

Your Manual for Harvesting Souls, Part 2

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If you think it's warm in here now, it's going to get hotter. Turn in your Bibles to Luke 10, [where] we're looking at Jesus' manual for harvesting souls.

I think most of us, [if we've been Christians for a while], have probably heard of different [evangelism] programs. Years back there was the Evangelism Explosion curriculum, there was the Discipleship Evangelism curriculum, [and] more recently The Way of the Master series. These are great programs designed to help people share the gospel and disciple people, to bring them into the kingdom. [These programs are also designed] to equip [Christians] for different kinds of circumstances [and] to help them understand where people are and how to bring them to Christ. Many have been brought to Christ by those trained in these programs, but the fact is that sometimes programs like that can actually be a hindrance. People start to try and learn them, [but] it's daunting. You have to memorize all these verses, and, "Now, when you do this make sure you say this. And if they say that, you say this." You go out there and you're terrified that you might make a mistake. Some people never say anything because they think, "I just can't get all this information straight in my head. I don't think I can share the gospel."

Well, you can. You can. Be encouraged. You can learn what you need to learn in order to share the gospel with the lost. If it seems difficult to

learn how to share the gospel, it's because it is. It's like reading your Bible, or praying. [Those are] pretty easy task[s], those two things, [aren't they]? No. The concept is easy, the idea is easy, [but actually doing it is a different story]. You know how easy it is to watch TV, or to read your favorite magazine, or to read the newspaper. Do you ever struggle trying to read the newspaper? You're trying to read the newspaper and your mind is wandering? No. It never happens. But what happens when you read the Bible? It's like everything you could possibly think of but God and what's in that passage is running through your mind. [It is] the same thing with prayer. Why is that? [It is] because there is a spiritual battle going on, and Satan doesn't want you to learn how to share the gospel. He doesn't want you reading your Bible; he doesn't want you praying. Those are the things that do the most damage to his kingdom, and so, it is war to the knife when you begin to try and learn how to share the gospel. This is why the Christian life is called a battle, a war: a spiritual conflict is raging behind the scenes.

When you learn how to share the gospel, you become a formidable weapon if you open your mouth because when you utter the gospel, you utter the very power of God for all those who believe [see Romans 1:16]. It is God's weapon to bring anybody who comes into the kingdom into the kingdom. Be encouraged about that, and be encouraged that God has often used less than stellar gospel presentations. Some of you have come to Christ through some very wimpy gospel presentations. I talked to somebody who came to Christ when they heard somebody teach on the verse: "Behold the behemoth" [see Job 40:15]. It just struck him that this God is the one who made dinosaurs, and from that, [he thought], "God is the creator, and I need to be saved." Through "behold the behemoth" [he was saved]. I mean, think about the "intricate" gospel presentation given to the Philippian jailer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," and he was [see Acts 16:31]. You can remember that. It's not too complex. Class is over. Many have come to Christ through tracts, and Gideon Bibles, and billboards, and all kinds of odd pieces and scraps of gospel data spread around.

It's been my experience that the fear of being rejected, the fear of persecution, the fear of losing relationships, of being thought of as some sort of religious fanatic or Jesus freak, is the real problem. I don't think it's that people can't tell somebody, "This is what Jesus did. He's the Son of God who lived a perfect life, died on the cross for the sins of men, was buried, and rose again on the third day. If you believe in Him you'll have the free gift of eternal life." That's not all that complex. You may not say it all that smooth[ly], and you may be fearful that you're going to misquote a verse, [but keep in mind that] you *always* misquote a verse because the Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, and I think we only have a few Hebrew and Aramaic speakers here.

Most people don't share the gospel because of fear. They're thinking, "What if I talk to the atheists and they have a slick argument, or [to] the evolutionists? What if they bring up the natives in Africa? I don't even know any of them." The essence of the gospel never leaves their mouth, and that's the problem because God is more than willing to use less than perfect gospel presentations, but He can't use silence.

As we come to Luke this morning, what we're going to learn from Jesus is His methodology for reaching the lost. It's His manual for harvesting souls. This is the method that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. What's great about it is [that] you don't need to quote verses. You just need to tell people the truth. We began to look in Luke [10], seeing that Jesus is now sending out the seventy to go out and proclaim the kingdom, to preach the gospel. He [did] that with the Twelve at the beginning of Luke 9, and now He's doing it with the seventy, or, if you have the NIV, the seventy-two. There's an ancient manuscript and [translators] don't know whether it's seventy or seventy-two. Most of [the translations] have seventy, I think. Here we have Jesus sending out the seventy, and [Luke] describes the seventy's charge, and then [Jesus gives] a threatening of judgment on those who don't repent. Then [in the next verses, the seventy are] returning, [giving] their comments, and they're rejoicing. We have this series from verses 1-[24 of] the whole account of the sending of the seventy. We are looking

at the first twelve verses, which is the charge part, where Jesus is getting them ready to go out.

