



THE

WORTHY
LIFE

We don't want this curriculum to be just another study that you do, we want it to positively impact your life and your walk with Christ. The goal is that you finish this study a different person than when you began. To that end, you'll find three sections in this book:

SERMON NOTES: The sermons each week will serve as your introduction to each topic, therefore faithfully and actively listening to the sermons is vitally important. Use this space to write down any notes that will help you remember the material covered. Jot down any quotes or thoughts that were meaningful to you and any questions that may come up during the sermon.

PERSONAL STUDY: You need to be in the Word yourself outside of your group time. To help you do this, we've provided space for you to record H.E.A.R. journals. The H.E.A.R. journaling method is a way to read the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. We'll walk through the H.E.A.R. method in detail on the following page.

GROUP STUDY: The group study is where you will take a closer look at the week's passage from a different perspective. This is the time to share any insights you gleaned from the sermon and the time you spent in personal study completing the H.E.A.R. journal. It is recommended that you listen to the sermon and complete the H.E.A.R. journal before you attend the group discussion so that you will be most equipped to contribute to the discussion, which will provide the most benefit for everyone.

Above and beyond all the advice given here, the most important thing that you can do to maximize the effect of this study in your life is to pray for God to enlighten you to the teachings of Jesus and to give you the wisdom and strength to be faithful and obedient to everything you learn. Rely upon the Holy Spirit to make this study relevant and powerful in your life and you will undoubtedly be changed.

H . E . A . R .

HIGHLIGHT - After reading the passage of Scripture, highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying it in the space provided. Write out the passage along with the name of the book and the chapter and verse numbers. If you want to, give the passage a short title to describe it.

EXPLAIN - At this stage you will explain what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of God's Spirit, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Why was this written?

To whom was it originally written?

How does it fit with the verses before and after it?

Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?

What is He intending to communicate through this text?

APPLY - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

How can this help me?

What does this mean today?

What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

What does this mean to me?

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you have learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you."

[Matthew 7:7]

- ONE.** Jesus Calls the Twelve
- TWO.** Jesus Sends the Twelve
- THREE.** Sheep Amount Wolves
- FOUR.** Have No Fear
- FIVE.** Not Peace But a Sword
- SIX.** Reward

ONE

"And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him."

[MATTHEW 10:1-4]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:1-4]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: God's ability empowers those who recognize their inability.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

To understand the significance of this passage, we need to back up and look at the very end of chapter 9 to see the context in which the beginning of chapter 10 takes place. Starting in verse 35 we see that "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and affliction." Jesus sets out on a mission, preaching and healing. He is establishing His authority not only in word (preaching) but in deed (healing). Jesus's preaching and healing was fueled by love for those He was ministering to. "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (v. 36). Moved by compassion, Jesus turned and "said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few'" (v. 37). Jesus is saying that there is a large number of people that are waiting to hear the Gospel and they are in urgent need of workers to share this good news with them. But notice the first thing Jesus tells His disciples to do: "therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (v. 38). Jesus didn't tell the disciples to start training disciple-makers. He didn't tell them to immediately begin drafting a church-planting strategy. He didn't command them to start planning an evangelistic, old-fashioned, tent revival meeting. Jesus understood that God was the "Lord of the harvest," and He knew that if they were to be effective, they would need to consult Him in prayer, entreating Him to do the work of enlisting workers suitable and fit for the job.

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This is the context that leads up to the beginning of chapter 10. It is after commanding His disciples to pray for workers to be sent that He then commissions His disciples as workers. “And He called to Him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (10:1). There are at least two important observations, here. First, Jesus was not content with only praying. He supplemented His prayers with action. He prayed for God to send out workers into His harvest, then immediately got to work doing the very thing He prayed for God to do. Jesus took responsibility for the work Himself, believing and trusting that God was with Him and the disciples in this work. Second, Jesus Christ gave the disciples the same authority that He had, “to heal every disease and affliction” (9:35; 10:1), meaning that He did not send them out powerless or without guidance. The disciples had followed Him on His previous trip “throughout all the cities and villages” (9:35). They had personally witnessed Jesus minister, preach, and heal; so when Jesus commissioned them to go and do the same, they had His example to follow. God will equip you to do whatever He calls you to.



