Lesson 4 | March 27, 2022 Instructions for Christian Disciples

Study Text: Matthew 10:1–33; 28:16–20

Central Truth: The words of Christ offer instructions for daily Christian living.

Key Verse: Matthew 10:7–8

As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give (KJV).

"Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!" (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to understand Jesus' instructions on discipleship and grasp what it means to follow them in all circumstances.
- Students will be challenged to recognize and accept that Christian discipleship will involve adversity and even persecution.
- Students will be encouraged that they can proclaim the gospel boldly.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: It would be considered horrible if a researcher discovered the cure for a disease that was killing millions, yet he or she did not share that discovery with those who needed it. Likewise, it is horrible if a person has the truth that will save people from spending eternity separated from God and yet is unwilling to share that truth with those who need Christ. **Believers must be willing to share God's love with others.**

Opening Activity—Job Opening

Ask: How did you become aware of an opening at your place of employment when you first got your current job?

Say: Most of us got help from a person or other outside source when it came to finding a job. Likewise, most Christians learned about Jesus and the way to salvation from someone else. It is important that Christians help others find the path to a relationship with God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Sharing the gospel should not be seen as optional for the Christian. It can be easy to share the way of salvation with someone you love, but it is not always as easy to share the gospel with someone you hardly know or someone who is a stranger. In this lesson, you will explore how declaring the good news is a part of

discipleship, and then be challenged to help others live out that same faith you have come to practice. Such a life is at the heart of discipleship.

Resource Packet Item 1: How Would You Respond?

Distribute the case studies worksheet, and divide the class into small groups to discuss the questions. Ask for volunteers to share their responses.

Part 1—Proclaim the Good News Proclamation to the Jews

Matthew 10:1-16

[Mat 10:1-33 KJV] 1 And when he had called unto [him] his twelve disciples, he gave them power [against] unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. 2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James [the son] of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into [any] city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. 9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, 10 Nor scrip for [your] journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. 11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. 16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Say: As God the Son, Jesus has authority over evil. He exercised that authority during His earthly ministry by casting out demons and healing diseases. Jesus chose to share

that authority with His disciples. As followers of Jesus today, believers have authority over evil as well. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Matthew 10:1–16, Jesus gave His disciples instructions on how to use their authority, as well as the purpose of this authority. Miracles were to be performed for a reason: to draw attention to the kingdom of God, and declare that His kingdom is near (verse 7). In this way, miracles serve to draw individuals toward the opportunity to become citizens of His kingdom. The purpose of healing, raising people from the dead, and driving out demons is to redirect a person's focus toward God. The restored health of the individual who receives the miracle is a marvelous benefit as well. But if the kingdom of God is not clearly proclaimed through the miracle, it has not accomplished its true purpose.

Resource Packet Item 2: Power to Change Lives

Distribute the case study, and give the students a few moments to consider their answers. Then have them respond to the questions.

Jesus told the disciples to go to the people of Israel first (verses 5–8). He sought to give the Jews the opportunity to inherit all that had been promised to them. It was Jesus' desire that they would repent of their wicked ways and return to Him as a lost sheep would return to its shepherd. Through the working of miracles by the disciples, they would see the truth about Jesus.

A person must not become prideful when God has done a miracle through his or her life, or use the experience to elevate personal status. Just as the believer freely receives the miracle of salvation solely as a result of God's power and authority, all additional miraculous acts that occur during the ministry of the gospel are entirely the result of God's intervention, and all praise and recognition must be given to Him.

Verses 9–15 remind us that hospitality toward strangers and travelers was expected within the Jewish culture. If a traveler entered a town and requested a place to stay and a meal, it was common practice for the host to grant the request. Jesus reminded the disciples to make use of this custom in their work to spread the message of the kingdom of God (verse 11).

Once the disciple entered the home of the host, the disciple was to share the message of God's kingdom (verses 12–15). Jesus knew some people would not be receptive to this message, even if miracles were performed, and the disciples should not force their message on their hosts. If the hosts received the message, their lives would be transformed. They would experience the peace that only comes through a right relationship with God. If the hosts rejected the message, the disciples were to walk away, having done what was required of them. They had no more responsibility. Those who rejected the message had made their choice, and they would face the consequences of that decision.

