

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Principles for an Effective Missionary, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 10:8-15

Code: 2278

Again this morning, we are coming to Matthew 10, and I would call your attention to verses 5-15. Let me read those verses as you follow along; that will become the setting for our message from the Lord's Word.

After having named the twelve apostles, Matthew writes, "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 a 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.'"

As we look again at this text, we are reminded that our Lord has trained the Twelve, and He is now about to send them out for the first time. This is part of their training, but it is also part of their sending. That is, they are going not only to be trained, but they are going to preach the Gospel as well, to a harvest of lost, scattered, shepherdless souls. Don't think for a minute that the Lord has only in mind their education in their being sent; He has in mind the salvation of open-hearted people as well.

So it is a twofold mission: evangelism is their primary job, and their own training is secondary, so that they will be better ready when they are fully, finally and officially sent out in their permanent ministry after the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was in the process of discipling them, of building them up so they could reach their generation with the Gospel.

Our own college pastor, Allen Hadidian, has written a very insightful and helpful book called Successful Discipling, and all of us should read and be familiar with it. In the book, he has an excellent definition of discipling. He writes, "Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have

been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth and maturity, and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation."

The heart of what he is saying is this: discipling is a process whereby an individual commits himself to others for an extended period of time to bring them to the place where they can reproduce themselves in the next generation. That is exactly what our Lord did. Our Lord was committed to giving Himself for an extended time to a few men so that they could be brought to maturity and equipped to reach their generation.

We are in the midst of this process as we study Matthew 10, and it is a key stage in their training. They would get a taste of what it's like to evangelize, a taste of what it is to step out of the fold, if you will, to leave the protective care of the Shepherd and hit the world. In verses 5-15, we see the principles for their mission, in verses 16-23, the reaction to their mission, and finally, the cost of being a representative of Christ closes out the chapter.

They had been with our Lord for some time, many months by now. They had seen His miracles, heard His unequalled teaching about the Kingdom; they had learned how to live, believe, trust. They had learned how to pray, and they are now ready to be sent to evangelize the towns and villages of Galilee, to reach that vast harvest of souls that our Lord saw in Matthew 9:37, those shepherdless sheep of verse 36. The multitude had been prepared in a way - they had seen enough and heard enough so that the ones of them who were open were open. All they needed was someone to give them the message.

So the Lord sends forth what we call the original missionaries, the first twelve sent by Christ Himself. In sending them, although they were unqualified from a human perspective, Jesus has poured His power into them, and made them able to change the world. In Matthew 10:1, it says, "He called them and gave them power." It was power that could enable them to go way beyond anything their humanness ever dreamed possible, in the advance of the Kingdom.

As Jesus sends them, He gives them principles for their mission. There is a sense in which this is a very isolated situation; you can never reproduce it in any point in history, there never have been another twelve disciples of Jesus, there never has been another time such as this time when the Kingdom was being specifically offered to Israel, so there are some dispensational limits to the specifics of this passage. Nonetheless, as we look at what Jesus said to them, I believe they are some timeless principles for any mission, for any missionary.

We asked the question last week, "What are the principles for an effective missionary?" I believe they're here. I believe that what our Lord tells them is a summation of the tremendously important principles for representing Jesus Christ in the world. All of us, though we may not be officially sent, as the Twelve, or as a pastor, teacher, or evangelist is, are nonetheless sent as representatives of

Christ into the world.

Let me remind you of the first few that we looked at last time. The first principle for an effective mission is a divine commission. Look at verse 5. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them." In other words, they were under orders from the living God. Going out to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not on your own, you do not make your own choices, call your own shots, determine your own direction, but you are under orders, under responsibility, answerable for everything you do and say to God Himself, who scrutinizes your ministry. So as one who represents Christ, you are under a divine commission.

I believe that is the first and essential element of Christian service - to know that Christ has sent us, gifted us, trained us, prepared us, and sent us out. For all that it means to be sent, for the sense of authority, for the sense of rightness about the mission, and also for all that it means about submission, for the sense of responsibility to the one who is our Lord, we need to recognize that we are divinely sent. We do not determine our own destiny, or mark out our own patterns and plans, but we are under His orders. That is necessary in any effective mission: that overarching awareness that I am sent by Christ Himself and He is the one who determines what I am and what I do.

