

Adult Teaching Resources

June 14, 2020



What the World Needs Now...

Matthew 28:16-20—"The World Needs the Gospel"

Matthew 9:35-10:8—"The World Needs Healing"

Matthew 10:24-39—"The World Needs Shaking"

Matthew 10:40-42—"The World Needs Kindness"

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The World Needs Healing

Matthew 9:35-10:8

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

Key Verse: Matthew 9:36—When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

The only constant in life is change. As much as we might want things to remain the same; things change. It's natural.

We started high school looking up to the senior class to eventually being the senior class everyone looked up to. We've grown from being children under the care of (hopefully) responsible adults to being the (hopefully) responsible adults caring for children.

In our passage this morning, we explore a time of change and transition for Jesus and his disciples. The more the disciples wanted things to remain the same, the more Jesus needed them to help be the change.

Opening

After everyone arrives, remain in the large group. Ask your group to think of transitions they have experienced where they had to move from a comfortable, familiar setting into a situation of the anxious unknown. As they share, record their answers in a list on the board.

Next, ask everyone to share the anxieties they felt moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar with each listed transition. For example, if the listed transition was from being a couple to having a baby, some of the anxieties could be: caring for a new life, taking time away from my spouse, loss of freedom with travel and spontaneity, etc. List the anxieties with the transitions.

Finally, ask everyone to share one great result from successfully navigating the transition and the anxieties. With the birth of a child, one answer could be, the joy of watching our child grow and learn.

Spend some time discussing the transitions we experience in life, focusing on the fact that life is full of transitions.

Reading the Bible

Where did Jesus go and what did Jesus do? (he went about all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and sickness)

How did he respond to the crowds? (he had compassion for them) How did he see them? (harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd)

What did he say to the disciples about what he saw? (The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.)

What did Jesus do with the twelve disciples? (he summoned them and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.)

What are the names of the twelve apostles? (Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot)

What instructions did Jesus give the twelve? (Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel)

What were they to proclaim? (the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’)

What were they to do? (Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,[d] cast out demons)

Making Connections

How far does your church’s ministry reach? How have you been involved in the ministries of your church? Are there places your church goes that you disagree with? Where? Are there places you think your church should go? Where are they?

When have you been comfortable doing ministry? When have you been uncomfortable doing ministry?

What needs do you think are most important to meet when doing ministry? Is one need more important than the others? Why do you say that? How do you prioritize others’ needs?

If there are four categories of ministry: preaching, teaching, education, and social ministry; which area do you feel called and qualified to work in? Why do you say that? When have you answered the call in that area?

How often do we look and see the needs of others? How often do we close our eyes and miss the needs of others? What can we do to be more aware of our surroundings and possibilities for ministry?

Our Lesson Writer says, “When Jesus looked at the multitudes, he saw them distressed and downhearted. Jesus still calls his followers to see the needs of the elderly, who are often lonely and afraid. He calls on us to see the disillusioned people who have given up on

Making Connections *continued*

church, to see the open eyes and tender hearts of youth who are so easily influenced and so in need of good examples and loving friends, to see the grimy hands and innocent hearts of children who are growing up in a world that is far from innocent.” Who do you see? What are you willing to do about what you see?

How can we share the love of Jesus in our own daily living? What difference do you think that will make?

In talking about the gift of healing Jesus gave his disciples, our Lesson Writer says, “Jesus’ granting of such power to the disciples was a special gift for a special time, and even then it may have been a temporary sign of the gospel’s truth and power.” What gift could Jesus give you, even for a temporary time, that you would use as a sign of the gospel’s truth and power?

If Jesus came to you right now and said, “You will leave the comfort of your home, go out into the world, and spread the gospel. You will not go alone. You will choose one person to go with you.” Who would you choose? Why would you choose that person? What gifts does that person have that would help you with your mission?

What do we allow to get in the way of us fulfilling the ministry and mission of Jesus? What do we need to do to focus more on Jesus and less on the distractions that get in the way?

So What?

Have everyone remain in the large group. Share the central passage of today’s lesson, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

We have heard this passage before. This passage has been used as a challenge for Christian ministry and missions. Today, this passage is personal as we have spent time reading the words before it and after it.

Ask everyone to think about the two sections of the statement:

1. The harvest is plentiful

2. the laborers are few

What is the harvest Jesus refers to?

Why does he say it is plentiful?

Is the harvest still plentiful today?

What signs do we have to support that?

Who are the laborers Jesus refers to?

Why does he say they are few?

So What? *continued*

Are the laborers still “few” today?

What signs do we have to support that?

Spend some time discussing those questions before moving on to these questions.

If the harvest is plentiful, what are we willing to do? What actions are we willing to take? What are we willing to sacrifice?

If the laborers are few, what does that mean for us? What is our responsibility? What can we do to be more efficient and effective in our ministry?

Give your group time to talk with each other, affirming their thoughts and ideas about ministry in both traditional and non-traditional ways. Jesus needs us. Jesus calls us. It’s our turn to step up and help with the harvest.

The Challenge

This week, be the laborer Jesus has called you to be. Go out into the world and work on the harvest.

Prayer

Loving God, for too long we have waited for someone else to do the work of sharing the gospel and spreading your love to others. After reading your word, we know it’s our time to go out and be your voice, be your hands, and show your love to others. Give us the wisdom, the guidance, and the courage we need to share you with others. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

A harvest awaiting—I once served a church that included several tobacco farmers. Trying to understand them and their culture, I sometimes helped out with the field work. One morning around 6:00 a.m. I watched a farmer nervously pacing. The second leaves were ready to be primed and put into the barns, but several men he had hired for the harvest were sleeping off a hangover. He needed men in the field, but they remained in bed.

