

The Mission Of The Church

Matthew 9:38

So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields."

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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	You are chosen to bear fruit.	4
Chapter 2	The 70 returned with joy.	13
Chapter 3	God made all creation.	22
Chapter 4	Philip preached in many cities	28
Chapter 5	The gospel will be preached to all nations.	34

Forward

Jesus needs workers who know how to deal with people's problems. We can comfort others and show them the way to live because we have been helped with our problems by God and his laborers (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

And before praying for unsaved people, pray that other concerned disciples will join you in reaching out to them.

In Christian service, there is no unemployment. God has work enough for everyone. Don't just sit back and watch others work—look for ways to help with the harvest.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

There was a definite mission that Jesus assigned to the disciples, and has been assigned to believers today.

Be faithful to fulfill that mission, we often call the Great Commission.

Chapter 1



You are chosen to bear fruit that will remain.

John 15:16

"You did not choose me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

Jesus made the first choice—to love and to die for us, to invite us to live with him forever. We make the next choice—to accept or reject his offer. Without *his* choice, we would have no choice to make.

Pray for the Lord to send out workers into the harvest.

Matthew 9:37-38

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

The good news of the kingdom was that the promised and long-awaited Messiah had finally come. His healing miracles were a sign that his teaching was true.

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Ezekiel also compared Israel to sheep without a shepherd (Ezekiel 34:5-6). Jesus came to be the Shepherd, the One who could show people how to avoid life's pitfalls (see John 10:14).

Jesus looked at the crowds following him and referred to them as a field ripe for harvest. Many people are ready to give their lives to Christ if someone would show them how. Jesus commands us to pray that people will respond to this need for workers.

Often, when we pray for something, God answers our prayers by using *us*. Be prepared for God to use you to show another person the way to him.

Seventy sent into the harvest field

Luke 10:1-3

Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them.

Far more than 12 people had been following Jesus.

Here Jesus designated a group of 72 to prepare a number of towns for Jesus' later visit.

These disciples were not unique in their qualifications. They were not better educated, more capable, or of higher status than other followers of Jesus. What equipped them for this mission was their awareness of Jesus' power and their vision to reach all the people.

It is important to dedicate our skills to God's kingdom, but we must also be equipped with his power and have a clear vision of what he wants us to do.

Jesus was sending 36 teams of two to reach the multitudes. These teams were not to try to do the job without help; rather, they were to ask God for more workers.

Some people, as soon as they understand the gospel, want to go to work immediately contacting unsaved people. This story suggests a different approach: begin by mobilizing people to pray.

And before praying for unsaved people, pray that other concerned disciples will join you in reaching out to them.

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"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Jesus said he was sending his disciples out “like lambs among wolves.” They would have to be careful because they would surely meet with opposition. We too are sent into the world like lambs among wolves. Be alert, and remember to face your enemies not with aggression but with love and gentleness.

A dangerous mission requires sincere commitment.

He who sows and he who reaps rejoice together.

John 4:36-38

"Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

"I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

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Jesus gave the disciples power and authority.

Luke 9:1

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

Note Jesus' methods of leadership. He empowered his disciples (Luke 9:1), gave them specific instructions so they knew what to do (Luke 9:3-4), told them how to deal with tough times (Luke 9:5), and held them accountable (Luke 9:10).

As you lead others, study the Master Leader's pattern.

Power to cast out unclean spirits

Matthew 10:1

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

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Jesus has received all authority in heaven and in earth.

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

God gave Jesus authority over heaven and earth. On the basis of that authority, Jesus told his disciples to make more disciples as they preached, baptized, and taught.

With this same authority, Jesus still commands us to tell others the Good News and make them disciples for the kingdom.

When someone is dying or leaving us, his or her last words are very important. Jesus left the disciples with these last words of instruction: they were under his authority; they were to make more disciples; they were to baptize and teach these new disciples to obey Christ;

Christ would be with them always. Whereas in previous missions Jesus had sent his disciples only to the Jews (Matthew 10:5-6), their mission from now on would be worldwide. Jesus is Lord of the earth, and he died for the sins of people from all nations.

We are to go—whether it is next door or to another country—and make disciples.

It is not an option, but a command to all who call Jesus “Lord.” We are not all evangelists in the formal sense, but we have all received gifts that we can use to help fulfill the Great Commission.

As we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us.

Jesus gave the twelve authority over unclean spirits

Mark 6:7

And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

The disciples were sent out in pairs. Individually they could have reached more areas of the country, but this was not Christ's plan.

