



## **TOGETHER WE CAN TAKE THE GOSPEL TO EVERY HOME**

**MATTHEW 9:35-38; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11  
LESSON 1**

### **MAIN POINT**

As followers of Jesus, we are called to pursue His heart and pursue the lost.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What is your absolute favorite place to spend time in our community? Why?**

**How have you seen the spiritual climate of our community change over the past several years?**

**In your own words, describe how our church should impact the spiritual climate of our community in the future?**

We must be people who not only enjoy our community, but who also impact it. Just as Jesus sent out His disciples to follow in His ministry footsteps, so is He sending us out to this community. Though we might be tempted to look at the challenge before us and feel defeated, the magnitude of the ministry God has given to us is actually empowering because we know that God is for us and the spread of the gospel. Because of that, we can be obedient to whatever He is calling us to do for the sake of the gospel.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what God's Word says and means for us.*

In his gospel, one of the themes Matthew highlighted repeatedly is the compassion of Jesus. Wherever He went, Jesus showed compassion to those in need. In chapter nine

alone, Jesus healed a paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8), raised a girl from the dead, healed a woman of chronic bleeding (Matt. 9:18-26), healed two blind men (Matt. 9:27-31), and healed a man who is unable to speak (Matt. 9:32-34).

### **What can we learn from Jesus' example in this chapter?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 9:35-38.

### **What examples of Jesus' compassion do we see in verse 35?**

Matthew describes Jesus going "about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Jesus' compassion can be seen in two ways here: He healed their diseases and afflictions and He proclaimed the gospel.

### **Why does Jesus want us to be concerned about people's spiritual and physical needs?**

### **What are the dangers of focusing on one of these more than the other?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11.

### **How did Jesus model radical compassion for us?**

### **Based on these verses, what characteristics does Jesus' example call us to embody as His followers and partners in His mission?**

As a result of Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing ministry, crowds gathered around Him. As Jesus saw them, His heart broke. Having compassion for the sea of humanity meant aching for them, feeling in His gut the depth of their spiritual and physical needs.

What about us? Do we care? Do we go out on mission? Are we empty of compassion, insulated from unbelievers? Are we afraid of what people might think if we show compassion to sinners? When Jesus saw people, He had compassion. Do we even look? Do we even care?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER RE-READ MATTHEW 9:35-36.

### **How does this help us see the difference between Jesus and other religious leaders of His day?**

Matthew reminds us that Jesus was profoundly different from other religious leaders in Judea. One of the key ways that Matthew described these differences in this passage is that Jesus went "throughout all the cities and villages." Jesus came to the people, rather than making them come to Him. This is a stark contrast to the rabbis of the day and even to John the Baptist. People had to come to them. Instead, we see in Jesus' mode of ministry an important truth about God: He pursues the lost with compassion. When Jesus walked the earth as Immanuel (God with us), He was not a hermit or one hidden away in a monastery. He went where the people were.

## **What did Matthew communicate by describing the crowds as helpless, or like sheep without a shepherd?**

God had commanded the leaders of Israel to protect the marginalized (the poor, the widow, the orphan, etc.), but instead of caring for them, the religious leaders neglected and abused them. They imposed heavy religious obligations on the people who already carried heavy spiritual and physical weights. Israel's shepherds neglected God's people (see Ezek. 34); nobody seemed to care for them.

Jesus was notably different. While He never ignored the elite, we see throughout His ministry that Jesus attracted the "weak" and "unimportant" members of His society. He was even called a friend of sinners and tax collectors. He ate with them and talked to them.

## **Read John 10:14,16. What does it mean that Jesus is the Good Shepherd? Why is this important?**

The people were lost, helpless, and like sheep without a shepherd. But Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, had come. He cared and even gave His life on the cross for the sheep. Today He sends out Christians to join in and to continue His work (see John 10:16).

## **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

The call of compassion in Jesus' teaching is clear. We live in a world desperately in need of the gospel, but there's good news! There are immense opportunities for reaching the people of our community and beyond with the gospel message. In order to be faithful to what God has called us and to pursue this mission with His heart, we must take seriously Jesus' call to care for and share Jesus with the people in our community.

**What does it mean to labor in the field where God has placed you?  
What does this look like for you?**

**Where do you sense God is calling you to give to help? With whom can you share Jesus and His compassion?**

**What can we do to engage more workers in the harvest in our church and our community? What is one thing holding you back from signing up to be one of these workers? How can you combat fear or doubt?**

## PRAYER

End your time together with prayer. Pray that God will give each member a willingness to sacrifice his/her life for the sake of people who do not know Christ. Pray God will give each member the courage to go to the hard places. Pray God will help each member to surrender completely to His instructions given in His commission to us. And finally, pray that God will send out workers from His church and this group into His harvest.