Jesus' approach is two-flanked. First, He empowers the seventy to go out, heal the sick, and proclaim the gospel in all the cities that He is going to go to. He, then, will come, in a second wave, and He and the [twelve] disciples will preach the gospel again. They will go forth and preach the gospel a second time, harvesting [some of those] who didn't repent the first time. Please follow along as I read Luke 10:1–12.

Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house." If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near." I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

As we learned last week in our little alliteration (Some people said, "I've never heard that word." [An alliteration] is when you make all the

points of [an] outline start with the same letter), we are looking at twelve perfect points proposed in this pericope that we can put into practice for proselytizing pagans. We have examined the first six steps of Jesus' manual for harvesting souls. [First]: Pursue God's purpose in saving you, which is to evangelize the lost. Second: Partner with others in ministry. Third: Plan to share the gospel with people more than once. [Fourth]: Pray for more laborers to be sent into the harvest. [Fifth]: Prepare to be persecuted. [Sixth]: Place your trust in Christ to provide for you as you minister to others.

Now we come to the seventh step in Jesus' manual for harvesting souls: Pass by some to reach greater numbers. Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]4. Jesus has just told [the seventy] not to take any extra provisions because He wants them to trust in God's providence to provide for them through those they attempt to evangelize. Then in the middle of verse 4, we read: "And greet no one on the way." Why would He say that? Think about that. Doesn't that seem strange to you? I mean, after all, He's sending them out to talk to people about the gospel, so why would He say, "Don't talk to people about the gospel as you go out to talk to people about the gospel"? Is that what He's saying? No, that's not what He's saying, [but rather], "Don't greet anyone on the way." On the way to what? He's sending them to cities, and towns, and villages where He Himself is going to come with the Twelve.

Now, if you've never been to the East and experienced the hospitality there, [you need to know that] it can be a very long process. You show up, and you say, "Hi, my name is Jack."

[They say], "Come into my house. Come into my house."

"Well, I'm really supposed to be..."

"Come, come, come, come," and they grab you by the arm and they sit you down. "Let me make some coffee," and man, you could bounce a horseshoe off [that coffee]. You're trying to drink it, and your heart's throbbing, and you're talking, man, you're ready to talk now. They just want to talk: "Tell me about your family. Tell me why you're here. Tell

me about your journey.” They want to know everything, and they tell you [things], and you ask them [questions], and two or three hours later, [they say], “Bless you, bless you,” and off you go. That’s just how it is there. You have those people come over here [to the West] and they say, “[Why do] people say, ‘Hi, how are you doing?’ and then walk away? Why don’t they talk?” They see Americans as very cold and selfish.

Jesus is talking to [the seventy] about this kind of thing. He says, “I want you to go from city to city, and as you go from city to city, you’re going to encounter all these travelers, and all these people, and all these farmers, and they’re going to [say], ‘Come, come, come,’ and you’re going to say, ‘Sorry.’ You’re actually going to have to be rude to them. You’re going to have to go against cultural custom because it’s urgent.” Remember, we learned [that] when [Luke] said, “And He sent out the seventy,” that word [that is translated] “sent out” means “to send out with urgency, or haste”? Why? [It is] because Jesus is going to die. Jesus wanted them to do the first wave of evangelism because He was going to come along [after them] and then He was going to die. This [was] going to be the first and maybe the only chance [for the people in these cities, towns, and villages] to hear the gospel twice in close proximity, and actually see miracles, and see the Messiah Himself. It’s urgent business. [The seventy are] just going to have to go by.

There’s a principle here. Jesus is not saying, “Don’t even acknowledge anybody,” but He’s saying, “Don’t engage in the typical, long, drawn-out, chit-chat, lollygagging, ‘How’s the weather? how ‘bout them Mets’ type of discussion.” He’s saying, “Don’t be going about greeting everybody. Don’t get bogged down in shooting the breeze, and having long conversations about things that don’t matter. Get to the city. Get to the town. Get to the village where I’m sending you, and preach the gospel, heal the sick, and then move on.” The principle here is: Sometimes you have to pass up some good ministry opportunities to reach greater numbers.

I’m telling you, you could talk to any pastor and he can tell you exactly how this is. You want to help everybody who asks. You just do. [You’re

thinking], “OK, I’ve got four hours to do my sermon because I couldn’t do it the day before because fifteen people interrupted me, and now it’s Friday, and I haven’t even opened my Bible.”

