

## LifeGroups 2.5—Compelled by Love Luke 10:1-12

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] When it comes to the mission Jesus launched the passage we are going to look at this morning from Luke 10 is one of the most important in all the Gospels because it literally shows Jesus' followers on mission. And as Jesus sends out the 72 he instructs them on how to act and tells them what to say so that they are successful carrying out the mission he launched. [Slide #2] He doesn't want any of his followers to be unprepared or for that matter surprised by what they'll find when on the mission.
- Luke 10 is the coach's pre-game speech before the team heads onto the field. [Slide #3]

### Organizational Sentence

- **Jesus gives four instructions for the mission he launched**

### Background and Setting

- Look at **Luke 10:1**. *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. The mission which began with the Father, continued with Son has been passed on to the disciples and then to a broader group of 72. In other words, the mission isn't for just a select few, for professional ministers, for the extremely gifted. The mission is for every follower of Jesus. And it's to be done together. He sent them two by two. Nobody goes alone.*

### Transition

The **first thing** Jesus instructs his followers to be about comes in **verse 2**. Listen. *He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

### Main Points

- Our effectiveness on the mission is dependent upon one key thing—prayer. [Slide #4] The mission depends on prayer. The mission's success or failure hinges on us spending time on our knees in prayer to the Lord of the Harvest. *He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*
- The reason we must pray is because the mission is immense—yes. Jesus likens people who need to hear of his love to immense fields of fully ripened grain—all awaiting harvest."<sup>1</sup> This is good news. There's a crop just waiting to be harvested. The bad news is if we don't pray the crop rots in the field.
- So pray. Jesus' words here are a command. Pray to the *Lord of the harvest*. Beg the Lord of the harvest. Plead with him to raise up workers to do the work of harvesting.

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<sup>1</sup> NIDNTT, vol. 3, p. 526.

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest, to God, to the one who owns the fields, to the one who is Lord over the Harvest and God will answer that prayer by sending workers on mission to reap.

- In order for us to go from LifeGroups 1.0 to LifeGroups 2 point whatever it will mean ramping up our prayer; specifically our prayers to God regarding the harvest we are asked to reap in this area.
- One of the things I've started doing the past couple of years, and I want to invite you to do with me, is to pray every morning at 10:02 the words of **Luke 10:2**. Being obedient to Jesus here takes all of 30 seconds. "Lord send out workers into your harvest field. Send out workers from Grace into your harvest field." By the way, when you pray this, you do realize that you may be the answer to your own prayer.

### Transition

The first instruction we are given is to **pray fervently**. The **second** relates to our attitude. [Slide #5] We are to **go dependently**. Look at **verses 3-4**. *Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

- The reason we are to go dependently is because the mission is dangerous—we are sent out like *lambs among wolves*. Have you ever wondered why Jesus, the Great Shepherd, would send us to the wolves? What kind of shepherd does that?<sup>2</sup>
- We are sent *among wolves* because "our mission is to seek and save the lost sheep—and wolves tend to gather where there is easy prey."<sup>3</sup> So how do we survive? Author **Neil Cole** suggests we survive not because we are we are a "strange new breed of sheep: teenage mutant ninja sheep with super powers."<sup>4</sup>
- We survive by being dependent upon Jesus the Great Shepherd. We are sent out like lambs among wolves to rescue other sheep; we are no different from the lost sheep Jesus sends us to with one major difference. We go with a Shepherd—Jesus. Remember, He sends us, as **verse 1** says, *two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go*. He's not going to abandon us.
- I love what Jesus does. As disciples of Jesus we go from being vulnerable prey to becoming valued members of a search-and-rescue team. And we don't need to fear the pack of wolves because He is with us. He carries a big stick, and has a quick swing.<sup>5</sup> Wherever we go our Shepherd goes.
- So to summarize. We are sent on a dangerous high stakes mission with a lot hanging in the balance. The mission isn't safe. It isn't comfortable. Or glamorous. We are sent out as vulnerable sheep—so vulnerable that we must depend on Jesus for everything. We are to depend on him for protection from wolves. We are to depend upon him for provision. **Verse 4**. *Do not take a purse or bag or sandals*. We don't fund the mission ourselves. Our shepherd provides for us as we go. And as **verses 7-**

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<sup>2</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 172.

