

## “LIVING IT...” *Part 1*

- Matthew 10:5-15

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- Matthew 10 -

**Matthew 10:5-15** *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city*

*of the Samaritans. 6 "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 9 "Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, 10 "nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. 11 "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. 12 "And when you go into a household, greet it. 13 "If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!*

A few years ago, there was a film out called “Failure to Launch.” It was about a guy who was by far a *chronological* adult but was still living at home with his parents. The time to “go” had truly come and gone and he was yet still left living in his parent’s basement. Sadly I must say that the primary concept there is anything but the exclusive realm of Hollywood. Such is a reality in our “Peter Pan” generation! But this paradigm strongly plays out in the spiritual realm also. Many of us have become very adept at ‘living in our ‘*Big Daddy’s*’ basement’ instead of growing up and stepping out into the real spiritual ‘adult’ world and taking our place in the body of Christ. Because we remain self-centered, self-absorbed and self-entitled, we effectively remain like children in our Father’s house... ‘Peter Pans’ in God’s kingdom.

Stepping up...or **out**, *so to speak*, is a very real part of our Christian maturation. Such is not an option any more than living your life in your parent’s basement playing video games is for any one of us in our earthly living. But yet the fact remains that many of us are at least attempting to live in such a manner! We would claim that we have been a Christian for years, and yet as Hebrews 5:12 tells us “*You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.*”

Because we are not busy being adults, we are busy being children. Principles like work, service, sacrifice, loyalty, faithfulness and consistency are lost in the muddle of gossip, tantrums, laziness, toys, fantasy and impulsive decisions. So at a time when your life should be actually ‘on the train’ you in fact never even made it to the station. Life remains a roller coaster of emotionally based actions and child-like decisions. The struggle with those same basic sins are still in play and you are still looking for your place in the body and what your gifts are.

Instead of serving Christ and letting Him teach you and guide you, you prefer to run through the house in a Halloween superman costume. You don't know exactly *what* you're supposed to be doing but you are sure it involves a cape...because you are obviously really something, and unless it comes with a leadership or pastoral position you're not interested. And by the way if this church doesn't give it to me I will go find one that will, and if people still don't recognize my vast talents I'll just take it solo! I wish this scenario was simply reserved for the single young people, but in reality, marital status, educational degree and quantity of age have little to do to deter such a life situation.

Yet when we look at how the *scriptural* accounts play out, we see a very different picture! The narrative before us firstly begins with Jesus *sending out* these guys. And that seemingly inconsequential detail actually explains a lot and is critical for everyone involved. Jesus “**sent out**” and “**commanded.**” That sounds very much like Jesus is calling all the shots! Instead of seeking the Master on this, the fact is many of us treat church like a ‘job fair.’ We are looking for something perpetually fun and exciting, not too time consuming but yet highlights my leadership abilities and for God's sake, doesn't require a lot of weekends or financial sacrifice. *Can you find that position for me please? Oh...and again, a cape please...*

But Jesus tells us that “**He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**” were laid. (Eph 1:4) And in Jeremiah 29:11 He says “**For I know the plans I have for you...**” So such is clear that GOD has His own ideas concerning us, and thus we aren't so much to find our own way but rather “seek him” and HIS plans and calling for us. That will surely play out in more than a prayerful scouting expedition, but rather some real physical and bodily involvement. But finding such direction comes with a “catch”...a “requirement” if you will. In Proverbs 3:5-6 He calls us also to “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.**” And Psalms 37:23 “*The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way.*” Are you living in the realm of His “way?” And is He ‘delighted’ in it?

Jesus “sent out” these guys. In fact, I can't recall any time where a guy ran solo on this aspect of his life and made it. I don't know about Apollos...nothing recorded about where he came from, but he still had plenty of people around him speaking into his life all along the way, in both a calling/encouraging manner and a corrective manner. Certainly throughout the establishment of the New Testament church, people didn't go it alone...they had others in their lives when it came to calling, and mission, and going forth. The fact is, family and community is often lived as an *optional* aspect for us, but factually it is impossible to truly live out our faith lives without such. Because GOD USES OTHER PEOPLE AROUND US TO SPEAK INTO OUR LIVES!

Recently I had a situation where someone rolled through here and thought that he ought to be anointed and positioned without ‘proving himself.’ That doesn't happen here, because it doesn't happen in God's kingdom realm. There were and are no anointed ‘Rambo's’ out there. There were, and are, *requirements* and *training* and *proving*. Scripture is replete with the concept of proving oneself faithful!

*“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;  
and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” Luke 16:10*

*“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant;  
you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.  
Enter into the joy of your lord.’” Matthew 25:21*

Jesus sent out these guys, and He did so with a noticeably specific plan. This wasn't a 'shoot from the hip' kind of thing. There was no 'winging it' in His plan for us. That it no way means we will always know the details of his plan, or the outcome concerning us and our called ministry. But God has a plan for us and He sees the end of it as clearly as the beginning! Note that Jesus sent these men first to the Jews...the lost nation of Israel. Not because they were more important, nor would the Jews receive Him wholesale. Thus typical worldly "success" would not come their way, yet God sent them just the same. Because in fact the Jewish *rejection* of Him would play an important part of the birth and formation of the early church. Just as the rejection of God by some plays into the kingdom plan today too. Certainly none of these guys would have understood that at this point, but that was not required because *CHRIST understood!*

We need to throw out the world's concepts of success in all of this, and understand that we must see ministry...and achievement in such, as looking very different than we tend to think on the human level. It's all so much bigger and oh so much more eternal than that. We tend to want to keep score and testify of constant and consistent progressive forward movement, but that comes from seeing everything in the realm of an American success story: where the "right-now" is primary yet God is working in and for the eternal realm!

