

## Guiding Principles for Effective Ministry

### Matt. 10:1-15

**Intro.** Successful businesses and organizations are often built on guiding principles determined early in their establishment. These principles are fixed like the rails of a train track. They remain constant despite changing circumstances. A large Texas based company provides a good example of this. Here are principles that govern all they do:

- Exceed customer expectations
- Live the Golden Rule (treat others with courtesy and respect)
- Be a leader
- Participate and contribute
- Pursue excellence
- Work as a team
- Share knowledge
- Keep it simple (make it easy for customers to do business with us and for us to work together)
- Listen and communicate
- Have fun

I'd like to do business with a company that operates this way. It's no wonder they're so successful! But guiding principles are no human invention. From the beginning, God established and published guiding principles for life...it's called the Bible. Perhaps the Sermon on the Mount could be labeled guiding principles for life in God's kingdom. Now in **Matt. 10**, as Jesus is about to send out six teams of apostles...twelve in all...we find Him giving them some guiding principles for effective ministry.

In **vs. 1-4**, Matthew introduced the twelve disciples Jesus chose and called to be His **apostles**...His messengers...His sent ones. After the long holiday season, let's reconnect with the context by reading these verses. **He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

At **chap. 10**, God's kingdom program took a big leap forward. Up to this time, preaching and sign miracles were done by Jesus alone. The disciples were students who learned by listening and by watching Jesus in action. Now near the midpoint of His ministry, the Twelve would join Him in the work. They were sent out even as Jesus had been sent by His Father. On this first short term mission trip which lasted just a few weeks, they would say and do what they had seen Jesus say and do. Having listed these men in **vs. 1-4**, Matthew then records the **instructions** or guiding principles given to insure their ministry would succeed. **v. 5** begins - **These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:** Even though these instructions need to be seen in the context of the kingdom offered to Israel, they contain some timeless principles for gospel ministry until Jesus returns.

Before we get into the text, notice the word **go** appears 3x's. (**vs. 5, 6 and 7**). This simple verb is basic and essential. The first verb of the Great Commission is **go**. We shouldn't expect the lost to come to us...we must **go** to them. We must be prayerful and proactive, not passive. And we must not over-think this or relegate it just to foreign missions. **Go** means **go**. And it's a command addressed to every believer. If a dictionary definition helps...the Encarta Dictionary of North America says, *go is an intransitive verb of motion expressing movement from an unspecified point of departure or from a place that is already known or assumed.*

For any who remain skeptical, **go** is precisely what Jesus did...**Matt. 9:35** says, **Jesus went** (same verb in the past tense) **through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.** So just as Jesus **went**, He asks us to **go**. If any are still puzzled about what the word **go** means, I can't help you. Even a coon dog knows what **go** means! The command to **go** *instructs all who believe to maintain constant motion toward the lost in both proximity and affection. We must not withdraw or hold up...we must take the initiative to meet the unsaved where they are.* It's a choice believers are called to make every waking day. As we go to work or to school or the grocery store or wherever, we should pray, "Lord, to whom would you have me go?" That's missional living.

**v.5a** then says, **These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:** As you see on the sermon notes, Jesus gave seven **instructions**. Notice that I've chosen to begin each instruction with the primary command to **go**. Why did I do that? Because the **following instructions** are meaningless until we're willing to **go**...to move from wherever we are to where lost people are.

**1. Go with a sense of obedience to your calling – v.5a** – I want to draw your attention to two words in this first sentence of **v.5**. The *first* word is **sent**. Like **go**, the word **sent** is "*elementary Watson!*" Having just **sent** Christmas cards and gifts through the mail, I won't insult your intelligence by presuming to explain what **sent** means. But I will say this...the Greek root word is related to **apostello** which is translated **apostle**. As we've been saying, an apostle is a *sent one*.

