

April 7

Lesson 6 (NIV)

CALLED TO MISSION

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Matthew 15:21–](#)

28

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Matthew 10](#)

MATTHEW 10:1–15

¹ Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

⁹ “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—¹⁰ no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ¹² As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³ If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.



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KEY VERSE

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.—[Matthew 10:1](#)

DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION

Unit 2: Call to Ministry

LESSONS 5-9

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the backgrounds of the 12 apostles.
2. Explain Jesus' mission instructions to the 12.
3. Determine one way to participate in Jesus' calling to continue his work.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. On Having a Commission
 - B. Lesson Context
- I. Called to Imitate (MATTHEW 10:1-4)
 - A. Empowered (v. 1)
 - B. Identified (vv. 2-4)
 - II. Commissioned to Do (MATTHEW 10:5-12)
 - A. Directing the Mission (vv. 5, 6)
 - B. Describing the Ministry (vv. 7, 8)
Com U Ni C8
 - III. Counseled to Expect (MATTHEW 10:13-15)

Thanks, But No Thanks

Conclusion

- A. Get with the Program
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Alphaeus	Al-fee-us.
Assyria	Uh-sear-ee-uh.
Bethsaida	Beth-say-uh-duh.
Canaanite	Kay-nun-ite.
Capernaum	Kuh-per-nay-um.
Gomorra	Guh-more-uh.
Herod Agrippa	Hair-ud Uh-grip-puh.
Herod Antipas	Hair-ud An-tih-pus.
Judas Iscariot	Joo-dus Iss-care-ee-ut.
Messianic	Mess-ee-an-ick.
Samaritans	Suh-mare-uh-tunz.
Thaddaeus	Tha-dee-us.
Zebedee	Zeb-eh-dee.
Zechariah	Zek-uh-rye-uh.
Zealot	Zel-ut.

Introduction

A. On Having a Commission

The word *commission* is well known, and the dictionary offers no less than seven definitions, with several sub-definitions, depending on context. Two definitions in Merriam-Webster's that should catch our attention are these: "a formal written warrant granting the power to

perform various acts or duties” and “authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another.” Those definitions are hard to tell apart; it seems like if one definition applies to you, then the other would as well, right?

Some might point out that the difference lies in distinguishing between *power* (the ability to do something) and *authority* (the right to do something). Others might suggest that the difference is in the part about a commission being written. This kind of commission is well known to Christians, since [Matthew 28:19, 20](#) is our formal written charge to make disciples (contrast [Acts 26:12](#)).

Commission more in the sense of “authority to act ... in place of another” without the element of being written is also in the Bible, but less well known. That’s our topic for this lesson.

B. Lesson Context

Matthew and Luke locate the events of our passage after the 12 disciples had had significant exposure to Jesus’ message and work. Another account notes that several disciples mentioned in [Matthew 10](#) met Jesus shortly after his baptism and witnessed his first miracle ([John 1:35-2:11](#)).

Jesus later encountered Peter, Andrew, James, and John in Capernaum and famously called them from their nets

to become fishers “for people” (see lessons [2](#) and [5](#)). In so doing, he was challenging them to leave their careers and travel with him full-time. From that vantage point, they witnessed Jesus’ teachings and healings across the region. Somewhere during this campaign, Matthew the tax collector accepted the call to itinerant discipleship as well ([Matthew 9:9-13](#)).

As Jesus’ mission grew, he urged prayer that God would raise up more people to help with the work ([Matthew 9:35-38](#)). Our lesson text today immediately follows this call to prayer.

I. Called to Imitate

(MATTHEW 10:1-4)

A. Empowered (v. 1)

1a. Jesus called his twelve disciples to him

This verse seems to represent fulfillment of the immediately preceding prayer for workers. This is the first time in Matthew that those followers closest to Jesus are designated by the expression *twelve disciples*. We may be surprised to learn that that expression is relatively rare in the New Testament. It occurs only here and in [Matthew 11:1](#); [20:17](#); and [Luke 9:1](#)—and the word *disciples* doesn’t occur in some Greek texts in the latter two. (Compare “eleven disciples” in [Matthew](#)

28:16.)

