

19. Jesus Sends out the Twelve

Luke 9:1-17

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

In Luke's narrative on the life of Jesus, there is a transition in chapter nine. At this stage in the life and ministry of Christ, scholars believe that Jesus had been teaching on the Kingdom of God and healing the sick for around 18 months. Now it was time to take the training of the disciples to the next level. It was time to send them out on a short-term ministry trip on their own. The disciples had been watching and learning from Jesus while He had taught the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Sower. They had seen him raise the dead, heal the Roman Centurion's servant, heal the paralyzed and the lepers, cast out demons, and also take authority over the wind and the waves. Now it was their turn! Jesus had explained while they listened, He performed while they watched, but now it was time for them to begin doing the things that he had been doing.

¹When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." ⁶So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (Luke 9:1-6).

Power and Authority

It must have been very daunting to be told by Jesus that they were now expected to follow in His footsteps and do what he had done. There must have been all sorts of fears in their minds, especially when Jesus told them that they were on their own, that He would be with them only in Spirit and not in the flesh. Mark tells us they went out in pairs (Mark 6:7), six teams to go to various towns and villages. I wonder if they began competing with one another as to who would go with whom? Perhaps one said, "Please don't send me with Peter, he always says stupid things and is so impulsive!" I'm sure nobody wanted to go with Thomas too, for he was such a realist and well known for looking at things from an earthly point of view; how on earth could he be used of God to heal people? These were not super-saints, they were people just like you and me, people with all kinds of insecurities and fears, yet were now being prepared to go out as sheep among wolves.

They were given power and authority by the Lord to do what He had been doing—to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to heal the sick. It would have been a very exciting yet sobering event for them. I imagine that in a quiet time when they were all together, He laid His hands on them and His authority and power rested on them from that time. What do we mean by the words, power, and authority? Looking at these twelve, viewing them as they were, without the eyes of faith, they looked like such unsubstantial tools for the job that was ahead! Just like you and I, they had to trust that when Jesus said anything was possible for them, it was possible. The Greek word *exousia* is translated as "authority," and means to have the right to exercise dominion in the

spiritual realm. Invisible evil spirits inhabit the spiritual realm and recognize true authority and are bound to obey the Lord's authority that rested on the twelve.

Along with authority, they were given power too. The Greek word *dunamis* is translated as “power.” This power is the divine ability to accomplish things in the physical realm, which would generally be impossible. The physical realm gives way to the spiritual realm. To illustrate the difference between power and authority, we can use the analogy of a traffic cop. Authority is exercised when he puts up his hand at a busy junction. You must stop because behind the police is the authority of the government. If you do not stop, he has the power to make you stop—the gun in his holster! Authority is nothing without the power to back it up. They were sent to heal the sick and cast out demons, and those demons had to flee because of the Lord’s authority on the twelve. Power was exercised in the physical realm as bodies were healed by the Spirit of God working with them.

Training for Ministry

Jesus’ training wasn’t full of just head knowledge; it was also very practical. The men He had chosen had not been educated men. They were learning as they walked with Jesus. After the resurrection of Christ and the filling of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Jewish leadership was astonished at what the training of the Lord had accomplished in the apostles:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were **unschooled, ordinary men**, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Jesus had a method of mentoring his disciples. The best form of training is:

1 Leader or trainer explains, trainee listens. The leader walks through the skill to be learned by the disciple	3 Trainee explains, leader or trainer listens. Trainee or disciple demonstrates knowledge, leader, or trainer checks for understanding.
2 Leader or trainer performs, trainee watches. Leader models good performance.	4 Trainee performs, leader watches. Trainee practices the skill; the leader provides feedback.

Everything they learned was in close relationship to the Master. They watched Him live His life for around 18 months, and now it was time for them to go out and do what He did.

Question 1) Why would the Lord command them not to take anything for the journey, no staff, no bag, no food, money, and no additional shirt or jacket? What was the Lord hoping to accomplish with such a directive?