You’re kind of a little frantic, and [just then] the secretary [buzzes you and says], “Um, somebody’s on the phone and they need to talk to you.”

“Can we do it. . .”

“They say it’s kind of an emergency.”

[Groan.] “OK.” [So you pick up the phone, and say], “Hi! What can I do for you?” Forty-five minutes later, [you say], “OK, praise God. Yes, come in next week, and this problem will still be there, and we can deal with it then,” [and you] hang up.

All of a sudden, [the secretary pokes her head into your office, and says], “Somebody’s outside here and they were wondering if they could just stop in.”

[Groan.] “No!” You have to get to the place where sometimes you just say, “No!” Why? Is it because I don’t want to talk to those people? No, I love talking to people! The reason I had to change my e-mail address and hide it from everybody [is because] I had the whole world wanting to chat with me. Everyone wanted to fix my doctrine, and fix my theology. I became the online answer man to college students around the world. There were times when I would sit at my computer [for hours answering e-mails]. I can type about eighty words a minute, and so, I would just sit down there and I’d be pounding down one [e-mail after another] and they would just keep coming in [from] New York, Spain, Philippines. [By] three in the afternoon, my fingers [were] kind of limp, and I just said, “Hey, I’ve got to stop.” Why? [It is] because as good as that ministry was, and as fun as that ministry was, and as helpful as that ministry was, I could not be dealing with thirty people one-on-one when I had 1,000 people to deal with on Sunday morning. I could not do it, so I had to just shut down.

Now, those people are still alive, I think. I’m just not answering their Bible questions anymore. This is such a burden when you’re in the ministry. I know you know this because you have your own ministry; you have

your own spiritual gift. You're teaching your own Sunday school, or folding your own bulletins, or setting up your own coffee table, or whatever your ministry is in the church, you know that you have to get ready, but you also have laundry to do, and children to feed, and houses to clean, and bills to pay, and jobs to work in. We all have to do all of those necessary things—sleep, things like that. Then you have to do your ministry. Sometimes people want you to go to the green bean bake-a-thon, or they want you to go to a crafts symposium, or they want you to go to the home and garden show, or they want you to come to their little going-away thing, or their birthday party, or whatever. You want to go to every one of them, but there comes a time when you have to say “no.” Why? [It is] because you have to do your ministry with excellence, and the only way you can do that is [to] say “no” to some so you can reach greater numbers.

That's what we see Jesus telling [the seventy] here: “Listen, go against the cultural customs, don't stop and chit-chat with everybody along the way, just say, ‘I'm sorry, I have to go.’ Yes, they may be offended. Yes, it may be uncomfortable for you, but just do this because this is urgent. I'm going to die, and so, it's time to get out there and tell people about [Me]. You're not going to have miraculous powers forever. This is a rare occurrence, so get into the densely populated areas, do the miracles, preach the gospel, [and] move on.”

Eighth: Provide a blessing to those who provide for you. Look at [Luke 10:]5: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’” Now, if you've ever gone to Israel, or maybe you know somebody who's come over from there, one of the common things that happens when you enter their house or when you leave is, “Peace! Shalom!” they tell you. “Peace be to you.” It's a common greeting. It's what we see all over the Bible. Jesus, after His resurrection, when He appeared in the room with the disciples, do you remember what He said? “Peace be to you” [see John 20:19–21]. It's just a standard Jewish thing.

But here we have something a little bit more than just a general, cultural greeting. When the seventy went out, and they said, “Peace be to this

house,” they were not just saying, “You know what? I’m just giving you the standard cultural greeting,” they were actually bringing an offer of peace. Who were [the people receiving the disciples] needing to be at peace with? God. Isaiah 48:22 says, “There is no peace for the wicked.” When [the seventy] came to a house, and they said, “Peace be to you,” if those people were willing to receive them and hear their message, they would be reconciled to the God of peace. [The seventy] were offering [those people who received them] salvation. They were preaching the gospel of peace. That’s what Paul calls it in Ephesians 6: “Shod your feet with,” what? “the gospel of peace” [see Ephesians 6:15].

Isaiah 52:7 says, “How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Think about that. This is what’s so cool about being a Christian. You can bring peace to somebody. You can be an ambassador for Christ and reconcile men to God through the blood of Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us this in Colossians 1:19–22. [Paul is] talking about Jesus, he’s talking about His deity, and then he says this: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,” speaking of Jesus,

and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

You and I are the agents of that. Jesus did the work, and then we bring men to be reconciled to God, to have peace with their Creator, through Christ. That is such an awesome privilege! When you share the gospel, you’re basically saying, “Here is how you can know your Creator and be

reconciled with Him because now you're hostile to Him, as Paul says in Romans 8."

