

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Week Eleven**  
**Matthew 10:1-31**

**Day One**

1 He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil 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.

10:1-4 – When God calls you to a purpose, He calls you by name and He calls you to Himself. It isn't just a task, it's a relationship with Him. I have found that when I function in my purpose, God provides for me and takes care of all I need to fulfill my purpose. He speaks to me, and my relationship with Him is somehow closer and more intimate.

Here Jesus called twelve men to Himself and gave them authority. That was a question the Jews always asked Jesus; "By whose authority do You do these things?" Jesus did the things He did in the authority of His purpose. That is all the authority you need as well, for your purpose is your command from heavenly headquarters. When you move in your purpose, you don't need an invitation to the party, so to speak. You invite yourself. Someone else said that you nominate yourself for the job. I like that.

If your purpose is to help the poor, you don't need anyone to invite you to do so. You show up where the poor are and start helping them. I was reflecting on this issue of authority the other day, and came up with nine aspects of purpose that give you the authority to do whatever it is God wants you to do. Here they are:

1. **The authority of results** – your purpose helps you bear fruit; no one can question your authority when you can show them the fruit of your labors.
2. **The authority of clarity** – your purpose is one clear, concise statement of what you are on earth to do. People will follow and respond to you because you are direct and focused.
3. **The authority of knowledge** – your purpose enables and even drives you to be skilled at what you do. You will have more insight and knowledge about your sphere of purpose than others.
4. **The authority of calling** – God assigned your purpose and wants you to fulfill it even more than you do. He will open doors and create opportunities for you to succeed.
5. **The authority of integrity** – your purpose causes you to live by your values, the things that are most important to you. You don't want to undermine your purpose, so you have added incentive to be an honest person of your word.

6. **The authority of courage** – your purpose makes you a leader where you function. You face your fears because your purpose is more important than you are. There are people waiting to benefit from what you do and who you are and you press through obstacles to be there for them.
7. **The authority of success** – your purpose gives you endurance to press through the barriers and endure long periods of suffering and regular setbacks. You don't only achieve results; you do so over a long period of time, which constitutes some measure of success
8. **The authority of humility** – you know your source of strength, which is God Himself. You acknowledge your source but you don't deny that you are good at what you do because God helps you.
9. **The authority of honesty** – you do not engage in “false humility” (denying what you can do) but you know your limitations and face your limitations and weaknesses with openness.

**Can you think of any others to add to the list?**

### Day Two

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, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is 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 take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; 10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

v. 5 – Jesus did not send the disciples to the Gentiles because they were not ready to go. They still had a deep bias against Gentiles that plagued the Church's mission for years after Jesus' ascension. Notice the difference between this scenario and the one in Acts:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

**Where has Jesus assigned you to work? Where are you most effective? Among what kind of people?**

v. 6 – Jesus' specific focus was Israel, but He gave many indications that God was also interested in the Gentiles. Yet Israel had the first opportunity to respond to and accept Jesus. Paul continued this emphasis, and went first to the synagogue to preach. Once the Jews rejected his gospel, however, Paul then went directly to the Gentiles, among whom he had great success – greater success than he ever had among the Jews.

v. 7 – Jesus was quite specific with the apostles, which is a word [apostle] that simply means “one who is sent forth.” Matthew referred to the kingdom of God as the kingdom of heaven, for Jews were hesitant to use God’s name lest they misuse it. Their message was simple: with Jesus’ arrival, it meant that God’s government and rule in the lives of individuals was closer than ever before. Jesus did not come to entertain or even just to heal disease; He came to establish the rule of God in the daily affairs and relationships of His subjects.

v. 8 – Jesus instructed them to keep their message simple, with only one major point to remember. If I have been guilty of any one thing when I teach, it is that I get too complicated. I try to say too much, overly concerned that I may miss something. My most effective messages, however, have been those with just a few or even one point to remember. I met two women recently, who both recounted messages they heard me preach. They told me what I had spoken about, and they had both heard me about eight years ago! That is the kind of speaker and writer I want to be, but I have not always lived up to that aspiration. **How simple is your message? Do people remember what you say? How can you be less complex in what you do?**

There is a phrase easily overlooked in this story and it is, “Freely you received, freely give.” This does not mean that Jesus’ workers were never to expect any remuneration for their work. Yet they were not to tie their remuneration to what they gave the people. I am Nigeria as I write and the people paid my way over, but could not give me any honorarium. I agreed to those terms and now I am teaching as if they were paying me an exorbitant sum. I am not holding back. Why? It’s because God has freely given to me the revelation and insight that I am teaching. I will not tie my teaching to money, although God knows I need it.