For just a moment, I'd like you to find **Rom. 10:11-15**. In these verses Paul outlines the method or the steps involved in salvation. He begins with the outcome...with **anyone** who believes and is saved. **v.11 - As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"** Notice the steps: People believe and are saved when they hear the Gospel and call on the name of the Lord. Yet, Paul writes, they can't hear without a preacher. This is axiomatic. As **v.17** says, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.** People can't embrace the Good News they know nothing about. So those who have already heard and believed are called to **hold out the word of life. (Phil. 2:16)** But notice the question in **v.15 - And how can they preach unless they are sent?** This rhetorical question begs a negative response. No one can speak with life-changing impact unless they are **sent**.

In **Matt. 16:18** Jesus said, "**I will build my Church.**" From beginning to end, salvation is the work of God. Our mission isn't like marketing / sales / or persuading people to sign on a dotted line. Being **sent** with a message isn't the same as winning an argument or overcoming reluctance. God is the One who draws people to Himself and God is the One who does the saving. Only God has power to regenerate and restore. Paul understood this. In **I Cor. 3:5-7** he wrote, **What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.** So right from the start, we must understand that effective ministry isn't self-initiated or the result of our most earnest efforts. Our task is to **hold out the word of life**...to sow and water Gospel seed and to pray.

There's a peppy song Peggy and I learned when working with teens years ago. It goes like this..."*Get all excited go tell everybody that Jesus Christ is King.*" I'm all for being excited about Jesus. But effective Gospel ministry is more than being amped up. It isn't frenetic activity aroused by excitement.

Gospel success doesn't result from believers who are driven, but from believers who are directed. Success comes as we submit to the King's authority and direction. These twelve men were not excited volunteers. They were men sovereignly chosen and sent by King Jesus.

The second word I want you to see in **v.5** is the word **instructions**. The word is **parangelo** in Greek. **Parangelo** was used of commands given by a military officer / a doctor's prescription / and court orders. In every example, the word signifies *unqualified obedience*. Soldiers don't do their own thing / sick people do what the doctor tells them to do / and only a fool disobeys court orders. So these **instructions** were not ideas / suggestions / or mere advice. They were guiding principles given by the King of kings...rules to be followed without improvisation. So the first missionaries were to *go with a sense of obedience to their king*. The same must be true of all who believe. Gospel ministry isn't freelance. It isn't like self-employment. Every believer is a team member with a coach and a specific assignment. Confidence comes when we know Christ has sent us and we are doing what He has instructed us to do. This assurance makes all the difference when the going gets tough.

**2. Go with a sense of focus – vs. 5a, 6 – “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.”**

**II Tim. 2:15** instructs us to **correctly handle the word of truth**. Correctly handling the word of truth demands that we recognize certain divisions or dispensations in God's redemptive program. For example, the office of apostle and prophet ended with the first century. The apostles and prophets were like block masons who lay a foundation. When their work was finished, they hopped in their trucks and drove off. They didn't hang around. Their work was followed by pastor-teachers, and evangelists. **(Eph. 4:11)** So in the primary sense, there are no apostles or prophets today. Their work was finished and **the faith was once for all entrusted to the saints. – Jude 3**

When Jesus said, don't go among the Gentiles or Samaritans, He gave an instruction that was appropriate for that time and that setting but not for all time. Today, our commission is to take the Gospel to the whole world. But at this early date, redemption and the kingdom were blessings promised specifically to the Jewish people...the people of the covenant. God never intended His blessings to be exclusively for the Jews, but as God's chosen people, they were the primary recipients...the first in line to hear. **Rom. 1:16 - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.** If Israel believed and embraced King Jesus, their kingdom would have come. The offer was genuine. But God knew Israel would reject and crucify His Son and that their rejection would mean salvation for the world. Later, after the Jews rejected Jesus, Paul was chosen to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. **(Acts 22:21)** So Gentiles like us are spiritual beneficiaries of the blessings Israel refused. A second reason the apostles were sent to the Jews is rational and racial. If the Gospel came to the Jews by way of heathen Gentiles, they never would have believed it! It would have been as credible as a Cowboy fan's explanation of why the referee picked up his flag on that pass interference call last Sunday. (I know, get over it.) To a Jew, heathen Gentiles had no credibility. So Gospel proclamation began in Galilee of Israel / with a Jewish Bible / a Jewish Jesus / and twelve Jewish men. The first ministry these men engaged in wasn't cross-cultural...they were sent first to their own people.

