

## Week 11: *Matthew 10*

### Hook



**Main Point: Jesus sends His disciples out on mission to declare the Good News of the kingdom.**

Many people feel the need to get out of the house and escape for a few days on a road trip. As they travel across the country, some may find that they were ill prepared for the journey. Have your Bible Fellowship break into groups and try to guess the top 13 most regretted items that are usually left behind on a long road trip.<sup>i</sup>

- Tire-Pressure Gauge
- Memo Pad
- First-Aid Kit
- Swiss Army Pocket Knife
- Blanket
- Flashlight
- Water Bottle
- Dash Cam
- Car Mount Charger
- Hand Sanitizer
- Stain Cleaner
- Travel Mug
- Seat Organizer

**Q: How does being prepared for travel affect how enjoyable the journey will be?**

**Q: Have you ever been on a trip and realized you did not have an item you needed? How did you deal with the situation?**

**Q: How would you feel about going on a long road trip relying only on what someone else packed for you?**

## Week 11: *Matthew 10*

### Book

**Main Point:** Jesus sends His disciples out on mission to declare the Good News of the kingdom.

#### Matthew 10:1–15 [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** Jesus' disciples are given the same mission – to proclaim the same kingdom, the same supernatural power and the same persecution.

**Q: Why did Jesus tell them not to bring anything on the journey?**

**Q: Why were they to shake the dust off their feet of the towns where the message was rejected?**

So far in Jesus' public ministry in Matthew, we have three chapters of major teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) and two chapters of Jesus' proclaiming the Gospel through healing and miracles (chapters 8–9). At the end of that last section, Jesus was moved with compassion over the lost and told His disciples the harvest was plentiful, but the workers were few. In chapter 10, He sent out His first workers into the harvest. In this first mission, the workers really were few – only 12. Jesus had many more people following Him regularly, even many who considered themselves disciples. But He chose 12 as His apostles – a significant number, symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel. He sent the 12 out *only* to the lost sheep of Israel, not to the Gentiles or Samaritans (v. 5). At the end of Matthew, Jesus would tell His disciples to go into *all* nations, but for now, it was only Israel (Matthew 28:18–20).

Here they are first called “apostles,” which literally means “ones who are sent out” such as delegates, emissaries or ambassadors. In our world today, an ambassador lives in an embassy in another country and his or her role is to keep the peace with that country. In the ancient world, an embassy was not a building. It was a group of people *sent to* another country as an envoy or delegation to *make* peace.<sup>ii</sup> As citizens of the actual kingdom of God, the disciples were being sent out into Israel (the country they believed to be God's kingdom) to share the Gospel of peace through Jesus. Ambassadors are sent as representatives of their kingdom with the full authority of the king who sent them. They work for his purposes, carry out his wishes, and act on his behalf. Jesus gave His disciples His authority to cast out demons and heal disease. But, as New Testament scholar Craig Keener writes, “That Jesus authorizes disciples to perform acts of compassion (9:36) in his name does not authorize them to use his power to get whatever they want (4:3).”<sup>iii</sup> The purpose of these signs was to proclaim the kingdom of God, just as they did for Jesus Himself.

Jesus commands His disciples to travel light. In the ancient world, travelers typically took a bag with a change of clothes, food and money. Jesus told them to take none of it, which would force them to rely on people's hospitality and God's provision. Not even letting them take the bag would prohibit their begging, as some travelers did.<sup>iv</sup> They were also not allowed to receive any payment for their ministry (v. 8).<sup>v</sup> No one could accuse them of doing this for money, but only freely giving what they had received from Jesus.

A staff was for self-protection, so not bringing one meant they would have to trust in God, for protection or *not*. Jesus did not promise them physical protection (v. 17). He knew He was sending them out as sheep among wolves (v. 16). Some would receive their message with joy, others would not. The disciples were not responsible for how people received their message, only how they gave it – in peace. They were to offer their message with peace. If people did not listen or receive it, they were to leave that town and “shake the dust off of their feet” as those who entered the temple shook the dust of the common world off of their feet because they were entering a holy place. Or how Jews traveling from Gentile lands shook the Gentile dust off their feet when they walked into the Holy Land, into God's kingdom. This was a symbol. Those who rejected the Gospel were not part of the kingdom. Sodom and Gomorrah are the ultimate symbols of God's judgment, yet Jesus said those who rejected Him and rejected the Gospel would have it even worse on the Day of Judgment. This would have been a shocking statement for the disciples and would have made the seriousness of their mission real for them.<sup>vi</sup> The consequences of their mission were eternal.

**Q: Have you thought about the eternal consequences of our mission? When you think about your friends or family at the Day of Judgment, how does it make you want to respond?**

**Q: Have you ever felt that people rejected the Gospel when you tried to share it? What did you do? How do we respond when someone rejects our witness?**

**Q: If our *whole life* is this mission, what does it say to us that Jesus commands us to give freely and live simply while trusting in God? What does that tangibly look like in our daily life?**

**Matthew 10:16–33 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Jesus' disciples living on mission should expect persecution.

