

## Prayer

O Lord, reveal Your love for us in all its fullness:  
 You are ready to receive our confession of faith, and bless us;  
 You are ready to hear our confession of sin, and forgive us;  
 You are ready to accept our repentance, and be gracious to us;  
 You are ready to forgive our sins, bind our wounds, and heal us;  
 You are ready to show us the path of faith, and guide us;  
 We praise You, O Lord, for Your love. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Community Spirit

*Pray for those who are on councils and committees that govern your local communities. Pray that they will seek the good of all and not the advantage for their own cultural groups.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for people experiencing droughts and turmoil in Africa*
- *Give thanks for the gift of life*
- *Pray against hatred in the world, and pray for peacemakers*

## Meditation

You called Abraham to follow you into the unknown ... and he did.

You called Sarah to trust you and bear a son ... and she did.

You called Israel to accept Moses' leadership ... and they did.

You called Caleb and Joshua to stand firm for You ... and they did.

You called Deborah to lead God's people ... and she did.

You called Gideon to test you and then act ... and he did.

You called Ruth to break down cultural barriers ... and she did.

You called David to become a servant before he was a King ... and he did.

You called the Queen of Sheba to honour Your greatness ... and she did.

You called Elijah to confront sin and wickedness ... and he did.

You called Wisdom to show God's truth to the world ... and she did.

You called Isaiah to speak about God's salvation ... and he did.

Lord God, You call us to follow in their footsteps ...

## Bible Study - Matthew 10:5-10

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following commission: 'Do not disperse yourselves among the Gentiles, or enter a town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but concentrate on the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, preach the good news that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give, therefore, without charge. <sup>9</sup> 'Do not take gold, silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup> no food-bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the labourer is worth his keep.

## Review

The time had come for Jesus to stand back and hand His mission over to the disciples, and He did so with instructions similar to those found in other Gospels (Mark 6:8-11, Luke 9:2-5 and 10:3-12). His reputation had spread throughout the Jewish regions of Galilee, so Jesus sent His disciples to continue His ministry in places where His work and authority were already respected. The disciples were called to do what Jesus had Himself already done (10:7,8), so they could never claim credit for what they did; they could only act in faith, and give glory to Jesus. By following in His footsteps, they would set the foundations for the later mission of the early church, which Matthew clearly had in mind. In this passage, Jesus began by giving the disciples a clear 'commission' (10:5); the disciples were told where to go, what to do, what to take, and where to stay; it was all basic, and essential.

If we are asked to do a task, we want to know firstly where to go, and Jesus told His disciples that the mission was to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' (v6 – see also 9:36), adding that the disciples should not disperse themselves further. The disciples had to start with limited aims, even though the salvation of the whole world was at stake, and Matthew knew that eventually the risen Christ would give the ultimate instructions to 'go into all the world' (28:19). In the mean time, Jesus told the disciples that they should not to go and settle themselves somewhere before beginning their ministry. The task was urgent, and they were to 'preach the good news' as they went (10:7). No opportunity was to be lost, and the disciples simply had to follow what they had seen Jesus do.

The following instructions set out in memorable terms the essentials of the mission call. The disciples would undoubtedly come across those who were ill and who needed healing (10:8) and when they came across lepers, who they would have avoided in the past, Jesus' example (8:1-4) meant they had to touch them and heal them as well. The other two features of their call were more dramatic, and if not for the first disciples, then certainly for us! The disciples were called to 'raise the dead' (10:8), and this was not some allegory about 'spiritual awakening'. This would not do justice to the prior example they had of the remarkable raising of the little girl (9:24,25), in which Jesus dealt with family distress at the death of a child, something which was far more common at that time than today. Lastly, they had to cast out of demons. Here, the disciples had Jesus' example of dealing with demons 'with a word of authority', such as with the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28ff) or those who controlled disease, as in the mute man (9:32ff). They understood that it made sense to cast out demons, because demons had no place in the Kingdom of God. The power of evil has always been found in bondage to illness or forms of behaviour, and the power of Christ has always been available to set people free from such evil.

The second half of verse 8 onwards describes the conditions under which missionaries should work. Much of what Jesus said about this was typical of rabbinical practice of the day, or, at least, it was what they were supposed to do. Jesus strictly re-asserted the disciplines of discipleship because of the urgency of the mission and this meant little time spent on possessions and money. In the text, a sense of urgency is created by the Spartan image of mission, but it forced Jesus' disciples to live by what they had learned from the Sermon on the Mount; 'do not worry ... about what you will eat or drink' (6:25ff). Here there is some discrepancy between Matthew and Mark, because Mark says that the disciples could take a staff (6:8), whereas Matthew apparently says no (10:10). However, if you read carefully, what Matthew appears to say from verse 8 onwards is that a missionary should receive provision for the present, but not for the future, and the disciples were to trust in God completely for the future. In addition, the word 'two' (10:10) could apply to 'sandals and staff' as well as 'tunic', again suggesting that a missionary should indeed wear normal clothing but not take more than their immediate needs; Jesus did not intend them to walk barefoot and without any means of support on rocky roads!

All these instructions need to be applied now in the different times and culture in which people do the work of God, and this has been going on now for two thousand years. Nevertheless, the radical nature of what Jesus said remains a strong challenge, particularly in a materialistic world such as that of today. Anyone who behaves according to this pattern would stand out, but that may be what we are called to do as disciples of Christ today!

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Which part of the instructions in this text challenges you most, and which would be most difficult to understand today?
2. In what ways does your church fulfil this calling, and in what ways should it fulfil this calling?
3. Do you agree that 'raising the dead' may be unnecessary because Jesus has been raised? How may we best understand this command?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*I find this whole passage very challenging. It constantly reminds me that in my heart and in my practical working life, I need to be 'stripped down to the minimum' and willing to work with only the essentials. It is only when my mind is so focussed that I am able to feel free to be creative as God requires of me. This will work out differently for different people, but that is the genius of such passages. God always uses His Word!*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Read through this passage carefully, and after some prayer, consider where and how it is challenging you most. Let the Lord guide you to putting His Word to you into practice.*
- *Discuss this passage with a close Christian friend and talk through whether it can revitalise the mission of the church today if taken seriously. What are your responsibilities in the face of this challenge!*

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, I rejoice in the love You continue to show me. Help me remember the cost of that love; Your life, Your ministry, Your death, and Your resurrection. Give me the grace to respond by offering all I have in Your service, and being content to follow You all my life. AMEN