When Jesus saw “the crowds” He had compassion for them. These were unbelievers who had not been born-again. Who are the “crowds” in your life? What is your reaction to them? Does your reaction lead you to serve them or ignore them?

Jesus’ compassion for the crowds was due to the fact that they were “like sheep without a shepherd.” This implies that what people really need is someone to lead them, to show them the way. In what ways can you lead those around you who do not know Jesus?

As mentioned earlier, Jesus’ ministry was comprised of leading by word (“teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom”) and deed (“healing every disease and affliction”). The disciples followed Jesus’ example when they embarked on their mission. We too are to demonstrate the Lordship of Christ in word, by sharing the Gospel, and in deed, by living holy lives devoted to doing good works to alleviate the suffering of those around us.

Take a look at who Jesus called to do this work (v. 2-4). This is a ragtag collection of uneducated fishermen, tax collectors, and religious zealots. These men were considered the “nobodies” of society. Matthew, who identifies himself as “the tax collector”, was likely hated and despised by the Jews that he was trying to minister to. There is absolutely nothing about this group of men that would qualify them for this kind of work.

But as has been seen already, Jesus wasn't looking for men of power and prestige, He would give them the power they lacked (10:1), Jesus was looking for the worst of the worst, the unassuming, and the weak. Jesus wanted to make a statement that "God's power is made perfect in our weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:19). Jesus entrusted the Gospel to weak, fragile, lowly men so that it would be clear "that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). God is glorified when His power moves mightily through insufficient people. What makes us able to be used by God is our complete inability to do this work ourselves.



What shortcomings do you have that you are allowing to hold you back from being on mission? Why do you lack confidence? Is it because you are trusting in yourself? Or do you not trust the power of God to be able to work through you?

What step of faith can you take this week that will require God to move if you are to be successful?

TWO

"These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town."

[MATTHEW 10:5-15]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:5-15]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: God has uniquely placed you where you are so that you can compassionately share the Gospel with and serve those around you.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

Remember again the immediate context leading up to this passage. Jesus traveled from city to city preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing all who came to Him. When He saw the crowds of people, He felt compassion for them and that compassion motivated Him to urge the disciples to pray to God to send workers into the world to share the message of the Gospel. Jesus' compassion causes Him to take an additional step, however, and He then commissions the twelve apostles to actually go and fulfill the work they just prayed for God to do. And now here we have Jesus explaining to the disciples exactly what they are to do.



Read **Matthew 10:5-15**

In verses 5 and 6, Jesus limits the disciple's ministry to the Jews. These are people that the disciples would have been familiar with, they could relate to, and they would have had some influence over. Who in your life has God given you any kind of influence over? Who do you best relate to?

Jesus tells the disciples what they are to do in verses 7 and 8: "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand! Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.'" Again, we see the two aspects of ministry that Jesus wants His disciples to engage in: word and deed.



Think back again to the group of people that God has given you influence over. How can you bring the Gospel to them in word? (i.e., providing encouragement, give them wise counsel, initiate a gospel conversation, etc...). How can you minister to them in deed?

The kind Jesus also reminds the disciples that they "have received without paying" therefore they should "give without pay" (v. 8). If we're honest, sometimes we do nice things for others with the hope that we will receive something in return. Maybe they will return the favor, or maybe they have access to something we want and hope they will share with us if we do something for them. But Jesus is quick to make sure that our motive for sharing and serving is not to receive any kind of kickback, for we ourselves haven't paid any price.

Do you find yourself at times desiring to do good to others in hopes of receiving something in return? Why is this wrong? How does this corrupt the message of the Gospel and make us hypocrites?