More common is the shorthand designation “the Twelve,” which occurs almost two dozen times in the New Testament. These 12 (named below) are the ones Jesus chooses to extend his ministry, which includes spiritual and physical healing. The word translated *disciples* occurs more than 250 times in the Gospels and Acts (only). It refers to those who subscribe to the lessons and lifestyle of a great teacher (compare [Matthew 10:24, 25](#); [Luke 6:40](#)). The common practice is to live alongside one’s teacher in order to imitate the master’s behavior.

1b. and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

The action verb “called” of the previous phrase is now followed by the action verb *gave*. Before sending the Twelve on their mission, Jesus empowers them to do the miracles they have seen him do ([Matthew 4:23, 24](#); [8:1-16, 28-34](#); [9:18-33](#)). If God’s will is to be done on earth as in Heaven ([Matthew 6:10](#))—and it shall indeed be done in fullness on earth when Christ returns—then there should be no *impure spirits* or *disease* or *sickness*. The message that is to accompany the exercise of power over these is described in [Matthew 10:7](#), below.

B. Identified (vv. 2-4)

2a. These are the names of the twelve apostles:

Alongside the rare designation “twelve disciples” (above) is the equally rare phrase *twelve apostles* (compare only [Revelation 21:14](#); some versions also [Luke 22:14](#)). The meaning of the noun is “messenger,” which is how the word is translated in [John 13:16](#). The fact that this is the first time the Twelve are called *apostles* is quite appropriate, since this is the first instance of Jesus sending them to proclaim his message. The verb form of the noun *apostle* is regularly translated as some form of “send” (examples: [Matthew 8:31](#); [10:5](#) [below]). Regarding the significance of the number 12, see on [Matthew 10:5, 6](#), below.

2b. first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;

There are four listings of the Twelve in the Bible: [Matthew 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Luke 6:13-16](#); and (lacking Judas the betrayer) [Acts 1:13](#). The names in the verse before us are always the top four in those lists, which seems to indicate their importance relative to the other eight.

Simon ... Peter is always listed first. This probably acknowledges his leadership among the Twelve (compare his frequent outspokenness in [Matthew 16:16-23](#); [17:1-8, 24-27](#); [18:21](#); [19:27](#); [26:33](#); [Acts 1:15-26](#); [2:14-41](#)). The order of the

other three names here varies from list to list. Peter, *James*, and *John* are sometimes referred to as Jesus' inner circle, being privileged to witness things the others are not (see [Matthew 17:1-9](#); [Mark 5:37-42](#); [14:32-36](#)).

The pattern repeats as the fifth and ninth names are the same across all lists, while names in the sixth through eighth and tenth through twelfth positions swap places from list to list, but always within those boundaries. Judas the betrayer is listed last in three cases and not at all in the fourth. With the minor exception of the latter, all listings of the Twelve thus fall into thirds of four names each.

Peter had been introduced to Jesus by his brother *Andrew* ([John 1:40-42](#)). Andrew was apparently Jesus' very first follower ([1:40](#)) and is one of two apostles who have Greek names. This speaks to Greek influence in the area. See further commentary in lessons [2](#) and [5](#) (pages [243](#), [270](#)).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to live out our own discipleship better as people sent by God?

Digging Deeper

Consider how these passages might and might not inform one's personal sense of calling: [Isaiah 6:1-8](#); [Jeremiah 1:4-8](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#); [John 17:13-23](#); [Acts 6:3](#); [9:10-16](#).

3a. Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector;

Philip is the other apostle who has a Greek name. He is from Bethsaida, the hometown of other apostles as well (see [John 1:44](#)). His name always appears fifth in the listings just discussed; the names of the other three apostles noted here vary in appearing in the sixth through eighth positions. *Bartholomew* is generally identified as the Nathanael in [John 1:45-51](#). He is otherwise not mentioned in the New Testament.

Thomas is the one whom many Christians today refer to as "doubting Thomas" because of his refusal to believe testimony of Jesus' resurrection ([John 20:24, 25](#)). This designation overlooks the courage he shows as the events surrounding his declaration in [John 11:16](#) come to pass.

It's interesting that this is the only list of the four in which *Matthew* is designated *the tax collector*, a despised profession. And Matthew is the one who writes this particular list!

3b, 4. James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

The name *James son of Alphaeus* appears in the ninth position in all four listings of the Twelve. The name *James* occurs more than 40 times in the New Testament to refer to as many as five men

by that name, so it's easy to get confused. Some think this James is the same as "James the younger" ([Mark 15:40](#)).

