

Appendix I - Bible Study **Jesus on how we are called to live**

I am indebted to my friend, Dr. Scot McKnight for many of these thoughts. It is his outline of Matthew 9 that provides the structure to this short study. The bottom line: Jesus calls you and me to live in new way...not just believe in new things. We are going to call this lifestyle "Missional". "Missional" is a term for what God is doing in this world and how the follower of Jesus is summoned to participate in that great redemptive work of God.

1. Missional work is shaped by the missional work of Jesus himself.

Matthew 4:23ff and 9:35ff (as well as many other places in all four gospels) says that Jesus went around all the cities and villages doing three things: (1) teaching in their synagogues, (2) preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and (3) healing all diseases and sicknesses. Here's the potent implication: If this is the general summary of Jesus' ministry then the specifics of that ministry can be found in between those verses.

Thus: teaching/preaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount and healing is found in Matt 8-9, which contains 10 separable miracle/healing stories about Jesus. Matthew 5-9 is an introduction to the missional work of Jesus.

And this leads us back to Matthew 9:36-11:1. Jesus only sends out the Twelve after he has "incarnated" his own missional work, after he has "performed" the gospel itself in his own way for his own people, and after he has "exemplified" what he means by kingdom missional work.

Our missional work is not ours; our missional work is Jesus' missional work that we simply are privileged to extend into our world.

2. The Real Shepherd, Jesus himself, was a compassionate person whose compassion for people drove him to prayer and to action for the people. A missional movement will only be genuinely missional to the degree that it is prompted by compassion. Jesus' compassion, Matthew tells in 9:36-38, was especially directed at those persons who had been neglected and marginalized by false leaders. The imagery Matthew uses is that they are "harassed and helpless," and then he quotes Numbers 27:17 ("like sheep without a shepherd") which recalls what Moses saw in Israel and which led to the appointment of Joshua (Jesus' name is the same as Joshua's!).

Jesus' compassion prompted prayer for more workers. How about you? Will you join in the work God is doing by opening your ears and eyes and heart to those around you who are in need of "shepherding"?

3. Jesus acted in the power of God. There is little doubt: the power of the missional work is from God. Here again, sometimes we get so clever and arrogant that we think it comes from our skill or ingenuity; sometimes we get so logical we think it comes from our minds; sometimes we get so persuasive we think we can control others; sometimes our facilities are so impressive we think Kingdom work is to dazzle the crowds. But not so with Jesus: the disciples were given authority over unclean spirits, and they were given authority to heal diseases and sicknesses. The issue is one of empowerment instead of just skills. The power of ministry is not to be found in the glitter but in the embrace of God's empowering Spirit.

So, if you are serious about developing a Christ honoring lifestyle, pray to God for enablement — and wait for God to fill you with the Spirit.

4. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus tells his followers to concentrate on the "lost sheep" of the house of Israel and not go off to the ways of the Gentiles or to a city of the Samaritans. Jesus' mission was itself shaped by the same (Matthew 15:24) — but it began to spill over to the Gentiles. In other words, what Matthew is saying is that the apostles were sent out to do what Jesus did and to extend what Jesus did to more people. A missionally shaped movement is nothing more and nothing better than getting to do what Jesus did, in the power of the Spirit, to others and for the good of the world.

5. Jesus told his followers not to take money, not to carry a beggar's bag, and not even to take extra clothing and shoes — and then adds they are not to take a staff (probably a protective device). In other words, missional work like this requires: (1) trust in God, (2) the protection of the Kingdom's reputation by what it looks like, and (3) assumption that God's people will provide.

Kingdom work, then, is work done in dependence on God and for God's glory and in the context of God's good people.

6. Reputation may not be everything, but it matters to Jesus. His concern was Kingdom reputation when the Apostles got involved directly in missional work, and when they were performing the Kingdom as an extension of his mission.

So, Matthew 10:11-13: here Jesus tells his followers three things: (1) as a result of your Kingdom ministry, find a place to stay; (2) stay in that place until you leave that village; and (3) your peace-blessing will remain on a place or return to you. Kingdom work offers the peace of Jesus to others — and this peace transcends inner peace as for Jesus "peace" pertains (see Matt 5:9; Luke 10:5) to the Kingdom condition of peace that is to permeate from Jesus through his followers into communities in order to transform life and society. When we say "The peace of the Lord" perhaps we could think of Luke 10:5 and missional work and that we are graced by God to be empowered to offer the peace of Jesus to others — and it can stick.