Jesus then explains to the disciples in verses 11-15 that there will be a divided response to their message. Some will receive it, some won't. But this doesn't mean that the disciples should become discouraged in their mission. Elsewhere, Jesus tells the disciples that whoever receives them, receives Jesus (Matthew 10:40). Therefore, whoever rejects them for their message, does not reject them, but Christ (cf. John 15:18: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first"). Thus, if they reject Christ, verse 15 shows us that they are liable to judgment.

Have you ever shared the Gospel with somebody and had them reject it? Did you take that personally? Have you harbored any bitterness or anger in your heart because of that?

But an important clarification needs to be made. The rejection that Jesus' disciples shouldn't take personally is a rejection that is based upon the work they do as His disciples. What that means is that if the Gospel is shared with compassion (remember compassion is the motivating factor behind Jesus and the disciples' mission), and it is rejected, then the disciples should not blame themselves. But the same cannot be said if the Gospel is rejected because it is shared with a different tone or motive. Anybody that does not share the Gospel or serve their neighbor in love should not expect to receive a welcome response.

Have you ever had an improper motive for sharing the Gospel? Do you feel compassion towards those who reject the Gospel? Or do you feel anger and frustration?

So, to sum up:

Who has God given you the influence to minister to?

How can you serve them in word and in deed?

How can you protect your heart to do so compassionately

THREE

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

[MATTHEW 10:16-23]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:16-23]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: We must be ready to endure persecution for our devotion to Christ, no matter who it comes from.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

After explaining to the disciples who they were to go to, what they were supposed to do, and how they were to do it, Jesus then warns the disciples of the intense persecution that would come about because of their ministry. When we remember what happened to Jesus, this shouldn't surprise us. Our message leads to outright opposition from the world, and sometimes it may even result in persecution by it. But although the world may fiercely attack us, our response, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, is always to turn the other cheek. We are to maintain a calm, meek, but persistent demeanor despite how strongly we may be attacked. Thus, Jesus likens the Christian who is on mission to a "sheep in the midst of wolves" (v. 16).



How have you experienced persecution of any kind for your faith in Christ?

We are relatively "safe" in the Western world, today. Our ideas and beliefs may be mocked and criticized, but we are very, very far from experiencing much of the persecution that is described by Jesus here. But nevertheless, persecution is something that we should expect to come our way at some point in our lives if we are faithfully living how we ought. "Anybody who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus tells the disciples that because of the opposition they will face, they should "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (v. 16b).

Serpents were seen by ancient Near Eastern cultures as representative of wisdom and prudence. Doves were considered symbols of innocence and simplicity. Don Carson explains how these two traits should be balanced, saying, "Jesus' disciples must therefore be shrewd, prudent, avoiding attacks where possible, behaving wisely and with far-sighted realism; but they must also be innocent, open—not so cautious, suspicious, and cunning that they become paranoid, elusive, and fearful."



What does being wise as serpents and innocent as doves look like for us today? What wisdom should we be pursuing? What innocence should we be pursuing? (see. Romans 16:19: "I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil").

Jesus also makes very clear that allegiance to Him and His Gospel may even bring about division in the family. "Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death" (v. 21). This statement shouldn't be taken as hyperbole. These kinds of disputes and fallouts happened then in Jesus' day and they also happen today. In America, it is extremely rare that differences in religion result in families putting each other to death, but nevertheless many families have suffered great pain and division due to the cause of Christ. This also, Jesus wants His disciples to be willing to expect and endure. If we are calling people to repentance, then we should expect people's lives to be so transformed by Christ that their values and direction are at odds with society, even their families.

Has your family suffered any division for the cause of Jesus? If so, read Jesus' promise in Matthew 19:29 and be encouraged to remain loyal to Jesus. If not, is your allegiance to Christ so deep that you think you could withstand the loss of family relationships if it came down to it?