Secondly, and we saw this last week, one who goes out representing Christ not only has a divine commission but a central objective. We talked about how important it is to have some precision in your ministry, to have a track, to have a focus, to know what it is you are called to do, gifted to do, sent to do, and to do it, and not to become so diversified that you wind up doing nothing very well.

In verses 5-6, He says, "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." We discussed the three reasons He said that. Reason number one is the specific place of the Jews: they were God's chosen people, the people of the promises and covenants, the ones given the law. They were the people who were to be the channel to reach the world. It wasn't that God was going to ignore the Gentiles; it was that Israel was being given the opportunity to be the vehicle to reach the Gentiles. The message was, "If Israel repents, and the Kingdom comes to Israel, then Israel will be used by God to draw all nations to the Messiah."

So God was going for a tool; Israel was not a cul-de-sac, Israel was a channel, a thoroughfare to the rest of the world. God was calling out a witnessing people, His covenant people, and saying, "Will you be My witness in the world to reach the nations?" So He says, "Go to them, and give them that first opportunity." That's why He sent them to the Jews only, in order to fulfill the special place of the Jews.

Secondly, He sent them because of the special problem of the Twelve. They weren't equipped for Gentile evangelism. The cultural gap was too great; there was too much hatred and too much

bitterness and too much animosity to try to hurdle. These were young recruits; the responsibility of going to the Jews was enough without crossing cultural barriers and trying to go to the Gentiles and Samaritans.

Thirdly was the specific point of attack. Our Lord also knows that when people go out on a mission, they need to have a very specific target, and I think that's a third reason He narrowed the target. It made it so simple; they knew exactly where they were to go.

We realize today that we are not dispensationally oriented like this; we are not offering the Kingdom to Israel, or instructed to go to the Jew only. Rather, we are instructed to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Nonetheless, there is a perspective here that is important, and that is that we are to function in precision. In other words, we must know our gifts, understand our callings, and then move out. Paul was that way; he said, "I desired not to build on any other man's foundation. I went where Christ was not named." In other words, "I had a clear focus of what God wanted me to do." Based on our gifts and callings, we are to have that same precision.

One who represents Christ on a mission for Christ must have a clear message. In verse 7, He said, "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" That means that their message was very, very clear. It wasn't psychology, or philosophy, or human wisdom, or politics, or economics. The message was the Kingdom of Heaven and its imminence, the nearness of the Kingdom. "Tell them that Heaven is coming to Earth. Tell them of God and all of His reign and all that it means, internally and externally, in, and around, and over men. Talk about the Kingdom." Their ministry, A to Z, alpha to omega, was the Kingdom of Heaven, and it was clear and precise.

So they had a divine commission, a central objective, and a clear message. Now let's come to the fourth point and pick up where we left off last time. This is essential; those who represent Christ must have a confirming credential. If you were to go out and preach Jesus Christ, what reason would people have to believe anything you said was really from God? Why should they believe that? Why should people have believed the Twelve when they said, "The kingdom of heaven was at hand," and that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah? Why should people believe when they preached the principles of the Kingdom and maybe repeated much of the Sermon on the Mount? While they were preaching all of this, why would the people want to believe that? Why should they believe it? Because they had credentials, there was some confirmation.

If you go to the doctor and he diagnoses something, why do you believe that? Because he is a doctor and he has a diploma hanging on the wall that says he graduated from medical school and he knows his stuff. That's his credential. When you hire someone to work for your company, you make sure he has had the proper training for the work you expect him to perform.

But what would you do with a preacher when there weren't any seminaries? How would you know he was on target? In fact, the disciples were opposite of the existing religious establishment. They hadn't been educated in the right place - they were from Galilee, not Jerusalem. They didn't belong to the right group - they weren't Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, or Zealots. There wasn't yet any New Testament to compare with what they said, and no one had a copy of the Sermon on the Mount. Why believe them? Because they had credentials, that's why.

Verse 8 says, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give." Those were the credentials of the apostles, and they were convincing enough to identify them as representatives of God. We've already discussed the specifics of healing, and cleansing lepers, and raising the dead, and casting out demons. All of that has gone on in chapters 8-9. We have seen the Lord do that already, and I don't want to spend time going over all of those things again, but I want you to see some rich truth here about the nature of these specific things. The credentials were the key to marking them out as representatives of God.