8 suggest, as we obediently carry out the mission, God will provide for us through those who respond to the message we bring.

- And we're to watch out for distractions. Last part of [verse 4](#). *And do not greet anyone on the road.* The one thing above all else that characterized greetings in the ancient world was their length. Jesus says the mission is too urgent to be distracted by something even as simple as a greeting.
- Everything about what we're trying to do with the LifeGroups is to make what Jesus describes here occur naturally within the life of the church. All too easily we're distracted by things that take us off the mission. Good things. Simple things. Churchy things. All too easily we feel the pressure of funding the mission ourselves and so our identity becomes more about fundraising than the mission. And more than anything else, we're just plain fraidy sheep. We become paralyzed with fear because we forget who goes with us.
- Do you see what Jesus does as he prepares his followers for the mission? He strips us of everything that we might naturally depend on so that nothing's left but him.

### Transition

Look at the [third instruction](#) Jesus gives in [verses 5-9](#). His instruction has to do with the message we've been given. [[Slide #6](#)] Jesus tells us to **boldly proclaim the good news**. Listen. *"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'* [6](#) *If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.* [7](#) *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.* [8](#) *"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.* [9](#) *Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'*

- To be on the mission Jesus launched is to bring people a very specific message. [Verses 5 and 6](#) tell us the content of the message. *When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'* In [2 Corinthians 5:20](#) Paul puts the message like this. *We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*<sup>6</sup> Same message. The only difference is one's pre-cross and one's post-cross.
- The message we bring has to do with our standing before God. Apart from God's reconciling love we are all counted by God as his enemies because of sin. The message we bring is that God loves us so much that He *made [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.*
- God knows we are unable to change our standing with him by ourselves. We can't earn peace. So God does something drastic. He makes peace with us through the death of Christ. By punishing Christ on the cross and *not counting our sins against us* we are forgiven and receive something we don't deserve, the righteousness of Christ. When this message is received by faith a person's standing before God literally switches from darkness to light, from death to life. They go from being his enemies to being adopted into his family—at peace with Him. We truly have a message of good news. [John Stott](#) has said, and I think he's correct, "nothing hinders

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20

evangelism more than the widespread loss of confidence in the truth, relevance, and power of the gospel."<sup>7</sup>

- Let me say something else about the person who responds positively to the message—the person of peace. “Jesus says we are to look for and even inquire about someone who would be receptive to our message of peace.”<sup>8</sup>
- Part of what LifeGroups should do is to pray for and search for, as a group, together, this person of peace. Neil Cole suggests that persons of peace are characterized by three things.<sup>9</sup> *One*, they are people of receptivity. They are open to the message of the person and the peace of Christ. *Two*, they are people of relational connections. They know lots of people and are an important part of the community, for better or worse. And *three*, they possess a reputation, whether it’s good or bad. Cole says, “the person of peace becomes the conduit for the passing of the message of the Kingdom to an entire community of lost people.”<sup>10</sup>
- For example, Lydia in [Acts 16:14](#). *One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.* Lydia a woman of good reputation, a business woman well respected and relationally connected in her community. She responds to the message of peace and [verse 15](#) says her whole household follows. Like dominoes, Lydia was the first and others followed.
- In John 4, Jesus passes through Samaria and meets a woman at a well. Unlike Lydia, this woman doesn’t have a good reputation. She’s had five husbands and the fifth guy wasn’t even really her husband. Jesus shares with her the message of peace and [John 4:39](#) tells us this amazing thing. *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in [Jesus] because of the woman's testimony.* The person of peace is the gateway through which others come to Christ.
- Another example, the demon possessed guy from the region of the Gerasenes in Luke 8. Flip back to [Luke 8:26](#). *For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. Many times [the demons] had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demons into solitary places.* Talk about a man with a reputation. Jesus casts out the man’s demons, we presume he shares with him this message of peace because the guy becomes a disciple. [Verse 35](#). *When [the townspeople] came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.*
- Skip ahead to [verse 39](#). Look what Jesus does. *"Return home and tell how much God has done for you."* So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. Right away, the man goes from living in tombs to being on the mission within a matter of minutes. Was he effective? When this event happened, the people were antagonistic to Jesus and basically threw him out of the region. [Verse 37](#). *Then*

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<sup>7</sup> Stott, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 182.

