

## Conditioned to Serve

Matthew 10: 9-15

As we continue to examine the instructions Jesus gave the disciples prior to sending them out to share their faith, we discover additional benefit for our lives and witness as well. While these were sent solely to the house of Israel, prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, the principles Jesus gave remain relevant for all who share the Gospel today.

Unfortunately, the ministry approach by many today bears little resemblance to the model Jesus provided for disciples engaging our culture. Contrary to popular approaches today, Jesus never promised their efforts would be easy or embraced by the masses. He did not promise wealth and privilege because of their association with Him. In fact, Jesus sought to prepare the disciples for the reality of genuine ministry in a fallen world.

Our culture may be different, but the struggles facing the disciples remain in our day. We live in a fallen world, surrounded by those who need the Gospel. Many will reject the truth, and the journey will be difficult. However, we have been called to proclaim the Gospel to the nations. In order to be effective, we must properly prepare for the work we are called to perform. As we discuss the [instructions](#) Jesus provided in the text, let's consider: [Conditioned to Serve](#).

**I. Go in Faith (9-10)** – As Jesus sent the twelve out, He essentially instructed them go in faith, trusting the Lord to provide for each need they encountered. We too must be willing to go in faith as we endeavor to serve the Lord, fulfilling the Great Commission. Notice:

**A. The Preparation (9)** – *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,* <sup>[10a]</sup> *Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves.* The disciples were going on a journey, being away from their usual place of lodging for an extended period. Jesus provided instruction on what they were to take as they went. The disciples were not expected to take gold, silver, or brass with them. They were not to take a leather bag used to store additional food supplies. They were not to take two coats, referring to a tunic or shirt; nor were they to take extra shoes or an additional staff. These instructions were not intended to send the disciples out ill-prepared, nor leave them in a place of hardship. This was done so the disciples would learn to depend upon the Lord while serving Him, focused solely on their calling, rather than material goods and pleasures.

- The text does not imply that those engaged in ministry should not effectively prepare for the task at hand, but it does reveal that we too must learn to walk by faith. We cannot be effectively serving the Lord if our focus is constantly upon our needs and welfare.

- It also raised the question in my mind – does one ever feel fully prepared for the work God has given us? Do we ever feel we've obtained all the resources and wisdom we need to engage in ministry? If we wait until we feel comfortable, we will never go. Like the disciples, we too must step out in faith, trusting the Lord to guide our path and provide our needs.

**B. The Provision (10b)** – *for the workman is worthy of his meat*. Jesus told the disciples that those to whom they ministered would provide for them as they traveled. In their faithfulness to serve, the Lord would provide for them through the kindness of others. When such provision was offered, the disciples could readily accept their hospitality without embarrassment. Their faithfulness to the Lord made them worthy of receiving the blessing of others. Jesus would provide for them through the kindness of strangers so they would not lose focus of the task at hand.

- Unfortunately, this text has been taken out of context for gain, or completely ignored. Some use it as a means to justify exorbitant salaries in ministry. They never seem to have enough, always looking for more wealth because they feel entitled because of ministry. Jesus did not speak these words to encourage ministers to become rich and live extravagant lifestyles. On the other hand, some resent the salary a pastor, evangelist, or missionary receives for their ministry efforts. The Lord ordained the church to provide for those who labor in ministry. God will bless those who faithfully care for their pastor. [1 Cor.9:14 – Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.](#)

**II. Abide in Fellowship (11-13)** – Jesus now offers instruction regarding their stay in a particular area, and the fellowship they should enjoy with those to whom they minister. Notice:

**A. The Inquiry (11a)** – *And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy*. As they came into a city or town, they were to enquire where those of moral and spiritual character could be found. The disciples were then to seek accommodations with such as these. This was done to safeguard their own spiritual well-being, as well as preserve the effectiveness of their testimony. The Lord wanted them to engage the lost, but also guard their reputation in order to be effective in ministry. No doubt, these would be advantageous to the work.

- As we seek to impact our community and world with the Gospel, we too need to work with and align ourselves with those of like faith. This will preserve our testimony and increase our effectiveness. It also provides opportunities to work with those who are already familiar with the area, joining in their work instead of working independently. A cooperative effort of like-minded believers will always be more effective than individual efforts.

