

**Mission Instructions**  
**Matthew 10:5-15**

Friends, I have a question for you this morning - how well do you follow instructions? To help you discover the answer I have a little test that you can take to help you figure this out.

It's being passed around, and you'll find pencils on your tables and I'll give you the next three minutes to do this exercise.

So go for it, find out how well you follow instructions.....

Well...how did you do? I must confess that when I first took this test I started reading but then began to do things before I had finished reading the test the whole way through.

And how often have you heard stories about a situation that happened because someone neglected to read the instructions; or about someone who just went ahead and did something without instructions because they thought they were doing the right thing but ended up doing more harm than good.

No, I didn't read the instructions for the dishwasher that explicitly state not to use regular dish detergent. I figured its soap for dishes what's the difference!

No, I didn't read the instructions for the microwave which said to pierce the potato with a fork or knife in several places being cooking it.

You're not supposed to wash whites and colors at the same time... Oh! Well I thought you would be happy that I finally decided to help you out around the house and do the laundry!

Oh, yes I washed that cast iron fry pan – it took a bit of time because it was really greasy but I scrubbed and scrubbed and I finally got it completely clean! What's wrong?

There's the old saying that goes "*the road to hell is paved with good intentions,*" or to quote something more biblical "*It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.*" (Prov 19:2)

Friends as we look around at our community and see it through the eyes of Jesus, and we the children of our community as sheep in need of a shepherd and as a field which is in need of workers, as we see the spiritual poverty that affects them and it touches us and moves us - it is only natural to want to rush out and do something about it right away...

After all, we learned last week that we have been authorized and equipped and are sent out to work in the field by being good shepherds who gather the sheep, give them feed and water, and protect them, and finally... lead them to Jesus. But, if we do not take the time to familiarize ourselves with the specific instructions which Jesus gives to the disciples and therefore to us – we might do things wrong and end up causing more harm than good!

And so - we continue to look at Mathew chapter 10, picking up where we left off last week.

Jesus has called the twelve disciples together, He authorized them, He's equipped them and now He is giving them specific instructions about what He is sending them out to do.

He gives them what I like to call the Five Commandments for Missionaries, the five things people who are sent on a mission need to know, and for us they become Five Principles that instruct us and guide us as we determine how to go about gathering, and feeding and watering the little sheep in our community.

So, Jesus gives instruction on...

1. Where to Go in Mission (vs. 5-6)
2. What to do in Mission (vs 7-8)
3. How to do Mission (vs 9-10)
4. Who to approach in Mission (vs. 11)
5. How to handle rejection in Mission (vs 13-14)

Now friends we might think it's strange that Jesus finishes by giving counsel on what to do in the face rejection, we might think its better to stay hopeful and positive, don't anticipate failure...anticipate success, believe in what you are doing... end on some sort of inspirational note, the mission's success depends on it!

But friends, success is just as dangerous to this mission as failure is, and the danger lies in our tendency to look for recipes for success.

So, as much as it is important that we listen to His instructions for mission so that we do not mess things up and cause harm – Jesus also wants to let us know that simply following his instructions to the letter is not a guarantee for run-away success, and He remind us that we are pursuing *a mission*...not success.

Because it's possible to desire success – even missionary successes in the kingdom of heaven – in a way that makes success into an idol and causes us justify any means in pursuit of a successful end.

So, Jesus instructions about mission are meant for the heart of the missionary – a final debriefing to speak to the internal condition of those who are about to go out and work in the field and shepherd the sheep.

So the first thing we learn is that our hearts need to be in the right *place* for mission – not over there but right here. Jesus says don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans; just keep going to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Jesus has specific instructions on where to go to do the mission work – they are going to stay local first.

This doesn't mean that Jesus came only to save Israel, but remember Israel had a calling to be an example to the nations around them – it was the whole reason God had chosen them.

They were to be a witness to the gentiles of what it was like to be a nation who belonged to God. So, if God saved Israel – they would live up to their true calling and be a light to the world. That was what Jesus was doing with the disciples and what He was going to have the disciples do for their fellow Israelites.

Friends, this is what Christ is calling us to do in our community here as well – our mission is here... not over there across an ocean. The Church is thriving in Africa, South America, and Asia...but it is in decline here in Canada.

The principle that we learn from Jesus first command is that we need to focus on mission in a particular place, the place where God has put us, called us, and we can play our part in his larger plan. Don't go over there – focus on the need that is staring you in the face - the spiritually starving children in our neighborhood.

While it may not seem to be a very significant task for our church in a world faced with climate change, AIDS, terrorism, and devastating natural disasters, friends... remember that the present state of this world is only temporary, and it's a very significant task to remind people of what will really last in the world which is to come.

That's why it's important that we remember the principle we learn from Jesus second instruction – We are Heralds and healers.