To take no staff meant to have no defense against robbers on the road. It was also handy to have a staff in walking over the hills of Galilee. Not to take a bag meant to have nothing to carry anything in, no knapsack, backpack or anything—they were to travel light and with no provisions for the journey. They were to have no bread with them, which means they were not to take a packed lunch and no dinner for when they got to the town. He also commanded that they carry with them no money to buy food when they got there. No extra tunic, jacket or coat if it got cold. They were to depend on the Lord and learn how to walk in God's provision for them. There is a new dependence on the Lord Jesus that comes to our lives when we lean totally on the Lord for His provision to keep us and protect us. We get in line with the sparrows when we willingly lead this kind of life: “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26). Several months later, in His last hours with them in the Upper Room, He asked them this question as to how they were provided for when He had sent out the twelve:

³⁵Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you out without purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered. ³⁶Now, however, He told them, “the one with a purse should take it, and likewise a bag; and the one without a sword should sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:35-36).

At this stage of their lives together with Christ, their training was complete, and as they go from then on, they were to take a purse, a bag, and even a sword to defend themselves. Part of their training was to learn to trust Him to provide for them in their mission. When we are mission-centered, we can trust Him to provide.

They were told to seek a worthy person in whatever town they entered. Matthew gives us more information:

⁹“Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. ¹¹“And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave *that city*. ¹²“As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³“If the house is worthy, give it your *blessing of peace*. But if it is not worthy, take back your *blessing of peace*. ¹⁴“Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵“Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city (Matthew 10:11-15).

Their ministry was to center on a house in the town; they were not to seek better accommodation. This strategy was not only for that particular time but for after the ascension of Christ and when they took the gospel beyond the land of Israel. To the most part, the early church grew by the people of God building a relationship in a household, starting a house church and multiplying it. The house church strategy was why Saul's (later to become the apostle Paul) persecution of the

early church was against believers in house churches: “But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison” (Acts 8:3). In obedience to the Lord's training in this passage, this was why the early church was situated in homes. Saul went from house to house because that was where the church was meeting.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house (Romans 16:3-5).

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house (Colossians 4:15).

...also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home (Philemon 1:2).

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house (1 Corinthians 16:19).

They were to be aware that there could be opposition and rejection of their message. When persecution took place, they were to do what the Jews did when they left Gentile and pagan lands; they were to shake the dust off their feet. It was a gracious way of reminding Jewish people that this was the New Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and they were rejecting it.

Luke now focuses his readers upon the question that everyone was asking at the time—just who is Jesus?

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. ⁹But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him (Luke 9:7-9).

Luke's evidence is building with each passage explaining Christ's teaching and His works, and, of course, in this chapter comes Peter's revelation from the Father that Jesus truly is God incarnate. This same question was on Herod Agrippa's mind, along with many others at the time.

Feedback Time

When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida (Luke 9:10).

Question 2) What would be the reason Jesus wanted them to report to Him? What do you think took place when He got together with them?

The Greek word translated *reported* means to conduct a narration through to the end, to recount and relate in full. They shared all the stories of what God did among them, with one another and with Jesus. We can be sure that He encouraged them; He clarified things for them, as they recounted to him what had happened, and instructed them further based on their report. More than likely, the reporting back was what we call the Ready, Fire, Aim method of training. This method is to initially instruct the disciple before firing them out on their mission, and in their reporting to Him, He further aimed them and honed the skills they learned in the heat of ministry. People need time to share and process what happened.

We learn so much faster when training and feedback are given to a specific situation that one has encountered. Three years of seminary education is one thing, but some lessons in ministry are only learned by being on the front line, rubbing shoulders with people with real needs among the people we serve. There is no better way of learning to live the Christian life than to walk with others who will give you feedback on areas of your life that still need some correction. That's why they were sent out in relationship with another, and why they were to share with the One who was mentoring them when they returned. Do not underestimate what can be achieved by just enjoying time together with others involved in front line ministry.

The place where they retired was Bethsaida, a fishing village on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. The name means house of fishing, although some commentators say that it means house of hunting. Bethsaida was about 4 miles by direct sailing or rowing and 8 miles around the northern side of the lake if one walked it from Capernaum. When the people saw Jesus' route, they started walking to where He went, carrying their sick and needy to the Lord. The disciples were probably tired after their short-term ministry trip. Ministry can be demanding and energy depleting. There is an impartation of oneself through ministry. We must take care to be aware of our own spiritual needs and not let ourselves come to a low point through exhaustion. Constant vigilance and awareness of the strategies of the enemy to discourage and intimidate us have to be at the forefront of our minds. A good night's sleep, nutritious food, and time to pray, reflect, and listen is good medicine to a time of energy-depleting ministry.