Jesus understood that sharing the message of the kingdom of God within the kingdom of this world was dangerous (verse 16). Jesus' disciples would be persecuted, and some would give their lives. So Jesus told His disciples to use wisdom as they shared the message of the kingdom of God.

Discuss

? Why do you think people are often most effective in sharing their salvation stories with others during the first few years after they are saved?

? What open doors of opportunity are there in your world where you can proclaim the power of the kingdom of God?

Proclamation to the World

Matthew 28:16-20

[Mat 28:16-20 KJV] 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.

Say: At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus adjusted the focus of His disciples toward the whole world. It was not God's desire for the Gentiles to live outside the Kingdom, but during His ministry, Jesus had focused mainly—though not exclusively—on the Israelites. That might have made Matthew 28 especially dramatic to His disciples. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Prior to His ascension to the right hand of the Father, Jesus gave the disciples what is known as the Great Commission, in Matthew 28:19–20. Prior to that, in verses 16–18, Jesus reaffirmed the authority that the Father had given to Him. The disciples would need to draw on His authority in the future as the Kingdom advanced.

Jesus was clear concerning what He wanted to see accomplished through the use of the authority that He had granted to His disciples. He didn't tell them simply to lead people into the Kingdom through salvation. He wanted His disciples to be disciple-makers, that is, to teach them the ways and values of the Kingdom.

Verse 19 reminds us that water baptism, a part of being a disciple, was a sign that a person had become aligned with Christ, believing in Him as Savior. When believers were baptized, they renounced their old lives. The consequences of this were not always minor. Those who were baptized were often cut off from their families. Water baptism was a very serious matter. There would have been no doubt in the person's mind concerning what they were doing.

Water baptism was to be done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This baptismal formula is important because it uniquely distinguishes the followers of Jesus, acknowledging the authority of the Father and recognizing the Holy Spirit, who guides and empowers believers as they follow Christ. This formula, then, affirms one's belief in the triune God.

A key part of proclaiming the Kingdom involves teaching the new convert how to obey what Jesus commanded (verse 20). When a person loves God, they will love others. Loving others will compel the believer, then, to offer the message of hope and salvation to all who will listen. Loving God and loving others are the hallmarks of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Discuss

? Why must we see salvation as a lifetime of discipleship rather than a momentary commitment at an altar?

? Why do you think love is such an important component in Kingdom living?

Part 2—Be On Your Guard Confident in Times of Trouble

Matthew 10:17-20

[Mat 10:17-20 KJV] 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Say: Jesus did not hide the cost associated with His command to share the message of the Kingdom. Although you will be rejected by some, and may even be persecuted for your faith, **you can be assured that God will provide strength to face opposition.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus commanded His disciples to be on their guard (Matthew 10:17–18). He was not commanding them to be defensive, but to be prepared to face difficulty. There

was, of course, an easy way out of persecution. <u>They could simply be quiet, blend in with the crowd, and keep the truth to themselves. But this was unacceptable if they were to stay faithful to their Lord.</u>

Jesus assured the disciples that they would not be alone when they faced persecution for their faith. The "Spirit of your Father" (verse 20) would be with them. This is the only occurrence of this particular phrase in the New Testament. It is a unique way of referencing the Holy Spirit, and commentators note that it reflects Matthew's tendency to highlight the intimate nature of the relationship between the Father and His children. Such intimacy surely would be present in these instances. When they needed their Lord the most, the Spirit would speak through them.

Tough times did come to the disciples. Church history teaches that nearly all of them gave their lives for the cause of Christ. First-century Christians were persecuted by the Jews and faced interrogation, imprisonment, and even death by the Romans. But just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit was with them and the kingdom of God continued to expand despite opposition.

Christians today should not be surprised when they face persecution for their faith. Following Christ will result in tough times, so we must not be caught off guard. Recalling that the Holy Spirit is with us during tough times will provide comfort and confidence as we faithfully declare God's kingdom.