**Are you freely giving what you have freely received?**

vs. 9&10 – Jesus sent the disciples out and told them to trust God for their provision. They were God’s workers and He would take care of them. They were therefore not to take anything with them for their trip – no suitcases with clothes and other necessities. On this trip, they were to take nothing but their message. I am intrigued by how specific Jesus was with the men for this journey. I suspect He would like to be that specific about the journeys I take. I need to listen more carefully for both my message and my means of travel when I go.

### Day Three

11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his 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, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.

v. 11 – I have stayed in many homes during my years of travel and it is often hard for me to do. “There’s no place like home” is a common saying. I would add, “There’s no place like a hotel when you can’t be home.” I remember staying in a home in Cape Town, South Africa once. I was assured that the family was accustomed to having guests and that their home was quiet and a good place to retreat after a busy day of work and ministry. What a joke! It was the noisiest place I ever stayed at. I can remember one night my hosts said we would eat at 5 PM. I came to dinner for 5 PM, but they had invited some guests and we had a small home Bible study first. We didn’t eat until 9 PM! Every afternoon the gardener would work in the yard and use the yard machinery right outside my window. That sure took care of any nap to ward off jet lag!

Yet staying in a home does help you connect with the people to whom God has sent you. Jesus was teaching His men that the Lord would provide for them as they went out. They would use this strategy over and over again, and many times the Lord used this to impact the families where the apostles stayed.

vs. 12&13 – **How would the apostles know if they had come to a worthy home?** They were to bless that home with peace and if the blessing returned to them, they were to move to another home. **I wonder what this dynamic looked and felt like? I wonder how the apostles knew whether or not their peace was received?**

I think they were able to discern the disposition of the peace they bestowed by the heart of the homeowners. Jesus was a controversial public figure. Some opposed Him, some were neutral and some were followers. It is interesting that the peace that the men looked to bestow on the household was tangible; it was something that you could sense and feel. I want that kind of dynamic where I go, don’t you? I want to offer people a peace that makes a difference and is backed by God’s guarantee, so to speak.

v. 14 – Jesus instructed His disciples not to waste any time trying to convince someone that what they taught was from God. He told them to move on and shake the dust from their feet as they went, indicating that they did not want to move carrying the dirt that they accumulated in that unreceptive place.

It’s difficult to know when to apply this principle. No one wants to run from a challenge and it’s easy to think that if I redouble my efforts then perhaps success is just a short distance away. Yet Jesus was saying to be sensitive to the receptivity of your audience and don’t waste time on those who aren’t ready for what you have to say about the Lord. *God, give me the wisdom and discernment to know when to stop what I’m doing and move on.* You can apply this principle to life outside of ministry. **What are you doing now that perhaps you need to stop doing and move on? Is there a relationship with which you should do the same?**

#### Day Four

15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. 16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.

Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

v. 15 – Wow! It will be worse for a town that rejected the apostles than it was for Sodom and Gomorrah – and it was bad for Sodom and Gomorrah! There's that phrase again: "I tell you the truth." **What else could Jesus do?**

v. 16 – This verse is difficult to interpret, for Jesus asked His disciples to be shrewd and innocent at the same time. Those two traits seem diametrically opposed to one another. **How can anyone be like a dove and snake at the same time?** You will never know unless you read on and interpret the verse in context.

v. 17 – Jesus told

### Day Five

19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

vs. 19&20 – Jesus didn't say *if* they were arrested, He said *when*. This isn't a promise for everyone, thank God. Yet I am intrigued by how many significant historical figures spent some time in prison, men like Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, St. Thomas More and others. I have come to the conclusion that you will not affect the world if you are not *willing* to go to jail for what you believe. I hope no reader ever has to spend any time there, and I certainly hope I don't, but I am ready if it comes down to going rather than deny something I know to be true and hold dear. I just hope they will allow me to write while I am there!

Jesus urged the disciples to treat their imprisonment as a ministry moment. They were not to worry what to say when they found themselves in prison, but they could be sure that God had sent them there for a reason, to meet with someone who needed to hear the good news. This is what happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi (see Acts 16).

