

***Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries***  
***Matthew 10: Jesus and His Disciples***

Lesson #5 for August 2, 2008

Scriptures: Leviticus 25:8-54; Matthew 10; John 10:10

1. One of the most important things that Jesus had to do during His brief ministry on earth was to train His disciples to carry on His work after He was gone. Jesus did not just teach His disciples what to do in order to witness; He showed them, and then He sent them out on training missions. The record suggests He did that at least three times with the twelve in Galilee, (Matthew 4:23-25; Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 10:1-11:1; Mark 6:7-12) and then, later with a larger group of seventy (or possibly seventy two) in Perea. (Luke 10:1-20) This lesson focuses on the instructions that Jesus gave His disciples and what those instructions might mean for us today.
2. By comparing all four Gospels, we come to the conclusion that Jesus chose the twelve, and then He gave the Sermon on the Mount as a kind of "Magna Carta" for His new kingdom. (See Luke 6) Later, He instructed them to go out.
3. Matthew's Gospel focused on the message for Jews. He seldom used the expression "kingdom of God." Instead, he usually wrote, "the kingdom of heaven." Why is that? What do you think Jesus had in mind when He referred to the "kingdom of heaven"? Because Matthew was writing to the Jews who considered the name of God (*YHWH*) to be "too sacred" to pronounce, he referred to the "kingdom of heaven" instead of the "kingdom of God."
4. Read Luke 17:21. Luke wrote, "The kingdom of God is within you," or it could be translated "among you," or even, "will suddenly appear among you." Was Jesus talking about His personal presence? His ministry? The coming of the Messiah?
5. As we know, the Jews were fully convinced that the Messiah would be a political Ruler and give them a political kingdom ruling over a specified territory from which they could drive out the Romans.
6. But Jesus was speaking of a "spiritual kingdom." What do you think Jesus had in mind? Can we become a part of Jesus' "spiritual kingdom of heaven"? Is it possible that kingdom could begin now? How could you tell if you were a part of the "kingdom of heaven"? Are there certain privileges and responsibilities to belonging to that kingdom?
7. We know that Jesus gave His disciples special powers when He sent them out. They could heal the sick, drive out demons, even raise the dead! Were those "gimmicks" to attract crowds? Why did Jesus give them those powers? Why doesn't He give those powers to His witnesses today? Or does He? Do we have any special powers available to us today as we witness?
8. Read Matthew 10:5,6,16. Jesus clearly instructed His disciples on their first missionary journeys to go only to the people of Israel. Why do you think He did that? What does it mean to be "as wise as snakes and harmless as doves"?
9. Read Matthew 28:19; 24:14. Near the end of His ministry, Jesus clearly instructed His disciples to go to the entire world. Why didn't He do that earlier? Was Jesus being "culturally sensitive"?

What does that mean?

10. When Jesus sent out His 12 disciples, did anyone else go along? What about the women mentioned in Luke 8:1-3? Do we have any evidence that any woman was ever sent to witness?
11. Considering what you have discovered so far about those first missionary expeditions, what principles have you learned that might apply to us?
12. Can you identify any unusual or specific characteristics of the disciples that set them apart from others? Why did Jesus choose them? They were all males. They were all Jews. They came almost entirely from Galilee. As far as we know, they were all middle-class, working people.

Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world's most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His colaborers; and He gave them the advantage of association with Himself. Never had the world's great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour's training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. {DA 250.1; CC 282.3; 2MCP 805.2}

13. Think about the area where you live. If a miracle-working disciple of Jesus came to spread the gospel in your area, how would you respond? How would the news media respond? What would happen if one of those disciples came to one of our hospitals and healed everyone there?
14. Notice that when Jesus called His disciples, He called them to follow Him full-time. Does that imply that those who have jobs and other responsibilities cannot be true disciples? If one is working full-time to support a family, can s/he also be a disciple?
15. Review the great principles that Jesus suggested to the Jews in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) When they went out to witness, what do you think the disciples said about Jesus' "Magna Carta"? If the disciples had clearly followed every detail of the Sermon on the Mount and convinced all of their followers to do the same, how would it have affected the world in their day? What would happen if we did it today?
16. Ellen White gave a couple reasons why the disciples were instructed to go only to the Jews at first. "If they had first preached the gospel to these [Gentiles and Samaritans], they would have lost their influence among the Jews who were first to hear the message of God."—*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 19, 1892, par. 5; DA 351.1.