But despite all of the negativity surrounding this passage, Jesus does give His disciples a bit of hope. Verses 19 and 20 say, "when they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." This is an encouragement to the disciples to have faith. The means by which they were to defend themselves would be given to them "in that hour", meaning they weren't going to have all the answers before they started fielding questions. Jesus is admonishing them to trust in the Lord's faithfulness to speak through them whenever His glory is at stake.



Do you let the fear of not knowing what to say or how to answer a question prevent you from sharing the Gospel with others? Do you let it prevent you from seeking restitution and peace with those who are opposed to you? How can you increase your reliance upon the Lord to help you through these situations?

FOUR

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. So, have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So, everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

[MATTHEW 10:24-33]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:24-33]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: As Christians, we are fearless in the face of opposition, knowing that our reputation, defense, and even our lives are protected by God.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

The main point of this portion of Jesus' instruction to the disciples is they should not fear the world or whatever it may throw at them. Jesus is trying to rid his disciples of fear. He says so three times: "So have no fear of them" (v. 26), "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (v. 28), and "Fear not" (v. 31). Jesus knows that the disciples are about to face much opposition from the world, and He wants them to face it with boldness and courage.

There are several reasons that Jesus gives the disciples as to why they should not fear the world. The first, you'll notice, is in verse 25. Jesus says, "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of His household?"* Then Jesus follows this statement with "So, have no fear of them."

*Beelzebul was used as a derogatory name referring to a demon. By calling Jesus Beelzebul, they were saying that He was wicked, and therefore they would persecute Him.



Why would Jesus say that the disciples being persecuted for being part of His household is a reason they shouldn't fear?

The point that Jesus seems to be making is that if you are so closely resembling Jesus in your effort to follow Him that you receive opposition from the world, you should take that as a sign of your Christ-likeness. Your Lord, who is far greater than you, suffered at the hands of men. If you try to emulate Him, you should expect the same treatment, but this isn't something to be afraid of. This is a mark of your sanctification. Peter says, "Beloved do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that comes upon you as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:12). It's not strange when Christians suffer for their devotion to Christ, it is to be expected. We know ahead of time that it's going to come, so we should not fear when it does.

Opposition from the world is to be expected, but who should we NOT expect opposition from? (Gospel-believing, Christ-honoring brothers and sisters in the faith). **How can we be sure that the opposition we are facing is the kind that Jesus is referring to? What indications are there that our persecution is due to our own sinfulness rather than our righteousness?** (We must always be honest with ourselves about our motives for behaving or speaking a certain way that may anger others. Also, it is extremely important that we justify our actions and words not by the way that we feel or what may be the popular sentiment at the time, but by what the Bible teaches and the example that Christ set for us).

The next reason Jesus gives as to why we should not fear is found in the second part of verse 26: "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known." When the world referred to Jesus as "Beelzebul" they were slandering Him. Jesus was not a wicked demon nor had He done anything that could be considered as sinful. When the world said these things about Him they were speaking lies. But what you never see Jesus do is defend Himself. He was assured that truth and justice would be brought to light and that in the end He would be justified before the entire world. "When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus wants His disciples to be free from the fear of a tarnished reputation. In the end, the entire world will be confronted with the truth, so we should not fear a loss of worldly status for the sake of following Christ.



How often do you let fear of damaging your reputation keep you from being faithful to Christ? Read **1 Peter 2:23** again. What example does Christ give us for how we should respond to false accusations?

Which leads us to another reason why Jesus says we should not be afraid. Jesus says, “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell” (v. 28). Jesus is again combating against the fear of man. John Piper explains, “the fear of man is the motive behind many sins. And Jesus wants to tell us that the penalty of those sins is much more to be feared than anything man might do to us.” If we fail to give in to the world’s demands, the worst thing they can do is kill us. But this is not to be feared if we know that we have eternal bliss awaiting us beyond this life. However, if we fail to give in to God’s demands (namely to repent of our sin and place our faith in Christ), then God can kill both our body and our soul in hell. Jesus says in verse 33, “whoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” The biggest reason why we deny Jesus before men is not that we are ashamed of Jesus, but that we are afraid of men. Jesus shows us how misplaced this fear is.