**B. The Stability (11b)** – **and there abide till ye go thence**. Jesus expected the disciples to remain with their faithful host until the work in that city or town was complete. This was to be done for various reasons: they were to be content with the provisions they received; moving frequently about would imply they were dissatisfied. It might also bring discouragement to the host, and instability in the ministry efforts. They were not called to seek the best accommodations, but serve faithfully in the work. They were expected to abide faithful until the work was complete.

- We need to display the same commitment and stability. We may not be staying in the home of a stranger, but the principles apply to everyday service to the Lord. We must be content to serve where the Lord has placed us, abiding faithful until the task is complete. Often we grow weary and abandon the effort before the need is met, and the work is finished.

**C. The Courtesy (12)** – **And when ye come into an house, salute it**. As the disciples were welcomed into a home, they were to extend a warm greeting, showing gratitude for the hospitality they had received. Jesus wanted them to be courteous and respectful of their host, not arrogant, feeling as if they were entitled to such provision.

- This seems to have been lost in our day, but it is essential in ministry. A soft, courteous word often goes a long way when laboring for the Lord. We must ensure that we reveal the love of Christ to all we meet, being willing to express our gratitude for those who aid in our efforts.

**D. The Reality (13)** – **And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you**. The Lord revealed His blessing upon those who sought to aid the disciples in their efforts. Those who welcomed them, helping provide for their needs, would enjoy the Lord's blessing. Those who refused to assist the disciples, rejecting them and their message, would miss out on His blessing. God honors those who honor Him and those who serve Him.

**III. Continue with Fortitude (14-15)** – Finally, we see Jesus' instruction regarding their faithful commitment, even in the face of opposition. Some would welcome them, and others would not. Jesus revealed how they were to respond. Consider:

**A. The Rejection (14a)** – **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**. Jesus was not at all deceptive with the disciples. He warned them ahead of time that all would not receive them or their message. In fact, some would outright reject them. Even if they faced rejection, they were expected to continue in the faith, abiding faithful in the work.

- If you have shared your faith much, you can identify with this warning from the Lord. While we wish everyone would respond favorably to the Gospel, we know all will not. Some, if not many today, will reject the message. Many have no desire for the truth of the Gospel, and no desire for a relationship with Christ. We cannot be dismayed. We have not been called to save them – we couldn't even if we wanted. We have been commissioned to share the Gospel and leave the results in the Lord's hands.

**B. The Admonition** (14b) – *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.* This was an old Jewish custom performed when they returned from a Gentile nation, hoping to remove as much sin and unrighteousness as possibly, not desiring even the dust of pagans to enter the beloved homeland. This stood as a testimony against that house or city, signifying their rejection of truth, as well as the disciples' refusal to be tainted by their unbelief.

- This custom would have little effect in our culture, but the principle remains. Again, we cannot save anyone. We are not responsible for their acceptance or rejection of the Gospel, but ensuring they hear and have an opportunity to respond. We cannot allow their unbelief and rebellion hinder our commitment to the Gospel. Shake off the doubt and unbelief, continuing in the faith.

**C. The Condemnation** (15) – *Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.* Jesus revealed a dire warning for cities that rejected the Gospel – their judgment would be more severe than that which God brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Rejecting the truth of Jesus Christ will lead to judgment and condemnation, resulting in eternal death and separation in hell.

- This really puts all that we have discussed into a proper perspective. The most important decision in one's life regards the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are surrounded by those who have yet to repent of unbelief and receive Christ as Savior. Apart from salvation in Christ, every one of these face eternal judgment and condemnation. Once this life is over, it will be too late to respond to the Gospel. I pray we sense the urgency of our day.

**Conclusion:** The Lord didn't promise our labor for Him would be easy, but He did promise to provide. Are you faithfully engaged in the work He has called you unto? Are you committed to seeing it through to completion? Are you discouraged by what you have encountered, being rejected by some? Maybe you have heard the Gospel, and chose to reject it. If there are needs, especially if the Lord is dealing with you about your salvation, come to Him today!