

**Book:** The Gospels  
**Series:** Following Jesus  
**Lesson:** *Jesus' Discourse on Discipleship: What Does it Mean to Be a Follower of Jesus? Part 1*  
**Text:** Matthew 9:35-10:4  
**Date:** Sunday, December 2, 2012

*Colonial Hills*  
**ABE**  
*Baptist Church*

#### Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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#### TEACHING TIP

This lesson will span two weeks—we will take main points 1-2 in the first week and main points 3-5 in the second week.

#### NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Matthew 10:5-42

#### INTRODUCTION

Before there were ever any “Christians,” there were “disciples.” Throughout the New Testament, the term “disciple” refers generally to a learner or pupil and more specifically to a person who “rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, those who were officially or (merely) popularly recognized as rabbis (i.e., religious teachers) all had disciples who would follow their teaching, their example, and even their daily schedules (cf. Mark 2:18). They were quite literally “followers” of that particular teacher (cf. Matthew 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21).

And so it was that those who first believed in Jesus and began to follow Him as their Lord and Savior were called His disciples (cf. Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). After His ascension, all those who followed in the footsteps of those first twelve disciples were also called disciples (Acts 6:1-2, 7; 11:26; 14:20, 22; 15:10). Again, this was just a common title given to learners who followed the words and ways of a particular rabbi or master.

It wasn't until Acts 11:26 in the city of Antioch that Jesus' disciples were first called “Christians” to identify them as the very disciples of Jesus Christ (i.e., in contrast with all other religious disciples). It

was a more specific title that was chosen for them and identified them clearly and publicly as followers of Jesus. It was also a title that caused them to experience persecution, for they were now bearing the very name and offense of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 4:16).

Two thousand years later, we live in a drastically different world than those early believers. Whereas the title “Christian” was disparagingly given to them, bringing with it oppression, the term today is commonplace and identifies all those who merely practice the religion called “Christianity” (even if they are a far cry from actually following the words and ways of Jesus Christ). It no longer bears the novelty, distinction, and difficulty that it first did. And, ironically, it is the term “disciple” that seems to have fallen away from common usage.

It seems then, perhaps, that the tables have turned for these two terms. Today, to call oneself a Christian is to earn acceptance (e.g., just consider President Obama’s earnestness to convince us that he is one), but to identify oneself in conversation as a “disciple” or “follower” of Jesus Christ is to be estranged and perhaps mistreated.

Regardless of which title you use or have heaped upon you, the point is that believers are followers of Jesus Christ—He is their entire identity. They are His “disciples.” That recognition, however, needs to be fleshed out with a better biblical understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Whereas some teach that believers (who have faith in Jesus as their Savior) and disciples (who obey Jesus as their Lord) are two different categories among Christians, God’s Word makes it clear that both are the same, and for a “Christian” to not follow Jesus as a disciple is for him to unmask his unbelief.

So, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? What does He expect from those who will follow Him? What should we anticipate as genuine Christ-ians? Just what did we get ourselves into when we identified ourselves with Jesus?

We turn in our Bibles today to Matthew 9:35-10:42 to answer those questions. In this passage, Jesus gives to His first twelve disciples—the first people who heard Him say, “Follow Me!”—a lengthy discourse on discipleship. And He doesn’t pull any punches or sugarcoat His explanation. He shoots straight, detailing exactly what the way of discipleship (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) entails.

We’re going to review His discourse, but we’ll take an overview, rather than a detailed approach. Throughout this study, I hope you’ll become convinced that ***you must follow Jesus Christ as His disciple***. As we study His discourse and consider its application, we’ll discover five aspects of discipleship. Each aspect answers our questions regarding discipleship and compels us to follow Christ.

## THE MOTIVATION FOR DISCIPLESHIP<sup>2</sup> (9:35-38)

Before the actual discourse in chapter 10, we have a brief transition provided for us in 9:35-38. “This little passage forms a bridge between the account of Jesus’ ministry in chs. 5-9 (summarized in v 35) and the extension of that ministry to his disciples in ch. 10.”<sup>3</sup> In this little anecdote, we learn of the motivation for discipleship—what compels Him to call us and what drives us to respond to Him.

### 1. ***Jesus’ compassion should motivate us to follow Him (vv. 35-36).***

Verse 35 summarizes Jesus’ entire three-year ministry and verse 36 shows what was at its heart—because of His great compassion toward people, Jesus went everywhere He could, healing people, teaching them from the Scriptures, and proclaiming to them the good news of His kingdom.