How often has the fear of man prevented you from being obedient to Jesus?
What exactly are you afraid of?

Lastly, Jesus explains that another reason why we shouldn’t be afraid is because God loves us and is on our side. This is the main argument of verses 29-31: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” If God is so concerned with the sparrows, who are of such little value that not a single one dies apart from His will, then how much more are you, who are of so much more value than sparrows and are so intimately known by the Father that He knows even the number of hairs on your head, of great concern to Him? You should not fear, because you are deeply loved by the Father with a perfect love, and “there is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out all fear” (1 John 4:18). If God is for you, then who can be against you?



What fear do you experience in life?

What is this fear the result of? The fear of man? The fear of damage to your reputation? A lack of understanding of God's love?

Will you repent of this fear? What Scripture can you rely on to help you combat this fear?

FIVE

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

[MATTHEW 10:34-39]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:34-39]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: Our devotion to Jesus must be greater than to our possessions, our families, and even our own lives.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

Context is crucially important to interpreting the Bible and it is especially so in this case. If you take Jesus' statement in verse 34 by itself without examining the broader context in which it falls, it will seem to contradict what Jesus has said elsewhere. But when you look at everything that Jesus has been saying up to this point, then His meaning becomes clear.

Jesus has been explaining to His disciples what they are to do, how they are to do it, and what they should expect. He tells them to share the Gospel; to do so with compassion, diligence, and bravery; and to expect great opposition because of their message. Opposition and persecution for the Messiah's people did not square with the incorrect view that the Jews of Jesus' day had about the coming Messiah's reign. They were expecting someone to come and be a political King for them. This King would topple the corrupt and oppressive Roman empire and bring about perfect peace upon the Earth. But Jesus explains that this is not His mission: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." The "sword" that Jesus is referring to is symbolic for "division" (a clarification that Luke makes in his parallel account of these words in Luke 12:51-53).



How does following Jesus lead to division? Has your devotion to Christ caused any division in your life?

How does following Christ lead to peace? Do you rest in this peace that Christ offers?

As we've learned in a previous study, the values of followers of Jesus are so different than the rest of the world that friction between believers and unbelievers is almost inevitable. Jesus is making the point here that this friction may even affect the relationships that we have with our family members (v. 35). Should this kind of conflict arise, followers of Jesus are obligated to commit themselves to Christ rather than to their families: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (v. 37). Christ is after our complete devotion. And because He is God, loving anything more than Him is actually idolatry. Scripture makes clear in other places that devotion to our families is a priority of the Christian life (Ephesians 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8), but it must never compromise our devotion to God.

What makes it so easy for us to put our families above the Lord? How can we protect ourselves against this?

Parents are often tempted with making their children the center of everything. What is dangerous about this? How does this negatively affect the parents? How does this negatively affect the children?

In verse 38, Jesus explains the cost of following Him: "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Jesus had not yet been crucified, but the disciples would have been very familiar with what crucifixion was. The point Jesus was trying to make was loud and clear: if you are not willing to sacrifice your life for Christ, if necessary, then you are not deserving of being able to follow Him. This verse is not so immediately relevant for us because our lives are not in any apparent danger because of our faith. But the requirement is still binding upon us. We are to treasure Christ above everything else, our possessions, our families, even our lives. If we do this, then Jesus gives us the assurance that we will have found true life as it was meant to be (v. 39).



Have you counted the cost of following Jesus? What might it cost you? But also, what might you gain?