Look at [Luke 10:]6: "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him." If they receive you, if they hear your message, if they receive Jesus, they will actually be receiving the very peace that God offers through salvation. Look again, in the middle of verse 6: "But if not, it will return to you." If not what? If they don't want to receive you, if they don't want to provide for you, if they don't want to hear your message, if they don't want to believe the miracles you do are from God. If they don't want that, then that peace with God you offer them will return to you, but not to them.

I think one of the hardest things when you're sharing the gospel is when people reject the truth, especially if they seem interested and you're kind of getting your hopes up. They say, "Well, you know, we're really interested in talking to you about this."

You're thinking, "Oh! God's drawing them! Ooo, ooo, ooo!" You sit down, and you're telling them, and your heart is beating, and you're trying to tell them all of the things you know about Jesus, and what God has done in your life, and [that they] just need to believe, and this is what Jesus did.

You tell them all that, and then they go, "Ah, nah. That's not for [us]." Then you feel like a tire with the air let out—psst. It's sad. They don't want it. But you know what? You need to remember that only God can save somebody. He saves them, yes, through you as you are faithful to tell people the gospel message, but *He* saves them, *He* opens their hearts, *He* grants them repentance, *He* gives them faith. *He* does it.

You have to pass by some to reach greater numbers. You have to provide a blessing of peace on those who will hear the gospel of peace so that they can be reconciled to God. And if they don't want to hear it, you just let it return to you and move on. [Ninth]: Peacefully be content. Look at [Luke 10:]7: "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you." Now, why would Jesus say this? Well, this is why: If you ever looked at a map [that showed the distribution of land] during that time, [what do you have] between southern Galilee and north of Jerusalem? You have Samaria and

then [on] the other side [of the Jordan you have] a bunch of Gentiles. Jesus knows He's going to be sending [the seventy] out into a bunch of unclean, non-kosher areas.

When you've grown up never eating anything that's not kosher, it's pretty painful to sit down to fried snake, [or] to a ham sandwich. Jesus knows this, and we begin to see Him setting aside the dietary laws. He does [this] more and more, then in the New Testament [it is stated] very clearly, as we see [with] Peter [see Acts 10:9–16] and [in] other places [in the New Testament, such as Romans 14:20]. [Jesus is] saying, “Listen, you go there, they receive you, you tell them the gospel, you do your miracles, and then you eat whatever they give you.” In other words, “Be content with what they give you. Don't worry about dietary laws, don't worry about the clean and the unclean here. Men's souls are at stake, and I'm coming after you. Don't say, ‘Could you go find us something [else to eat]?’ None of that. You just eat whatever they give you.”

When you begin to share the gospel, you're going to encounter situations that are less than comfortable for you. Sometimes you want to share the gospel with a person, but he has the foulest mouth. You just want to walk away. Well, he has a foul mouth because he needs Jesus. [Maybe a person has] spiked hair [and he] looks scary. [Or] big nose rings and [other] things that [make] you kind of feel uncomfortable—big tattoos of monsters on his arms, [or] giant arms with tattoos [that make you think], “The guy's going to kill me. If this doesn't work, he's going to kill me.” You have to get out of your comfort zone. You have to sometimes just be content with things that are uncomfortable for you.

When I went to Russia, I ate with this big family. It was a big privilege. They were having this birthday party. I was there with a couple [of] missionaries, and they said, “Oh, this is huge, man, because the Russians are tight, [yet] you get to go [eat with] this family.” They sat me down next to the patriarch of this family, this grandpa. I couldn't speak Russian and he couldn't speak English. He got this little dish [of food]. There was not very much [on it], but he got it, and I was wondering why there wasn't more. He

slid it over in front of me, and in this dish were some translucent, smelly, raw fish fillets, soaked in some sort of brine. He did the [take some gesture], and though I don't speak Russian, I knew what he was talking about. He was saying, "Have some fish."

So, I got [a] big slab and put it on my plate, and I thought, "I just need to get this over with so I can enjoy dinner," so I hacked it in two, popped in the first half, [chewed, swallowed], and down it went, got the other one, and put it in. [The grandpa] was looking at me and smiling. He went and got more and put it on my plate. Then everybody at the table was kind of giggling because none of the other Russians would eat that, only grandpa did.