One advantage in going out by twos was that they could strengthen and encourage each other, especially when they faced rejection. Our strength comes from God, but he meets many of our needs through our teamwork with others.

As you serve Christ, don't try to go it alone.

Signs will follow those who believe.

Mark 16:17-18

"These signs will accompany those who have believed: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

There are times when God intervenes miraculously to protect his followers. Occasionally he gives them special powers. Paul handled a snake safely (Acts 28:5), and the disciples healed the sick (Matthew 10:1; Acts 3:7-8).

This does not mean, however, that we should test God by putting ourselves in dangerous situations.

Chapter 2



The seventy returned with joy.

Luke 10:17-19

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name."

And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.

The disciples had seen tremendous results as they ministered in Jesus' name and with his authority. They were elated by the victories they had witnessed, and Jesus shared their enthusiasm.

He helped them get their priorities right, however, by reminding them of their most important victory—that their names were written in heaven. This honor was more important than any of their accomplishments. As we see God's wonders at work in and through us, we should not lose sight of the greatest wonder of all—our heavenly citizenship.

Jesus may have been looking ahead to his victory over Satan at the cross. John 12:31-32 indicates that Satan would be judged and driven out at the time of Jesus' death.

On the other hand, Jesus may have been warning his disciples against pride. Perhaps he was referring to Isaiah 14:12-17, which begins, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!" Some interpreters identify this verse with Satan and explain that Satan's pride led to all the evil we see on earth today.

To Jesus' disciples, who were thrilled with their power over evil spirits ("snakes and scorpions"), he may have been giving this stern warning: "Yours is the kind of pride that led to Satan's downfall. Be careful!"

As the father has sent me, I also send you.

John 20:21

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

Jesus again identified himself with his Father. He told the disciples by whose authority he did his work. Then he passed the job to his disciples of spreading the gospel of salvation around the world.

Whatever God has asked you to do, remember:

- (1) Your authority comes from God, and

- (2) Jesus has demonstrated by words and actions how to accomplish the job he has given you.

As the Father sent Jesus, Jesus sends his followers . . . and you.

As the father sends Jesus, so he sends his disciples.

John 17:18

"As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Jesus didn't ask God to take believers *out* of the world but instead to use them *in* the world. Because Jesus sends us into the world, we should not try to escape from the world, nor should we avoid all relationships with non-Christians.

We are called to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), and we are to do the work that God sent us to do.

When you receive power from the Holy Spirit, you will witness.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary—that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority.

The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power to witness after they received the Holy Spirit. Notice the progression:

- (1) they would receive the Holy Spirit,
- (2) he would give them power, and
- (3) they would witness with extraordinary results. Often we try to reverse the order and witness by our own power and authority.

Witnessing is not showing what we can do for God. It is showing and telling what God has done for us.

Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him (Matthew 28:19-20). But they were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God's plan.

This verse describes a series of ever-widening circles. The gospel was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the whole world.

It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria, and finally be offered to the Gentiles in the uttermost parts of the earth.

God's gospel has not reached its final destination if someone in your family, your workplace, your school, or your community hasn't heard about Jesus Christ. Make sure that you are contributing in some way to the ever-widening circle of God's loving message.

You will be clothed with power from on high.

Luke 24:49

"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Luke wrote to the Greek-speaking world. He wanted them to know that Christ's message of God's love and forgiveness should go to all the world. We must never ignore the worldwide scope of Christ's gospel.

God wants all the world to hear the Good News of salvation.

He breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

John 20:22

And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

This may have been a special filling of the Holy Spirit for the disciples, a foretaste of what all believers would experience from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) and forever after. To do God's work, we need the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. We must avoid trying to do his work in our own strength.

There is life in the breath of God. Man was created but did not come alive until God breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). God's first breath made man different from all other forms of creation. Now, through the breath of Jesus, God imparted eternal, spiritual life. With this inbreathing came the power to do God's will on earth.

They spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Boldness is not reckless impulsiveness. Boldness requires courage to press on through our fears and do what we know is right.

How can we be bolder? Like the disciples, we need to pray with others for that courage. To gain boldness, you can

- (1) Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage,
- (2) Look for opportunities in your family and neighborhood to talk about Christ,
- (3) Realize that rejection, social discomfort, and embarrassment are not necessarily persecution, and
- (4) Start where you are by being bolder in small ways.