Certainly no one could have seen how the death of Lazarus could have been anything but a bummer, yet in the end, there was a great glorification of Christ in such, even if at the time it was painful for all involved. All this is to say that when we start talking about 'calling' and 'going' and 'serving', we cannot use the measuring stick of the world! Not for *who* and *how* one is chosen, nor what is *success* and what is *failure*! I know a guy who walked away from maybe 4 regular teaching situations so he could go out solo and "preach the gospel." Excuse me? Oh you mean so you can be 'the man' and wear the cape...

They were to indeed share the gospel, but further, they would also be a conduit for a great outpouring of the power of the Spirit of God in their midst. Fulfilling their ministry calling was about more than having the ability to teach a bible study. There was a supernatural aspect to it. Something beyond talent and natural ability. There would be aspects like having one's house in order...a humble spirit...an ability to work well with others...a faithfulness and loyalty to others. Our 'stepping out' will naturally bring great peace and support from those we call family and community.

For these apostles, there would be special spiritual gifting of healing of the sick, cleansing of lepers and even raising of the dead! All of which would be, *after all*, the gifting and exercise of the Holy Spirit *in them*. What that means is that you can go to seminary because you want the cape and all, and be the best in your class. But if the Spirit of God is not present in the exercise of your calling, it will all still be a bust...even if you immediately go to 2 services and build a new church building. Once again, that is measuring by the human standard and the earthly yardstick!

How do we measure then? CAN we measure? Is it in the lack of trial and problems? Is it in the attendance numbers and the tithes? NO, no, and no. If there can be any measurement at all, any confirmation of calling, it is in the active presence of God in the midst of the exercise of such as well as the peace and support of those around you. But even that too can be oft misleading, because many of us don't know our scripture or don't *want to see ourselves in such*, and so we don't know that the presence of God can be a buzz at times and a painful shellacking on other occasions. It can be the salvation of one individual, and the sinful exit of another. Both are the presence of God...both are His hand at play. Because your future with Him involves both a merciful and gracious shoulder to cry on as well as some wood-shed spankings. BOTH are the active work of the Holy Spirit in your life, as He teaches, disciples, and "separates the sheep from the goats." So participating in both is the work of and hand of God.

**They were to “freely give.”** Ministering for Christ is not a hobby and not something you dabble in on the weekends when it’s convenient! Again, that is the spiritual Peter Pan still living in His parents basement wanting something that is “easy to catch” ...so it fits into his schedule. Getting serious about this is for the spiritually mature. I recently bumped into a guy I first met well over a decade ago, and he told me when I met him that he was “trying to figure out what God wanted him to do.” Then I lost track of him for years and when I ran into him again, I asked him how he was and his immediate response was “I’m still trying to figure out what God wants me to do.” I wanted to reach over and slap him! I think it is just a whole lot easier to stay ignorant and be perpetually “on the search,” instead of actually engaging, and God forbid, *finding* the answer to that search! I mean, if I found it, then I would have to actually play ball!

Christ was making sure that their dependence was upon the Father and upon the active supernatural power of the Spirit in their midst. GOD would act. It wasn’t about them. Their part was obedience, and God would do the rest! And their ministry wasn’t fluffy and cotton candy, and it sure isn’t today. They weren’t messing around! Jesus Himself instructed them to walk away if they were rejected. If the people wouldn’t hear them then they were told to cut them loose and shake off the dust from their feet. The stakes are too high to ‘play church’ and to build a social club.

Your service to Him is, by His design and call, crucial for the kingdom. It doesn’t matter if it is happening from behind a pulpit or from behind the coffee counter! Together we are a body of Christ and together we are the hand of God. You and your place matter to Him. It matters to me. It will not be easy, it will not always feel good or be personally rewarding. It will be costly and imminently sacrificial. And we do it because Jesus did. And being like Him is “living it.” That’s the picture. He’s the example. He’s our model.

*“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”* 1 John 2:6

*“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”* 1 Peter 2:21

*“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”* John 13:15

Note also that Jesus was specific as to where they were to go and what they were to do there. While God ‘loves to give good gifts to his kids’ (Matthew 7:11), I think most often we fail to recognize what ‘good gifts’ are and we have our own criteria. So we quickly move to “**MY** will be done” instead of “**THY** will be done.” It is a terribly sad thing to watch someone who has set their sights on a *position* rather than an *opportunity to serve*. What follows is frustration and disappointment, which then leads to animosity and bitterness. I have watched this play out many times when someone needs to be a pastor or an elder instead of needs to be a servant. Eventually they leave to go find such an opportunity for position instead of humbly serving God for the KINGDOM’S sake. I highly encourage you to seek biblical qualifications as well as personal talents and gifting. Because to fail in this will only lead to a lot of future disappointment and brings shame upon the kingdom as you fight against God and the community He has placed you in. This is one of the reasons why God has placed us in fellowship communities. Let the people around you speak into your lives. So often they can see things you cannot!

But the bottom line herein is to *engage*. We must realize that God saved us for a reason beyond His love and beyond eternal life. If you are reborn, you are **reborn a soldier of God**. And “*No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*” (2 Timothy 2:4) Are you “entangled” in the world today? Too busy and too distracted by shiny objects? Are you trying to live as a Christian without living for Christ?

*And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places  
and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.* Isaiah 58:11