

Matthew 10D

- Class is back in session tonight
 - Once again, we return to studying Jesus as He trains His disciples in the ways of the Kingdom program
 - The Kingdom program is the mission Christ gave to every disciple that as we go, we are to seek for lost sheep in the world
 - We proclaim the Gospel message of Christ and His Kingdom
 - And by the preaching of that message, we know the Lord will stir hearts to bring men and women to faith in Jesus
 - In effect, we're recruiting a population of citizens for the Kingdom in anticipation of its arrival
 - This will be the Church's mission until the Lord returns to inaugurate His Kingdom on earth
 - And in Chapter 10 Jesus is training the twelve apostles to carry out that assignment
 - As ambassadors for Christ, they would explore strange, new worlds...seek to bring new life to new civilizations, boldly going where no disciple had gone before
 - We follow in their footsteps, so we too need to learn the lessons Jesus is teaching to these men in this chapter
 - We've reached the third step in my six-part outline of this chapter
 - Part I was the objective, Part II was the message, and tonight we study Part III, the method Jesus gave to these men
 - As we study this method, keep in mind that Jesus does all the hard work of the Kingdom Program, and we're just learning to walk with Him
 - When it comes to bringing new spiritual life into the world, we're like a spiritual midwife
 - It's the Spirit Who brings new spiritual life; we just receive that person

- We show up at the end of the process to receive a new life and then begin a process of caring for that new believer
- So let's look at the Method, which has three steps, starting in v.8

Matt. 10:8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

- Jesus tells His apostles that as they go their way, they will have power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons
 - Now last time I checked, these activities are not usually part of an evangelist's job description
 - And that's for good reason...because Jesus is speaking to men who had very unique roles in the early church
 - These men were called and commissioned as apostles, and as we discussed in earlier weeks, that means these men had a unique role
 - To remind you of what we've discussed in the past, every believer in the body of Christ receives a spiritual gift
 - A spiritual gift is a supernatural equipping made possible by the Spirit of God
 - Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians that the Lord assigns each believer a spiritual gift according to His will
 - As we work in our spiritual gift, we bring glory to the Lord
 - Spiritual gifts glorify the Lord but not because the activity itself is miraculous but because they achieve miraculous results
 - Two people can pray and their prayers won't appear to be miraculous, but the person with the spiritual gift of prayer may achieve miraculous results
 - Two people can teach the Bible, but the teacher with the spiritual gift to teach will make far greater impact on the students
 - Example of spiritual gift of evangelism....
 - Those miraculous outcomes are not credit to the person; it's evidence of the Lord working through a gift to bring glory to Himself

- Others who see your gift at work will recognize the Lord was working through you for their benefit
- We simply showed up...it was the Lord Who did something special through us...*availability, not ability*
- In that way, the Lord receives the glory through our spiritual gifts
- I went through that background to remind us that the apostles also received a spiritual gift
 - The apostolic spiritual gift was a special and unique gift befitting an apostle's unique role in the church
 - That gift included multiple supernatural abilities, some of which can also be given to other believers individually (like healing)
 - And in v.8 the Lord is referring to supernatural abilities that are part of the apostolic spiritual gift
 - For example, Jesus told the apostles to heal the sick, because the apostolic gift included the ability to impart supernatural healing
 - They also raised the dead, cast out demons and authorized Scripture
 - We even see apostles pronouncing judgment on sinning believers which results in their physical death
 - Those examples show us that the apostolic gift was truly unique and unequalled in the church
- Jesus was referring to those unique abilities in v.8, telling the apostles to go out using the spiritual gift they had received
 - Therefore we need to generalize Jesus' instructions a little for our sake
 - To the apostles, Jesus said heal and raise the dead, etc. because their spiritual gift allowed them to do such things
 - But for us, we should hear Jesus saying "use *your* spiritual gift"
 - Teach, pray, serve, give, help, discern, or do whatever your gift appoints
 - As we work in our gifting, we show the love of Christ to those we meet along the way
 - And through those moments, we draw people's hearts to God

- Think of it as a supernatural magnet that draws lost sheep
 - As the Lord does a spiritual work through us, He's calling His lost sheep
 - Jesus described the effect this way

[John 10:14](#) "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, [John 10:15](#) even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

[John 10:16](#) "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

- Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the One drawing men and women to Himself
 - And Jesus assures us that His sheep will hear His voice when He calls
 - But that call comes in a variety of ways, including by our witness, as we minister through our spiritual gift
 - When we minister to someone in our spiritual gift, we're giving opportunity for a lost sheep to "hear" the voice of their Shepherd
 - The lost sheep will be attracted the work of the Spirit...it will appeal to them, leading them to ask questions, to look deeper
 - In that way it becomes a test to know whether someone may be receptive to the Gospel message
 - Jesus used this method frequently...do you remember the story of the woman at the well in John 4?
 - As Jesus talked to that woman, there came a moment when Jesus used His spiritual insight to test her heart