In II Corinthians 12:11-12, the Apostle Paul says, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." How did he know that? "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." The credentials of an apostle were signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Mighty deeds were miracles that created wonder, and the wonder pointed to God as the source. Paul said, "How did you know I was an apostle and came behind not the chiefest apostle? Because of the signs, wonders, mighty deeds, and miracles of an apostle. That was the proof."

That was the way it was with Jesus. A blind man Jesus healed said to the Pharisees who had questioned him, "You mean you don't know who He is, and He opened my eyes? You don't know where He came from, and I've been blind from birth and He made me to see?" In other words, he was saying, "It's pretty obvious to me where He came from; He came from God." So the ability to do these things points them out as from God. But if that is all that miracles were intended to do, it was unnecessary to do these kind of miracles.

It wasn't necessary to do deliverance miracles, healing miracles, raising the dead miracles; it wasn't necessary to do that. Just imagine - they could have leaped tall buildings in a single bound. They could have disappeared and then reappeared somewhere else. They could have shot up in space, flown over the city, and swooped over buildings. They could have done astounding things that didn't relate to what they did perform. They could have read minds. So why did they perform the types of miracles they did? Let me tell you why.

Look at the first credential: heal the sick, cleanse the lepers. What does that say to you? Not only did they heal the sick for the sake of the miracle and cleanse the lepers for the sake of the miracle, but the first credential they manifested was compassion and mercy on people in need.

As I said, it didn't have to be this. They could have done all kinds of astounding, miraculous tricks that didn't make anyone any better, but they were revealing the great heart of God, and God cares for people who are hurting, who suffer, who are poor, and who are sick. The miracles dramatized the mercy of God, and showed them that whatever the Kingdom of Heaven was, when it was at hand, sick people got well and lepers lost their leprosy. In other words, it would be an element of the coming Kingdom that God would remove disease. So they got a little foretaste of what the Kingdom was all about, and the first credential was compassion and mercy for people who suffer.

Jesus always had great concern for the poor. When John the Baptist was wondering if Jesus really was the Messiah, He said to John's disciples, "Go and show John this: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Why tell him that? Because that will reveal that this is God's Messiah because He shows the compassionate, merciful heart of God. It wasn't just a trick or a miracle for the sake of a miracle; it was a miracle for the sake of the true representation of the compassionate heart of God.

One who truly represents Jesus Christ gives himself to the poor, the hurting, the needy, and the downtrodden. When I see people who claim to represent Jesus Christ and yet are devoted to the rich and famous, I wonder about that. They are under the illusion that the Kingdom of God is advanced by money and the rich, but they are wrong. There is nothing wrong with that, in and of itself; those people need Christ too. But there is something wrong with the illusion. It is characteristic of God's representatives that they are drawn to the hurting, the downcast, the sick, the poor, and the needy, and that is the heart of God revealed.

You find throughout the Old Testament this indication. In Psalm 9:18, for example, "The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." Psalm 12:5 says, "'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise,' saith the Lord; 'I will set him in safety.'" I'm skipping many, but in Psalm 35:10, it says, "All my bones shall say, 'Lord, who is like unto thee, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoils him?'" Near the end of Psalms, in Psalm 140:12, it says, "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." Isaiah 41:17 is a beautiful verse that talks about how God comes to the rescue of those who are hurting.

In contrast to that, people who are representatives of a wicked world, a false teaching, do not manifest the compassion of God. That is why the Old Testament says that wicked men oppress the poor (Ezekiel 18:12), sell the poor (Amos 2:6), crush the poor (Amos 5:11), grind the faces of the poor (Isaiah 3:15), devour the poor (Habakkuk 3:14), persecute the poor (Psalm 10:2), and defraud the poor (Amos 8:5-6). People who are wicked and of the world use the poor, abuse the poor, step on the poor, and want to eliminate the poor and the needy; they are just in the way.

On the contrary, God cares for them. He doesn't forget them (Psalm 9:18). He hears their cry (Psalm 69:33), maintains their right (Psalm 140:12), delivers, protects, exalts, and provides for them (Psalm 35:10; 12:5; 107:41; 68:10). Psalm 14:6 says, "The Lord is their refuge." I believe they are even called 'my poor' in one text in the Old Testament.