I wonder how the disciples responded when they saw thousands of people descending on them when all they wanted to do was rest. Perhaps if it was you or me, we might resent people coming to us when all we want to do is rest, but, instead, we find that Jesus welcomed them (v. 11). How beautiful it is to think that Jesus is always available. Many ministers are protective of their privacy and 'family time,' not so Jesus. His body language told them that He was happy to see them. I imagine His delighted heart smiling and warmly welcoming them. Mark tells us that **"He was moved with compassion towards them"** (Mark 6:34).

The disciples had the best mentor in the world. They lived with Him and enjoyed close intimate fellowship as they observed how He lived His life. I believe that this is the key to moving in power and authority. Their anointing came out of their close relationship to Christ. It is the same with us. Education is useful if you can get it, but never let it be a substitute for a relationship with Christ. Get close to Him, live a life of love and devotion to Christ and obedience to the Spirit, and you will enjoy power and authority to do the same things that Jesus did. He has promised it to you:

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father (John 14:12).

The second thing I see here in verse 10 is the need for accountability. Nothing is as dangerous as an unaccountable person. Jim Jones, the man who led 913 people to commit suicide with his cult, the People's Temple, was an unaccountable leader. David Koresh, the self-proclaimed leader of the Branch Davidian cult, was another, 76 people died when a confrontation ensued with the government after they had stockpiled many weapons. The Lone Ranger mentality is destructive to the Body of Christ. Every one of us needs to have someone that we can be accountable to in the Lord. We all need someone who loves us enough to give us perspective and feedback, instruction, and encouragement. The enemy loves to see an unaccountable leader; he often causes great damage through leaders that have no one overseeing them.

I don't believe we need to report to our leader everything that is going on in our lives. A leader that seeks to control your life is not really leading you. Think of how Jesus led. He led by example and challenged people by causing them to recognize and question their motives and choices. He did not cross the line into controlling behavior. We all need someone who will care for where we are at and can ask us the hard questions.

Question 3) What type of questions do you think Jesus may have asked His disciples? What does Jesus being “moved with compassion” look like in your mind’s eye?

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

¹¹but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. ¹²Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.” ¹³He replied, “You give them something to eat.” They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” ¹⁴(About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” ¹⁵The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. ¹⁶Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. ¹⁷They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over (Luke 9:10-17).

In recounting the same incident, the apostle John writes that Phillip was tested along with the others: ⁵“When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” ⁶He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do” (John 6:5-6). I wonder how many situations we go through in life are a test from the Lord for us to find out the measure of our faith. Are you quick to respond with, “where am I going to get that from?” How pleased He is when we respond with a heart that says, “I am at the end of my resources, Father, would you please help me?” It is my

persuasion that God often leads us into situations which are entirely beyond our resources that He might stretch our faith beyond our capacity. People are like elastic bands; they have to be stretched to be effective. Alexander Maclaren once said:

It is often our (God-given) duty to attempt tasks to which we are conspicuously inadequate, in the confidence that He who gives them has laid them on us to drive us to Himself, and there to find sufficiency. The best preparation of His servants for their work in the world is the discovery that their own stores are small.

Luke writes that there were five thousand men (Luke 9:14). Five loaves of bread and two fish are not much when you consider we estimate there were probably 12,000 people that sat down to eat. Furthermore, John 6:9 tells us that we are talking about five small barley loaves, which in the Mishnah, a Jewish Commentary, was the bread which the poorest of the poor ate.¹