Anyone who has ever spoken about or for God in front of people knows the dynamic to which Jesus was referring here. We know what it's like to be a channel for the Holy Spirit to be God's mouthpiece. There are times when I have been aware that it wasn't me speaking. It was my voice and vocabulary, but it was God using me to speak to others. It is a phenomenal experience and one where you definitely speak beyond what you know. There are times when I've said something that I have wanted to stop and say, "Where did that come from?"

v. 21 – Jesus was not sharing good news where relationships were concerned. The message that the apostles carried was not always going to unite people and families. At times, it would not only divide them, but also stir up violence and betrayal. When you are dealing with zealous followers of Judaism, Islam, Catholicism or any other sect or movement, followers can be quite upset when family members depart from what they consider “the faith.” Jesus warned repeatedly that persecution was to be part of the gospel message.

It is hard enough when those you don’t know oppose you, but when it is those closest to you, it can be almost too hard to bear. My wife and I certainly felt some of this from our family when we broke with our traditional denomination. We have forgiven our families and they us, but my wife and I determined not to repeat that dynamic with our own children. They are now adults and aren’t doing everything spiritually that we would like or prefer for them to do. So we are being supportive and minding our own business, not pressuring them to do what it is that we want or feel they should do.

The key for success in the Lord is not quitting! Jesus promised that those who endure to the end will be saved. I want to endure to the end. **Is this your goal? Are you wavering in any area of your faith? Has anything happened that has caused you to draw back from following the Lord with all your heart?**

### Day Six

23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! 26 "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

v. 23 – These instructions seem to be exclusively for the early disciples. Jesus promised that they would not go through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man returned. This obviously cannot be a reference to the Second Coming of the Lord, so it must have meant something else. I consider it a reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but we don’t have time to look at all the evidence that this is so. Suffice it to say, however, that it cannot be a reference to the Lord’s return. Once again, Jesus had to say, “I tell you the truth.”

Jesus told His disciples to flee persecution and that is what they usually did. Modern followers should do the same. There may be a time when one must face persecution and there is no way out. Otherwise, persecution can be interpreted that it is God’s time to move on to another audience and place of ministry. There were times when the Apostle Paul wanted to stay in a location but the persecution was too intense, so he had no choice but to move on. I always interpret that as God’s plan to keep Paul moving.

I have sensed that I work best when I move from place to place. When I stay put too long, I seem to get on people's nerves and things happen to spoil the good work that has been done. While I must face any personal responsibility I have in making that happen, I must also view it as the hand of God, keeping me in motion so that I touch as many people as possible.

**Do you know how you work best? Have you developed a strategy so that your best is what you do as often as possible?**

vs. 24&25 – Jesus was assuring the disciples that their persecution was because of Him. They were not to be discouraged by their tribulations, for it was exactly what Jesus was experiencing Himself. It is like what the Lord told Samuel when Israel wanted a king:

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you (1 Samuel 8:6-8).

It can be hard not to take insult and persecution personally, but it is not about you or me; it's about Him. If they hated and treated Jesus badly, there is a chance people will do the same to His followers. You can actually encourage yourself with that truth, as Paul told the disciples:

They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said (Acts 14:21-22).

That strikes me as a strange way to encourage the people but, if they knew that they were sharing in God's plan and will for their lives, it made (and makes) the pain and suffering more bearable because it is for a purpose.

v. 26 – **What is Jesus final advice to His followers in this case?** He told them not to be afraid of those who threatened and persecuted them. Jesus gave them an example of this when He was seized, tortured and murdered. He did not fear His captors, but put His trust in God totally and completely. You and I will do well to do the same should we ever face the same dilemma.

### Day Seven

27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from

the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

v. 27 – One indication that fear was not a factor for the disciples was for them to freely proclaim what the Lord had taught them. The intimidation would come to keep them quiet, otherwise the people could not have faith:

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Roman s 10:17).

**Are you intimidated by anyone or any group that is keeping you from speaking the truth? Of what are you afraid? What can you do to get free?**

v. 28 – Jesus urged His followers to fear God, for only God has real power, to either save or destroy. Proverbs also begins with that admonition:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7).

v. 29 – God is in control. I don't have to fear and I can look for His plan in everything that happens! If persecution arises, perhaps it's time to move on to a new venue. If arrested, then it's time for a new audience! God is aware when small, frail and seemingly insignificant sparrows perish. He is also aware of my situation and yours, too. We can relax and trust in Him, especially when things happen that we don't understand or even like. **Did you need a reminder that God is in control?**

v. 30 – Don't be afraid! That admonition is one most often mentioned in the Bible. I had a friend who once pointed out that when God says not to fear, it's often too late! We're already afraid! Examine your life right now. **Where is fear hindering your work and progress in the Lord? What can you do to face that fear and move on?** Remember, the Spirit is there to help you, so ask for His help and then do what you need to do to be free from fear.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).