

Disciples on Mission



Small Group Resource

June 2026

Disciples on Mission 5



BIG Idea!

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS IS FOR ALL PEOPLE

Peter having had a vision from God showing that the foods that he would have considered unholy and forbidden were actually not something that should disqualify anyone from being followers of Jesus. God has no partiality or favourites and that those from different nations and cultural background only need to do what is right and not be hampered by any demands to follow the Jewish way of doing things. Forgiveness was for all. Not that they would tolerate everything but true life was welcome for everyone.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

As we journey through the book of Acts we see the good news of Jesus spreading from Jerusalem to Rome. Being empowered by the Holy Spirit meant following the Spirit's lead into some unknown and strange situations for the apostles (sent ones). Starting from a place of prejudice and hatred the apostles were called to take this good news, this life-giving freedom from sin, and the presence of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit, to these very people they had been told all their lives to hate and not associate with. There were stories on both sides at how wicked each other were. Jews were taught that the gentiles would force their women to have abortions and then put their dead foetuses down the drains or under the floorboards making their houses unclean. On the other hand gentiles were told that the Jews would go around and rob pagan temples. It was told that the Jews did not regard the pagan gods as real and therefore no-one real owned the temple items so they could enter and help themselves. The Jewish hatred grew from a people being separated for God to an irrational fear of 'the other'. Here we see God clearly breaking down these prejudices, explaining that God has no favourites and that no man is unclean because of his ethnicity or occupation. God speaks to our Roman centurion Cornelius, about the Good News of Jesus, and filling him with the Holy Spirit and giving him the gift of speaking in tongues while Peter was still in the process of speaking the message of the gospel to them. The gospel was on the move in powerful ways.

1

PRAYER POINT

Pray that we would see others in the same way Jesus sees them.

2

ACTION POINT

Ask God to show you if you treat anyone with partiality.

3

MISSION POINT

How might you express the Good News of God with People in your world you don't really get on with?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Acts 10: 34-43

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Consider what must have been like to share this story of love and compassion to those you have hated all your life.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

Was there favourites in your extended family of origin? What did that look like? Was it real or perceived?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What does it mean for us in our setting to have no partiality?
3. Who do you find it hardest to love in your context?
4. What stories do you have from your family of origin that make this difficult?
5. How might we show this life and love to those we find difficult to love?
6. What might God be challenging in you at this time?

PRAY for each other that we would see others in the same way that God sees them as we take part in His global mission.

Disciples on Mission 6



BIG Idea!

BEING SENT

God's compassion for the lost, broken and forgotten, motivated Jesus to continue the 12 disciples' training by sending them out to fulfil who they were being called to be. Jesus gave them all the authority to cast out demons, raise the dead and heal every disease and sickness and sent them on their way. The disciples are sent to fly solo without their trusted mentor as they become apostles (the sent ones) of the life-giving good news of the kingdom of God. This is a model for us as we learn to be the sent ones in our places and spaces that God has led us to inhabit. We, are also called to be his apostles sent into a broken and dark world that is in great need of His grace, love, compassion and freedom from brokenness, oppression and sin. We too have been given authority by God to outwork the mission and to be salt and light in our world.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

Matthew has carefully constructed his gospel to highlight that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. He also included Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God and that Jesus was like a new Moses type figure who would lead his people to a new land and create a new nation and Kingdom. He reports in detail how that Kingdom works by including recounts of Jesus healing many who were sick and setting the oppressed free.

The twelve were moving from being just disciples, or apprentices learning from their rabbi, to apostles, ones being sent to outwork the mission of said rabbi.

So here we have the sending out of the 12 disciples. They were sent with clear instructions of going to the Jewish towns only and how to react when their message was rejected and they themselves were not received in peace. Jesus warns them that it would not all be straight forward or easy but sent them out anyway. To be a disciple of Jesus is to consider yourself as sent to your worlds to be the ones who heal the sick, speak life into the dead and dark spaces of our world and set the captives free in the name of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading:

Matthew 9:35 - 10:8

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Consider what it would have been like for the disciples to be expected to go and be like Jesus doing the things they saw him do?

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS What does it mean to be a sent person in a place you have been living for a long time?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. List the things that Jesus asked the disciples to do in this situation.
3. How might the disciples have felt under the weight of expectation?
4. How would you feel if God asked you to do something similar?
5. What might that look like in our context? What might Jesus ask you to be doing?
6. What is Jesus asking you to consider as we study these verses?