**Q: If it is good news, why would people hate us and want to persecute us for our message?**

**Q: Why should we not fear our persecutors?**

The Old Testament often portrays God's people as sheep and God as their shepherd, rescuing them from those who abused them. Jesus Himself had just talked about them that way at the end of the last chapter (9:36). But now He was intentionally sending His sheep out among the wolves! But as His ambassadors, with His power and authority, they would be able to make it through, because of the Holy Spirit's working and speaking through them (v. 20). Disciples living on mission should expect to be persecuted. It's just part of the package. Keener writes that "persecution was so much of a guarantee for a true disciple (2 Timothy 3:12), that the leaders of the apostolic church would probably have questioned the authenticity of the witness of those not experiencing any (Acts 5:41; 14:22)."<sup>vii</sup>

Jesus said in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount that they were blessed when they were persecuted for His sake, that they should rejoice in it (5:10–12). Soon after Pentecost, they did! They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name (Acts 5:41). Here He described more of what persecution would look like— arrest, flogging, betrayal by your own family, maybe even death. But Jesus told them not to fear. Not because He would protect them from harm or even save them from death, but because those who endure to the end would be saved (v. 22). Jesus pointed to our eternal destiny as our hope. He calls us to think eternally here, to really play the long game here. Don't fear your physical death. It's painful, but it only happens once and then you have an eternity, either of eternal life or eternal destruction (v. 28). Be more concerned about your eternal destiny than you are about your physical safety, your reputation, even your life. Again, Jesus stressed the eternal significance of this choice – if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before God at the Day of Judgment (v. 33).

This is the context into which Matthew writes that the hairs on our heads are numbered and we are more valuable than many sparrows. It's not a sweet Hallmark kind of moment. It is in the middle of talking about persecution, death and eternal judgment. God's caring about us more than many sparrows doesn't mean He will protect us from all harm. In this passage, Jesus promised persecution for those who go out on mission! God might allow them to be arrested, flogged, or even killed, but we can be assured that whatever happens to us is not outside of God's care (v. 29). This is a hard truth. We may very well die in service of the mission (and almost all the 12 did), but if we do, we can trust that it was part of God's plan and His will. Jesus ended this section with this assurance – that if we die acknowledging Jesus before men, He will acknowledge us before God at the judgment. This is our hope in the face of persecution – our future inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:3–5). We may suffer and even die, but we will receive eternal life. It will be worth it. This was the attitude of Jesus, and it will become the attitude of all His disciples. The kingdom is the pearl of great price. It is worth giving everything you have for, even your life. As Paul wrote when he was in prison for his faith, not sure if he would live or die, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

**Q: Why is it hard to hope in the promise of heaven when you are suffering on earth? Does that sound like a trite thing to tell someone who is being persecuted? Why or why not?**

**Q: Think about the disciples rejoicing at being considered worthy of being persecuted and eventually dying for their faith. How does that make you feel about your own life and faith?**

**Matthew 10:34–42 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** Discipleship is putting Christ above all else and losing your life to Christ.

**Q: Why would even families be divided over the Gospel?**

**Q: What does it mean to lose your life for Jesus?**

Jesus described a new reality in which even families would be divided by the Gospel, and He demanded that people choose Him over their family. Thinking in terms of kingdom theology helps this make a lot more sense. Jesus instituted a completely different kind of kingdom, with a completely different kind of army, fighting completely different kind of battles. This is a spiritual kingdom, not the physical kingdom of Israel. The citizens of this spiritual kingdom are based on faith, not geography or ethnicity. So even within a family, you could have citizens of the kingdom of God and citizens of the kingdom of the world. The Bible tells us these two kingdoms are diametrically opposed and in a constant spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10–18). Good versus evil, light versus darkness. Instead of a physical battlefield, these battles take place in our workplaces, our homes, even our own hearts and minds. And even within our own families there may be people fighting against our kingdom, against our mission.

But in God's kingdom, those *people* are not really our enemies. The principalities and powers, the forces of evil are the enemy. We are trying to save those people from that kingdom of darkness and bring them into God's kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13–14). Yet, it may feel as if you are in a constant battle, even with your own family. Jesus very much demands that we choose sides in this battle, even if it means we become enemies with our family (vv. 34–37). This would have been a very difficult saying in their culture, where people were so interdependent on their families. A newly married couple didn't go out and live on their own; they lived with the husband's family. This is why Jesus specifically mentioned daughter-in-law as an example, not son-in-law. Family was everything and the entire society was built on it. Most saw honoring your parents as the highest social obligation. For Jesus to say they had to love Him more than father or mother was another statement of His divinity (v. 37). No rabbi would have ever said that. Only God was worthy of that kind of love.<sup>viii</sup>