7. Missional work involves a balancing act of innocence and shrewdness. Matthew 10:14-16 evokes the seriousness of missional work. Jesus tells the Twelve that if villages reject the Kingdom, when they leave that village they are "shake the dust off their feet." In all this, Jesus says, the disciples are to be as "shrewd as snakes but as innocent as doves." Here is the balancing act of the missional disciple. Why? Because the missional person finds herself or himself on the border - being forced to make decisions never made before. Forced to do things never done before. Forced to engage in situations never engaged before. Force to try new things and see new things and say new things — and it is not easy to know what is right sometimes.

8. To participate with Jesus in the mission he calls his Apostles to, and to make that a template for our day, is to be in tune enough with the Spirit that when difficult times arrive we can expect the Spirit to give us the words to say. Jesus predicted rough patches — which is mild language for overt opposition. Their opposition would come from the seats of power in Galilee and Judea. His followers would be asked to testify about what they were doing. In such settings, Jesus said, don't worry about what to or (and this is important) how to say it: words will be given, and they will be given by the Spirit.

Genuine Jesus Kingdom work is prompted through and through by the Spirit.

9. In this next section of Matthew 10 (vv. 21-25), Jesus goes so far to tell his Apostles that they will be hated by all because of "his name." Association of Jesus does not mean that all days are happy days; association with Jesus sometimes involves opposition. Why? Because of the way of the Kingdom of God cuts against the grain of cultural powers; it also cuts against the grain of ingrained, routine, ritualized Christian ways. But, Jesus calls his missionaries to perseverance and even tells them that if they don't persevere to the end they will not be saved. Once one has taken the Kingdom path, there can be no looking back.

Why is perseverance so needed? Because Jesus, too, persevered. Association with Jesus is association, Matthew tells us, with the path of opposition. Jesus is Teacher — disciples (in this case) are not better than teachers. If Kingdom opponents (like those who offered John's head on a platter) malign Jesus, how much more will they malign his followers? Let me encourage those of you out there who are striking into new ways to press on in the name of Jesus and the Kingdom.

10. Matthew 10:26-33, there is a strong warning on Jesus' part: fear God and don't fear humans. The point being that missional workers, regardless of what our vocation is that we serve God — we follow Jesus in what we do. Which means the assaults of humans, as long as we following Jesus, can be deflected — even when they mean pain and suffering and insult. Jesus calls us to confess him and he promises to call us by name in front of his Father.

To me this means the willingness to be a gospel missional person in both performance and proclamation, both in how I live and in what I say. When the former lags, the latter is hard, so I pray for God's grace to sustain the former so the latter will partake in authenticity. Still, even as "earthen vessels" we are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

11. This type of living can be divisive. One of Jesus' harder and harsher words is this: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth — I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Matthew 10:34 says: Jesus does not want division, but division is sometimes the inevitable result of the presence of Jesus' Kingdom work. Jesus wants peace, but knows that peace comes as a result of responding to Kingdom work. We need to pause to look a little more closely and ask, "Where are the divisions Jesus is talking about?" The answer is simple: one's own household. What Jesus is speaking of here is family opposition to the missionaries, and probably for joining in the Jesus Kingdom work and probably for being missionaries for Jesus. It does not appear to me that the divisions are in the communities into which they are sent, but instead come from those in one's own family when they oppose the missional work itself. Those closest to you, even those in our congregational family, may misunderstand what you are doing.

12. Full-scale missional work, as we see in Matthew 10:37-39, moves from love to sacrifice. He who loves anyone more than me, Jesus says, is not worthy of me. The foundational core of the follower of Jesus' life is a love for Jesus. How do we love Jesus? We love him by listening to him, by speaking with him, by following him, and by doing what he has given us the calling to do.

13. Those who are involved in missional work are the presence of Christ to others. "The one who receives you receives me, and the one who receives me receives the one who sent me" (Matthew 10:40). The call of God is essentially the call to incarnate Jesus in our lives. It means we are not on our own, it means this is not about us, it means this is not about programs and size and glory, but about being Jesus to others by surrendering who we are and what we do to the Kingdom calls us into. Do the people around you see Jesus in you? We might ask about numbers and changes and impact, but Jesus would ask "Whom did they see in you?"