Here we see the very tender side of Jesus, clearly expressed in His emotions. The word for “moved with compassion” (cf. Matthew 14:13-14; 15:32) literally refers to the intestines, but was usually used figuratively to

represent the emotions, just as we would use the word heart today.<sup>4</sup> We've all felt our heart skip a beat or our stomach churn when we experienced a strong emotion. That's the idea here—Jesus was physically and emotionally moved at the plight of these people.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus' compassion was in direct response to His accurate understanding of their predicament. He saw that they "they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (v. 36). The root meaning of the word "faint" means "to flay" or "to skin" and connotes the idea of being harassed, troubled, and exhausted. "Scattered abroad" has the idea of a forceful throwing (Matthew 27:5; Luke 4:35; 17:2). Like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus perceived that these people were "helpless and defenseless, spiritually battered, thrown down, and without leadership or supply."<sup>6</sup> They are "without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

**Illustration:** We've all been touched by those commercials that parade pictures across our televisions of adorably cute and physically destitute children somewhere in Africa. And while we may have justified our responselessness by accusing them of unfairly manipulating our emotions, it was just that kind of a look that deeply moved Jesus. Yet, when He looked, He saw so much more than we do—He saw the desperation of their hearts—and He responded so much more appropriately than we do—He ministered His salvation to them.

Jesus' divine compassion toward people's desperate condition compelled Him to minister to them actively by way of healing, teaching, and preaching. His ministry of miracles was but a taste of heaven on earth,<sup>7</sup> authenticating the spiritual message that He was most concerned about communicating. That message was one of Old Testament explanation ("teaching") and New Testament revelation ("preaching the gospel of the kingdom").<sup>8</sup> This "good news of the kingdom" offered guidance to lost sheep, peace to

fainting hearts, and restoration to those who were scattered. "The kingdom is the rule and reign of Christ—now in and over His saints on earth, eventually over all the earth during the Millennium, and ultimately and eternally over the new heavens and the new earth."<sup>9</sup> This is "good news" indeed, and it is available to all the lost, scattered, and disheartened sheep who will respond to His simple invitation: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Finally, Jesus' compassion toward man's condition further motivates Him to involve others in His great mission. The text clearly indicates that Jesus responds to what He sees and feels by inviting His twelve disciples to pray for and then become laborers in His mission of harvest. Such compassion will compel His disciples, too.

**Application:** Had Jesus not had compassion on our "fainting" and "scattered" souls, we would not even be having this discussion of following Him as our Lord and Savior. Isn't it incredible how stingy we can be with what He so importantly and lavishly gave to us?! Isn't it telling how unmoved we can be by what so greatly moved Him?! Part of discipleship is following the ways of Jesus (cf. Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15), and Peter fleshes out what that looks like according to this passage—"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9a).

*Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did,  
Till my eyes with tears grow dim;  
Let me view with pity the wandering sheep,  
And love them for the love of Him.*



What obstacles keep us from “being moved with compassion” toward the lost? (Consider why Jesus was so unhindered in His response of compassion.) (1) *I don’t “see” people—I’m so self-centered/saturated that I don’t even visually see or mentally consider the people around me;* (2) *I don’t recognize their true situation as “distressed and dispirited” (NASB) or “harassed and helpless” (ESV), a state I used to share with them;* (3) *I’m not involved with people—Jesus was moved with compassion, because He was among them and witnessed firsthand their great needs (cf. Hebrews 4:15; 5:8)<sup>10</sup>;* (4) *I don’t appreciate Jesus’ compassion on my own helplessness;* (5) *I don’t understand the incredible solution that I have in the “good news of the kingdom”*



How do we develop this kind of compassion for non-disciples around us? *God’s spirit must recreate this in us, so we must ask for it; we must choose to practice compassion, even when we don’t feel compassion; we must constantly preach the gospel to ourselves so that the hypocrisy of our lack of compassion will be unmasked (i.e., we, too, have no hope apart from the mercy of God [Romans 2:4]) and the love of God will be our prototype and power (1 John 4:19)*

## 2. **Jesus’ commission should motivate us to follow Him (vv. 37-38).**

We mentioned above that Jesus’ compassion is what drove Him to involve His disciples in His mission. That invitation to partnership should, in turn, compel us to follow Him as actively-engaged disciples.