False prophets and teachers are merciless and have no compassion; they use and abuse people. Jesus indicts the scribes and leaders of Israel with a tremendously bitter indictment. He says, "Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost places at feasts; who devour widows' houses." Some religious leaders actually extorted from the poor. People even today who claim to love Christ will do anything for money, including robbing from widows their last mite. They have no thought for the needy. The one who represents our Lord is sympathetic, tender, drawn to the sick and the poor.

I was interviewed by a reporter who had surveyed many Christian leaders across America, and he was extremely disillusioned. He said, "I've talked to conservative and liberal Christians alike - fundamentalists, evangelicals, Bible-believers, clear to the other extreme of those who don't believe all the evangelicals believe, but still claim Christ. Out of all those I interviewed, I found one person I thought was more like Christ than any of the others." I asked him who it was, he told me the name, and I knew who it was.

He said, "He's way over here; he believes in God and Christ, but he doesn't believe that all of the Bible is necessarily inspired. He is not nearly as evangelical as many, but his entire life is given to caring for people who are poor, oppressed, and needy." He said to me, and this is a quotation from an unregenerate reporter, "He appears to me more like Christ than all the rest." It was really sad for me to hear that. He talked to a lot of people who had the right message but cared more for the rich and famous, while the one who impressed him didn't have the message quite together, but manifested the attitude. It was a sad indictment of Christianity in many ways.

What are the credentials? We can't heal the sick or cleanse the lepers - we aren't living in an apostolic era, but we can show the divine compassion those miracles were intended to demonstrate. Those are the credentials.

The second credential is: "raise the dead, cast out demons." The only thing I think about when I hear that is power. I mean, the power to raise the dead and the power to invade the kingdom of darkness, the unseen world of the demons, and overcome that kingdom, that's power! Now I can't raise the dead or cast out demons, and neither can you. Today, no one has the power and authority our Lord and His apostles had over demons and death. You say, "Then how does this relate to us?" Because it shows us power. The mark of the apostles was power.

Matthew 7 says how you can tell a false prophet, "By their fruits you will know them." If you don't see any power, any changed lives, any dramatic transformations, the result of their ministry being the shattering of the kingdom of darkness, or someone who was dead come to life in Christ, then that person is not a true preacher, or a true representative of Christ. A true representative of Christ will be marked by God's power everywhere he goes. False teachers and apostles are impotent, like it says in Jeremiah 5:13. Jesus told the leaders of Israel that they didn't know the power of God in Matthew 22:29. They were impotent to change anyone's life, even their own.

A true representative of God manifests power - not to raise those who are physically dead, but to raise those who are spiritually dead through the Gospel of Christ, to see people redeemed. A true representative will have power to shatter the demons as souls are released into the Kingdom of God.

By the way, when the apostles went forth, they had power. You can trace it through the gospels - in Mark, Luke, and Acts, all the way to chapter 28 - and you'll see tremendous power. Effective missionaries and effective representatives of Christ have power, and they raise the spiritually dead and shatter the kingdom of darkness with the message of light. Those are their credentials. If you're going to go out and represent Jesus Christ and be believed, you'd better have some credentials: compassion and power.

The third credential is most interesting. At the end of verse 8, it says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." If I have compassion and mercy that is not of the flesh but of God; if I have power in my ministry, it is not of the flesh. I didn't earn that power, or gain that power; I didn't get it by going to Bible college or seminary, or by being ordained. I got that power from God, right? Since I paid nothing for my power, I shouldn't charge anything. That's exactly what He's saying; the third credential is unselfishness. Show me someone who truly represents Jesus Christ and I will show you someone who is not in it for personal gain.

The Jewish exorcists, who were common in the time of Christ and went around casting out demons, charged people. When people were demon-possessed or had family members who were demon-possessed, they would go to the exorcists for deliverance. Ultimately those exorcists had no results because the people were demon-possessed because of sin, and the exorcists couldn't do anything about that. Nevertheless, people would pay great amounts of money to get exorcised.

Then there were medical doctors at that period of time, however primitive their science may have been, who would charge great amounts of money for physical healing. They would put prices on their services, as doctors today do, and as psychiatrists and psychologists do, who are the modern exorcists. People will pay a fortune to go to these kinds of people to get the kind of physical or emotional or mental deliverance they think they need.