[John 4:15](#) The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

[John 4:16](#) He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

[John 4:17](#) The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband';

[John 4:18](#) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

[John 4:19](#) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

[John 4:20](#) "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

- Jesus used a spiritual gift to minister to this woman
 - He revealed hidden truth, a gift of discernment or knowledge, pointing out the woman's ungodly lifestyle
 - That's something that could not have been known apart from a supernatural insight that comes from God
- Notice in John 4:19 the woman responds immediately saying I perceive you are a prophet
 - Jesus' spiritual power caught her attention and drew her into a spiritual conversation
 - She then proceeds to ask Jesus about where is the proper place to find God...that's a lost sheep trying to find her Shepherd
- Jesus had put a test before this woman, to see if she was a goat or a lost sheep
 - If she had been merely a "goat" then His accusation would have offended her, and she would have walked away
 - But because she was a lost sheep, she heard her Master's voice and she was drawn to Him despite His stern statement
 - The lost sheep of God are instinctively drawn by demonstrations of His love and power
- So we're supposed to use our spiritual gifts as part of the method of seeking lost sheep
 - Your spiritual gift is your superpower, your way to jumpstart a conversation about Jesus
 - So if you have the gift of service, serve an unbeliever in unexpected ways, and they may be drawn into a conversation
 - Do you have the gift of giving? Give to someone who never imagined they would receive generosity, and watch their heart soften
 - The gift of discernment? Speak wisdom and insight to someone suffering in difficult circumstances and see where that leads

- The gift of mercy? The gift of healing? The gift of prayer?
 - Show Christ's love to someone in those ways, and don't be surprised when they open up in a spiritual conversation
 - If you haven't been approaching evangelism in that way or if you don't even know what your spiritual gift is, then you have some homework to do
- That's step one in our method...as you go, minister to others in your spiritual gift as a means of drawing their attention to God and testing their hearts
 - And that leads us to Jesus' second instruction in the Kingdom Program method at the end of v.8: freely give what you have freely received
 - The apostles were sent out with something precious, something of immeasurable value – the Kingdom message
 - They had the words of life, the way to heaven, the explanation for how to be reconciled to God
 - That is the most valuable thing you could ever offer to another human being
 - Just think...given what you know now about heaven and hell, about salvation and judgment, what would you give to have that knowledge?
 - If you had to buy your salvation from God, what do you suppose the gospel would be worth to you?
 - How much would you be willing to pay to know how to go to Heaven? Wouldn't you give everything? Every penny?
 - What good would your money be anyway if in the end you left it behind to spend eternity in eternal punishment?
 - My point is we know our message is priceless, and when we give something of great value to another person, it's human nature to expect something in return
 - Psychologists call this effect reciprocity, and it's a basic human instinct
 - Salesmen are taught how to use this principle to encourage a sale
 - They will give a potential customer a free sample because they know it will trigger reciprocity

- For example, when you go to the supermarket or warehouse club, you see those ladies serving samples of food in the aisles
 - If you take their sample, have you noticed how it makes you feel obligated to buy their product?
 - You feel guilty for saying no to that nice lady who was nice to you first...that's reciprocity at work
- We all experience this sense of obligation when someone is kind to us, and Jesus wants us to be aware of this principle so we don't abuse it
 - Because in the world's way of thinking, when you give someone an incredibly valuable gift, you expect something in return
 - You expect the other person to reciprocate in some way
 - And if they don't at least offer to repay or just thank you, you consider it rude or ungrateful
 - That's how the world works, but that thinking is counter productive to advancing the Kingdom Program
 - Because taking a worldly approach to reciprocity causes people to resist accepting that free gift in the first place
 - Remember my example of the ladies in the supermarket aisle...
 - Have you ever declined a free sample even though you wanted to try it?
 - Why did you stop yourself? It was probably because you knew you would feel obliged to buy something afterward
 - So to prevent yourself from spending money on something you didn't need, you didn't engage in that exchange
 - You didn't want to incur a debt of kindness because you knew you would feel pressure to make a purchase
 - So imagine what would happen if we operated with the expectation that people should give us something every time we shared the Gospel?
 - What if we told people we have a free gift for them but we meant it the way the lady in the supermarket aisle offers
 - If we give people our message expecting them to repay us in some way, then we're abusing the reciprocity effect

