



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for February 3, 2008
Released on Wednesday, January 30, 2008**

"Summoned to Labor" ("Called to Labor")

**Lesson: Luke 10:1–12, 17–20.
Background Scripture: Luke 10:1–20.
Devotional Reading: Psalm 78:1–4.
Times: A.D. 29
Place: Judea**

LESSON TEXT

Luke 10: 1–12, 17–20

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

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17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to show that Jesus appointed seventy followers to labor in a spiritual harvest field.

Principle: to be aware that effective service requires a minimum of physical equipment but a maximum of spiritual devotion.

Application: to encourage each Christian to make witnessing a primary goal in life.

INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MISSION STRATEGY

The work of the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was marked by a great interest in foreign missions. To be a missionary in that era often was a life commitment—a commitment to be trained for service, to leave one's home country, and to take up permanent residence in a foreign land.

The risky nature of these ventures was shown in the requirement of some missionary agencies for their people to take caskets with them when they went out. This was because of the high likelihood that they would die on the mission field. Yet there are many success stories from this era, and nations such as South Korea and the Philippines, as well as many African countries, were left with a permanent Christian witness.

Christian missionary endeavors boomed after World War II, as military veterans came home with a clear understanding of the need for the gospel in foreign lands. As new technology emerged, it was often incorporated into mission work. This included airplanes to reach remote regions and radio broadcasts to penetrate areas closed to missionaries. Later came computers to assist with Scripture translation as well as e-mail and Internet access.

When we speak of *missions* in a technical sense, we mean more than occasional or random opportunities to share the gospel. *Missions* is intentional, strategic, cross-cultural evangelism. It does not happen accidentally. Crossing cultural boundaries to bring the gospel to others requires planning.

One of the most dynamic developments in Christian missions in the last few years is the rise of short-term missionary trips. These have allowed Christians with little training or experience to travel abroad and engage people with the gospel. Admittedly, some short-term mission trips are more productive than others (as is also the case with long-term missions). But the short-term trips have brought a renewed excitement in many congregations concerning the need for worldwide evangelism. Some believers who would never be candidates for full-time mission work have experienced spiritual growth in ways that may not have happened otherwise.

Today's lesson is about a mission trip. It was *intentional*, because it came from Jesus' directives. It was *strategic* because it involved advance planning and sought to accomplish a larger goal. It may have been even a little *cross-cultural* in that the missionaries were going to places where they were not known. (We do not know if those whom Jesus sent out ventured into non-Jewish environments.)

We may be surprised, though, to realize that this was a short-term missions project. Perhaps some of these disciples became “career” missionaries at a later date, but probably most did not. Yet as is true with short-term missions today, the participants engaged in important tasks.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Luke 9:51 begins a new section of Luke’s story of Jesus. Here we are told that, “When the time was come that he should be received up, [Jesus] steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” So Jesus and His group departed from Galilee to visit the holy city.

As we know, it was in Jerusalem that Jesus fulfilled His earthly destiny: the cross. His arrival in the Jerusalem precincts to fulfill that vital part of God’s plan (which would be His final trip to Jerusalem) did not happen until Luke 19:29, some 10 chapters later. At least part of the reason Jesus sent out the 70 disciples (Luke 10:1) was to prepare the way for that final trip.

Earlier, Jesus had initiated a similar “sending out” project that was limited to the 12 chosen disciples (Luke 9:1–6). They had been sent out with the authority to cast out demons, the power to heal diseases, and the responsibility of preaching the gospel. The word used to describe the act of sending in Luke 10:2 is related to the word *apostle*. Indeed, when they returned from their mission, the 12 were called *apostles*, for they had been sent out (Luke 9:10).

QUESTIONS

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MISSION (Luke 10:1–2)

1. Why did Jesus send out the seventy messengers (Luke 10:1)?

The events in this week’s text are similar to those in Chapter 9, where Jesus sent out the Twelve for ministry (vs. 1–6). But these are separate incidents because the number sent out here was 70 (some Greek manuscripts say 72). These disciples were to precede Jesus to locations He intended to visit. What an awesome task indeed!

The mission was undertaken at a significant juncture. Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem. They had just come through Samaria and were entering Judea, where they would pass through several towns and villages before reaching Jerusalem. The 70 would precede Him and prepare the people spiritually for His ministry. They were sent out by twos for companionship, for protection, and possibly as a double witness to establish responsibility in case of rejection (cross reference Deut. 19:15).