Now along come the apostles, who instantaneously, with a word, whenever they wished, and at all times had the power of God to cast out demons. They could heal the sick of any disease and raise the dead. How much do you think they could have made? It's inconceivable. They could have made a fortune! Simon Magus, a sorcerer, was aware of the power the apostles had and tried to buy it in Acts 8. He was willing to pay any price because he knew he could make it back a thousand times over. Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." The Holy Spirit is a free gift, so Jesus says, "You received it free, so you give it free. Don't you ever charge anyone for your ministry; don't you ever put a price on your ministry or your power." This was the true law of the rabbis.

A rabbi was bound by the law to give his teaching freely and for nothing; he was forbidden to take money for teaching the law which Moses had freely received from God. The Talmud said the only time a rabbi could take money for his teaching was if he taught a small child, because that was the responsibility of their parents, and if they were shirking their responsibility in favor of having the rabbi do it, then they needed to pay him for it because it was their job.

The Mishnah said that a rabbi was never to take money for his teaching any more than a judge was to take money for his judging - that would be bribery - or a witness was take money for witnessing in a law court. Rabbi Zadok said, "Make not the law a crown wherewith to aggrandize thyself, or a spade wherewith to dig." Hillel said, "He who makes a worldly use of the crown of the law shall waste away, hence thou mayest infer that whosoever desires a profit for himself from the words of the law is helping his own destruction."

In other words, no rabbi put a price on his ministry or his teaching, but false apostles are always interested in their own, personal aggrandizement. They are always in it for their own gain. There is always a price on their service. You find someone who represents Jesus Christ that puts a price on his service, and I'll tell you someone who has just priced himself out of blessing from God.

I Peter 5 says we don't do this for 'filthy lucre.' Paul said to Timothy that when looking for an elder, find a man who isn't interested in personal gain. Paul says to Titus, "When you ordain elders in every city, find a man who isn't interested in personal gain." This isn't anything new; clear back in Isaiah 56:9-11, the prophet says, "All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory." If you're going to serve the Lord for gain and put a price on your ministry, you just price yourself out of blessing.

Through the years I have been repeatedly asked this question, because so many people, I suppose, have a price. "What is your fee?" or, "How much do you charge?" I have been preaching for over twenty years, that seems amazing to me; I should have improved! Yet never once in my ministry have I ever set a price on anything I've done, and I never will. The Bible says I received it freely, so I give it freely. Why would I set a price? I've known pastors who have said, "I'll come to your church; my base salary is X. If you can pay it, I'll come." But the credentials of a representative of Christ are compassion for the needy, power to change lives, and unselfishness. No price.

You say, "Wait a minute, MacArthur, we pay you a good salary." You're right. That's the next point, and we do want to go on to that! There is another credential, and it's what I call a confident faith. It's not really a credential, but a mark of an effective missionary, apostle, or representative of Christ. Yes, a divine commission, a central objective, a clear message, and a confirming credential. Now, a confident faith.

You say, "You mean you can't put a price on your ministry? Then you're liable to go somewhere, spend a lot of money getting there, and what if they don't give you anything?" That's happened, sure. I went clear across the country for three days, preached my heart out, came back and never heard a word; not a 'thank you,' nothing. This has happened several times.

The other day, I got a long-distance phone call. "Remember back a year and a half ago when you spoke for us and we never said 'thanks' to you? We're sorry." I said, "It never bothered me. It's OK; it's fine." But that happens. I mean, I've gone three times in a row, 50-mile round-trips, spoken three times, and gotten a check for \$3, \$1 each time. That didn't even pay for the gas! Frankly, I sent it back; I thought they must have needed it more than I did! That's going to happen, and that's OK. Then, the rest of the time, I get more than I'm worth.

The issue with me is not to set a price. I received the power and the call and the gifts free; God gave them to me. I can't charge you for that, so I'll never set a price or ask a fee. On the other hand, the fifth principle is a confident faith. At the same time, I believe God will meet my needs. Look at verse 9. He says to them, "As you go, take neither gold, nor silver, nor copper in your purses," and that's coinage.

He says, "Don't take any money; don't think, 'I'm going to go, but first of all, I have to amass a fortune to support this trip. I mean, if I'm not going to charge anyone, and freely I've received and freely I'll give, then it is obvious that I have to support myself. So as soon as I get all my money collected and stuffed in my purse, I'll be on my way.' No," He says, "Don't take a thing. Don't take any money at all." Not only that, but He says, "Don't take a food bag," and that's what the word 'bag' probably means - a bag of supplies and food. He says, "Don't take two coats for if something happens to one, neither shoes, nor yet a staff."