- It's like ministries that tell you their teaching resources are free..."for a donation of any amount"
- Immediately you realize that free isn't really free...they want to be paid for something they received freely
- If we do that with the Kingdom message, people will decline to listen to our message
 - People are smart...everyone knows how the reciprocity principle works, even if they can't name it
 - So people will instinctively resist a free offer if it comes with a catch
 - Which is why Jesus says what we freely received from Him we should give freely also, with no strings attached, no expectation of reward
 - We all need to understand that...there is no reciprocity with the Gospel
 - Jesus didn't tell us we could have salvation freely but He expected us to pay Him back somehow
 - You can have salvation freely now, but I'm expecting you to give Me some percentage of your income
 - Eternal life is free, but you better show up to church every week...
 - Unfortunately, ignorant or selfish church leaders have tried to make people think the Christian experience works this way
 - They put a guilt trip on you making you think that Jesus is expecting pay back for your salvation
 - That kind of reciprocity robs us of the joy of serving Christ
 - Jesus said His burden is easy, light...it doesn't come with strings attached
 - We received the priceless gift of salvation without any cost...Jesus paid the price to make it available, you paid nothing
 - So how could we possibly put a price tag on others receiving it?
 - That's why VBVMi has never charged for its resources or placed any burden, reciprocal or otherwise, on those who use them

- We received the word of God freely, and we give it back freely
- So if you're giving money or your service to Christ because you feel some guilt and obligation, please stop
 - If that's why you give your time or treasure, you're serving your own guilty conscience, not Jesus
 - He doesn't want guilt offerings from us, or service done out of obligation
 - He tells us to give freely out of joy and to serve Him with an eager heart, out of the desire to bless others
- So Step 2 of the method is offering our message without expecting anything in return...which leads to Step 3

[Matt. 10:9](#) "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, [Matt. 10:10](#) or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

- Jesus say go out in a state of dependence and vulnerability
 - Notice in v.9 Jesus says don't take gold, silver or copper in a money belt, which suggests living day-to-day
 - And in v.10 He adds don't take a bag, extra clothes, extra footwear or extra staff
 - The men could take one coat, one set of sandals, one staff, but not extras
- The point is we must operate from a position of vulnerability and dependence
 - We don't pack a suitcase with extras of everything we might possibly need
 - We don't wait to accumulate a cushy retirement before engaging in the Kingdom program
- That's our human nature...to protect against every possible contingency, to make every preparation before taking a step of faith
 - We tell ourselves we don't want to become a burden on others
 - But the truth is we don't want to lose control

- But as hard as it may be for us to accept, Jesus wants us to work from a state of dependence: dependence upon the Spirit and dependence on others
 - First, we need to get used to the fact that we are dependent upon the Spirit in this work
 - Remember our objective: finding lost sheep
 - That's an objective that depends entirely on the work of the Spirit...God has to produce the sheep, we can't
 - And He has to direct us to them, because He knows where they are and we don't
 - So if we aren't comfortable leaning on the Spirit, we're just going to stumble around in the darkness getting nowhere with our mission
 - The Spirit doesn't give us the whole plan in advance, so we have to live in the moment, day-to-day as we seek lost sheep
 - I think one of the reasons modern Christians experience so few miracles in our everyday life is because we've made self-reliance our highest goal
 - God has to strip away all those sources of support and move us out of our comfort zone so He can guide us into unexpected moments
 - We received a letter from a member of our congregation:

I thought God had set me aside because I have been struggling through a really long season. Yesterday, there was a story about a woman who was helping the homeless during this recent winter snap by putting them in a hotel. My immediate thought was "Great, another person I am NOT like." Then I said to God, "If you put a person who needs help in my path tonight, I will help them." I was coming out of a restaurant and a young man asked if I could spare 20 dollars for a hotel. I said, "I'll do you one better, I'll pay for your hotel outright." "Get in and I'll drive you back to your hotel." Then I prayed for safety. While driving, I was reminded of Pastor Steve saying that preaching the gospel was like being on an easter egg hunt. All the work was done for us, we just needed to keep looking for the "egg."

So I preached the. most. awkward. gospel presentation ever. I even started with "This is gonna be awkward" and launched into my practiced 3-minute testimony. I tried to be as theologically correct about salvation as I knew how to be. Not sure if he was an egg. But thanks to the teaching, the pressure was off and the gospel was preached.

Signed “a donkey” P.S. I hope I didn't lose heavenly rewards by publicly stating my good deed.