Jesus turns to those who have already benefited from His compassion, and He commissions them to join Him in His mission to rescue fainting and directionless souls. The image that Jesus uses here of a “harvest” reminds us of what He shares by way of parable in Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43—that there is both a positive and negative side to

this harvest. Some will be gathered together unto life everlasting, while others will be cast away into eternal condemnation (cf. Isaiah 17:10-11; Joel 3:11-14).

The title for God “Lord of the harvest” emphasizes His sovereignty as both rescuer and judge. Yet, balanced with such unquestioned and unrivaled sovereignty is Jesus’ admonition to “pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.” God has planned to use His disciples as channels of His saving message and catalysts of His rescue effort. While not all will be rescued, some certainly will be, for “the harvest is plenteous.”

God’s commission, then, should powerfully motivate us to partner with the Master. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord [cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9], we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11) because the Master Himself is similarly motivated—“The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance....[Indeed] the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Peter 3:9, 15).



**Application:** How should the reality, as stated by Jesus, that “the harvest is plenteous” adjust my attitude about evangelism? *It should strengthen our faith that some will indeed respond. Whereas the fear of man tells us that “they will reject us,” “they aren’t interested,” “they’ve probably heard it,” “they won’t respond,” etc. faith in Jesus’ promise encourages us that the harvest of salvation is all around us—God has some that He has planned to rescue unto eternal life, and He desires to do so through us! Therefore, while I will anticipate some rejection, I should also expect some fruit—it’s a “plenteous” harvest.*



In the context, is the “plenteous harvest” referring to local eangelism or global missions? Verse 35 makes it clear that it refers to local evangelism around Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth (9:1). Jesus was “moved with compassion,” not for the natives in some faraway land, but for His own people. He wanted to be the Shepherd, not of a far distant flock, but of the sheep who were His neighbors. He wanted to reap a harvest, not across the sea, but among those in His own country to whom He had already been so faithfully ministering. And while it was to His own people that He saw so few laborers, it was also in His own nation that He saw a “plenteous” harvest ripe and ready to be reaped. So, this promise of a “plenteous harvest” (elsewhere described as “fields” that are “white already to harvest” in John 4:35) is guaranteed in the context, not of foreign missions, but of local evangelism.



According to this passage, what has always been the greatest obstacle to Jesus’ rescue mission? “the laborers are few”—so many need to hear the good news lest they be harvested unto judgment, but so few are working the fields



Does that obstacle bother you? See, compassion and mission go hand-in-hand—if you don’t have compassion for the lost, you probably are not engaged in the rescue mission to save the lost.



How is that obstacle overcome? Or, what response does Jesus command of His disciples in light of that truth (plenteous harvest) and obstacle (few laborers)? We must pray, not just for the salvation of the lost, but for God to send someone to rescue the lost



How specifically can we apply that response? (1) Pray! I should pray less generically that someone be saved and more specifically that God send someone to share the gospel with that individual; the same applies to

my response to worldwide missions. (2) Be willing to go! That kind of a prayer genuinely prayed puts us in a position to be the answer to our own prayer request (cf. 10:1-5a). So, be careful what you pray for. Are you willing to be the answer to your own prayers? The next chapter is going to prove that Jesus is pleased to use the same group for both the prayer support and the ground support of His rescue mission—His disciples.<sup>11</sup> (3) Go! He told twelve men to pray for God to send “laborers”; He immediatley “sent” those same twelve men.

**Illustration:** Acts 4 records for us the very beginning of persecution among the early church. The first incident simply consisted of Peter and John being arrested and threatened “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (v. 18). But these early Christ-ians, these followers of Jesus who were obviously identified with Him (i.e., the religious leaders “took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus”—v. 13), simply responded, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (v. 20). There was no keeping these men silent—the compassion of Jesus had forever compelled their hearts; the rescue mission of Christ had forever rewritten their agendas.

**Application:** Do you recognize what an incredible privilege it is for Jesus to turn to us and invite us to join with Him in His rescue mission? Do you recognize how much of a reasonable response it is to “labor” for Him? We were the ones who needed His compassion, for we were “distressed and dispirited” (NASB), “harassed and helpless” (ESV). We were the ones who needed to be rescued from a “harvest” of fire and eternal wrath.

Remember, at this point, Jesus hasn’t even commissioned His disciples yet; so, all we’re considering are motivations for following Him in faithful service as His disciples. Is the compassionate love of Christ constraining you to channel it to others (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)? Is the rescue mission of Jesus inspiring you to partner with Him? This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus—what I have been given (i.e., compassion and deliverance), I will give in return.



*Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today  
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way  
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He died  
He has no help but our help to bring them to His side.*

*We are the only Bible the careless world will read.  
We are the sinners gospel; we are the scoffers creed;  
We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed;  
What if the type is crooked? What if the paint is blurred?*

*What if our hands are busy with other work than His?  
What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?  
What if our tongue is speaking of things his lips would spurn?  
How can we hope to help Him or welcome His return?*

**Transition:** Before they even follow Him, Jesus' disciples are won by His compassion and motivated by His mission to serve Him as their Lord. And they are never again the same. Immediately following the motivations for discipleship, we are introduced to the very first people who were called disciples of Jesus. Oh how things changed for them when they began to represent Him!

#### THE PARTICIPATION IN DISCIPLESHIP (10:1-4)

Two observations immediately leap off the page in these first four verses of chapter 10.

##### **1. Disciples have extraordinary power (v. 1).**

Verse 1 describes ability and activity that is certainly not typical for people. The disciples had "power" over demons, sickness, and disease. Throughout the Gospels and Acts, incredible things happened through these men.

##### **2. Disciples are ordinary people (vv. 2-4).**

Simon Peter was an impulsive, active, married fisherman (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:30). His brother, Andrew, and two other disciples, James and John, were also fishermen. All four

knew each other before they ever met Jesus (Mark 1:29; 4:18-21), and Andrew and John had both previously been disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-40). Philip lived near those guys (John 1:44) and introduced Nathaniel (aka Bartholomew) to Jesus (John 1:45-51). We don't know much at all about Bartholomew or the other James (the son of Alphaeus), and all we know of Thaddeus is that he was also called Jude of James (Luke 6:16; John 14:22) and Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3). Thomas was a twin (John 11:16, 20:24, 21:2) who would have considered himself a "realist," believing in only what he could see and rationally explain (John 20:25). Matthew was a disdained tax collector when he started following Jesus (Matthew 2:14). Simon was a political zealot (Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15), and Judas Iscariot grew up south of Jerusalem and was the treasurer (John 12:6; 13:29).

There is nothing unique, stunning, above average, or particularly advantageous about any of these men. In fact, from a human perspective, most of them "were unlearned and ignorant [uneducated and untrained] men" (Acts 4:13). All of them had a significant share of blunders and imperfections!

The only explanation, then, for the dichotomy between these ordinary people and their extraordinary power is found in the One they were following. They were Jesus' "sent ones" (i.e., "apostle" literally means "sent one"), and He accompanied His commission with enablement. Verse 1 tells us that Jesus "gave them power." That term power "is from a verb that means 'it is lawful,' and it therefore refers to a right or power that is legitimately delegated. Jesus granted the twelve disciples God's divine authority to do exactly what He Himself had been doing (see 4:23; 9:35). To do what He did would demonstrate they were sent by Him, just as what He did demonstrated He was sent by the Father. Throughout the book of Acts we see the disciples doing the very things for which Jesus here gives them authority."<sup>12</sup> Jesus' authority and power are great; so also are the authority and power of His representatives.

Remarkably, though, Jesus promised in John 14:12 that all His disciples would do “greater works than these” (in extent, not power). So, just as extraordinarily as these first twelve disciples were used (cf. Acts 17:6—they “turned the world upside down”), Jesus intends to mightily use in His mission all those who follow Him as disciples.

**Illustration:** In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur relates the following story of how Dr. Thomas John Barnardo started his rescue ministry for children.

*One night in the East End of London a young doctor was turning out the lights of a mission hall in which he was working. He found a ragged boy hiding in a dark corner, where he begged to be allowed to sleep. The doctor took the homeless boy to his own room, fed him and tried to get his story. He learned that the boy was living in a coal bin with a number of other boys. He persuaded the boy to show him where these boys were. They went through narrow alleys and finally came to a hole in the wall of a factory. “Look in there,” he said. The doctor struck a match and looked around, crawling into the cellar. Finally he found thirteen boys with only bits of old burlap to protect them from the cold. One lad was clasping to him a four-year-old brother. All were sound asleep. The doctor caught a vision then and there of service for his Lord. He cared for those boys and started the Bernardo Homes for neglected children. At the time of the death of Dr. Bernardo, the newspapers reported that he had taken, and surrounded with a Christian atmosphere, more than 80,000 homeless boys and girls. Hundreds of them became fine Christian citizens.<sup>13</sup>*

**Application:** The story then ends with an appeal to us: “O that we might have eyes to see the need about us!” We don’t have to be gifted, trained, superior, or accomplished to be a disciple of Jesus. We just have to follow Him with eyes open to what our Master has prepared and will empower us to do in His mission. And, as with the first twelve disciples, extraordinary results can follow;

but they come not from our cunning or skill, but from the One whom we are following who has “given” to us His authority and ability (cf. Zechariah 4:6).



