



## Group Discussion Guide

*For group meetings from November 8 afternoon through November 15 morning*

### **Matthew 10:1-15**

After telling his closest followers (and likely some other disciples who were present) to pray and ask God to send more workers for the harvest field, Jesus called those 12 closest followers together. He sent them out to conduct ministry in much the same way as he had been. He gave to them the authority over unclean spirits and the ability to cast them out of people, and to heal every disease and adverse physical condition. Matthew recorded the names of the 12 (including himself) and then he shared how Jesus instructed these men to handle their new responsibilities.

Jesus was very specific: the 12 disciples were to limit the scope of their ministry to Israelites. This was not meant to keep Gentiles and Samaritans out of the kingdom of God; it was about following the timeline God had already determined. After the resurrection of Jesus, they would be sent to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). At this point, they were instructed to go only to the Jews and tell them, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus told them to do the miraculous, and not to receive any payment for their work. In fact, he instructed them not to be concerned with being well prepared (in an earthly sense) for their travels. There seems here to be an emphasis on ensuring that those who saw their ministry would have no reason to believe they were interested in personal gain. This note from a commentary on this passage brings the principle into the modern age:

*A church whose members are preoccupied with material concerns still finds it hard to convince the world that it should take God seriously.*

*R. T. France, Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 183–184.*

For food and shelter, Jesus told the disciples they should find those basic necessities provided by those who would be generous in response to their ministry. He also warned them some would reject them ("not worthy"; "not receive you or listen to your words") and their response to these who reject should be to simply move on. It was not for them to render judgment, because God would do so on the day of judgment.

### **Matthew 10:16-25**

Jesus continued to give his disciples practical instruction about what they would face and how they should respond. He was very clear with them: they would be persecuted for the sake of his name. However, they were not to be worried about what they would say when brought before authorities, because the Holy Spirit would speak through them. Jesus also explained that the Gospel would divide households, and the disciples might face hatred from some within their

own families. And yet, their endurance of such persecution would be worth it because at the end of it all, they would be saved and ushered into the coming kingdom of heaven. Jesus instructed his disciples to leave areas where they faced persecution and to move on to nearby towns to continue their ministry. Their mission would not allow them to reach every town in Israel before Jesus would return. As they followed him, they would experience the same harsh treatment he did and they should expect this.

### **Matthew 10:26-42**

Jesus told his disciples they would face persecution, but he then encouraged them to not be afraid of those who would come against them. The truth of the Gospel would be revealed because this was part of God's plan, and so the disciples were to take what Jesus had taught them personally and proclaim it openly to all. Jesus contrasted fear of men with fear of God and instructed his followers to fear only God. Human opponents could bring their earthly lives to an end, but God has the power to judge for eternity. Jesus reminded them of the truth he preached in Matthew 6:25-34, that God's care for people exceeds his care for animals and therefore His sovereign will over their lives could be trusted. As they lived according to their faith in God, they must publicly acknowledge His lordship over their lives.

The next statements of Jesus are a stark reminder of how the Gospel can divide believers from unbelievers. While Jesus was born into the world with the message of peace on earth (Luke 2:14), this message was a reference to how the Gospel would give people peace with God. The Gospel also would give peace in human relationships between those who built their lives on this foundation. However, as followers of Jesus dedicated their lives to him and his ways, it would put them at odds with those who had chosen to reject him. That dedication is spelled out clearly in verses 37-39. Clinging to the things and even people we value in this life and being unwilling to sacrifice of ourselves proves we lack the level of dedication to Jesus that he has commanded should be present in our lives.

Jesus issued some challenging instructions to his disciples, but he concluded with words of encouragement. There would be people who received them and their ministry, and those people would receive Christ and God's blessings. Those who would even offer the basic common courtesy of giving a cup of cold water to one of the disciples would receive a reward that would never be taken away.

## Discussion Questions

1. Jesus gave to the twelve disciples the authority to do ministry as he did. What does this teach us about our ability to accomplish the mission he has given us?
2. How can we ensure we are carrying out God's work without the expectation of receiving earthly rewards, and with the faith that demonstrates we are trusting God to provide?
3. According to the teachings of Jesus in this chapter, how should we react when people reject our words as we share the truth of the Gospel?
4. The disciples were taught not to fear people who would stand against them. Instead, they were to only fear God. How has God helped you to develop this focus?
5. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth ... I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (v. 34). Are you surprised by this statement? Why or why not? What do you think Jesus meant by this?
6. Read verses 37-39. What does it mean to take up our cross and follow Jesus?
7. How have you been blessed as you've carried out your mission of making disciples?