The only thing we know of *Thaddaeus* is the question he asks in [John 14:22](#). He is the same as "Judas ... of James" in [Luke 6:16](#) and [Acts 1:13](#). *Simon the Zealot* is referred to as "Simon who was called the Zealot" in [Luke 6:15](#). *Judas Iscariot* is, of course, infamous for betraying Jesus ([Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50](#)).

The collective identity of the 12 apostles is perhaps more significant than their individual biographies. All are close associates of Jesus. They are familiar with his lifestyle, teaching, and methods of ministry. They are therefore well-prepared to continue and expand his work.

II. Commissioned to Do ([MATTHEW 10:5-12](#))

A. Directing the Mission (vv. 5, 6)

5, 6. 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."

The Gentiles are people who are not Jews. Free trade, travel, and colonization have resulted in a diverse population, even here on the edge of the Roman Empire. Even so, devout Jews associate with neither them ([Acts 10:28](#)) nor *Samar-*

itans ([John 4:9](#)). The latter are scorned for their mixed-blood heritage that resulted from the Assyrian conquest of 722 BC (see [2 Kings 17](#); compare [Ezra 4:1-5](#)).

The instruction Jesus gives is not ethnic or racial discrimination. Jesus has a plan that includes an offer of the gospel to everyone. But the plan must unfold in an orderly, focused way. The plan's progression is later laid out for the apostles as witnessing "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#); compare [Romans 1:16; 2:9, 10](#)).

Jesus' previous visits in areas with heavy concentrations of Gentiles ([Matthew 8:28a](#)) and Samaritans ([John 4](#)) are not inconsistent with this plan. To preach the gospel does not seem to have been Jesus' reason for entering those areas (compare [John 4:1-4](#)). Belief resulted when residents of those areas sought him out rather than the reverse ([Matthew 8:28b; John 4:39-42](#)). The focus for now is on restoring and renewing the Israelite people.

The number 12, for its part, corresponds symbolically to the 12 tribes of Israel (compare [Matthew 19:28a; Revelation 21:12, 14](#)). Since the forthcoming mission focuses on calling Israel to return to God, it is fitting that Jesus chooses 12 envoys to extend his ministry.

Jesus' description of the target audi-

ence as *lost sheep* (compare [Jeremiah 50:6](#)) is consistent with his Messianic identity and mission as prophesied in [Ezekiel 34:11-25](#) and [Micah 5:2-5](#) (compare [Matthew 2:3-6](#)). Similar language will be reflected later in Jesus' self-description in [John 10:7-18](#).

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances, if any, will it be a good idea to use a "targeted demographic" approach when planting a new church? Explain.

Digging Deeper

Consider this from several angles: targets of age group, economic status, etc.

B. Describing the Ministry (vv. 7, 8)

7. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

The message the Twelve are to preach is identical to that preached so far by John the Baptist and Jesus ([Matthew 3:1, 2; 4:17](#)). The message doesn't change, only the messengers. On the meaning and significance of the phrases *kingdom of heaven* and *has come near*, see lesson 5, pages [269, 270](#).

COMUNIC8

Text messaging, like it or not, has

changed the way we communicate. The use of abbreviations such as *LOL* for *laughing out loud* or *IMO* for *in my opinion* are widely used. But we wonder what the long-term effect will be.

In recent years, the New Zealand department of education ordered that students should not be penalized for answering questions on tests by using such text-speak. While still encouraging students to use standard English, authorities instructed teachers to give credit when an answer shows the required understanding. These educators argue that text-speak is just another way to communicate. While many support the policy, others responded "R U c RE us!" (-translation: "Are you serious!"). They are concerned that such abbreviated language will lead to misunderstandings and degradation of the language.

The apostles were given a short message: just five words consisting of 26 letters in Greek. But they were to take no shortcuts in communicating it. Neither must we.

—J. E.

What Do You Think?

Which will be more important in presenting the gospel, the accuracy of the presentation or the perception that we are acting in the other person's best interest? Explain your answer.

Digging Deeper

Identify the strengths and weaknesses of both answers. What are the dangers of too much emphasis on one at the expense of the other?

8. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

The works the disciples are enabled to perform are tied to Jesus' proclamation of the coming of God's kingdom. The miracles Jesus performed to establish the truth of his message will be the same for the Twelve (compare in [Matthew 9:35](#)).

The instructions parallel Jesus' later reply to John the Baptist's question in [Matthew 11:4, 5](#). God's kingdom is indeed coming powerfully! It comes not in the form of a military revolution but rather in terms of physical and spiritual healing.

Notably, the disciples are not to accept payment. Their works are to proclaim God's rule, not to enrich themselves (compare [Acts 8:18–20](#); contrast [2 Kings 5:15–27](#)).

What Do You Think?

What can modern Christians and churches do to demonstrate that God's kingdom is present and active in the world?

Digging Deeper

Does the old saying "what you win them with is what you win them to" have any value in answering the question? Why, or why not?

C. Defining the Method (vv. 9–12)

9, 10a. "Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff,

The disciples are to travel light. Can you imagine a trip of several days when you don't even have a change of clothing? They are not even to take *a staff*, which is a walking stick! Traveling with only the clothes on their backs, the disciples won't have any need for a *bag*.

10b. for the worker is worth his keep.

The logic behind the instructions to travel light appears in the form of a proverb (see also [1 Timothy 5:18](#)). How Jesus expects this to work practically comes next.

11. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave.

While the Twelve are not to solicit money for their preaching and healing ministry ([Matthew 10:8](#), above), they are allowed to accept room and board. They should expect to receive this from those to whom they minister (compare [Num-](#)

to whom they minister (compare [Numbers 18:31](#); [Luke 10:7](#); [1 Corinthians 9:14](#)). *Worthy* does not refer to people who are unusually spiritual, but rather to those who are receptive to the disciples' message and willing to provide hospitality (compare [3 John 5-8](#)).

While moving around might give the disciples more opportunities to preach to more families, Jesus' instruction here is consistent with those of the previous three verses. Once it becomes known that the disciples can perform healing miracles ([Matthew 10:8](#), above), they will quickly receive many invitations to stay at the finest houses in town. Various temptations would come from doing so, not to mention the time that would be wasted. The disciples are instead to lodge with the first person who welcomes them in a given town, even if it means living with less (again, see [Luke 10:7](#)).

12. As you enter the home, give it your greeting.

This verse envisions that the disciples will take their message from door to door in each new village. When they come to a new town and begin preaching, they should offer a friendly greeting and blessing on any home they enter. Their approach should be a positive one, offering peace and healing and assuming that people will receive the message.

III. Counseled to Expect ([MATTHEW 10:13-15](#))

13, 14. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

In Jesus' mind, there are only two ways to respond to his message: accept it wholeheartedly or reject it. Since the disciples will preach Jesus' message and use his methods, they should expect exactly the same outcomes.

Notably, the success of the disciples' mission is not measured in terms of how many people accept the message. The apostles are not instructed to stay in town until 75 percent of the population have heard or 20 percent of the sick have been healed; they have fulfilled their mission as soon as they have proclaimed the kingdom and demonstrated its power.

The symbolism of shaking *the dust off* graphically communicates that the disciples are not responsible for other people's choices. While they are permitted to take shelter and food from those who accept them ([Matthew 10:10](#), above), they are to take nothing from those who reject the message —not even loose dirt from the road (compare [Acts 13:51](#)).

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

It seemed like an offer too good to refuse—until it was refused! The Chamber of Commerce of Murcia, Spain, sponsored a contest called “Shopping Against the Clock.” The winner was to be awarded a shopping spree worth a little over \$7,000. The only catch was that the winner had to spend the money in less than three hours.

About 600 businesses were involved, hoping that the promotion would boost interest in the local economy. More than 60,000 contestants entered. But when the winner was notified, she replied that she would have to think about accepting it. In the end, she declined, saying that she was just too busy to waste a morning shopping!

By contrast, the runner-up gladly accepted. Taking three hours out of her day, she ended up with jewelry, clothing, shoes, home décor, sunglasses, presents for her family, and a whole ham!

We may be surprised that Jesus would caution his apostles regarding those who would refuse something as valuable as they had to offer. But then as today, some do refuse. That leads us to ask the question that comes next.

—J. E.

What Do You Think?

How will we know when it is time, if ever, to “move on” from a person who consistently resists the

gospel message?