It is the apostle John who tells us about Andrew finding a boy who was willing to share his lunch (John 6:9). We are talking about just enough food for one person, perhaps hurriedly stuffed on his person by his mom as he is dashing off. John uses the word *opsarion* to describe the two fish in the boy's lunch. This word describes the small and generally dried or pickled fish eaten with bread, similar to sardines or maybe in England what we call Sprats. We're talking about fish that are a maximum size of 6 inches. When the boy's packed lunch was brought, it consisted of five barley loaves, more than likely smaller than your average pita bread size. The pickled fish would add a bit of taste to get it down. As the disciples looked at this boy's lunch, the Lord uttered something startling, "Have the people sit down" (v. 10). This was another way of saying "let's sit down to eat," when there was nothing to eat but this boy's lunch. What marvelous faith! Luke tells us that Jesus directed the people to sit down in groups of fifty and hundreds:

Question 4) Why do you think Jesus led them to sit in groups of fifties? Where did the miracle take place? Do you think it was at the hands of Jesus or in the hands of the disciples as it was passed out, or both? If you were a fly on the grass, describe what you think you would have seen.

The things of God are better received and enjoyed when we are fellowshiping with friends and relatives in a community. To be put together into groups of families and friends gave no room for the doubters that would say that no one else ate.

After He broke the bread He said the blessing which was probably the traditional blessing from the *Mishnah*: "Blessed be you, O Lord our God, king of the world, who causes bread to come forth from the earth" (Berakcot 6:1). He then broke the bread and fish into pieces and "gave." The Greek imperfect tense of the verb says that He "kept giving." Wouldn't that have been wonderful to watch?

As they began to eat, I would think that the noise level began to rise as each person ate bread and fish beyond the amount of five loaves and two fish even just for each group of fifty. I wonder if each of the groups was told beforehand that all they had on the menu was a little boy's packed lunch. □

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Hendrickson Publishers, page 467

There are some, the doubters of this miracle, who would have us believe that lots of people kept their lunches from Andrew, and when the time came to eat, they all ate their packed lunches. How absurd! The miracle was attested to by each of the gospel writers with more than enough evidence as to time and place, so it could be verified, and of course, there were twelve baskets of left-over pieces taken up later on.

The more they were given, the more they ate. I can see each disciple going back to the Lord for more because each group ate more than each disciple could carry. It was astonishing to them that so little food was now filling each of them up. I'm sure they asked for reassurances from the disciples as to the truth, "Are you sure that this was just one boy's lunch that we are eating?" As they ate, they looked at one another in amazement at the impossibility of it all. With God, all things are possible!

How amazing it would have been to be one of the disciples sent by the Lord with a basket to collect the leftovers! As each group of fifty or a hundred threw their leftover pieces of fish and bread into the basket, they would each look into the basket and see way more fish and bread than when they had started! John mentions just pieces of bread in the baskets (John 6:13), but Mark records there were pieces of fish and bread that were left (Mark 6:43). You would think that all the fish would be eaten because it was a smaller amount and tastier, but there was more than enough fish as well as bread to go entirely around the crowd. How glorifying to the Lord as each family and social group confessed as to all they had eaten, with so much left over. One wonders why He didn't just allow the people to take the leftovers home, but how much more beautiful for all the people to see all the remaining bits in twelve baskets before they left for home and realize just how wonderful the Lord is to prepare a table in the wilderness.

John tells us that when the people began to realize the miraculous nature of the feeding of the five thousand, they started saying, "This is truly the Prophet!" (John 6:14). Moses, many hundreds of years previously had told them that God would send them a prophet like himself and that they should listen very carefully to Him:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Here before them was the One about which Moses told them. He was the prophet who should come into the world, and like Moses, He had fed them miraculously. Moses brought them heavenly bread that came down, the Manna. He also multiplied meat miraculously by feeding them quail that fell all around their camp (Numbers 11:31-34). When they began to realize that this was the One spoken by Moses, they wanted to take Him and make Him king. It was not God's timing for Jesus to be crowned king—God planned to crown Him with thorns. He withdrew by Himself and left the disciples to return to Capernaum by boat.

What impossible situation are you facing that you need prayer for right now? Pray about the things you are facing that are beyond your own resources. Maybe as a group, you could close in prayer for the Lord to meet your need for resources.

Prayer: Father, I pray that your people would be stretched beyond their abilities and resources to know You as their great provider. Indeed, you are a wonderful Father.

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