2. What is the value in conducting ministry in teams today?

The book of Acts shows us frequent instances of kingdom workers laboring together in teams. Working in teams provides several benefits. One benefit is protection. This protection might be physical protection for those working in hostile environments. Working in teams also can provide protection against charges of moral impropriety if set up to do so. Teamwork establishes accountability.

People working together in teams can also provide encouragement to each other. One person going out alone to conduct visitation for the church may get cold feet and decide not to go. Knowing someone else is going along provides some much needed confidence. Working in teams also provides the chance for a person seasoned in the task of visitation to be a mentor to a novice.

3. What problem did Jesus cite in His illustration of the harvest? How was it to be solved (v. 2)?

Jesus likened the spiritual venture ahead to gathering a ripened harvest (cross reference Matt. 9:37–38; John 4:35–38). The problem was that there were too few laborers to harvest it. So He told them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up more of them (Luke 10:2).

The *laborers* are no more than that. They are not building their own empires or reputations. They are working for the Lord of the harvest, God, and bringing glory to Him (compare John 4:35).

It has been suggested that these workers themselves were God's answer to their prayers. But perhaps the purpose of their prayers was to have God raise up even more workers from among those they would reach during their mission. The heralds of Jesus' message did not have to be limited to twelve or even 70. Those who believed them would themselves become heralds in answer to their prayers.

This "heralding" would result in a chain-reaction of many more people having an opportunity to hear the gospel—with the possibility of their accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We need to remember that not everyone who hears the gospel will accept it, however. And, unfortunately, their rejection of the gospel is *not* a rejection of the messenger (that is, of us), but it is a rejection of Jesus Christ Himself. We should never take personal this rejection. (See Luke 10:11-12 for Jesus instruction on how to deal with this very subject.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MISSION (Luke 10:3–12)

4. Why did Jesus send out His own as lambs amid wolves (v. 3)?

"Go your ways" is just one word in Greek: "Go!" The command was decisive, and it entailed risk. "Behold," said Jesus, "I send you forth as lambs among wolves." He saw His messengers as defenseless amid wicked men who would do them harm and tear their message to shreds. This was understandable in light of rising opposition to Jesus Himself.

This reminds us that we are not above Jesus' experiences when it comes to our missionary encounters with the world. Matthew 5:12 says that we should "rejoice" in these hard trials because we are in good company; the "prophets" that lived before us had to endure the same hostilities.

The imagery of lambs in a hostile world was not new to these disciples. Israel had long been portrayed as the Lord's sheep (see Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11–31). But why would Jesus send them forth helpless into the midst of their enemies? Did not lambs need a shepherd to protect them? Yes, but they needed to learn to claim His protection even when He was *physically* absent. He was their good Shepherd (John 10:1–18), but they had to trust Him.

We have to trust Him today, as well, as we carry out our various ministries in His name. He is just as much our good Shepherd as He was to those 70 missionaries in today's lesson. He is just as much *spiritually* present with us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—as He was *omnipresent* with those 70. We have nothing to fear in our Christian journeys. We are working for the Lord; we are doing a "good work."

5. Why did Jesus forbid His disciples to take extra supplies (v. 4)?

As if to make them even more vulnerable, Jesus told them, "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes" (Luke 10:4). The purse would have been used to take money. The "scrip" refers to a kind of knapsack carried by shepherds, travelers, and beggars that was used to hold extra provisions. The shoes mentioned here were common sandals. None of these were to be carried; the clothes on their backs and sandals on their feet had to suffice (cross reference 9:3).

The reason for this austerity (or, sternness) was to increase their faith and eliminate distractions. Though these rules were not permanent for Christ's messengers (cross reference Luke 22:35–37), they did teach them to depend on Him for sustenance. As to the distractions that might sway a disciple from his devotion, we who live in the midst of affluence can testify how difficult it is to keep a godly focus. Jesus' instructions continue to remind us of the values of living simply (see 1 Tim. 6:6–11).

Jesus' command to "salute no man by the way" (Luke 10:4) may seem strange to us, but it was another reminder that the mission was urgent. To *salute* involves stopping and talking with a person going the opposite direction. The teams are to stick to their purpose and not dilly-dally along the way. Jesus gave similar instructions to the 12 apostles when He sent them out earlier (compare 2 Kings 4:29).

6. Does Jesus' command to the 70 about their staying focused on the missionary task at hand need to be reiterated to us today?