## COMMENTARY

### MATTHEW 9:35-38

Jesus' extensive ministry took Him throughout Galilee where He went to synagogues and taught God's Word, but He didn't stop there. He also served needs by preaching and healing. By preaching the good news of the kingdom, Jesus met the most pressing spiritual needs among the people who listened to Him. By healing every disease and every sickness, He also attended to their most pressing physical needs.

As a result of Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing ministry, crowds gathered around Him. As Jesus saw them, His heart broke. He was stirred deep down in His heart. The Greek word for "compassion" refers to emotions that are felt in the deepest sense. The word refers to the inner parts of a person, or the bowels where emotions were thought to originate. It conjures images of extreme pity and mercy. Having compassion for the sea of humanity meant aching for them, feeling in His "gut" the depth of their spiritual and physical needs.

Because of Jesus' loving heart for the people, He looked on them as sheep abandoned by their shepherd. God had directed the leaders of Israel to care for the people. Instead of caring for them, the religious leaders neglected and abused them. They imposed heavy religious obligations on the people who already carried heavy spiritual and physical burdens. Israel's shepherds neglected God's people (Ezek. 34); nobody seemed to care for them. But Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, had come. He cared and even gave His life on the cross for the sheep. Today He sends out Christians to join in and to continue His work. As the crowds made their way to Jesus, He could see they were weary because of the oppression they endured. He saw how their needs had worn them out, leaving them pillaged and plundered but not helped. No wonder Jesus' heart broke for the people of Galilee.

Jesus' love for the needy Galileans fostered a sense of urgency. He wanted to meet their needs as soon as possible. In addition to seeing the people as sheep, He spoke of them in terms of a great harvest. A farmer knows when grain needs harvesting, and he wastes no time gathering it. He realizes the window of opportunity, and the ungathered grain will be lost in the field. Jesus saw the opportunity for a rich spiritual harvest. He wasted no time in gathering it. Otherwise, the window of opportunity would pass.

Seeing the needs of people, Jesus called on His disciples to pray that God would send out workers into His harvest. The harvest is great; opportunity is there for us. Believers

should pray for God to call workers to missions, for we know God works through the prayers of His people.

Jesus instructed His disciples to direct their prayers to “the Lord of the harvest.” A reference to God, the phrase implies His sovereignty to direct people into fields to reap the abundant harvest. What a comfort and an encouragement this is for believers. God is the Lord of the harvest, not us. We are not responsible for the kingdom’s growth; God is. Yet God calls us to cooperate with Him in praying and in going. As we pray, we ask Him to send out workers. In other words, we ask the Father to give His people a push.

## **PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**

Verse five calls believers to imitate Christ. Paul admonished Christians to have the same disposition or attitude that our Lord exhibited in His life and death. In this way Paul introduced one of the greatest affirmations about Christ in the New Testament. In this section of the passage, Paul drew back the veil of eternity to give us a glimpse of the glory that belonged to Christ in His pre-incarnate state.

The form of the term translated “existing” indicates a continual, perpetual existence. In other words, our Lord was not a created being. He was present with the Father at creation, and He has been continually coexisting with the Father throughout all of the ages. Although our Lord was God in His pre-incarnate state, He did not view His deity as something to be used for His own advantage.

Our Lord was willing to divest Himself of His prerogatives of deity. The word translated “emptied” is thought by some to be the key expression in this passage. Christ in His pre-incarnate state did not hold to His deity for His own advantage. Rather, He was willing to empty Himself for the sake of others. Christ took the form of a slave.

Paul affirmed that Christ demonstrated humility by His obedience, even to the point of dying. The word translated “obedient” literally means “to give ear to” or “to listen attentively.” The words translated “to the point of death” indicate the progression of that horrible death by crucifixion to which our Lord was subjected. Paul pointed to Christ’s love for others and His obedient service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. Christians who follow Christ’s example and exhibit self-sacrificial love toward other believers and willing obedience to God help promote their church’s unity.

The progression in this passage is obvious from the opening statement in this verse. God’s exaltation of Christ is precisely because of His death of humiliation on the cross. The Heavenly Father exalted Christ on the basis of His death. The word translated “exalted” basically means “to raise to the loftiest heights.” Contrary to all earthly values, Christ’s painful, humiliating death resulted in His exaltation to the loftiest heights by His Heavenly Father. The word translated “gave” comes from the same root as the word grace.

Paul’s statement is introduced by a construction that was used to show either purpose or result. All that has been described in this glorious passage has to do with God’s purpose

in salvation. The result of Christ's exaltation is that one day every person will bow in obedience and worship before the One who bears that name which is above all names.

Not only will all persons and powers in the universe bow before the exalted Lord, they also will confess Him as Lord. The term translated "confess" means "to declare openly" or "to proclaim." All voices of the universe will proclaim in unison on that day that Jesus Christ is Lord.