Then Jesus went even farther. They were to love Him even more than their own lives (vv. 38–39). In Jesus' day, "taking up your cross" wasn't a metaphor; it actually referred to Roman crucifixions, being forced to bear the instrument of your execution past a jeering mob to the site of your imminent execution as a condemned criminal.<sup>ix</sup> We often think of it more symbolically, as carrying your burdens, like the modern phrase, "That's my cross to bear." But in their time, it literally referred to crucifixions. He really means "whoever loses his life" (v. 39). This is hard to hear and even harder to imagine for those of us who aren't faced with life-and-death persecution on a daily basis, but Jesus was talking about being willing to die for your faith. Keener writes, "That even the first disciples were not initially prepared for such a demand (26:56) does not mitigate the level of commitment the saying seeks from the Matthean community: if one wants to follow Jesus, one must be ready to die."<sup>x</sup> This is the straightforward demand of discipleship in God's kingdom.

Jesus closed this section with a word about those who receive His apostles as they were sent out on mission. A cup of cold water was the most basic level of hospitality a person in the ancient world could offer to strangers; even the poorest person was obligated to give it. Jesus' apostles represented Him, so however people treated them, it was as if they did it to Him and to God. If they rejected the disciples, they rejected God. If they received the disciples, they received God. Jesus said something similar in the parable about the sheep and the goats – whatever you do to the least of these, you do it to Him (25:31–46). This would have assured the disciples that whatever happened to them would be either rewarded or punished by God. Again, as He did in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus linked the apostles to the prophets of the Old Testament. They were sent on mission from God, and many would mistreat them and not listen to them. But God would deal with those people. Their job was only to share the message, not control people's responses.

At the end of Matthew, Jesus expanded the mission to all of His disciples of all times, not just the Twelve, and expanded the mission field to every nation on earth, not just Israel (28:18–20). So, we can easily apply the principles of this mission to our own mission to share the Gospel today. It is our mission to share the Gospel with all people everywhere we go, both through our words and our actions. The Holy Spirit is with us and will give us the power to share the message. Some people will receive the message; others will reject it, and some may even persecute us for it. That is not our responsibility. We are to plant the seed and water the seed, but it is God who makes it grow (1 Corinthians 3). The core truth of all this, whether you ever face persecution for your faith or not, is that once you become a follower of Jesus, your life is not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You lose your life to Jesus (v. 39). Because your life belongs to God, your purpose is His mission, His kingdom. Because your life belongs to Him, to live is Christ and to die is gain. This doesn't necessarily mean you will lose your physical life for Him. But your life is no longer your own. Your life is a living sacrifice for Jesus (Romans 12:1).

**Q: Do you think most Christians in America live with this definition of discipleship? Why or why not?**

**Q: What would a life of this kind of discipleship look like in our world today?**

**Q: We can't all sell everything we have and become missionaries. How can you live on mission for the Gospel in your day-to-day life?**

**Q: What would it look like to "lose your life" for Jesus in your daily life?**

## **Week 11: *Matthew 10***

### **Took**

**Main Point: Jesus sends His disciples out on mission to declare the Good News of the kingdom.**

Jesus called the apostles to go on a journey that would force them to rely on Him so that the Gospel could be shared the most effectively. Relying on God means trusting in and valuing Him above everything else in our lives, whether it be our family, friends, jobs, finances or desires. When we allow God to lead us through our lives, we will find that He cares for us and will take care of everything we need. Living this way allows us to be a living testimony of God's faithfulness to others.

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK about Jesus' lordship in your life.** Am I living on mission for Jesus? In what ways am I living out my faith as the disciples did, and in what ways am I really living for myself? What things about my life need to change in order to completely live for Him? Are there logistical, tangible things I need to do differently or is it a mindset and inner change I need? Or both?

**PRAY that God's kingdom would expand** for those who don't know Jesus. Pray for the Spirit to give you the words to witness to them. Pray for the vision to know how to go out on mission in your own day-to-day life. Pray for Him to show you your unique mission field.

**ACT: Share your story this week.** Determine your mission field. Write a list of all the places you go on a regular basis to live, work, and play. Now list the people you typically interact with at those places. Pray through that list and choose one or two who don't know the Lord. Pray about how to reach out to them in love to share the Gospel in a way that is loving and winsome.



*Hook, Took & Editing by Victor Miller*

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<sup>i</sup> Reid, S. (2019, March 29). *13 Essentials to Put on Your Road Trip Packing List*. Retrieved from <https://www.jetsetter.com/magazine/your-road-trip-packing-list/>

<sup>ii</sup> B. J. Oropeza,, *Exploring Second Corinthians: Death and Life, Hardship and Rivalry* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2016).

<sup>iii</sup> Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians. Library of Early Christianity 6* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986).

<sup>v</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

<sup>vi</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

<sup>vii</sup> Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>viii</sup> Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>ix</sup> Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977).

<sup>x</sup> Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).