Verse 39, in the immediate context, seems to be referring to the disciples' potential to be martyred. But a modern application can be made for us in that sometimes we seem to seek after prosperity and ease in our walks with Christ rather than embracing the kind of sacrifice that is required of us. In what ways do we find ourselves unwilling to "lose our lives" for the sake of Jesus?

There is some division that is necessary. Jim Elliot, who was a missionary that died sharing the Gospel, prayed that he would be a divisive person. He prayed, "Father, make of me a crisis man. Bring those I come into contact with to a decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road; make me a fork in the road, that men must turn one way or another upon facing Christ in me." Would you be willing to pray such a prayer?

SIX

"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever received me receives Him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

[MATTHEW 10:40-42]

PERSONAL STUDY

[MATTHEW 10:40-42]

HIGHLIGHT. _____

EXPLAIN. _____

APPLY. _____

RESPOND. _____

GROUP STUDY

BOTTOM LINE: We are ambassadors for Christ, representing Him on the Earth, and we know that if we are faithful to serve Him we will receive a great heavenly reward.



Spend a few moments as a group sharing any insights you may have gleaned from the H.E.A.R. journals.

Per Jesus' words here, receiving Jesus is equivalent to receiving God ("whoever receives me receives Him who sent me" v. 40b). In other words, you receive Christ, you receive salvation. This is what the gospel message essentially boils down to: turn away from your sin, and receive Christ as Lord. But Jesus knew that He wouldn't be able to stay on earth forever, He knew that others would have to respond to Jesus' gospel as they saw Him in His disciples. Thus, Jesus says, "whoever receives you receives me" (v. 40a). Jesus was commissioning His disciples to go out and minister to the world on His behalf. This commissioning is given to all believers, as we are all "ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). If you are a disciple of Christ, if you are a believer, then you have a part to play in carrying on the work of Jesus on the Earth.



How are you currently engaging the world in mission for Jesus? Do you need to be "trained" (discipled)? Or do you need to be obedient?

Verses 41 and 42 then go on to explain the reward that people will receive if they receive the disciples' teaching. It appears that Jesus using a play on words to describe certain groups of people. "Prophets" would refer to certain leaders within the body of Christ; "the righteous" would refer to a larger group of mature believers; and the "little ones" would include all of the laypeople in the church. ("Little ones" is a frequent designation of disciples in the book of Matthew). Those who "receive" these prophets, righteous ones, and little ones are receiving their testimony about Christ.

Essentially, Jesus is saying that anybody is capable of bearing witness about Him, no matter how mature you are in the faith. And those who believe, who receive them, will receive the proper reward, eternal life.

We may not all be missionaries or pastors, but if we receive such people and assist them in their work, then we too will be beneficiaries of their rewards (3 John 5-8).

Other than financially, how can you help support the work of pastors, missionaries, and evangelists?

This passage also raises another issue and that is the issue of rewards. The New Testament speaks frequently of rewards that are reserved for those who excel in obedience and righteousness. And when you boil it all down, the essence of these rewards is joy in God. Pursuing God and doing good with the motivation of receiving rewards from the Lord is not wrong, when you understand that the reward you will receive is more of Him. In fact, this kind of motivation is required by God: "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Our work is the work of pursuing God. This applies to any work that we do. Colossians 3:23-24 says, "whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward." What is the inheritance? For believers, it is God. We will one day receive God, in all His glory, unhindered by sin. This is what heaven is. And this is where the Christians' greatest joy lies.

Whether you are making sales calls, whether you are washing the dishes, or whether you are serving in your church, you do these things for the reward of increasing in your joy in the Lord. This is the greatest reward you could receive and it glorifies God when His disciples are relentlessly going about the work of the Gospel as a means of attaining more of Him.

Read **Matthew 6:1-4**. Have the rewards that the world offers ever truly satisfied you?



What wrong rewards have you been motivated by?

If somebody were observing your life, what would they assume that your treasure is?

What is something that you can do that shows the world that your treasure is in heaven and not on the Earth?
