



Discipleship Values



In some university courses, students do a 'practicum' or 'prac' placement in the workplace, to start integrating theory with practice. In this study and study 6, we will be looking at the mission of the church, focussing on Matthew 10. However, we'll also be looking at the parallel (Synoptic Gospel) passages in Mark 6, Luke 9 and Luke 10, when Jesus sent out, first, the twelve, and later, the seventy-two, on their first ministry 'pracs'.

ICEBREAKER: As we grow up, our parents give us more autonomy and we gradually learn to take more responsibility. We have various formal and informal 'rites of passage' which signal that we have transitioned from childhood to adulthood. What was an event that you remember as a significant turning point in your life?

READ: MATTHEW 10:1-8

In Matt 10:1, Jesus called twelve of his disciples (or 'followers') to himself and gave them authority for mission: over evil spirits and power to heal diseases and sickness. In the next verse, the twelve are referred to as 'apostles' or 'sent ones'. Jesus then 'sent' them on their first mission trip. Joel Green (writing about Luke 9:1) notes that there is "a series of three actions on the part of Jesus: he calls, empowers, and sends the twelve."¹ Jesus gave them "power and authority, a combination descriptive of Jesus' own credentials in (Luke) 4:36."²

This was a significant day for the disciples. They stopped being just 'hangers on' and observers. It was their turn to start to copy what Jesus had been doing.

- READ: Matt 28:18-20. How do you feel about these verses of Scripture? How do you feel about the way it has been preached about? How do you feel about the commands in this passage?

READ: Matt 10:7-8. (Below) This was the job description given to the 12 disciples.

"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

- Circle the words and ideas that stand out for you. What questions do you have about these two verses?
- Underline all the verbs. When you think of the ideas of 'ministry' and 'mission' (including what you see our pastoral team and mission partners do) – what things are consistent with what you think ministry and mission is or should be? What things seem strange or unfamiliar? Why?
- If physical sickness and death are symptoms of the impact of sin on our world, in what way is healing a sign of the kingdom of God coming near? How does it reflect what heaven will be like?

In the Old Testament, God's presence with his people is connected with the idea of 'shalom'. The following quote is by Grant Buchanan:

"Michael Gorman (in *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*) highlights that shalom is both negative and positive. On the negative side, 'shalom is the resolution or cessation, and therefore consequently the absence, of chaos, conflict, oppression, and broken relations'. Positively, shalom 'is the establishment, and henceforth the presence of wholeness, reconciliation, goodness, justice, and the flourishing of creation'. In other words, it is 'physical and spiritual well-being'. This twofold aspect of shalom provides a suitable framework for how we consider shalom within a ministry framework, and within and beyond our faith communities."³

- How do you feel about the idea of our mission being about bringing God's healing and wholeness into our families, workplaces and communities?

¹ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p357.

² Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p358.

³ <https://www.harvest.edu.au/blog/2017/11/shalom-ing-our-world-a-major-aspect-of-effective-kingdom-ministry/>

- If Jesus has also given us authority over evil spirits and power to heal diseases and sicknesses, should we expect people to always be healed when we ask God to heal them? How do you feel about the idea of asking God to demonstrate his power in the lives of people you rub shoulders with?

In Matt 10:5-6, we read: “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.”

On these mission trips, Jesus specifically limited the scope of the ministry of the disciples, by commanding them to stick to ministry among Jews. We don't know why Jesus did this, at this time. Later, he commanded that we should be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria (ie where the Samaritans were) and “to the ends of the earth” (where all the ‘unclean’ Gentiles lived). (Acts 1:8) But for their first ministry ‘practical placement’, the disciples were sent out among people who had the same ethnic and religious background as them. They did not have to leave their country or learn a new language. Their first lesson was to learn to preach the good news and to minister in the power of the Spirit to their fellow Jews.

- READ: Luke 9:51-56. What was the attitude of the Samaritans towards Jesus and his disciples? What was the attitude of James and John to the Samaritans in these verses? How might James’ and John’s attitude toward the Samaritans have been ‘unhelpful’ to successful gospel ministry?

In Luke 10:7-8, we read that Jesus instructed the disciples, that when they were offered hospitality, to: “Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.”

The disciple’s mission trip involved being house guest – including eating the food and using their cups and bowls provided by strangers. Practising Jews were careful to comply with Old Testament dietary and purification rules. It is only when we get into the book of Acts, that the (Jewish) apostles – and the early church – started to wrestle with the complications that came with both evangelising and doing church with Gentiles. At this time, though, the disciples were probably not ready to deal with having to eat ‘unclean’ food and eat with people who they believed were ‘unclean’.

- Jesus and his disciples did life together over about a three-year period. The disciples learnt from Jesus as they walked together and ate together. What are some of the benefits of extending hospitality to people and sharing meals together?

An important lesson for anyone in ministry is that ‘it’s not about the money’. Jesus lived an itinerant lifestyle – but that does not set a precedent for everyone to live that way. Jesus’ teaching, though, extols the virtue of living simply, being content with what we have and trying to avoid attitudes of greed and envy. The disciples needed to build relationships of trust with people, in order to be able to eat and to have shelter.

- Read and compare Matt 10:9-10, with Mk 6:8-9, Luke 9:3 and Luke 10:4. What lessons and attitudes was Jesus teaching the disciples, by making these stipulations?

Read Luke 22:35-36. Before Jesus went to the cross, he gave some totally different advice to his disciples.

- What had they learnt from their first mission trip? What things in Jesus’ original instructions in Matt 10 were limited to that particular context/ situation? What new advice is given here? What principles can we learn that continue to apply to us, today?

REFLECT on the following quote by R.T. France about Matt 10 and share your thoughts with your group:

Jesus “assures the disciples that no previous fund-raising is necessary, nor (do they) need special equipment (to) be acquired. **They can go just as they are, and the mission is urgent.** The principle is that of (Matt) 6:25-34; they can leave the provisions to God. **This is not a call to asceticism**, for due provision of food and lodging is assured ...; **it is a call to put first things first.** This spirit of sitting light to material provision is good both for the disciple’s own attitude in his mission, as **he trusts God for practical provision, and for his credibility** in an age aware of the possibility of using religion for profit. ... A church whose members are preoccupied with material concerns still finds it hard to convince the world that it should take God seriously.”⁴

- What things have challenged or encouraged you in this study? What are you going to do about it?

⁴ France, R. T. (1985). *Matthew: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 1). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p183-184.