How easy it is for us to lose track of what it is that we are supposed to be doing. Our *spiritual* attention span at times can be shorter than a grain of rice! Some of this stems from "fiery attacks" of the enemy, but much of it comes from our not being dedicated to "the work." If working for God is important to us, then it will show in our daily plans and actions. If working for God is *not* as important to us, then this too will show in our daily plans and actions. Just *how* important is Kingdom business to you?

7. What was necessary for God's peace to rest upon a household that Jesus' disciples visited (vs. 5,6)?

Greetings were to be reserved for those in the towns to which Jesus sent His messengers. Upon entering the home of a host, they were to say, "Peace be to this house." This was the greeting "Shalom," which was typical among the Jewish people (cross reference Judg. 6:23; 19:20; 1 Sam. 25:6). It carried a wish for prosperity and well-being upon the household due to the presence and blessing of God.

Whether or not God's peace actually rested on a household, however, depended on the attitude of the one to whom it was offered. If a man of peace was there, the disciples' peace would rest upon it. If not, it would return to the messenger.

When these delegates of Jesus pronounced peace on a household, it was not a perfunctory (or, obligatory) "Hello. How are you?" They actually came with His message, which, if received, would bring peace with God. The host's response to this message was thus of utmost importance. Christ's peace could not grace a home unless His gospel was accepted. One who welcomed the message revealed that he was a man of peace whose character merited God's peace.

8. How did the principle that a laborer is worthy of his reward apply to Jesus' messengers (vs. 7,8)?

Jesus instructed His disciples to remain in the houses that received them, “eating and drinking such things as they give.” Although He commanded them to take nothing along to sustain themselves, He Himself sustained them through the generosity of their hosts. They were to receive these provisions with thankfulness.

This was entirely proper, “for the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). That is, the laborer ought to be paid for the work he does. In this case, the one bringing spiritual benefits through his work should have his material needs met (cross reference Matt. 10:10). Paul later alluded to this principle when arguing that those who preached the gospel should have material support (see 1 Cor. 9:11–14; 1 Tim. 5:17–18).

The instruction *go not from house to house* is similar to the directive given to the 12 in Luke 9:4. “Staying put” will help eliminate the distraction of always seeking better accommodations.

9. What message were Jesus’ disciples to convey (v. 9)?

Jesus instructed His disciples to “heal the sick that are therein.” This would give evidence to the people that “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Nothing is said here of other miracles, such as exorcising demons, cleansing lepers, and raising the dead—as Jesus did when He sent out the Twelve (see Matt. 10:8; Luke 9:1). However, we do learn that upon their return, they rejoiced that the demons submitted to the name of Jesus (Luke 10:17).

These signs were to accompany the message that the kingdom of God had come near. This had been a major theme of Jesus since the beginning. John the Baptist had announced it (see Matt. 3:2), and Jesus had urged repentance in the light of it (see Mark 1:14–15). The kingdom was near because the King Himself had arrived, giving evidence of His credentials by teaching and signs. And now the signs of His messengers would further confirm its nearness.

10. What were they to do if their message was rejected (vs. 10-12)?

Not everyone would welcome the King and His kingdom. So Jesus informed His disciples what to do if rejection occurred. They were to go out into the “streets,” or broad places, of the city and make a public proclamation. This pronouncement was to be accompanied with a visible sign—shaking the dust of that city from their sandals. This would indicate that having done their duty, they disclaimed further responsibility for its fate.

What would be the fate of a city that rejected Jesus’ gospel of the kingdom? Speaking with divine authority, Jesus proclaimed that it would be more bearable in that day for Sodom than for that city (v. 12). Sodom, the symbol of the grossest sins, had been destroyed centuries before, but it will still answer for its evils at the final judgment. At that same judgment, the cities that reject Christ will be found even more guilty than Sodom.

11. How should we respond when our message is not accepted?

One thing we must be careful *not* to do is overstay our welcome. Sometimes what people may need is simply some time alone to process the message they have heard. In this we need not pester, but instead pray. Replacing a condemning spirit with a caring spirit is important.

Another thing we can do is keep our eyes open for a more opportune season. There are “seasons of the soul.” These are times when people may be going through some tough situations, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or other life events that may make them more open to our caring concern. They may be more open to the message of Christ as we support them.