Paul talked about this in 1 Corinthians 10:24–26. He said: "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor" [10:24]. Listen, when it comes down to either you and your dietary preferences or the salvation of a soul, guess what God wants you to worry about? He says, "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake" [10:25]—in other words, if you find out it was sacrificed to an idol, you might not be able to get it down, so don't even ask, "FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS" [10:26]. You just eat it. You eat the fried snake, and the raw squid, and the monkey brain. Why? [It is] because it's more important to reach souls for Christ. Jesus says, "When I send you out, you're going to go into some scary places. Some of these cities I'm sending you to are Gentile cities, and they're going to put things in front of you that you have never eaten [and] would never eat. Just [don't say anything] and eat it."

When we go out and we're doing gospel ministries, a lot of times people will be kind to us. They may give us things, and you kind of feel beholden, don't you? You think, "Man, they're being so nice to me," [and] you feel guilty. Well, stop, because notice what Jesus says [in the] middle of [Luke 10:]7: "For the laborer is worthy of his wages." What does that tell you? They owe you. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9? "Listen, if we sow spiritual things among you, is it such a [big] thing that we reap

material things from you?” [see 9:11]. Some carpenter comes over to your house and does some work, [or] some plumber, [or] some electrician, and you pay them. Do they feel guilty? “I’m so sorry you paid me.” No, you owe them. That’s [Jesus’] whole point here: “When you go out and you’re doing miracles, and you’re healing people, and you’re preaching the gospel of the kingdom, don’t feel all guilty and beholden that they’re giving you a little food. You’re offering them salvation. You’re trying to save their souls. You’re working for them. They owe you.”

“The laborer is worthy of his wages”—that same phrase [or concept] appears in [our text, and in] Matthew 10:10, 1 Corinthians 9:14, and 1 Timothy 5:18. In every instance, it is always used of supporting those who are doing the gospel ministry. Jesus wanted the disciples to know that God, through His providence, was going to provide for them and that when they had somebody provide for them, [they shouldn’t] think, “Oh, this is not good. I don’t want to be beholden.” No, if you’re in that house and you’re telling them the truth, praise God. Let them pay you your wage.

Is that how we should do it now? Should we go into an unevangelized area, preach the gospel, and expect those unbelievers to take care of us? No. Things have changed. Turn over to Luke 22:35–38. The principle that God provides is still true, He just provides through a different way. This was a unique situation where Jesus promised to provide for the seventy as they went about doing miracles and preaching the gospel. In Luke 22:35–38, He addresses it again. Peter has just boasted that “I will never deny you, Jesus,” and Jesus says, “No, you’re going to deny me three times before the cock crows.” And then look at what He says in verse[s] 35–38:

And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one [(for protection)]. For I tell you that this which is written must be ful-

filled in Me, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.” They said, ”Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, ”It is enough.”

Jesus’ whole purpose here is: “Listen, things have changed now. I’m going. I’m going to be numbered with transgressors. I’m going to die. I’m going to leave you. So, get your knapsack, get your money, get your provisions, your extra pair of sandals. Make sure you have something to protect yourself [with], and then get out there and preach the gospel.” We know from the New Testament that the Church is to support those who work hard at preaching and teaching, and so, now, mostly the Church does it. Believers support other believers [so they can] evangelize. Then, [when the seventy were being sent out], the Church was so small that God, through His providence, was providing for them. Paul was a tentmaker. He did his own thing. I mean, it’s hard to go into a town, and say, “Hey, provide for me so I can preach the gospel so God can save you through me.” That was unique to that time. Now, Jesus says, “Take your provisions.”

Look at the end of [Luke 10:]7[-8]: “Do not keep moving from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you.” Notice [that] Jesus says it a second time: “Eat what is set before you.” You know they’re going to have a problem with those ham sandwiches. You know that they’re just [struggling.] The fried worms and monkey-brain casserole just [are] not going to go down. But Jesus says, “You eat what is set before you, and if the food is bad, don’t go to another house.” You know what would happen. They’d get somebody to receive them, somebody they can share the gospel with, somebody who let them have a base of ministry operations, and Jesus [says], “Don’t go looking for the Jew down the road. Don’t go looking for the rich man’s house. Don’t go looking for the other guy’s house, who’s got a little better grub. Just stay in that place and eat what they give you.”

There are many people in the ministry who are always looking for better pay, the higher salary, the nicer place to live. They're always trying to leverage their ministry, and go from their two years in this church, and two years in that church, and two years in another church trying to find what? Are they thinking about other people or are they thinking about themselves? For the sake of preaching the gospel, you have to put up, a lot of times, with things that are not comfortable and not [to] your preference, but the salvation of souls is worth it.