They testified by gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 2:4

God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

“God also testified to it” continues the thought from Hebrews 2:3. Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by “signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the gospel wherever it was preached (see Acts 9:31-42; Acts 14:1-20).

Paul, who discussed spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12-14, and Ephes. 4, taught that their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature.

When we see the gifts of the Spirit in an individual or congregation, we know that God is truly present. As we receive God's gifts, we should thank him for them and put them to use in the church.

Make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

They received the word and were baptized.

Acts 2:41-42

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

About 3,000 people became new believers when Peter preached the Good News about Christ. These new Christians were united with the other believers, taught by the apostles, and included in the prayer

meetings and fellowship. New believers in Christ need to be in groups where they can learn God's Word, pray, and mature in the faith. If you have just begun a relationship with Christ, seek out other believers for fellowship, prayer, and teaching. This is the way to grow.

“Breaking of bread” refers to communion services that were celebrated in remembrance of Jesus and were patterned after the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples before his death (Matthew 26:26-29).

Chapter 3



God made all creation.

Acts 14:15

"Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings like yourselves! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

Responding to the people of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas reminded them that God never leaves himself "without testimony." Rain and crops, for example, are evidence of his goodness. Later Paul wrote that this evidence in nature leaves people without an excuse for unbelief (Romans 1:20). When in doubt about God, look around and you will see abundant evidence that he is at work in our world.

Many believed and were baptized

Acts 18:8

Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

They cannot hear without a preacher.

Romans 10:14-15

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him?
And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him?
And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

We must take God's great message of salvation to others so that they can respond to the Good News. How will your loved ones and neighbors hear it unless someone tells them? Is God calling you to take a part in making his message known in your community? Think of one person who needs to hear the Good News, and think of something you can do to help him or her hear it. Then take that step as soon as possible.

Our fellowship with you is also with the father and the son.

1 John 1:2-3

and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John opens his first letter to the churches similar to the way he began his Gospel, emphasizing that Christ (“the Word of life”) is eternal, that God came into the world as a human, that he, John, was an eyewitness to Jesus’ life, and that Jesus brings light and life.

They were sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:2

And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

Jesus announced his kingdom by both preaching and healing. If he had limited himself to preaching, people might have seen his kingdom as spiritual only.

On the other hand, if he had healed without preaching, people might not have realized the spiritual importance of his mission. Most of his listeners expected a Messiah who would bring wealth and power to their nation; they preferred material benefits to spiritual discernment.

The truth about Jesus is that he is both God and man, both spiritual and physical; and the salvation that he offers is both for the soul and the body.

Any group or teaching that emphasizes soul at the expense of body, or body at the expense of soul, is in danger of distorting Jesus’ Good News.

Freely you have received, freely give.

Matthew 10:7-8

"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'
"Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.
Freely you received, freely give.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to usher in his kingdom. They hoped for a political and military kingdom that would free them from Roman rule and bring back the days of glory under David and Solomon. But Jesus was talking about a spiritual kingdom.

The gospel today is that the kingdom is still *near*. Jesus, the Messiah, has already begun his kingdom on earth in the hearts of his followers. One day the kingdom will be fully realized. Then evil will be destroyed and all people will live in peace with one another.

Jesus gave the disciples a principle to guide their actions as they ministered to others: "Freely you have received, freely give." Because God has showered us with his blessings, we should give generously to others of our time, love, and possessions.

The Lord conformed his word with signs following.

Mark 16:20

And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.

And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

Mark's Gospel emphasizes Christ's power as well as his servanthood. Jesus' life and teaching turn the world upside down. The world sees power as a way to gain control over others.

But Jesus, with all authority and power in heaven and earth, chose to serve others. He held children in his arms, healed the sick, washed the disciples' feet, and died for the sins of the world.

Following Jesus means receiving this same power to serve. As believers, we are called to be servants of Christ. As Christ served, so we are to serve.

They preached the gospel with healing everywhere.

Luke 9:6

Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Paul received his ministry from the Lord.

Acts 20:24

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

We often feel that life is a failure unless we're getting a lot out of it: recognition, fun, money, success. But Paul considered life worth *nothing* unless he used it for God's work. What he put *into* life was far more important than what he got out.

Single-mindedness is a quality needed by anyone who wishes to do God's work. Paul was a single-minded person, and the most important goal of his life was to tell others about Christ (Phil. 3:7-13).

It is no wonder that Paul was the greatest missionary who ever lived. God is looking for more men and women who focus on that one great task God has given them to do.