PRAY for each other that we would see how God wants us to be a part of his global mission.

1

PRAYER POINT

Pray that God would show you what it means to be sent win the situation you find yourself in.

2

ACTION POINT

Look for opportunities to be and speak the Good News of Jesus in your everyday life.

3

MISSION POINT

How can we encourage each other as we embark on this global mission for God?

Disciples on Mission 7



BIG Idea! BE SHREWD AND SMART

The disciples were called to be shrewd and innocent, to be on guard and not naive about powerful people who could bring them harm while being sent out to share the good news of the Kingdom. God promised to provide words by the Holy Spirit when they were arrested or in danger. The promise of God is not that life, as a believer, would be as the idiom suggests “all a bed of roses”. Actually Jesus and the new testament writers seem to imply that life would have its challenges and difficulties particularly because we choose to be followers of Jesus. The message of the Kingdom however overrides all the possible hardship and angst because those who have ears to hear are transformed by the abounding love of God and received into his family.



DIGGING Deeper! Context:

Matthew continues to report more instructions on what to take and expect when the disciples go on tour. They were under no illusions that life was going to be easy and that people would just fall at their feet in repentance. The landscape was made out to be hostile and dangerous. Jesus' sales pitch to encourage his closest followers to go out by themselves and preach the Kingdom of God 'leaves a lot to be desired'. All the more reason for the disciples to follow the way that Jesus ministered, in spending time in prayer and listening to the voice of God as they venture into the unknown. They were taught that peoples responses were not on them but to continue healing, preaching and teaching what it meant to be a true Jew, believing, accepting and following Jesus as the Messiah King. All the more reason for them to hear the words that they would be led by the Holy Spirit, given words when needed and could trust that God would go with them. This trust was not just in the transformational work of the gospel but also in their practical needs as they went from place to place, not relying on their own provisions but to take very little and to believe that God would look after them. What a training mission they all were sent on, and not just those with the gift of preaching or evangelism. They were ALL sent to do the work of the harvest in the same way we are also sent no matter what our gifts might be, to be the words and actions of God in our places and spaces in our time.



1

PRAYER POINT

Pray that God would give courage to us all as we look to share his love to those around us?

2

ACTION POINT

Ask God to give you opportunities to trust him in while accepting that this will include things that may severely challenge us?

3

MISSION POINT

How can we encourage each other to continue the work of the gospel even when it is scary or difficult and no-one seems to be listening?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Matthew 10: 16 - 20

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Consider what the disciples might have thought when they heard these instructions.

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS What is the most difficult situation you have found yourself in while trying to talk to someone about Jesus?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. What does it mean to be vulnerable as lambs in our world today?
3. How might you balance being wise as serpents and innocent as doves?
4. What would the equivalent of being dragged before the council, governors or kings be in our day and age?
5. What does it look like for you to trust the Holy Spirit in the way we might communicate to others about Jesus?

PRAY for each other that we would see how God wants us to be a part of his global mission.

Disciples on Mission 8

BIG Idea!



BRING LIFE

Deeply moved by the plight of His people (Matt 9:35-38), Jesus decided to send out His Disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, heal the sick, raise the dead and drive out demons (Matt 10:1-8). His Disciples were to take no material comforts and no money. Instead, Jesus instructed them to rely upon the kindness of others. In this way, the Disciples were to enter into the messiness of people's lives and, should their message be welcomed and supported, bring life to their homes and communities. In doing so, the Disciples mirrored the story of the prophet Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17. Jesus insists that the 'Good News' of His ministry isn't to be preached from a soapbox, but applied at ground-level. In their reliance on charity, the Disciples mirror Christ's own posture. The new life Jesus offers will not be forced upon anyone. One must welcome Jesus into their life, just as one welcomes a guest (Rev 3:20).



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

In Matthew 10:41, Jesus relates His Disciples missional posture to the story of Elijah and the widow from Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. At that time, the people of God were experiencing a great drought and famine. Elijah was instructed to travel to the widow's home where he would be supported. In spite of her own desperate situation, the woman supplied Elijah with water and food. During his stay the woman's only child, a son, died. Elijah cried out to God and the boy was raised to life.

Jesus referred to Elijah's story as it neatly encapsulated Israel's present situation. Once again, God's people were suffering. Only this time, their deficiencies were primarily spiritual. To meet this need, Jesus instructed His followers to bring life to people's homes and communities, so long as their work was welcomed and supported. The raising of the widow's son serves as instructive encouragement for the Disciples, whilst also foreshadowing the death and resurrection of God's own Son.