You say, "Wait a minute; if they couldn't set a price, and couldn't take anything with them, they were going out there naked. They had nothing." Aha! A spiritual principle at the end of verse 10. Just remember this, "The workman is worthy of his sustenance." Who made up that principle? God says, "I did, and I will manage the resources." So you go in confident faith. You don't take anything; this is like survival training - you go out there without anything. What are You trying to teach these people, Lord? Confident faith, confident trust.

Do you know what the Jews realized in this time? They knew this; this is how the rabbis were. They were never to put a price on anything, demand anything, or ask a fee; the people they ministered to were always to supply their needs. The Talmud tells us Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said, "If a man entertains a [rabbi] in his house and lets him enjoy his possessions, Scripture accounts it to him as if he had sacrificed the daily burnt-offering." God would bless him because he took care of God's servant.

So there is a double instruction here: God's man is never to be over-concerned with material things, but the people of God must see it as their duty to support him. I can't name the price, but it is your responsibility before God to support those who serve you, for the worker is worthy of his sustenance.

You say, "How should we do that?" Well, in I Timothy 5:17-18, it says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." It isn't just meeting their need, it's honoring them. It's not just honoring them, it's double-honoring them if they work hard in the Word and doctrine. Don't muzzle the ox that treads. In other words, if you want the animal to work, you have to feed it.

In I Corinthians 9:14, Paul says, "They who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." He doesn't mean live what you preach, he means live by your preaching; be supported in it. So we have to live by faith. We are not allowed to put a price, or make a demand, but to be unselfish. The responsibility is God's; God says, "I know the principle, and that is that a faithful worker is worthy, and I will move through the people to meet the need." It's all up to Him.

So it is all His. I've said this to young men all my life, "If you never ask for anything, and never seek anything, and never put a price on anything, then whatever comes, you can accept as a gift from God, and there will be no confusion in your mind at all, because you didn't seek to gain it."

That brings me to the sixth principle, and this is where the balance comes together. I call this a settled contentment. One who represents Christ and is sent out as an ambassador or missionary for Christ doesn't put a price on his ministry, trusts God to supply (and God will supply through the people according to the diligence and faithfulness of his ministry), but the point is that whatever he receives, he is to be content.

Verse 11, "Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy." What does that mean? 'Worthy' doesn't mean 'wealthy.' It means worthy. It is someone whose character, lifestyle, and integrity would be a fitting place for you to stay. For example, if you go into town and stay in a horrible home of dissolute, unregenerate, vile, wicked people, and you walk out of that every day to preach the message of holiness, no one would believe you. They would identify you with the unholiness of the place you're staying.

I remember preaching at a meeting in a certain city, and arrangements were made for me to stay in a particular motel. When I went to the motel after the meeting the first night, I noticed that about twenty semi-trucks were parked along the street and many women were standing in front of the entrance. It didn't take a Phi Beta Kappa to figure out what was going on. I said, "I can't stay in this place, because I'll get confused with what is going on around here." That's the point here. He's saying to find a place worthy of the occupancy of a representative of Jesus Christ; be careful where you stay. But when you find that place, "Abide until you leave the town." In other words, stay there all the time.

That's what's going to happen; you'll go into town, and every time it will happen this way. I've had this happen; some dear saint would come to me and say, "Would you stay with us? We'd love to have you." Of course I would say yes. Often their home was a humble little place. The food may not have been the bill of fare at some fancy restaurant, but it was nice and simple. But about two days later, someone would say to me, "We don't know where you're staying, but we live up on the hill, with eight swimming pools and a herd of horses, and we have a suite you can stay in." I'd find myself thinking, "That would be really nice. But how do I get out of the place I'm in now?" Jesus' instruction solves that dilemma: be content with God's provision and stay there until it's time to leave. If God wants you up on the hill, those people will meet you first when you come to town.

I've stayed in \$150-a-day hotel rooms; I feel funny, like people are staring at me saying, "How did he get in here?" and I've stayed in places that you might not even stay in. Monty and I have stayed in places where every time we went into the bathroom, we had to collect the frogs. It wasn't really a bathroom, but that's what they told us it was. I mean, I've been in all those places, but the point here is, wherever it is that God, in His providence, takes you, be content to stay there. Don't be in the ministry to see how much comfort you can generate for yourself. That is settled contentment.

