



Chapter 10

Morale is an essential indicator of any organization's health. When it's good, it can be the fuel that carries teams over obstacles and to great accomplishment. But when it's bad—oh—it's really bad. A sure-fire formula to kill morale is this: give subordinates incredible responsibility for the mission, but withhold the authority needed to get it done. Responsibility without authority is an exercise in futility!

Icebreaker:

1. Have you ever been in the position of being responsible for something you didn't have the authority to carry out? What happened and how did the situation make you feel?

It stands to reason that responsibility and authority should be distributed in equal measures. What happens, though, when a *supernatural* responsibility is assigned to a group of ordinary first century guys? Could this be a setup for an epic fail?

You might remember that Matthew's Gospel contains five major teachings from Jesus. *The Sermon on the Mount* (chapters 5-7) was the first and now, chapter 10, is the second. It's known as *The Missional Discourse*.

Verses 1-4

Here is the fruit of the disciples' prayers for laborers at the end of chapter 9. Prayer was the original missional task for Jesus's followers to engage. We should take note.

2. Are you surprised Jesus called His followers to put their energy toward prayer rather than just "getting to work"? How is prayer a part of God's work?

Now, "The Lord of the harvest" (9:38) calls twelve disciples and, most importantly, empowers them to do the very same kind of supernatural things Jesus has done. Note the similarity in language between 9:35 and 10:1. Like Jesus, the disciples will "heal every disease and every affliction."

"Prayer does not equip us for greater works; prayer is the greater work."
— Oswald Chambers

Verses 5-15

It's incredible that Jesus's plan is for frail human beings to participate in the mission and not just spectate. Here we see a specific missional focus on the people of Israel as well as instructions for the disciples to travel light! To be clear, they should have no expectation of getting rich along the way, and some people may be less than enthusiastic toward the disciples' efforts.

We should be mindful of how this call of Jesus includes parameters that would later be rescinded; namely, the extraordinary lack of provisions (Luke 22:35-38) and the exclusive focus on the people of Israel (Matthew 28:19). The former could be motivated both by the urgency of the mission and to display God's provision, while the latter follows Jesus's own early ministry focus (see also Romans 1:16).

3. The underlying question we might ask is why Jesus doesn't go with them. What reason(s) could Jesus have for sending the disciples out on their own?

Jesus certainly is using this as a teaching experience for the disciples. It's a limited assignment. They are to go to familiar places, in a short window, and be back soon. He is not pushing them out of the nest just yet.

4. Imagine being in the place of the twelve. How would you be feeling? Are you excited? Nervous? Terrified? Have you experienced this as you follow Jesus?

Verses 16- 39

Wow! There's a lot here! This section widens the scope of mission to include Gentiles (see verse 18), and the commissioning is brutal and sobering. Words like *wolves*, *serpents*, *flog*, *dragged*, *death*, and *hate* fill this part of instruction. These underscore the stakes for those who closely associate with Jesus. None of these happened to the disciples in their first journey. Instead, Jesus is speaking about future kingdom assignments for the disciples (see The Book of Acts) and for future generations of Jesus's Kingdom Community after them.

5. How does Jesus's commissioning strike you? What glorious promises accompany each of the descriptions of persecution or hardship?

6. Read verses 38-39. How would you explain this "Christianese" jargon to someone who does not yet know the Lord?

Verses 40-42

Jesus closes with the bold claim that, as His Kingdom messengers are sent out, they are inextricably identified with the King and "him who sent me." It's a call for hospitality and kindness toward those who love the Lord. He will repeat a similar idea again later in Matthew 25:40: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." We also hear echoes of the "Golden Rule" from Matthew 7:12: "whatever you wish that others would do for you, do also to them."

7. What does taking care of our own brothers and sisters demonstrate to the world?

8. What are some practices you have or can put into place to make sure you are taking care of Jesus' family today? How has the kingdom family taken care of you?

Tying the Bow

This chapter calls us to take up the same ministry and mission that Jesus modeled. The cost is high, but we are assured of God's provision in an ultimate, eternal sense no matter the outcome. The One who calls us is faithful!

9. After these 10 chapters, how is Jesus helping you learn to be a disciple? Take time to pray with your group about ways you can more faithfully follow Jesus's example.