But even though this instruction applied to that time and setting, there remains a principle here we can learn and benefit from. It's good to be broad-based and to see the masses as lost and in need of Christ. It's good to follow Paul's example who *became all things to all men so that by all means some might be saved*. But a ministry that lacks focus, emphasis or priority tends to be weak and ineffective. It's far better to target a short list of unsaved people we naturally come into contact with...people we know / pray for / and have occasion to speak to. Our list shouldn't exclude others the Lord might bring our way...but a short list helps us focus on those we already know and have some relation to.

For example...what names should be at the top of a Christian grandparent's list? How about this?...their grandkids. Friendship or relational evangelism has proven to be far more effective than other methods. Surveys indicate that 57% of people who get saved and remain in a church were influenced by a believer in that church. So the most effective method involves a sense of focus and priority. And don't you agree? To claim we're burdened for the lost means nothing unless we care about the neighbor next door. It's like the guy who loves humanity but hates people.

**3. Go with a clear message – v. 7 - As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'**

The content of the message entrusted to the first missionaries was the same as the message preached by John the Baptist and Jesus. The **kingdom of heaven** signifies the reign of God in human hearts...a reign that will one day be universal. Though the apostles didn't yet understand it all, the rule of God began with the Incarnation and will culminate in Christ's Second Coming. Central to the Good News of the kingdom was the coming of the King, Jesus. Everything they were given to say revolved around His coming / His person / and His teachings. Like heralds with exciting news, the apostles took this message from house to house. They spoke to people in open fields and on the streets of Galilean towns. In conversation, they repeated themes Jesus addressed in the Sermon on the Mount. **Mk.6:12** says, **They went out and preached that people should repent.**

Even though Jesus is the centerpiece, it's important for us to realize that our message isn't the same as the message given to the first missionaries. The Gospel of the kingdom was for the Jews to whom the promise of the kingdom belonged. The message we preach is the Gospel of Grace. But at this early date before Jesus was rejected and crucified, the apostles knew nothing about the cross or the grace of God by which we are saved. In Peter's vision in **Acts 10**, the Church is represented by a great sheet let down from heaven and then suddenly taken up. The sheet is filled with all sorts of creatures, clean and unclean. That's us. We're like a parenthesis in God's Kingdom program. The message given to the Church is the Good News that God has cancelled our sin debt once and for all by the sacrifice of His Son on Calvary's cross. Our task is to announce that God's salvation is by grace through faith and available to everyone who will trust in Christ and receive God's free gift. In the coming Tribulation, the Gospel of the Kingdom will once again be preached by the 144,000 of **Rev. 7:4-8**...12,000 from each of Israel's twelve tribes. This revived message will be preached in anticipation of the Second Coming of King Jesus and the actual establishment of His kingdom.

So while the content of our message isn't the same, a guiding principle can be found here. Jesus instructs His people to *go with a clear message*. In **Col. 4:3, 4** – Paul wrote, **And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.** This prayer request is appropriate for us all. Unlike the telephone game where a message is corrupted as it passes from person to person...it's essential that we present a Gospel that is authentic and true. Our message must be Bible-based and clear. So let me ask you...how sharp is your ability to explain what Christ has done for you? Can you list the key points of the Gospel? In terms a non-churched person can relate to, can you explain the Gospel of grace and the way to be saved? We can help with that. As a guiding principle, we must *go with a clear message*.

**4. Go with divine credentials and a gracious attitude – v.8 - Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.**

**v.1** says Jesus gave the Twelve apostles **authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness**. These supernatural abilities continued throughout the first century to demonstrate the powers of the kingdom.