Chapter 4



Philip preached in many cities.

Acts 8:40

But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Why was Philip suddenly transported to a different city? This miraculous sign showed the urgency of bringing the Gentiles to belief in Christ. Azotus is Ashdod, one of the ancient Philistine capitals. Philip probably lived in Caesarea for the next 20 years (Acts 21:8).

God is a witness in all things.

Romans 1:9

For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

When you pray continually about a concern, don't be surprised at how God answers. Paul prayed to visit Rome so he could teach the Christians there. When he finally arrived in Rome, it was as a prisoner (see Acts 28:16).

Paul prayed for a safe trip, and he did arrive safely—after getting arrested, slapped in the face, shipwrecked, and bitten by a poisonous snake. God's ways of answering our prayers are often far from what we expect. When you sincerely pray, God will answer—although sometimes with timing and in ways you do not expect.

Paul preached where Christ had not already been named.

Romans 15:20

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

Paul wanted to visit the church at Rome, but he had delayed his visit because he had heard many good reports about the believers there and he knew they were doing well on their own. It was more important for him to preach in areas that had not yet heard the Good News.

We are witness to obey the Lord.

Acts 5:30-32

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

You are witnesses of God's blessings.

Luke 24:48

"You are witnesses of these things.

The Holy Spirit will testify the truth from the father.

John 15:26-27

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about me, and you will testify also, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Once again Jesus offers hope. The Holy Spirit gives strength to endure the unreasonable hatred and evil in our world and the hostility many have toward Christ. This is especially comforting for those facing persecution.

Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit—*Counselor* and *Spirit of truth*.

The word *Counselor* conveys the helping, encouraging, and strengthening work of the Spirit. *Spirit of truth* points to the teaching, illuminating, and reminding work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministers to both the head and the heart, and both dimensions are important.

We must speak about what we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:20

For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

We sometimes may be afraid to share our faith in Christ because people might feel uncomfortable and might reject us. But Peter and John's zeal for the Lord was so strong that they could not keep quiet, even when threatened.

If your courage to witness for God has weakened, pray that your boldness may increase. Remember Jesus' promise, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

God's eternal purpose is made known through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:10-11

So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose, which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” are either angels who are witnesses to these events (see 1 Peter 1:12), or hostile spiritual forces opposed to God (Ephes. 2:2; Ephes. 6:12).

God is glorified through the bearing of much fruit.

John 15:8

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

When a vine bears “much fruit,” God is glorified, for daily he sent the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and constantly he nurtured each tiny plant and prepared it to blossom.

What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought into the barns, mature and ready for use! He made it all happen! This farming analogy shows how God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with him and begin to “bear much fruit” in their lives.

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles.

1 Peter 2:12

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Peter's advice sounds like Jesus' in Matthew 5:16: If your actions are above reproach, even hostile people will end up praising God. Peter's readers were scattered among unbelieving Gentiles who were inclined to believe and spread vicious lies about Christians.

Attractive, gracious, and upright behavior on the part of Christians could show these rumors to be false and could even win some of the unsaved critics to the Lord's side. Don't write off people because they misunderstand Christianity; instead, show them Christ by your life. The day may come when those who criticize you will praise God with you.

Repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in all nations.

Luke 24:47

And that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Chapter 5



The gospel will be preached to all nations.

Matthew 24:14

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus said that before he returns, the gospel of the kingdom (the message of salvation) would be preached throughout the world. This was the disciples' mission—and it is ours today. Jesus talked about the end times and final judgment to show his followers the urgency of spreading the good news of salvation to everyone.

Preach the gospel to all creation.

Mark 16:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God. Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven't heard about Christ.

The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ's church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection. Do you ever feel as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ? You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today.

Shake the dust off of your feet, when rejected.

Luke 9:3-5

And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. "And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

Why were the disciples instructed to depend on others while they went from town to town preaching the gospel? Their purpose was to blanket Judea with Jesus' message, and by traveling light they could move quickly. Their dependence on others had other good effects as well:

- (1) it clearly showed that the Messiah had not come to offer wealth to his followers;
- (2) it forced the disciples to rely on God's power and not on their own provision;
- (3) it involved the villagers and made them more eager to hear the message.

This was an excellent approach for the disciples' short-term mission; it was not intended, however, to be a permanent way of life for them.

The disciples were told to stay in only one home in each town because they were not to offend their hosts by moving to a home that was more comfortable or socially prominent. To remain in one home was not a burden for the homeowner, because the disciples' stay in each community was short.