*all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear.*

- Later, **Mark 7** and **Matthew 15** tell us thousands from this same region came to meet Jesus. The people no longer antagonistic, bring the sick, the demonized, the handicapped. And Jesus heals them and feeds them.<sup>11</sup> Why? I think because of the influence of the demon possessed man; he was a person of peace.
- Go back to Luke 10. Look at **verse 6**. Reality is, no matter how good our news is some people won't receive it. This is without a doubt the thing we fear the most. *If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.* In other words, if the greeting 'peace to this house' is refused, the benefit of peace with God is lost. That hurts. But instead of fearing rejection what we need to do is what Jesus suggests in **Matthew 10:11**—the parallel passage to the one here in Luke 10. **Matthew 10:11** says *Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.*
- If a person rejects the message of peace, yeah we're sad. When our words of hope and peace are rejected it hurts. Instead of hanging our head in shame and hoping we never have to experience that kind of rejection again we need to follow-up the rejection with a question. "Is there anyone here in this community who really needs to hear this message?"<sup>12</sup> Jesus says we are to search for the person worthy of the message and then take the message of peace to them. If the message is rejected, like a boomerang, it returns to the messenger so that it can be sent out again. We keep sharing until the person of peace is found.
- Maybe the person who rejects the message says "yes, four houses down, there's a guy who parties all night. The music is loud. There are beer bottles all over his front lawn. Please go save that guy so I can get some sleep."<sup>13</sup> By the person who rejects the message we are pointed in the direction of a person of peace. Remember, we don't take God with us anywhere. He is a missionary God already at work in the people's lives. Sometimes it takes a little searching to find where God is at work. And sometimes we're a bit surprised when we find that person.

### Transition

Look at **verses 10-12**. One final instruction. [**Slide #7**] In **verses 10-12** Jesus instructs those on the mission to **warn of God's judgment faithfully**. *But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.*

- This is connected with the message we bring. And part of being on the mission Jesus launched, part of boldly proclaiming the message of peace is explaining to people the consequence of rejecting God's offer. We are not to take the rejection personally. **Verse 11** likens the messenger to Teflon; we're not to let the rejection stick to us. We're to remind people that in spite of their rejection, the message of peace is still

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<sup>11</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 184.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church*, p. 187.

true, that *the kingdom of God is near.*' In other words, in spite of rejection, God's purposes for salvation, for history, will be fulfilled no matter what.

- And hardest of all, [verse 12](#), we're to remember that the consequences of rejecting God's offer of peace are harsh but just. *I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.* Jesus says, "On judgment day, Sodom, the most despicable of ancient Galilean cities and a symbol of unrighteousness will fare better than the person who rejects the kingdom message."<sup>14</sup> A lot's at stake with the mission.
- Let me ask you this. What good is a lighthouse if it doesn't warn ships of danger? What good is a weather forecast if it only forecasts blue skies? What good is our immune system if it doesn't warn of disease? In the same way, what good is the message of peace if we fail to explain to people the consequences of rejecting that message?
- Again, as [John Stott](#) reminds us "to 'evangelize' in the New Testament does not mean to win converts...(that's not our goal)...Evangelism is the announcement of the good news, irrespective of the results."<sup>15</sup> Our mission is to bring the message. It's up to the Lord of the Harvest to do the actual harvesting.

### Conclusion

- Those four things, pray fervently, go dependently, proclaim boldly and warn faithfully are Jesus' specific instructions for his mission. If we want to be faithful to his mission it will mean making these four things part of the culture of all we do as a church.
- In [Luke 10:17](#) Luke tells us *The seventy-two returned with joy* because they saw God use them in powerful ways. I want to suggest to you that if we want to see God work; if you want to see God use you in ways you never dreamed possible you've got to follow the instructions.

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<sup>14</sup> Bock.

<sup>15</sup> Stott, p. 38.