Discuss

- ? What difficulties have you faced as a result of your faith in Jesus?
- ? How have you prepared yourself to face opposition in the future?

Cost of Obedience

Matthew 10:21-25

[Mat 10:21-25 KJV] 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against [their] parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. 24 The disciple is not above [his] master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more [shall they call] them of his household?

Say: Jesus offered a sobering description of what could happen to those who obey His commands. He expects His followers to be fully committed to Him, though we won't have an easy road. On the contrary, at times, even those closest to us will turn against us. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The challenge of discipleship might bring problems at home as well as out in the world. The message of God's kingdom may divide families, causing brothers to turn over their brothers to the authorities (Matthew 10:21). This same betrayal may occur between parents and their children. Jesus stated that the love of evil will supersede the love of family members. Jesus indicated there will be no place to hide. Those who reject God's kingdom hate the citizens of the Kingdom.

Jesus indicated that some who start on the journey of Kingdom life would change course short of the finish line. Verse 22 implies that some would not endure. In light of Jesus' words in verses 21–23, this is not surprising. It is hard to stand firm against evil in the face of persecution. But Jesus offers a marvelous assurance: Those who do endure to the end will be saved.

From NIV Study Notes:

Some take Jesus' saying here as a reference to his second coming at the end of the age (24:30), understanding "going through the towns of Israel" to refer to the completion of the mission to the Jewish people. Others understand it to refer to his coming in judgment when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD 70. the Son of Man comes. The first of a number of Matthew's allusions to Da 7:13–14, signaling the vindication of Jesus as God's chosen one. Matthew alludes to Daniel to show that Jesus is vindicated at his resurrection (16:28; 26:64), at the fall of the temple as Jesus predicted (24:30), and at his second coming (24:36–37).

Spirit Filled Life Bible:

Jesus will come to His followers before they have gone through the cities of Israel. This difficult verse has been variously interpreted as referring to His coming in the Transfiguration, Pentecost, in the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (a coming in judgment), or in the Second Coming. Perhaps the simplest meaning answers these questions: Jesus was simply saying, "I'll join you later."

Resource Packet Item 3: Suffering for Christ

Distribute the information sheet, and review the information on the death of each person on the list. Recount how suffering on the part of these people led to the advancement of the kingdom of God. Lead the group in a prayer for the persecuted church today.

In verses 24–25, Jesus helped His followers understand why they would be treated in such a manner: They would suffer, just as He suffered, because the student is not greater than the teacher. The follower of Christ could not expect to be treated better than Christ himself, who suffered accusations leading to death by those who hated Him. If a person desired to take part in the ministry of the miraculous, he or she would also have to embrace the consequences that come with such a ministry. Jesus was

persecuted for the message of the kingdom of God. Disciples of Jesus would, and will, be persecuted for faithfully declaring that message as well.

Although it seems like a contradiction, believers will often go to areas of the world that have yet to hear the gospel, despite certain persecution. As the Spirit moves in the hearts of people, they develop boldness to trust God and overcome fear.

Discuss

? Why do you think some parts of the world suffer worse persecution than other parts? What can we, as people who suffer less than many, learn from the suffering and response of others?

? How do you think believers in safer countries today would respond in the face of persecution?

Part 3—Do Not Be Afraid A Bold Proclamation

Matthew 10:26-28

[Mat 10:26-28 KJV] 26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in darkness, [that] speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, [that] preach ye upon the housetops. 28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Say: The natural, human reaction to Jesus' instructions to His disciples might have been to quit before they even got started. Who wants to put themselves in the path of someone who wants to harm them? But Jesus assured the disciples that the wise choice was to trust God rather than succumb to the threats of others. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus' command not to be afraid in the face of persecution goes against all human instincts. Jesus instructed the disciples to demonstrate their courage by being bold in their proclamation of the Kingdom. Up until that point, the proclamation of the Kingdom had been somewhat limited. Much of what Jesus had taught, He had taught to His closest followers, His disciples. But now it was time for them to move forward and proclaim these words to the world without restraint, in broad daylight and loudly from the roof tops (Matthew 10:26–27). The life of Jesus was a demonstration of the fact that God loves the whole world. But the world would only come to know this if the truths of God, taught throughout the ministry of His Son, were shared with the world.