What is our excuse for failing to join Jesus in the fields of need?

Apostles—Matthew 10:2 is the only time the word for “apostles” appears in Matthew. The Greek term *apostolos* means “one who is sent with a message.” This is what made them apostles and not just disciples: they were sent out to proclaim the good news that in Jesus the kingdom of God had come near.

Over time, the term “apostle” came to have a more honorific sense, but its primary meaning is “one sent with a message.” In that sense, all believers are called to be apostles.

Zealots—The disciple known as “Simon the Zealot” was evidently an enthusiastic supporter of Jewish independence from Rome, but it is unclear whether the activist opposition party known as “Zealots” had yet been organized. Simon could have been known for his pro-Jewish stance without being a member of an organized movement.

Discourses—Matthew 1:5-42, which the writer puts in the context of Jesus’ instructions to the disciples, is the second of five lengthy discourses that Matthew attributes to Jesus. The others are 5:1-7:27; 13:1-52; 18:1-35; and 24:3-25:46.

Instructions—The core message Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim was a simple quotation from his own preaching: “the kingdom of God has come near” (v. 7, cf. Matt. 4:17). Astute readers may wonder why Jesus did not instruct the disciples to call for repentance, as Jesus did. Perhaps Jesus simply wanted the offer of salvation to receive primary emphasis as a way of attracting Israel’s attention. Individuals who sought further information about the kingdom would have ample opportunity to learn more about repentance and salvation, but the central message was this: “the kingdom of God is near!”

Actions—Food for thought: Is there any point in talking about Jesus if we don’t act like Jesus? In the specific setting of today’s text, the ability to perform miraculous healings was a primary way in which others recognized Jesus in the disciples. It’s unlikely that many of us have that gift. What are some ways in which others can see Jesus in us?

Baggage—According to Matthew, Jesus’ disciples were not to profit from their newfound power, nor were they to take along any “emergency money” or even the normal small bag that would be packed for a typical journey (v. 9). Though filled with God’s power, they were

Digging Deeper *continued*

to live as those who were powerless. There is a reason for this. Purposeful poverty would give the disciples the freedom to accept help from others, and it would force them to depend on God (not themselves or their power) for sustenance during the mission. In addition, the urgency of the mission demanded that the disciples travel lightly, unencumbered by excess baggage.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Who were the twelve disciples?

Careful readers are aware that the three synoptic gospels and Acts all include lists of the twelve disciples, but the lists are not identical. How do we deal with the presence of different names?

The disciples' names are listed in Mark 3:16–19, Matthew 10:2–4, Luke 6:13–16, and Acts 1:13. In each list, Simon Peter is named first and Judas Iscariot is last (except in Acts, where he no longer appears). Peter, apparently, was consistently thought of as the primary leader among the disciples.

All four lists put the disciples into three groups of four. The two sets of brothers are always listed first: Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John (Mark lists them in the order Peter, James, John, and Andrew, perhaps emphasizing significance over fraternity).

The second set of four in each list includes Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew. Bartholomew is not a given name, but a reference to his father: the Greek *Bartholomaios* reflects the Aramaic phrase *Bar Talmi*, which means “son of Talmi.” Many scholars think he is the same person who is called Nathanael in John 1:46.

The name Thomas is also a descriptor: it is from an Aramaic word that means “twin.” The Greek word *didymus* also means “twin,” and the Fourth Gospel refers to him as “Thomas, also called the Twin (Didymus),” as in John 11:16; 20:24; and 21:2. We have no knowledge of who his twin was.

The Gospel of Matthew is the only one that identifies Matthew as “the tax collector,” which seems to reflect Matt. 9:9, in which Jesus calls Matthew, who was “sitting at a tax booth.” The parallel story in Mark identifies the tax collector as “Levi the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14).

The third set of four includes James the son of Alphaeus (to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee), and Simon the Cananaean/Zealot. Thaddeus appears in Mark and Matthew (a textual variant calls him Lebbaeus), but in Luke and Acts he is replaced by “Judas son of James.” Some scholars have proposed that he changed his name from Judas to Thaddaeus after Jesus' betrayer gave the name “Judas” an infamous reputation. Thaddaeus could mean something like “warmhearted.”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke understandably list Judas Iscariot last among the apostles. The meaning of “Iscariot” is unclear: some think it means “Judas, man of Kerioth.” Since Kerioth was in southern Judea, that would make him the only apostle who did not come from Galilee. Other possible meanings have been suggested, ranging from “assassin” to “hypocrite” to “redhead.” Acts 1:15–23 explains how the remaining disciples chose Mathias to replace Judas so there would still be twelve apostles.

The Hardest Question *continued*

The number 12 was clearly intended to parallel the 12 foundational tribes of Israel, symbolizing that in some way Christ had come to establish a new foundational covenant, not just for Israel, but for all people.

We know very little about the disciples' activities after Jesus' resurrection. Though the others are named in Acts 1:13, only Peter, James, and John play any part in Luke's narrative. This is understandable, as the disciples were all Jewish and probably remained active in the Jerusalem church, working among other Jews. As the Book of Acts describes the shift of the gospel to the Gentile world, the focus moves to missionaries like Paul and his colleagues.

Many traditions exist about later activities of the disciples. One tradition, for example, claims that John took Jesus' mother Mary to Ephesus and lived there. Another asserts that Peter went to Rome and was martyred there, insisting on being crucified upside down because he wasn't worthy to die in the same manner as Christ. How much confidence we can place in such traditions remains uncertain: tradition is a powerful thing, but not always historically accurate.