It's no surprise to see Matthew include an account of Jesus referencing Old Testament prophecy. For Matthew, it was imperative that his audience weren't just *told* Jesus was the Messiah, but were *provided* compelling evidence. In the same way that Christ would draw upon Israel's history to illuminate His Messianic purpose, so Matthew drew upon the prophetic and thematic connection between the heroes of old and Jesus of Nazareth.

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading:
Matthew 10: 40 - 42
1 Kings 17:7-24

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Imagine walking up to strangers, introducing yourself as a Christian and asking to be accommodated and fed. How would you respond to a request like that?

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

If this is mission in a first century, near eastern context, what does mission look like for us in Palmerston North?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. Is there a challenge for you in Matthew 10?
3. What are the needs in your community?
4. What specifically in your community makes you angry or upset? How might this fuel your action to mission?
5. Have you ever considered how your life might be part of the big narrative of God's story?

PRAY that God would show us how to meet those needs and apply the Gospel at 'ground-level'.

1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

What practical things can I do to support my own missional lifestyle, and the missional lifestyle of others?

3

MISSION POINT

How can we bring life to our own communities? What do people suffer from in my context?

Disciples on Mission 9



BIG Idea!

THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

Perhaps the Gospel's greatest scandal is Christ's reversal of worldly priorities. While humans typically value wisdom, status and the privileges of education, God is more interested in matters of the heart. It should come as no surprise then, that God chose to reveal Himself through His Son; a humble carpenter whose best friends were fishermen and tax collectors. This led ancient philosophers, such as the Roman thinker Celsus, to accuse Christianity of lacking intellectual depth. Celsus himself wrote that Christianity "... thrives in its [purest] form among the ignorant".

God is not a cipher to decode. He does restrict Himself to those worthy of His attention. Rather, God chooses to reveal Himself to those the world calls ignorant or unimportant. And not just that, but God actually invites us into a deep, personal relationship. Whatever barriers exist between God and humanity, they are barriers of human make. In Christ Jesus, we have a saviour who meets people where they are. A saviour who *chooses* to yoke Himself to His own creation.



DIGGING Deeper!

Context:

In Matthew 11:16-19 Jesus responds to the people's contradictory judgement of John the Baptist and Himself. John had been labelled a demonic radical, while Jesus had been accused of debauchery. In other words, John took sin too seriously, while Jesus didn't take sin seriously enough. Jesus compares their behaviour to children sitting about a marketplace. Rather than basing their judgements on consistent reason or rationality, they are instead dominated by self-serving, child-like impulses.

His reference to music and dance likely relates to the festivities of a wedding and the mourning of a funeral. Sticking with the child-like theme, Jesus paints the picture of a petulant people refusing to dance to a wedding song, nor grieve to a mournful tune. We see this same petulance in the unrepentant towns which Jesus lists in verses 20-24.

In verses 25-30 Jesus once more refers to children yet, in this instance, Christ's intention is to not rebuke, but to comfort. God has chosen to reveal Himself to the child-like, rather than those of a higher intellectual or social status. Christ's illustration of a shared yoke, therefore, appears less like two equals 'pulling their weight'. Instead, we see a loving father taking the weight of the work upon Himself, sharing the yoke not for necessity's sake, but for the sake of a close, loving relationship and instruction.



1

PRAYER POINT

What can you pray for this week, for yourself, your family and friends?

2

ACTION POINT

When you are tired and overloaded, is Jesus your first port of call? If not why might that be the case?

3

MISSION POINT

How well do we communicate the gentleness and lightness of Jesus? How do we balance that with the reality of life in a fallen world?

Start by checking in with how everyone is doing and ask a state of your soul question.



Today's Reading: Matthew 11: 25-30

READ the verses out loud.

THEN and THERE

Imagine Jesus saying these things to you. How would you respond to this invitation?

Read Digging Deeper.

DISCUSS

Do we feel like Jesus is with us, yoked to our shoulders? Looking back on our journeys so far, do we see two pairs of footprints?

QUESTIONS to Consider

1. What sticks out to you about these verses?
2. How do you feel about Christ's invitation to walk with Him?
3. Do you ever feel like you have to *earn* God's love? How does that relate to your relationship with your natural father?
4. What encouragement is there in being a child of God?
5. How do we explain this to people who haven't met Jesus yet?

PRAY for each other that we would see what it means to be yoked with God and be at rest.