Contentment is so elusive, isn't it? Paul said to Timothy, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Some people never know that experience of contentment. Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." Public preaching would lead to hospitable invitations, and they were to be careful not to lodge in a disreputable place, and not to start climbing a social ladder, but to concentrate on the business at hand.

Let me give you the two final principles very rapidly. An effective missionary representative of Jesus Christ has a concentration on the receptive. He says, "When you come into a house, greet it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it." When the disciples found the worthy house, they were to stay and minister to those gracious, hospitable people. Once they had established their lodging, they could begin their ministry in that town, which was to preach the Gospel from house to house. Whenever they visited another home, they were to greet the people in it.

The common Jewish greeting was 'shalom,' or 'peace.' It meant everything; wholeness, soundness, health, welfare, prosperity, well-being, blessing, and benediction from God. Just pour out your blessing, and say, "This house is blessed by God." Verse 13 says, "If the house is worthy, let your peace come on it." If it's a worthy house, pour out your blessing and benediction, let them have everything you have to give. "Concentrate on the receptive," is what He is saying. "Find the open hearts, the places where the Gospel has access and receptivity, and pour yourself into that place." That's the concentration that we have to have in ministry.

I really believe that's the focus that I want to have. I talk about this very often with people in the ministry, and we talk about who we preach to. Some say, "I just preach, and I'm going to get those people committed if it kills me." So that person ends up preaching to the periphery all the time, to the fringe, and ignores the dear people who are hungering and thirsting to grow, if all he is doing is banging the ears of the uncommitted.

I am committed, in my heart, and I think this is because of the Scriptural mandate, to preach to the people who want to learn the most. I want to feed a hungry heart. Now and then, I will fire out exhortations to the uncommitted. But I concentrate on feeding the people who are willing to receive God's Word because they are the catalyst to change the world. Don't just tickle people's ears, but feed them substance. Concentrate on the people who want to grow, who want to be nurtured, who are receptive. "When you find a house that receives you, pour out your peace on that house. Give them everything they want."

Concentrate on the receptive; in your ministry, that is important. You find those places where there is openness, and pour your heart into those places. Don't smash your head against the proverbial wall. That leads to the last principle, which is reject the contemptuous. There must be a rejection of the contemptuous.

At the end of verse 13, He says, "If it be not worthy, if they're not interested, not receptive, then let your peace return to you." That was an Oriental expression; they would give their peace, but if the house wasn't worthy, they'd take it back. In other words, they would un bless an unworthy house. They would come to a home and say, "Peace be unto you in the name of Christ." If the home was vile or rejecting, they would say, "We take back our peace. This house is un blessed." They would actually do that. They would confront the situation in that way by removing the blessing they had

verbally given. So He says, "If you find a place where they are not worthy, then let your peace return to you. Don't waste it on them, take it back. Don't give them God's benediction if they're not worthy of it. Don't tell them God will bless them."

It's the same thing in the epistle of John, where he said, "If there come any unto you [who brings erroneous doctrine regarding Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that bids him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." He's saying, "Don't pronounce benedictions on people who are godless." Don't say, "Bless you, brother," to someone who isn't regenerated. God's blessing is not to be thrown around indiscriminately. Nor should people live under the illusion that they are truly blessed or redeemed when they are not.

Verse 14. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." That was a physical thing the Jews did. When people traveled in the time of Christ, they would get covered with dust. When Jewish people returned to Israel, they did not want to bring Gentile soil into Israel with them because they believed it would defile the land. So before they entered Israel, they shook the dust off themselves so they wouldn't bring any Gentile dirt back in.

So He says, "You're going to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and if they don't hear your message, you treat them the way you treat a Gentile." That's what Paul did at the synagogue in Pisidia Antioch in Acts 13. He went in, and when they didn't receive his message, it says he shook the dust from off his feet and went next door to the Gentiles. He treated the Jews like Gentiles and the Gentiles like Jews. Treat them as a pagan.