RESULTS OF THE MISSION (Luke 10:17–20)

12. Why were Jesus’ messengers rejoicing when they returned (vs. 17-20)?

The messengers returned to Jesus, elated at the success of their mission. They were impressed by the fact that “even the devils (demons) are subject unto us through thy name.” Jesus sees the disciples’ success as a foretaste of the complete defeat of Satan. The cross would signal Satan’s final downfall (John 12:31) and his being cast into the lake of fire only follows naturally (Rev. 20:10), though separated by a larger time interval.

Jesus had cautioned them not to make His shared *power over* “the enemy” their primary focus (Luke 10:19, 20). There was something more worthy of their joy. They were to rejoice, because their names were written in heaven! The perfect tense of “are written” means “have been written,” or “stand written.” It implies a permanent record before God that they belonged to Him.

Like these disciples, we can rejoice that our names are recorded in heaven eternally. And Satan, the one fallen from there, is powerless to change that (cross reference Rom. 8:28–39). *Hallelujah!*

CONCLUSION

EXPERIENCING GOD’S CALL TO SERVICE

Experiencing and understanding God’s call to service is one of the most perplexing issues facing church members. Most assume that “calls of God” are reserved for career preachers, missionaries, etc. Yet we are all called to be faithful and to serve God as the Bible teaches us. This is a universal call, and we should rejoice in it. The more specialized calls to ministry come to relatively few believers. This does not make them elite or specially privileged. It just means they are chosen by God for certain tasks.

“I have spent a quarter of a century preparing people for the various ministries of the church,” a pastor once said. “At the same time, I have preached in over 150 local churches. These experiences have caused me to observe two great tragedies.

First, I have found people in ministry positions who were never called by God to be in that ministry. This has caused them to doubt their vocation, act in a tentative manner, and generally cause damage to the people they work with. Ministry training alone does not make a minister.

Second, I have encountered Christians—some who were in their twilight years—who knew they were called by God into ministry *but did not respond to the call*. Such people may have been successful in business and may have lived rich, productive lives. But they have lived regretfully, knowing in their hearts that God intended them to be preachers or missionaries.

In counseling many people through the process of evaluating God’s call to ministry, I have found two principles that seem always to apply. First, if God is calling you to ministry, the call does not go away. It is not a one-time invitation. It is not the stirring of the heart at an emotional moment that disappears after a good night’s sleep. If God is calling you to be a missionary, for example, that desire will be etched on your heart until the day you die.

Second, if God is calling you to ministry, you will never be satisfied doing anything else. If you are called to be a preacher, circumstances may require you to take a job selling cars or delivering mail at particular points in your life. But you will not be happy doing just that. Your call will cause your heart to yearn for the ministry to which God has appointed you.”

Participation in limited ministry experiences is a good way to explore a possible call to ministry. Many churches organize short-term mission trips. Have you ever considered going along on one of these? Such an experience may help you explore the possibility of God’s call. Even if God is not calling you to be a career missionary, perhaps He intends that you become an annual mission-trip participant. Maybe He has some other plans for you. In all things, however, we should be guided by Scripture and open to the leading of God’s Holy Spirit.

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** We should always wait for God’s guidance and then follow Him (Luke 10:1–2).
- 2.** God directs and guides us as we obey Him (vs. 3–4).
- 3.** The peace of God that we have as believers allows us to bless others for Christ (vs. 5–7).
- 4.** A person who rejects the gospel when we witness is rejecting God, not us (vs. 8–11).
- 5.** When someone rejects the gospel, it helps us understand how God feels when we reject His will for us (v. 12).
- 6.** Our service for God enables us to cooperate with Him in His work (vs. 17–20).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

A few dedicated workers can accomplish much for Jesus.

PRAYER

Lord of the harvest, many years have passed since Jesus sent out the 70, but not much has changed. We still see a great harvest of souls waiting, with few workers for it. We pray that You would raise up laborers to work the fields of the unsaved, whether in foreign countries, another city, our own neighborhood, or even in our own families. We pray that each of us will find a way to be part of this army of evangelists. We pray this expectantly, looking forward to Your blessing and our rewards in Heaven. We pray in the name of our master, Jesus Christ, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

We live in a society that prefers terms such as “mistake” or “error” to replace the term “sin.” Rehabilitation is substituted for repentance and regeneration. Our next text is only nine verses long, and Luke 13:3 and 5 are identical. However, the message is powerful. People must repent of their sins or perish. Think on this subject as you study next week’s lesson. Read **Luke 13:1–9 “Summoned (Called) to Repent.”** *Good studying!*

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