The signs, wonders and miracles proved God wanted to bless His people and do them good. It also proved the apostle's message was from God and that Christ was with them. Paul named the credentials or accompanying signs he was given in **Rom. 15:18, 19 - I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done--by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.** Again in **II Cor. 12:12** he wrote, **The things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles--were done among you with great perseverance.** Because sign miracles formed such a compelling testimony, people were accountable for the message they heard. Written to a Jewish audience, **Heb. 2:3, 4** says...**how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**

History says these miracles ceased at the end of the first century. While God still heals people according to His will, He no longer gives believers the supernatural ability to perform miracles or healings. Despite the claims of faith-healers, God isn't giving miracle working powers or the ability to raise the dead. Does that mean you and I are left without credentials to support and validate the Gospel we share? Not at all! Our credentials are the changes God's Spirit produces in us. For example, **I Pet. 3:1, 2** explains how the Gospel is validated by a wife who believes. **Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.** Her credentials are purity and reverence. In **I Thess. 1:5** Paul wrote, **...our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.** Here the spoken word was enhanced by the dramatic changes the Spirit produced in the lives of those who believed.

Now a changed life may not seem as exciting or compelling as the ability to heal a cancer patient, cast out a demon or resurrect somebody who died. But those miracles were momentary and not as convincing as we might expect. Today God has given us the privilege to display the miracle of His grace in a sustained and consistent way. Day after day through the ups and downs of life, you and I are privileged to display the power of God at work in our lives. People around us are watching and taking notes. Paul said the life of a believer is like a letter of commendation **known and read by everybody.** (**II Cor. 3:2**) When Jesus promised His followers would do greater miracles than He did, I think of the Apostle Paul. It took unearthly power to turn a proud self-righteous Pharisee into a humble servant of Jesus Christ. In the same way, it takes enormous power to change a selfish man or woman into a person who is kind and genuinely burdened for the welfare of others. The credentials that authenticate our message are the visible and tangible witness of a changed life.

But there's another part to **v.8 - Freely you have received, freely give.** In the primary sense, the first missionaries were to serve others without charge. I can imagine these missionaries talking to farmers while lending a hand in their fields. I imagine them working beside a carpenter while sharing the Gospel of the kingdom. David Ruhstorfer, our missionary in Senegal, serves the Malinke people just this way. Whatever the situation, the missionaries were to give of themselves just as Jesus had given Himself to them. They were to go as givers not getters. They were to maintain an attitude of humility that demands nothing but has something of great value to give away. This guiding principle has often been distorted. Some use the Gospel selfishly as path to prosperity. Though we don't like to hear it, we all tend toward snobbery. We all tend to credit ourselves and think we're somebody because God saved us. Yet everything we have we received from God as a gift of His grace. We are *beggars telling other beggars where we found bread.* As Jerry Bridges recommends, we must preach the Gospel to ourselves everyday. Our only boast is Jesus. So we must go with the divine credentials of a changed life and a gracious attitude that is eager to give.

**5. Go with a sense of dependence on God – v.9, 10 - Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.** In short, Jesus said, I want you to travel light.

Once again, I'm racing against the clock. I need to finish before the clock strikes 10:45 and I turn into a pumpkin. You thought *fanny packs* were a new invention, didn't you? 2,000 years ago the ancients carried coins in a money belt...same concept. We may discuss this in greater detail tonight, but the point of this instruction is simple. The first missionaries weren't to drag a u-haul trailer loaded with provisions. They weren't even to carry a **bag**, which was equivalent to a suitcase. One tunic was plenty. The staff in their hand and the sandals on their feet was all they were to take with them. Instead of hauling a bunch of stuff, they were to trust God to supply their daily bread. They were asked to remember and apply what Jesus taught them earlier. Remember **6:31, 32? ...do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.** So as they went, they were to trust the Lord to provide for them.