Tenth: Proclaim the gospel while using your resources from God. Look at [Luke 10:]9. Jesus says, "And heal those in it who are sick." Now just stop there. This tells us that Jesus, just like [with] the Twelve, gave [the seventy] power to heal the sick. That's kind of cool. I wish some of you had that power. If somebody said, "Jack, would you like to have that power?" I don't know [what my response would be]. You know what would happen. The word would get out, the whole world would know, and everybody's son, and daughter, and nephew, and niece from around the world who had any sort of sickness or [who was] ailing, or any person with cancer, they'd all come to you, all wanting healing. Could you imagine the burden that would be?

The neat thing is [that the seventy] went to a lot of small towns and villages where there wouldn't be that many people. They stood in the street, and said, "Come, come! If you have anybody who is sick, come!"

People [asked], "What do you mean 'sick'? I've got [a sore] back."

All of a sudden [the disciples said], "In the name of the Lord Jesus you're healed."

[The person exclaimed], "I'm better!"

Then [another] guy [came], [who said], "I cut off my finger chopping down a tree." [Poof!] It's fixed. "Ah!"

Pretty soon news got out and everybody brought everybody who was sick, and [the disciples] just healed everybody. [Then] they said, "We have a message from God." Well, no kidding, because now the miracles have authenticated the messengers. It would be great if God was still doing this

now, but He hasn't left us without any power. If you listen to the sermon "Miracles Then and Now,"¹ or "The Purpose of Signs and Wonders,"² you can see why God did this. Basically, He did miracles for a specific time, among specific people, in a specific place while the New Testament revelation was being given, and it was only for that time. Now that we have the New Testament, we have the Word, which "is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing... and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" [Hebrews 4:12]. The Gospel, the New Testament Scriptures, are God's power to bring people, to convince them, when nothing else will.

You have gifts. They may not be gifts of healing, but you have gifts. And you know what? You may not even have gifts that make you a preacher, or a teacher, but you can still share the gospel one-on-one, and you can still fulfill your place in the Body of Christ to enable me to do what I do and other people who have gifts to do what they do. See, that's what's cool about the Body. We're all one in Christ. When everybody chips in, and everybody does their little part, whatever little part that is, we all work together to preach the gospel. I'm just the mouth, [and] if your mouth isn't connected to the rest of your body, it's not much good. We are those who are armed with the gospel of God, and each of us can share the gospel individually with those we know, and each of us can be a part of the corporate Body and the proclamation of the gospel, too.

Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]9: "And say to them," them that receive you, to them that you heal, "'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" Why is that? Why would [the seventy] say that? Does that mean Jesus is about ready [for] His second coming? He hadn't even died yet. The kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of the Messiah, would be characterized by the healing of the nations—people being healed, people being restored, [and] the light of the Truth—the gospel—would be presented to them. Je-

¹<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2005/20050508>

²<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060604>

Jesus is coming after. So, listen, when you have the power of God working miracles, and you have the messenger of God proclaiming the truth of the Messiah, and you have the Messiah Himself coming through your town, you can't get much closer to the kingdom of God. That's about as close as you can get without actually being in the kingdom. If you believe, you become a kingdom saint. And so, yeah, the kingdom of God had come near [to the people] through the miracles, through the proclamation of the truth, and through the Messiah who would come after [the seventy].

Isaiah 9:2 talks about [how] "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light." That's what you get to do, and that's what I get to do. Would you say our world is kind of a dark place, entrenched in sin, [with] lots of immorality, lots of ungodliness, lots of wickedness? Sure, we all know that. Well, you are the one who can bring a great light into that world and shine it on people. Some will get mad, some won't want to hear it, but some will come to repentance and faith, and that's why we're all here, because God has drawn us to a saving faith, or maybe He's drawing some of you today and you're thinking about Christianity, you're thinking about giving your life to Christ. Calvary Bible Church can be used as a light, not only to Burbank, but around the world, and we're doing that. We're doing that through our Web ministries, we're doing that through short-term missions, we're doing that through supporting other missionaries. We're making a statement; we're being a light.

Eleventh: Publicly protest those who will not receive your message. This is very interesting. Look at [Luke 10:]10[-11]: "But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you.'" Now, we saw this in Luke 9:5, [it's] the same thing [Jesus] told the Twelve. You go in that city, you heal all of their sick, you start preaching the truth, and they say, "Nah, nah. We're not going to believe in this Jesus guy. We've heard stories about Him." Then what are you to do? Notice what He says: "Go out into its streets," that is, "Get into a public place where everybody in that city can see you. Pop off a sandal, stand there on

one foot, and knock off the dust, and get it off there. Symbolically say to them, ‘Listen, because you will not receive Jesus, you will not receive the Father, you will not receive your salvation, we don’t even want to take a speck of dust with us from this place.’” That’s a scary statement because “the kingdom of God has come near,” [to them] and [they would] not have it. Paul did the same thing in Acts 13:50–51. He shook the dust off his feet when they would not hear the gospel preached.