How does this understanding of discipleship (i.e., ordinary people being extraordinarily empowered by Christ) change your mindset and encourage you to follow Jesus? *open discussion*

**Illustration:** Longfellow could take a sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and make it worth \$6,000—that’s genius. Rockefeller could sign his name on a piece of canvas, and make it worth a million—that’s capital. Jesus Christ can take a worthless sinful life, wash it with His blood, put His Spirit in it, and make it a blessing to humanity—that’s discipleship!

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 609.

<sup>2</sup> Although the term “discipleship” has often been formalized to describe a process of securing a new believer in the basics of the Christian faith, we’re using the term to describe the whole of the Christian experience. The one who believes in Jesus as Savior follows Him as Lord and becomes His disciple for life—this we are calling discipleship.

<sup>3</sup> *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Mt 9:35–38.

<sup>4</sup> To the Hebrew “the heart was the source of thought and action, whereas the bowels were the responder, the reactor” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Matthew*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody Press, 1985]).

<sup>5</sup> “Jesus therefore used the common term of His day to express His deep compassion for the great crowds of people who were suffering. But His care was not merely figurative, because He felt in His own body the symptoms of His deep caring. If our bodies literally ache in pain and nausea when we experience great agony, remorse, or sympathy, we can be sure that the Son of Man felt them even more. Matthew tells us that, in order to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah, Jesus ‘Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases’ (Matt. 8:17). It was not, of course, that Jesus Himself contracted the diseases or infirmities, but that in sympathy and compassion He physically as well as emotionally suffered with those who came to Him for healing—just as a parent can become physically ill from worry and concern over a child who is desperately sick or in trouble or danger. ...

Jesus not only performed miracles of healings to establish His messianic credentials but also to show God’s infinite love. He demonstrated *compassionate* power, a kind of power completely foreign to pagans and even to most Jews—who had long ago lost sight of the lovingkindness of the God who had called, guided, protected, and blessed them as His chosen people. The people who witnessed Jesus’ healing touch and heard His healing words must surely have been as astonished by His **compassion** as they were by His power.... That sympathetic compassion is unique to Christianity, because it is unique to Christianity’s God” (Ibid.).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “In his book *Counterfeit Miracles*, B. B. Warfield wrote. ‘When our Lord came down to earth, He drew heaven with Him. The signs which accompanied His ministry were but the trailing clouds of glory which He brought from heaven, which is His home’ (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, [1918] 1983, p. 3)” (Ibid.).

<sup>8</sup> “In preaching the gospel of the kingdom, Jesus was not expounding the Old Testament, as He did when teaching in the synagogues, but He was proclaiming the New Testament, the New Covenant which He would seal with His own blood (Matt. 26:28). He was unfolding the mysteries that were mentioned but not explained in the Old Testament, hidden even from the most faithful believers of previous times. He was thus giving new revelation about God’s plan of redemption” (Ibid.).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Commenting on two statements about Jesus in the book of Hebrews (‘For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,’ 4:15; and ‘Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered,’ 5:8), Dr. Brand says, ‘A stupefying concept: God’s Son learning through His experiences on earth. Before taking on a body, God had no personal experience of physical pain or of the effect of rubbing against needy persons. But God dwelt among us and touched us, and His time spent here allows Him to more fully

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identify with our pain’ (Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], pp. 140. 146–48)” (Ibid.).

<sup>11</sup> “It is possible to pray regularly for the salvation of a loved one, a neighbor, a friend, or a fellow employee and to let our concern stop with our prayer. But when we earnestly pray for the Lord to *send* someone to those unsaved people, we cannot help becoming open to being that someone ourselves. It is possible to pray for someone’s salvation while keeping them at arm’s length. But when we sincerely beseech the Lord to send someone to witness to them, we place ourselves at His disposal to become one of His workers in that ministry” (Ibid.).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.