

Prayer

Shout aloud to the God of our salvation! He has blessed us, He has healed us, He has challenged us, He has helped us, He has forgiven us, He has changed us, He sustains us, He delivers us, and He has reserved a place in heaven for us! Praise God for the wonderful things He has done for us! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Community Spirit

Pray for the people who you know who live near to you. You may or may not have much of a 'community spirit' where you live, but you can still pray for those around you!

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the gift of life
- Pray against hatred in the world, and pray for peacemakers
- Pray for athletes at the Olympic Games

Meditation

How long have you waited for the Lord?

Are there prayers unanswered that ache within your heart?

Is there sickness in your body, soul or spirit which needs healing?

Can you bear the waiting for a loved one to be saved?

Do you long for Your church to be filled with God's love?

How long have you waited for the Lord?

And how long has He waited for you?

Are there gifts of His Spirit He longs to give you even now?

Is there a part of your life remaining troubled, which still needs His light?

Can you hear the Lord calling, but you still hold back?

Do you offer yourself unreservedly to receive the Lord's blessings?

How long has He waited for you?

These longings are not distant and far apart worlds;

They are one, and each provides the answers to the other.

Pray for the faith which brings the two together.

Bible Study - Matthew 10:1-4

¹ Then Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits, and to heal every kind of illness and affliction. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as 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 Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

Review

At the beginning of chapter 10, Matthew tells us about Jesus' commissioning of the twelve disciples. At this point in the Gospel, we only know about the call of five of them; Peter,

Andrew, James and John (4:18-22) and Matthew (9:9). Over the years, many have asked why Jesus went on to commission the twelve without saying anything about them or how they were called. This is the kind of question we cannot answer of course, but it is true to say that Matthew's primary concern is always Jesus, and the disciples rarely feature in his Gospel except as a group (with the possible exception of Peter in chapter 16 and then in his part in the Passion narrative from chapter 26). The stories we have of the call of the disciples are recorded by Matthew only because they tell us something about Jesus, rather because they say anything about the disciples. The calling of Peter and Andrew, James and John describe the commencement of Jesus ministry and His authority (4:18-22), and the calling of Matthew describing the priority of Jesus' ministry to 'sinners' (9:9)

The whole group is only described as the 'twelve disciples' here in Matthew, elsewhere and in most of Mark and Luke, they are simply talked of as 'the twelve'. In addition, Matthew also describes them as 'apostles' for the first time (10:2). The reason why Matthew used this term was because it strongly connected with what Jesus planned for them. The word 'apostle' means someone who is 'sent' (which is literally what the Greek means), and the passage we read tomorrow will describe how Jesus sends the twelve on a mission to do the same kind of work that He had just shown them. The unique title of the 'Twelve Apostles' was later used of the twelve, and a different 'twelfth' disciple named Matthias was added after the death of Judas (Acts 2:26). They were regarded as the true witnesses to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and it was they who were commissioned to go into 'all the world' (Matt 28:19 and Acts 1) to preach the Gospel.

Clearly, all this points to the importance of the commission here is our text (10:1) which was for active service under the authority of Jesus, and it was to be solidly based upon what they had seen and heard of Jesus. The list of the names (10:2-4) is unique to Matthew, but is close to the list that is commonly known; Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas (Luke records James as 'Judas, son of James'). Any attempts to try and clarify the different Gospel lists has proved inconclusive, and I am not sure it matters, because what is important to Jesus is that a defined group was been chosen; the figure 'twelve' representing the new people of God who would replace the twelve tribes of Israel. It was also important that Peter was named first, because he became the leader of the twelve and had a clear role to play later in the Gospel (see above).

Through all this, one thing remains clear, however. The mission upon which the disciples were to embark was rooted solidly in the authority of Jesus, in His commission (10:1) and His example of ministry. There are a number of places where Jesus' ministry is summarised, but here, Jesus talks about it as matter of 'signs and wonders', of 'casting out unclean spirits and healing every kind of illness and affliction'. We will discover more about the nature of this call and ministry in the rest of chapter 10, but it is interesting that Jesus starts here. Jesus seemed unashamed to call his disciples to do those things He had done which were both spectacular and also helped people. By doing what Jesus said, the Gospel would have a door into the lives of people who needed help; and secondly, the casting out of demons was important because it was an outward demonstration of Jesus' supreme spiritual authority which would have been clearly understood in those days, even if we struggle with the whole matter of deliverance today.

For myself, I pray that God's people will, even in our day, see themselves once again as the inheritors of this clear and exacting call. It is a starting place, and there is and always was much more to Jesus ministry; but if we miss the starting place, how will we ever build a ministry truly based on Jesus' example? We will examine how it all this works in the days and weeks ahead. This all challenges me deeply about my life and work as a Christian today, and I hope it does so for you.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group why Jesus may have chosen twelve men as a team of disciples.
2. What does it mean to you when someone places their trust in you for some task? Do you ever feel like this about God who has called you to be His disciple?
3. Discuss in your group why it is that there may be a little confusion about who was a disciple, and who was not (Matt 10:1-4; Luke 6:12;16; Mark 3:13-19).

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Some of the greatest Christians who have done the most astonishing things for the Kingdom of God have been people who felt that God had called them in a special way, and they were not content to think of their discipleship as 'ordinary' in any sense. When God's people have this sense of special faith, then almost anything becomes possible.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Write down a list of the twelve people you know who you would use as a group of 'disciples' to assist you in any great call you had to fulfil. Doing this may help you become more aware of what this process involves.*
- *Seek the Lord in prayer about what it means to you to be His disciple. There is something special that the Lord wishes to say to you, and you need to hear this.*

Final Prayer

Hear the words we speak to You, we pray;
Listen to our hearts, and feel our emotions;
Answer us when we call on Your name;
For in You alone, we have confidence. AMEN