- When it comes to leading us to lost sheep, that’s how the Spirit works
 - He uses dependence to bring people into relationships...people we would have otherwise passed by unnoticed
 - How many times have we read stories of people saved by a “chance” encounter with another person
 - A car accident, getting locked out of a house, returning a lost wallet, a package delivered to the wrong house
 - God uses everyday circumstances like that to bring strangers together
 - And in those moments, the Kingdom message can be shared and a sheep can be found
 - But if we’re wrapped up tight, in our world of self-reliance with every contingency covered, we will overlook those moments
 - Ironically, you can go into the mission field too prepared, and as a result, unable to hear the Spirit when He directs you
 - So when find yourself in unexpected situations, like a flat tire on the side of the road, expect God to use that moment in miraculous ways
 - Don’t get mad or worried...get excited because the Spirit may be about to put a lost sheep in your path
 - And if you’re thinking that way, seeing dependence as opportunity not burden, then you’re living the Kingdom method
- But there’s a second reason to go out in a dependent mindset...remember that reciprocity effect I explained earlier?
 - Here’s where you can put it to work for the Kingdom in the right way
 - When you accept a free gift from someone, they will expect you to offer to reciprocate
 - They gave your car battery a jump start, they put gas in your tank, or bought your meal...

- So now you owe them a debt of kindness
- And that's when you have the chance to give them the greatest gift they could ever receive
 - As you thank them for their kindness, you say "I'd like to give you something out of gratitude, something very valuable..."
 - "It's the good news of how you may enter Heaven, to know that God has forgiven you so He will welcome you into His presence when you die."
- Because of reciprocity, the person will listen when they might not have done so under other circumstances
 - They will feel obligated to allow you to offer them something
 - That's how Jesus wants to use your dependence on others
- And it's what Jesus means at the end of v.10 when He says a worker is worthy of His support
 - The Lord will reward your willingness to be dependent by bringing people to you who will help you
 - And then when someone gives you support, take an opportunity in that moment to reciprocate by giving them the Gospel
- Finally, step four:

Matt. 10:11 "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

- This fourth step of the method bridges us into the next section I call the Result
 - So we will only look at it briefly today...we'll look at it in greater detail next week
 - Jesus says that as you go out seeking the lost, inquire who is worthy
 - The word translated inquire carries more intensity in the Greek
 - It's the same Greek word that Herod used when he told the magi to search for the Child born under the star
 - It means to investigate, to carefully scrutinize

- So Jesus is asking us to carefully investigate a town or village or community before beginning our work
- We are to choose our stopping place with some forethought, to consider our options and choose with some consideration
- So do we strike up conversations at the local coffee house? A street corner? At our place of business? To our next-door neighbor?
- Jesus' point is that preparation is part of the method too
 - He's balancing His earlier advice that we go about our work in a state of dependence following the Spirit
 - Sometimes we hear that direction and we think we just walk out our door and see what happens
- Operating in ignorance and without proper preparation isn't the same thing as being dependent; it's arrogance and foolishness
 - We must balance dependence with intellectual preparation by doing our homework and being wise as serpents, innocent as doves
 - So as you enter into a situation to find lost sheep, don't walk in blindly; without an understanding of the situation on the ground
- We have a brain for a reason, so Jesus asks us to combine spiritual dependence upon the Spirit and our material dependence upon strangers with a careful process of thoughtful preparation
 - That preparation will help us avoid dangers or waste time in places that aren't sensible or helpful to our mission
 - A single woman seeking for lost sheep in dark alleys at night is not sensible
 - A group of teenagers traveling through a war zone in Central America is not sensible
 - The Lord doesn't give us bonus points for how much danger we expose ourselves to in the course of our work
 - Perhaps a good example from recent news would be the man who was killed by natives on the Island of North Sentinel

- Based on the reports of that incident, he seems to have ignored obvious signs that there was no one worthy to receive him
- He tried to get on the island multiple times
- In earlier efforts he had been hit by arrows and was forced to swim back to his ship when they burned his canoe
- He persisted, and was finally killed on his third attempt to land
- We don't know what the Spirit was telling him, but this was not a case of persecution or martyrdom
 - The trouble didn't come to that man because of his faith...he went looking for the trouble and he found it
 - Paul didn't work that way, and Jesus isn't asking us to operate that way
 - On the contrary, He says carefully investigate the best place to go as you begin your work
- There's more we will say on this third step, because it leads us into our next section on "the results", which we study next week
 - For now, it's time for me to issue my weekly challenge
 - Each week in this chapter, we've learned a little more of how to serve Christ in the Kingdom Program
 - We've learned our objective was to find lost sheep, so I challenged you to see the world with spiritual eyes
 - Knowing that everywhere you looked, you might be seeing a lost sheep waiting to be found
 - And then last week we learned the circumstances, calling and content of our Kingdom Message
 - And then I challenged you to obey Christ so as you go you preach the truth to someone
 - And we've already heard a testimony of how someone carried out that challenge and was blessed by it
 - So now, here's your challenge this week... practice getting comfortable with vulnerability, with being dependent on the Spirit

- Look for those moments that God creates for you, put your spiritual gift to work and freely give what you have been given
- And let's see if we can get a few more testimonies this week