You say, "Wait a minute! Does this mean we are to reject the contemptuous? If I go to someone and tell them about Christ and they aren't interested, we should just say, 'Nuts to you, fellow,' and split?" Not quite. A lot of us wouldn't be redeemed if we had been treated in that manner, right? The point is this: the assumption is that when people have seen the miracles and have fully heard the message and have been given ample opportunity to respond, yet they still reject Christ, then you are to leave and treat them as the pagans that they are.

In II Corinthians 5:20, Paul says, "We beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." There is a begging, a pleading, a compelling! But when the pleading is done, and the credentials are manifest, and all the signs are given, and they still refuse, treat them like pagans. Don't give them the benediction of God; walk away.

Verse 15 is the key. "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." It wasn't very good for Sodom and Gomorrah, was it? Fire and brimstone rained down on both those cities and destroyed them so that they can't even be found today. In fact, they think they must be under the south end of the Dead Sea because

they can't find a trace of them at all.

As it was an absolute, utter, total, devastating, and eternal destruction on those two cities, it will be worse for any house or city in Galilee that rejected the Gospel. This assumes that the town in Galilee or the house in Galilee knew and heard more than Sodom and Gomorrah did. The point is that they must, then, have had an awful lot of information.

The idea is that when a city with a greater exposure to the truth of God (namely, the representatives of the Lord Christ Himself), giving them the message and authenticating it with their credentials, turns its back on that, it is a Hebrews 6 situation. They have been exposed to all of the data, and have refused, it is impossible for them to be renewed to repentance. When you have done your best, but they are unreceptive and contemptuous, don't waste your time. Divine judgment rests on that city and that house; it is very severe.

What have we learned? The Lord sent out His twelve disciples two by two and gave them principles for an effective mission: a divine commission, a central objective, a clear message, a confirming credential, a confident faith, a settled contentment, a concentration on the receptive, and a rejection of the contemptuous. I believe those are excellent standards for our service to Christ.

Many of us get a direct hit with this message, I know I do, people who are pastors and missionaries. Perhaps you are thinking about going to the mission field or other Christian service. But secondarily, it hits all of us, because all believers represent Christ. As we go through these principles, we see how they affect all of us and apply to all of our hearts.

Let me just ask this in conclusion: if God were to compare those standards to your life, would you really be a faithful missionary? Do you run your life and your representation of Christ by these standards? The world has all the wrong criteria; the world would never have picked any one of the Twelve disciples to be missionaries. They have all the wrong standards, but God has all the right ones. Let me close with this story.

At 3 o'clock on a cold morning in the winter, a missionary candidate walked into an office for an appointment with the examiner of a mission board. The examiner had told him to report at 3 in the morning. The examiner arrived at 8 a.m., five hours later. The examiner, without saying a word of explanation, sat down and said, "Let's begin. You want to be a missionary with this agency, and I'm going to ask you some questions. First, please spell 'baker.'" The young man said, "B-A-K-E-R." The examiner replied, "Very good. Now let me see how much you know about figures. How much is twice two?" The young man said, "Four." The examiner said, "Excellent. I'm going to recommend to the board tomorrow that you be appointed as a missionary; you have passed the test." Then he left.

At the board meeting, the examiner spoke so highly of the applicant, saying he was one of the finest

young men that they had seen as of yet. He said, "He has all the qualifications of a missionary! First, I tested him on self denial; I told him to be at the office at three in the morning, in the cold. He left a warm bed and came out in the cold and never had a word of complaint. Secondly, I tested him on punctuality, and he was there on time. Thirdly, I examined him on patience by making him wait five hours to see me. He didn't even question why I was late. Fourth, I tested him on temper, and he didn't show any sign of it. Fifthly, I tested his humility by asking him questions that a little child could answer, and he showed no offense. He meets the requirements."

Patience, humility, punctuality (which demonstrates that you care for someone else by not making them waste their time waiting for you), and sacrifice (that you'd go out in the middle of the night), those are the things that God can use to make a man into what He wants him to be. He made these twelve, and gave them the principles for their mission. May we be so effective as they.

Thank You, Father, for our time this morning. Thank You for what we've learned about how we are to represent You. Bless every life here; may we all be little Christs, Christians. May the world see Christ in us - His compassion, His power, His selflessness. May we too know how to live by faith, trusting You for everything, and content with whatever You give, be it little or be it great. May we focus on the receptive and reject the contemptuous that we may go to the crying hearts with the message of Christ. Bring us together again tonight with great expectation, we pray in our Lord's name, Amen.

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