We proclaim a message that the present state of this world, the present conditions that people live in, the sickness which affects them, the finality of death – is only temporary!

The Kingdom of Heaven is near... its coming; it's on its way – get ready for it!

So what can we offer as proof of this Kingdom to the children in our community?

What would it mean to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse from leprosy, and drive out demons in our ministry to children? Well friends – I think it would mean that through teaching them the truth of scripture their spiritual sickness is healed, through introducing them to Jesus Christ they are brought back to life spiritually, through befriending them they are cleansed from the isolation of being lonely and through protecting them from false teaching we drive away demons that seek to destroy them.

The Kingdom of Heaven is near and here is the proof.

And with such good news and such amazing power to accompany it, comes the temptation to profit from it. In Jesus' third command we receive the principle that we engage in mission for the benefit of others not to profit for ourselves. We

received the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven freely, we were forgiven freely, we were healed freely – and so we do all these things for those we are sent to in a generous spirit.

Now Jesus goes on to say we are not to take along any resources or basic necessities and this seems to be counter-intuitive. If we want to minister freely, then shouldn't we make preparations to be able to do so and support ourselves?

But friends remember, Jesus said “seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things will be given to you” The gospel brings forth gratitude and Jesus wants those who are touched by it to demonstrate that it has born fruit by financially supporting those who have administered it. This is why he says – “the worker is worth their keep”

So I think this applies to us in two ways, first it means we don't have to have all the finances in place before we develop some means to gather in the sheep and feed them, because the resources will to be supplied by those who are benefiting from ministry.

Second it means that we have no other agenda for our mission other than to be shepherds to the sheep. We cannot engage in this mission in order to recruit more members as a solution to the challenge of having enough people who can give to meet our budget or volunteer to do the support work for our church.

These things may occur as a side benefit of engaging in this mission but it can't be our motivation or goal for the mission. We engage in mission for the benefit of others, not to profit for ourselves.

So, here is the fourth command of Jesus which flows out of the last one – Find the receptive people to the mission. If we have some other motive for the mission we'll be targeting the wealthy families, or the really talented families, or the families with many children so that our giving will increase, our talent pool will be well stocked, and we'll have an impressive amount of kids in our church.

But Jesus says “find out who is worthy and stay with them” Mathew loves to use the term “worthy” in his gospel and he uses it to describe those who are receptive to the gospel.

So we are to look for those who are receptive to the gospel, open to hearing the good news. And we need to search for them, because at first glance you can't really tell can you. At first glance we might see wealth, talent or quantity but we need to *search* in order to discover who is open to the gospel.

And when we find these families, we need to stay with them. Now the disciples literally stayed in the homes of these people on their mission. For us this will mean that we need to develop close relationships with children and their families. We can't limit our mission to offering a program where kids come for an hour each week – Jesus says to get close to them, get into their home life and stay with them.

Friends in the end it's not about having run successful children's programs that we well attending; it's about whether or not we built a community of families who are growing into fully devoted followers of Jesus.

It's about families changing so they worship at church and play at sports, instead of playing with church and worshiping sports, families who worship Christ, and not their kids.

Now, friends even if we make sure that we have paid attention to the mission instructions that Jesus has given us, and we follow them to the letter – we a) Focus on mission here - not there, b) act as heralds and healers, c) do mission for the benefit of others, and d) search out those who are receptive... we will still face rejection as missionaries.

We will discover that there will be families who are not receptive to the gospel. They're just interested because we offer a kids program. They're only interested because it will give their kids some good values and keep them out of trouble. They just want their kids to learn a bit about Christianity so they can make a decision for themselves when they are older. They are not interested in the gospel, in the kingdom of Heaven, in learning how to follow Jesus Christ.

And so friends, it may seem that Jesus' last instruction for such situations seems hard and harsh – if the home is not deserving, if is not receptive to the gospel... then let your peace return to you. In other words move on from them. Shake the dust off your feet – leave everything from them completely behind and don't waste any more time trying to convince them.

But...there are *others* who are going to be receptive, and *they* need your time and energy. Jesus is concerned that we don't miss *them* because our ego is wrapped up in trying to convert someone who is uninterested and resistant. Then we've become focused on success instead of the mission.

Take back your peace, shake the dust from your feet – move on and search for someone receptive. They need what you are bringing to them, they need you to find them, don't delay in your task.

So friends, these are the five principles which will guide us, the five things we need to know as we embark on our mission.

Last week we looked around at our community. We discovered that through Jesus eyes we see children who are like sheep without a shepherd and a field that is in need of workers to bring in the harvest.

Today we hear the words of Jesus speaking to our hearts to prepare us to go out into the fields and shepherd the sheep.

So friends, how good are you at following instructions? Lets find out. Amen.