Verse 28 is interesting. Fear can prevent people from doing the right thing. The enemy of the Kingdom seeks to intimidate God's people with threats that they may even lose their lives. Jesus turned this around by citing an important biblical principle. The people of God should neither fear men nor the enemy of their souls. The worst that might happen is the loss of life. But Scripture calls us to instead fear God (cf., 2 Corinthians 7:1). That is, we acknowledge God as Creator and Lord, and revere Him for the power and authority He holds over us, today for all eternity. How unwise it would be to focus on earthly enemies rather than our Almighty God.

Discuss

? How do you react to the thought that you might be required to suffer greatly for your faith?

? Why can even a committed Christian struggle to follow Christ consistently?

In God's Care

Matthew 10:29-33

[Mat 10:29-33 KJV] 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. 32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Say: Children ride in the backseat of a car with no fear for their safety because they trust the parent driving the car. Later, however, that same child might think he or she can drive better themselves. This illustration reminds us that Christians must learn to trust God with childlike faith. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus reassured the disciples that God cared for them by reminding them that He cares for every part of His creation, even that which seems insignificant (Matthew 10:29–30). Likewise, God cares so intimately that He knows the number of hairs on a person's head—a seemingly trivial point, and one that is difficult to ascertain. If God is concerned about birds and hair counts, surely the believer can have confidence in His care for them. Believers need not live in fear because they know that God loves them and values their lives (verse 31). God's care does not guarantee a life without trial, but a life of joy and peace, even in times of trouble.

Jesus then gave an important reminder: Believers would face real temptations to deny that they are His followers. Those who are willing to acknowledge

themselves as followers of Christ will be acknowledged to the Father as His followers (verse 32). But those who deny Him will also be denied before the Father (verse 33). This does not mean that we forfeit salvation if we stumble in faith, for Peter was restored after denying Christ three times (see Luke 22:54–62; John 21:7–19). Rather, it reminds us of a stark choice that we must make. Will we join in solidarity to our Lord, or will we divide our allegiance between the Lord and men, depending upon the situation? Let us, as His disciples, choose to stand boldly for Christ.

Discuss

- ? How can a believer overcome fear when faced with opposition?
- ? What are some ways God has shown His care for you?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God desires all people to enter the kingdom of God, for He does not wish for any to perish (2 Peter 3:8–10). Yet in our role in reaching them, we must also keep two things in mind. First, God has called us to be disciples. We must ourselves be lifelong learners, growing in relationship to Christ. This equips us to be faithful to Christ. Second, we must be committed to the lifelong task of discipleship, helping people find Christ. We need to invest time and resources to help them become faithful followers of Christ in a difficult world.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Develop a testimony script of your salvation or another miracle that you have experienced in your life, to help you better share your testimony when the opportunity arises.
- Look for opportunities this week to share Christ with someone.
- Pray that God will empower you to stand strong and bold for Him when you are tempted to avoid trouble by concealing your relationship with Christ.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Peter Proclaims the Good News. Acts 2:29–41

[Act 2:29-41 KJV] 29 Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the

Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.

Tuesday:

Philip Proclaims the Good News. Acts 8:4–8

[Act 8:4-8 KJV] 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed [with them]: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

Wednesday:

Saul (Paul) Proclaims the Good News. Acts 9:19–22

[Act 9:19-22 KJV] 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard [him] were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Thursday:

Instructions for Peace. Philippians 4:4–9

[PhI 4:4-9 KJV] 4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: [and] again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand. 6 Be careful for

nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Friday:

Instructions for Contentment. 1 Timothy 6:3–8

[1Ti 6:3-8 KJV] 3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, [even] the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Saturday:

Paul's Charge to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:11–21

[1Ti 6:11-21 KJV] 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and [before] Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14 That thou keep [this] commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, [who is] the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom [be] honour and power everlasting. Amen. 17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane [and] vain babblings, and oppositions

| of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace [be] with thee. Amen. |) |
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