:38, 39? What is He not promising us? What comfort can you receive for yourself from these words?



Jesus cares even for the sparrows and tells us not to be afraid for we are “worth more than many sparrows’ ” (Matthew 10:30, 31, NIV).

FRIDAY—AUGUST 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The First Evangelists,”¹³ pages 349–358, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“People’s hearts are not any softer today than when Christ was upon the earth. They will do all in their power to help Satan in making it as hard as possible for the servants of Christ. They will do it in the same way the people did with Christ when He was upon the earth. They will tell lies. They will criticize [find fault], and turn against the servant of God. They will, with their evil plans, find fraud¹⁴ and dishonesty where there is perfect honesty. They will bring false charges against God’s servants, even when He Himself is leading them. But God’s servants would give even their lives if God required. By doing this, they will push forward God’s cause.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*¹⁵ for the Church, volume 4, page 234.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In what ways is our mission field today different from the one Jesus’ disciples went into? What things are the same?
- ❷ As a class, talk about what it means to be living in the “kingdom of heaven” now. What do we have to

13. evangelists—Christians who preach the gospel (good news) of Christ to many people at one time.

14. fraud—the act or practice of cheating, tricking, or lying.

15. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.

show for it? If someone were to consider (carefully think about) our church as a whole, what would they find that makes us different from other groups working together for a good cause?

③ How involved are you and your local church in evangelism, in witnessing? How are you working to help those around you who are suffering? How can your local church do better in that area? Why is that part of our work so important? But why is

ministering to the physical needs of those around us not enough? At the same time, what happens when we focus on preaching and do not pay attention to the social part of the gospel?

SUMMARY: The world's greatest Teacher took time to give special instructions to His disciples before He sent them out into their mission field. The principles He listed to them are timeless. So, we must not fail to obey these principles today.