Speak peace to the house you enter.

Luke 10:4-12

"Carry no money belt, no bag, and no shoes; and greet no one on the way. "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

Jesus' direction to stay in one house avoided certain problems. Shifting from house to house could offend the families who first took them in. Some families might begin to compete for the disciples' presence, and some might think they weren't good enough to hear their message.

If the disciples appeared not to appreciate the hospitality offered them, the town might not accept Jesus when he followed them there. In addition, by staying in one place, the disciples did not have to worry continually about getting good accommodations. They could settle down and do their appointed task.

Jesus told his disciples to accept hospitality graciously because their work entitled them to it. Ministers of the gospel deserve to be supported, and it is our responsibility to make sure they have what they need.

There are several ways to encourage those who serve God in his church.

First, see that they have an adequate salary.

Second, see that they are supported emotionally; plan a time to express appreciation for something they have done.

Third, lift their spirits with special surprises from time to time.

Our ministers deserve to know we are giving to them cheerfully and generously.

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Acts 8:4-8

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

Persecution forced the Christians out of Jerusalem and into Judea and Samaria—thus fulfilling the second part of Jesus’ command (see Acts 1:8). The persecution helped spread the gospel. God would bring great results from the believers’ suffering.

Persecution forced the believers out of their homes in Jerusalem, and along with them went the gospel. Sometimes we have to become uncomfortable before we’ll move.

We may not want to experience it, but discomfort may be the best thing for us because God may be working through our hurts. When you are tempted to complain about uncomfortable or painful circumstances, stop and ask if God might be preparing you for a special task.

Israel had been divided into three main regions—Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south. The city of Samaria (in the region of Samaria) had been the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel in the days of the divided kingdom, before it was conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C.

During that war, the Assyrian king took many captives, leaving only the poorest people in the land and resettling it with foreigners. These foreigners intermarried with the Jews who were left, and the mixed race became known as Samaritans.

The Samaritans were considered half-breeds by the “pure” Jews in the southern kingdom of Judah, and there was intense hatred between the two groups. But Jesus himself went into Samaria (John 4), and he commanded his followers to spread the gospel there (Acts 1:8).

Peter and John prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14-17

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Peter and John were sent to Samaria to find out whether or not the Samaritans were truly becoming believers. The Jewish Christians, even the apostles, were still unsure whether Gentiles (non-Jews) and half-Jews could receive the Holy Spirit. It wasn't until Peter's experience with Cornelius (Acts 10) that the apostles became fully convinced that the Holy Spirit was for all people.

It was John who had asked Jesus if they should call fire down from heaven to burn up a Samaritan village that refused to welcome them (Luke 9:51-55). Here he and Peter went to the Samaritans to pray with them.

Preach so the Holy Spirit may sanctify the Gentiles.

Romans 15:16

To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

God does not show partiality.

Acts 10:34-35

Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to the spread of the gospel in the first century was the Jewish-Gentile conflict. Most of the early believers were Jewish, and to them it was scandalous even to think of associating with Gentiles.

But God told Peter to take the gospel to a Roman, and Peter obeyed despite his background and personal feelings. (Later Peter struggled with this again—see Galatians 2:11-14.) God was making it clear that the Good News of Christ is for everyone!

We should not allow any barrier—language, culture, prejudice, geography, economic level, or educational level—to keep us from telling others about Christ.

In every nation there are hearts restless for God, ready to receive the gospel—but someone must take it to them. Seeking God is not enough—people must find him. How then shall seekers find God without someone to point the way? Is God asking you to show someone the way to him? (See Romans 10:14-15.)

Many turned to the Lord through preaching of the word.

Acts 11:20-21

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

When the church accepted Peter's testimony that the gospel was also for Gentiles, Christianity exploded into Gentile areas, and large numbers became believers. The seeds of this missionary work had been sown after Stephen's death when many believing Jews were persecuted and scattered, settling in faraway cities and spreading the gospel.

It was in Antioch that Christianity was launched on its worldwide mission and where the believers aggressively preached to the Gentiles (non-Jews who did not worship God). Philip had preached in Samaria, but the Samaritans were part Jewish (Acts 8:5);

Peter preached to Cornelius, but he already worshiped God (Acts 10:2). Believers who were scattered after the outbreak of persecution in Jerusalem spread the gospel to other Jews in the lands they fled to (Acts 11:19). At this time, the believers began actively sharing the Good News with Gentiles.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House
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