Notice the last phrase of **v.10 - the worker is worth his keep**. Here are three simple questions: **#1** - Who gave the law that says the worker is worthy of his (wages) or keep? Answer: God. **#2** – Does God always comply with His own laws? Answer” Yes. **#3** – When Jesus (who is God) sends out workers...who do they work for? Answer: For Him. **#4** – Who then is responsible to comply with this law and make sure the wages of His workers are paid? Answer: The Lord Jesus. Therefore, these first missionaries were to go with a sense of dependence on Him. In simple faith they were to trust Him for whatever needs they faced along the way. Faith-missions are based on this principle.

Now if we fast forward to another day after the apostles returned from their first mission trip, we see how faithful Jesus was to His promise. **Lk. 22:35 - Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered.** As a time-less guiding principle, God is honored when we trust Him to meet our needs as we concentrate on serving. We must **go with a sense of dependence on Him**.

**6. Go with discernment and blessing – vs.11-13 - "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.**

The fact that some **people** and **homes** were **worthy** or **deserving**, doesn't mean they were morally better than others. It means these people and homes welcomed or received the apostles and their message. Worthy people were neither resistant nor hostile. When the apostles encountered a family who extended warmth and hospitality, they were to stay in that home until they left that town. In other words, they weren't to shop around for a better deal. They weren't to search for a house that employed a gourmet cook / had matching recliners and a wide screen TV / or Serta Perfect Sleepers. They were to pronounce “shalom” or the blessing of peace on the house and people who received their message. But they were to withhold their blessing from those who rejected them. Why? Because they were in fact, rejecting Christ. And by rejecting Christ they were rejecting God. So by this instruction, Jesus urged them to practice discernment as they went from place to place. But He also instructed them to go with blessing on their lips. I've mentioned this before, but the first and last words of Jesus were words of blessing. This is consistent with the Gospel...the Good News. Jesus didn't come to condemn the world and neither should we. We must go to the lost with optimism. We should expect our message will be received and eager to bless. But we must be careful to not bless those God cannot bless. Some, eager to be tolerant, inclusive and successful, make that mistake.

**7. Go with awareness that not everyone will welcome you – vs. 14, 15 - If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.**

It was customary for a Jew to shake the dust off his feet when leaving a Gentile town. In a similar way, Michiganders were prohibited from cutting firewood here and taking up north or transporting bait fish from one lake to another. The Jews shook the dust off their feet to prevent the transport of defilement. It was a sign of rejection. A sign they rejected the godless immorality of the heathen.

We have to be careful as we try to find a guiding principle from this final instruction. There probably aren't many of us who trusted Christ the first time we heard the Gospel. I'm quite sure some of us were rebels who resisted the Lord for many years. We're thankful for **II Pet. 3:9** which says, **(God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** Just as God has been patient with us, we must be patient with those who doubt, those who need more time and those who respond negatively. But faced with divine messengers doing undeniable miracles and given the urgency of the moment, this sign of rejection was to be shown to any who refused heaven's king. The reason is stated in **v.15 - it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.** The seriousness of their rejection is owed to the fact that they were given more light than Sodom and Gomorrah was ever given, yet still they rejected God's rule.

As a timeless principle, Jesus prepares us to expect that not everybody will welcome us. In fact, some will hate us and turn against us because of Jesus. But this is what it costs to be faithful to Him. Jesus spoke of this again in greater detail in the verses that follow.

So, here are the guiding principles given to make out-reach ministries successful. Let's quickly review them again. Go with a sense of obedience to your calling / Go with a sense of focus / Go with a clear message / Go with divine credentials and a gracious attitude / Go with a sense of God-dependence / Go with discernment and blessing / and finally, Go expecting not everyone will welcome you. But remember, the first step of obedience is a willingness to go. To be missional...to move from where we to the lost in terms of affection and proximity. May the Lord make us willing to go and to find success through the guiding principles He has provided.