Look at the middle of [Luke 10:]11, [where the seventy] were to say: “Yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.” [The people] were to hear that. They were to know that the kingdom of God came near, oh, so near. Their salvation was basically handed to them: “Here is the gift of eternal life. Here. Here, take it,” and they would not have it. They would not be saved, they wouldn’t believe. No matter what you do or how you present the truth, some people just don’t want to hear the gospel. They reject it. They don’t want to hear the truth. What’s interesting here [in this verse], and what this teaches us, is [that] when they get to that place, before you leave them alone, just end with one warning: “I have just offered you salvation, and before God, you are rejecting it.” Then you move on.

Now, what’s neat about this is [that] God uses things like this. Sometimes the offer of free grace and salvation, the love of God, [and] Christ dying for sinners just doesn’t work on some people. So you give them a little warning and then you leave. You leave, and they start thinking, “I probably shouldn’t have done that.”

I’ve talked to people who have said, “Oh, after I heard the gospel, I didn’t want to have anything to do with it, [but] God just started working on my heart. I became so terrified of dying. I couldn’t handle it. I just thought, ‘If I die in a car accident, if some psycho pulls me over, or some drunk person’s wheel falls off and kills me, I’m going to go to hell.’” We’ve had people pull off to the side of the road and give their lives to Christ. It just took a little while for the Word to start working in their hearts, [but] they started getting convicted, and they started getting scared because they

realized that judgment had almost come upon them, and they were fearful because they knew they could die at any time.

There's this little technique that you use when you're fly fishing. We used to fish with streamers, this certain kind of fly, for these big lunker trout in the bottom of this one river. We would cast out into the river and let the fly swing downstream. A lot of times you could see these big bull trout just following the streamer, and if you just [left] it there, they would never bite it, but if you pulled it away, they jumped on it. That was the secret of getting them. You just kind of brought it by them, and [they were like], "Ah, nah, I don't want that," then all of a sudden, [they were] like, "It's getting away!" and [the fish would bite it].

That's how some people respond to the gospel. You present the gospel, and it's like, "Ah, nah. I don't want to hear it. I don't want your religion, so quit trying to cram [it] down my throat. What about the natives in Africa?"

And so, you say, "OK."

And [they say], "Wait!"

This is what was happening [in Luke 10]. [The seventy] would come to a city, they'd do the miracles, they'd preach the gospel, someone would reject [it], and [the disciples would] say, "Later!" and they'd walk away. Then [those who had rejected the gospel] would be all tormented. And who was coming next? Jesus. A lot of those people would be ready to hear [the truth] a second time.

Twelfth: There is judgment pronounced on those who will not repent. Look at [Luke 10:]12: "I say to you." Notice that Jesus has stopped telling the disciples what they are to tell the people, and he is now [giving] a commentary on those who will not repent. He says: "It will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city." Now, if you know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, that is a scary statement. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain were those cities that were down in what is called the Jordan Rift, the valley where the Jordan River flows and dumps into the Dead Sea. Genesis 18:20 says: "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave." That was God's commen-

tary. They were [an] immoral, wicked, adulterous, homosexual society, and God says, “Their sin is extremely grave.”

If you know the story, God sent a couple [of] angels down there to rescue Lot and his family. Lot couldn't convince anybody to leave but his wife and two daughters. God said, “Don't look back.” The next morning, they [were] fleeing out of the city, and the text says, “Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” [Genesis 19:24]. What is that? Brimstone is molten sulfur, sulfur that has been ignited and is hard on the inside [and] gooey and on fire on the outside. If you've been in a hailstorm [you know that] even hail the size of peas hurts when it hits you. [In Sodom and Gomorrah] they would experience pea-sized and larger chunks of molten, burning sulfur [hitting them]. God would rain that down upon them.

When it struck, they would have the initial pain of the impact, then when it hit it would explode, and they'd have fire. If they tried to wipe it off, they'd spread the fire. They'd run into their house and then what would happen? Then their roof would catch on fire. Pretty soon smoke would start filling their abode, and outside the ground would just be being pelted with fire and brimstone, and sulfur smoke would be creeping through the town. People would run outside screaming and yelling [with] their hair on fire. Pretty soon they'd hit the ground, breathing in all those noxious fumes, and they would die this terrible, agonizing, burning death. Soon, every animal, every beast, every bird, every bug would be totally exterminated from Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain.