Digging Deeper

Consider how these Scriptures do or do not inform your answer:
Matthew 7:6; 13:52–58; Acts 13:44–52; 1 Timothy 1:18–20; Titus 3:9–14.

15. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

We come to an analogy between the disciples’ mission and the mission of angels to rescue Lot and family from Sodom (Genesis 19). Like the angels, the disciples bring a message of salvation. Those to whom the disciples preach will have more time than did Lot as well as much more evidence of the truth. If the healings, exorcisms, and lifestyle of the disciples do not convince them, they will have no excuse come *the day of judgment*.



Visual for Lesson 6. Start a discussion by posing the question on this visual. Dig deeper by asking,

the question on this visual. Dig deeper by asking, "Does God ever call us from a ministry or only to one?"

Conclusion

A. Get with the Program

In some respects, the mission of the 12 apostles was a test run for the later work of the 70 in [Luke 10:1-12, 17](#). Both missions were pilots for the imperatives of [Matthew 28:18-20](#). These verses have become widely known as the Great Commission, often cited as a convenient summary of Jesus' instructions to all future followers. The church's missionary efforts have long been grounded in that final teaching of Matthew's Gospel.

While the Great Commission extends far beyond the area of Jesus' earthly ministry, close inspection reveals that Jesus simply instructs his followers to do what he himself has done. He made disciples; now his disciples are to do the same. In many respects, the Great Commission is a nutshell version of Jesus' own program. The question now is, will you get with the program?

B. Prayer

Father, help us to be wise and courageous as we seek to fulfill your Son's calling on us. Give us the strength and abilities we need to proclaim your kingdom

whenever and wherever you need us to do so. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The "all nations" of [Matthew 28:19](#) still await the gospel.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible](#)
Student

Into the Lesson

For about a dollar, purchase and download the *Mission Impossible* theme from a music website. On the board write, “What are some ‘impossible missions’ people have attempted in history?” Play the theme song and direct class members’ attention to the question on the board to begin class.

After the music ends, help the class list some missions that came to mind (military missions, exploratory missions, scientific and commercial ventures, etc.) Discuss by asking, 1-Why were these ventures difficult? 2-What potential costs were involved? 3-What potential rewards would have come with success?

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Military Missions” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work individually for no more than one minute. Reveal the answers and discuss the missions by posing the questions above.

After either activity say, “At times people are challenged to accept a mission that will change their lives and even influence the course of history. When

Jesus called his first disciples, they became a part of just such a challenging operation.”

Into the Word

Before class, use a Bible dictionary to research and summarize on 12 sheets of paper all biblical background information on each of the 12 apostles, one apostle’s information per sheet. (Research background only, not what they did after [Matthew 10](#). About some, little or nothing will be known.)

Divide students into three groups, giving each group one of these identities: 1-Peter, Andrew, James, John; 2-Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew; 3-James of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot.

Have each group choose an actor or actors to portray their characters and dramatize backgrounds. The dramatizations should include also how life has changed because of Jesus (up through [Matthew 10](#) only), what has Jesus called them to do during the upcoming mission, and how Jesus has prepared them for the mission.

For example, Group 1 should talk about family fishing businesses. Answering Jesus’ call required that they give up their livelihood and settled lives in order to travel through the countryside with Jesus, etc.

Allow preparation time first. As groups work, move among them to help as necessary. Your advance research will have added to information that is available in the commentary. Have the class act out the skit(s).

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Operation Lost Sheep” activity, from the reproducible page. Have students work in groups to paraphrase the cited portions of the Bible text to complete the dossier for the mission.

After either activity say, “Jesus trained his apostles so that they would be prepared for this first mission on their own. We have received hours of training by way of sermons and Bible studies. Let’s think about how we can use what we have learned to fulfill a mission Jesus has for us.”

Into Life

Before class, gather information about the missions supported by your congregation. If your congregation has a missions committee, invite a member of that committee to explain the work and needs of these missions. Be sure to have him or her mention needs for volunteers in these mission endeavors.

After the presentation, distribute handouts (you prepare) that list all the missions just discussed. Select a task force from your class to plan a way to

participate in a project of one of the mission programs. Ask the task force to report back in two weeks. (*Alternative.* Distribute the handout for class members’ participation as individuals.)