By exciting the prejudice of the Pharisees, they would have involved themselves in controversy, which would have discouraged them at the outset. Even the disciples were slow to understand that the Gospel was to be carried to all nations. Until they themselves could grasp this truth, they were not prepared to

labor for the Gentiles. If the Jews would receive the Gospel, God purposed to make them His messengers to the Gentiles. Therefore, they were first to hear the message. {ST, November 7, 1900 par. 2}

17. Think of the many cultures and subcultures that live around us. How do we reach out to all of those groups? How can we make them feel comfortable with the gospel without upsetting them by some “cultural indiscretion”?
18. In our world today when we try to “sell” something, the first question we are usually asked is, “What’s in it for me?” What advantages, privileges, promises, or benefits do Christians have to offer to the world? Read John 10:10. If someone were to follow you around for a few days and focus on how you “live” your Christianity, would they consider it a privilege they wanted to enter into? Or a reason to run away?
19. What are Christians mostly known for in your community? The Gallup polling organization once took a poll in the United States that showed that professing Christians are not really significantly different from the general population when it comes to basic moral values. Does this imply that Christians are losing their moral values? Or does it imply that as a Christian nation, those “Christian values” have become embedded within our entire society?
20. The followers of Jesus are sometimes referred to as “disciples” and sometimes as “apostles.” What is the difference? A disciple is an apprentice or a student who follows instructions and practices what his teacher or master is doing. A disciple is expected to adopt the principles and ideas of his teacher.
21. By comparison, an “apostle” is one who has been sent out to accomplish a certain task. The Latin equivalent would be “missionary.” A more modern equivalent would probably be “ambassador.”
22. It is interesting to note that technically, one cannot be an apostle of an apostle. Everyone must be sent out by the original dispatching authority. Do you think that you have been commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to accomplish certain goals? In your church, do you know some who are “disciples” and others who are “apostles”? Do you think you have—or does anyone you know think he has—been specifically commissioned by Jesus Christ to accomplish a certain task or tasks?
23. In a society where almost every word spoken by someone in authority is recorded and preserved, Christians must learn to be very cautious and diplomatic in what they say in public appearances. Does that mean we should “water down” the gospel? (Read Galatians 1:8,9)
24. Given the set of instructions the disciples are recorded as having been given, try to imagine what a day for one of those disciples would have been like as he traveled through Galilee with Jesus. “During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching.” (DA 350.3; MH 19; 4T 225; ChS 132.1) Do you think the disciples did the same? Did they also cast out demons? Did Jesus give the disciples the power to raise the dead? (Matthew 10:8) Did they ever actually raise anyone from the dead? (Compare Acts 9:32-43)
25. Do you think the disciples focused their ministry on any particular segment of society? Did Matthew, for instance, focus on tax collectors? Did the disciples make any special effort to reach out to the poor? To the blind? To the oppressed? Even to people in prison?
26. What would you say was the chief motivation behind the disciples work during those missionary

journeys?

27. Are there certain special groups of people—for example, certain professionals, certain age groups, certain language groups—that you feel particularly skilled at reaching out to?
28. Jesus did not try to hide from His disciples the fact that when they went out, they would face a certain amount of animosity. Read Matthew 10:22; Hebrews 10:35,36; Romans 5:3,4; James 1:3. Clearly, the disciples and other Bible writers felt certain that persecution would follow if they “witnessed” about the truth. This should be obvious if we remember the Devil’s goals. Should we get discouraged and stop witnessing because it is difficult? Or should hard times help us to build courage and faith to move on? Read 2 Corinthians 11:21-33. Certainly, we cannot claim that we have suffered more for the gospel than Paul did!
29. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “Take up your cross and follow Me”? (Matthew 10:38) What do you think the disciples thought when Jesus first mentioned the “taking up of a cross”? In those days the cross was a symbol of Roman torture and was used against traitors. It must have seemed very much out of place to the disciples who had no idea what was coming!
30. Try to imagine what Jesus would do if He had a half day to spend on earth today walking among human beings as He did some 2000 years ago. Where do you think He would go? What would He do? And what would He say?
31. How involved in witnessing are you and your Sabbath school or church? Do you think witnessing is an essential part of your Christianity? What would happen if every Seventh-day Adventist made a genuine effort to witness to the truth about God?
32. If we really believe in the “larger view, great-controversy, trust-healing model” of salvation, do we speak about it to others? Are we embarrassed to speak about what we believe because our beliefs are different from theirs? If we are excited about what we believe, shouldn’t we invite others to think about those things also?

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