Jesus says, “It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for those who reject the gospel attested by those miracles.” Whoa. You see, nobody went through Sodom and Gomorrah and did any miracles, and preached the gospel. They didn't get any warning. God just judged them.

[You might be] out there, thinking, “Oh, Jack. I am so glad you don't do miracles!” What this text [in Luke 10] tells us, along with other texts in the Bible, is that there are greater degrees of punishment in hell. Think about that. Some people have this idea, “Well, if I'm not going to go to heaven,

I'm going to go party in hell." There's going to be no partying. [Or they think], "If I'm not going to go to heaven, I might as well sin all I want." There are greater degrees of punishment.

Thomas Watson, in his work *The Mischief of Sin* in a chapter entitled "Hell's Furnace Heated Hotter," said:

The coolest part of hell is hot enough, but there are some who shall have a hotter place in hell than others. All shall go into that fiery prison, but some sinners God will thrust into the dungeon.³

Jesus, when speaking of this in Luke 12:47–48, says:

And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Notice there [that] the more revelation you are given, the more opportunities to hear the gospel [you have], the greater your judgment will be if you reject it. The author of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 10:29: "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" "How much severer punishment" in hell? If you're out there thinking, "Jack, I'm glad you don't do miracles," I have news for you: something greater than miracles is here, and it's probably sitting in your lap right now, or maybe just a few inches past your knee in the pewback in front of you. It's called a Bible, something the people of Sodom and Gomorrah never had, something

³Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, p. 92.

the people of the cities that Jesus sent the seventy out to preach [to] never had. We have the full revelation of God with all the great miracles God ever did in it.

How much severer punishment do you think those will deserve who have come to Bible-teaching churches, heard the gospel Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, and then left never having repented? You will be thrust down into the very depths of hell if you know the truth, and you know it well, and you have a Bible, and you die unrepentant. The warning here is serious, and I hate to tell you, next week it's going to be worse. I am already loathing next week. I *do not* like preaching texts [like] we are going to look at next week. I'm telling you, do not leave here having rejected Christ.

When you have the truth, and you hear the gospel, and you go to a Bible-teaching church, and you think, "Oh, I'll repent some other day. I'll give my life to Christ [later]. I just love my sin," [you are trading] a drop of sin for a sea of wrath. Who would do that, when right now Jesus crucified is saying, "Come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest [see Matthew 11:28]. I will save you, I will change you, I will transform you, I will forgive you, I will reconcile you to God [if you] just believe in Me"? If you reject that, it will be worse for you than Sodom and worse for you than the people that the seventy went out and preached to, I'll tell you that, because you have way more revelation. "To whom much is given, much is required" [see Luke 12:48].

May we all be motivated to share the gospel because of this. If you haven't repented, may you be motivated to do it now and not wait. [Don't] think, "Oh, I'm too great of a sinner." Believe me, your sin is no greater than God's grace. "Yeah, but you just don't know what I've done." No, but God does, and Christ[s] sacrifice is perfect and infinite and can save any sinner. Don't ever think that you can just leave here and repent tomorrow because tomorrow may never come for you. You need to run to Christ now. He will save you. He will either be Lord, Master, and Savior of your life now, or He will be your Judge for all eternity.

[To recap what we've covered]: Pass by some to reach greater numbers. Provide a blessing of peace by preaching the gospel of peace to those who will listen. Peacefully be content with the Lord and His provisions for you as you labor in the ministry. Proclaim the gospel while using your spiritual gifts and resources. Protest those who reject the kingdom of God. Pronounce judgment on those who will not repent because it's coming. It's true. Warn them. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this text. Even though it's very sobering at the end, yet the message is still true. You have sent Your Son to save sinners from the wrath to come, and even though the wrath is scary, and the judgment is sure for those who will not repent, yet salvation is equally sure for those who will. Father, I pray for those here this morning who, in their hearts, are battling You, who maybe call themselves Christians and maybe are even members of this church, people who have maybe come to church for many years, but they know in their hearts [that] they don't love You. They know they love their sin more, and they're willing to only give You lip service and a few crumbs of their lives. Father, may they repent now. Grant them repentance, save them as only You can. For the rest of us, may we take the principles we have learned from Jesus in the text, may we apply them as we go out into the world on the highways and byways, and, Father, be a witness for You in what we say and what we do that You might save some, bring many to glory, and give Yourself glory in doing that. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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