



## **FOLLOWING JESUS (WEEK 4: GO)**

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**CONNECT** (from last week): What is one area of your life in which you can respond to God's call to the harvest?

#### **WARM-UP Questions**

1. Have you ever had a sense that God has sent you to GO into the world? How does that make you feel?
2. What do you think that might look like for you in practice (tomorrow, in whatever you are doing)?

#### **READ Matthew 10:1-15**

3. Why were the disciples first sent to the Jews? Does this sending then also apply to us?
4. What are the various examples of **declaring** and **demonstrating** the Gospel in this passage?
5. What does it mean for us to both declare and demonstrate the Gospel with our lives? Which makes you more uncomfortable? Why are both essential for all Christians as they take part in God's mission?
6. Do you think as Christian we can ever be lulled into a false, inward looking lifestyle, rather than an outward Gospel-declaring-and-demonstrating mission? What helps to hear and respond to the GO?

#### **READ Matthew 10:16-39**

7. What most strikes you in this section? How is the Gospel Good News that can invoke opposition?
8. What does it mean to be sent out like sheep amongst wolves? How was this true for the disciples? Have you ever known this to be true in your life?
9. If Jesus and the apostles were persecuted, why should we also not be surprised by rejection?
10. What do you think it looks like to be **both** shrewd and innocent at the same time?
11. How are we enabled to face all manner of challenges without fear? How do we keep the big picture of God's coming Kingdom in mind? How is it encouraging that we 'do' mission together?
12. Read verses 29-32 again. How does it make you feel to know that God loves you in such an intimate and secure way? How can that knowledge help shape your response to being sent by God?
13. How is it possible to be sustained and spurred on in life-long mission as a disciple of Jesus?

**APPLY** (to this week): Who are five people in your life, who don't yet believe, who you can seek to share the Good News with? Pray for them every day this week and look out for opportunities to show and share the Good News for them.

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**PRAY:** *God of Mission, we thank you that you have been sending your followers into the world with your Gospel for thousands of years. Thank you that you also have sent us! Please help to see the opportunities, go joyfully, and face opposition in the security of your love and salvation. Please help us to declare and demonstrate your kingdom every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



# GOING DEEPER

## **FOLLOWING JESUS (WEEK 4: GO)**

### GOING DEEPER RESOURCES & SUGGESTIONS

Each week we provide additional resources that help to go deeper with whatever series we're currently focusing on as a church. Resources could include recommended books, articles, online sermons, courses, or videos. These are optional extras! Please don't feel under pressure to look at every resource, but consider what could be useful to.

#### **Something Experiential**

- For the application question this week (identify five people in your sphere of influence who don't yet know Jesus), write their names down (or make do something visual) so that you can have their names before you every day. It could be as simple as a post-it note or something more creative. Try to use it as a reminder to pray for each person daily and to actively seek opportunities to share the Gospel with them.

#### **Talks & Other Audio**

- AUDIO: "For those not enthusiastic for Mission" a sermon on Luke 15 by Dick Lucas. See: <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/for-those-not-enthusiastic-for-mission>
- AUDIO: Two sermons on Matthew 10 by Knox Chamblin. See: <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/the-appointment-of-the-twelve-apostles-and-their-first-mission-matthew-10-1-15>  
<http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/jesus-charge-to-the-missionaries-the-broader-mission-matthew-10-16-42>
- AUDIO: "Life and Faith: Love in the Time of ISIS". Nik and Ruth Ripken set to uncover why people hold on to their faith in places where they face suffering and death. They've travelled to over 70 countries and spoken to hundreds of Christians. Listen to the interview: <https://publicchristianity.org/library/life-faith-love-in-the-time-of-isis>

#### **Video**

- VIDEO: Interview with Toby Hall when he was CEO of Mission Australia (one of Australia's leading Christian Charities). In this talk he focuses on how the work they do seeks to transform lives as they work as agents of change. <https://publicchristianity.org/library/mission-possible-agents-of-change>

#### **Articles and Other Reading**

- BOOK: "Matthew for Everyone: Matthew" by Tom Wright.
- WEBSITE: "Talking Jesus". Talking Jesus is an initiative of the Church of England (in partnership with others) to help followers of Jesus to share the Good News with the world. The website contains some key findings on research regarding evangelism along with key recommendations and resources for churches/individuals to use. Go to: <http://www.talkingjesus.org>

## Talk 4/5 (Following Jesus): 19/02/17

“The GO of Following Jesus” by the Rev'd Adam Lowe

*Bible Passage: Matthew 10:1-42*

### INTRODUCTION \ \ OVERVIEW

Over the last three weeks, we've been looking at what it means to be a *passionate follower of Jesus*, through some key chapters in the Gospel of Matthew.

- We've looked at the *cost, call, and work* of following him.
- **Today, we come to the GO! Following Jesus involves a GOING.**
- **When you choose to respond to God's call, Jesus disrupts our life, displaces our priorities, disturbs our comfort, and despatches us for his kingdom purposes.**
- If that makes you feel *unsettled*, that's awesome, because that means we're probably beginning to get it.

In our previous weeks we've been looking at smaller interactions, but today, we're looking at the entirety of Matthew's account of Jesus sending the disciples off on their first missionary journey - *without him*.

- One of Matthew's distinctive features as a Gospel, is that it contains five big teaching sections by Jesus, of which this is the second.

- *In the first, Jesus shows us what the kingdom of God is all about;*  
*In the second, here, Jesus sends them out to show and tell the world.*
- He's **told** and **shown** them the shape of the kingdom,  
now it's their turn to **declare** and **demonstrate** the kingdom too.
- But he doesn't do so without telling them some important things *about* their going.
- And as we look at that, we can immediately be a little surprised,  
by how limited in scope the mission seems to be at first glance...

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These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans (Matthew 10:5)

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- This is not because Jesus intends the Good News just to be for the Jews.
- They first go to the Jews because Jesus had great compassion for these people,  
who had been like sheep without a shepherd for so long,  
and by going to them first, it fulfils the promises to Israel,  
confirming that this is not a new religion, *easily dismissed*, just for Gentiles,  
but that all of the hopes and aspirations of Israel culminate in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The scope of mission starts off here narrowly,  
but by chapter 28 of Matthew, the mission goes to the end of the world.

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- It starts small, then goes to infinity.
- Which means, that what Jesus says, also applies to us.
- He's told them in chapter 9, to be praying for workers for the harvest,  
and now he's showing them *that they are part of the answer to that prayer;*  
**And so are you.**

So the '**go**' of following. Massive chapter!  
But we're going to look at *just* three things today.

- As followers of Jesus we:  
*go outward;*  
*[go] with opposition;* and  
*[go] without fear.*

4

## #1 GO OUTWARD \\ VERSES 1-15

So first, *we go* **OUTWARD** with a message empowered with authority.

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As you go, **proclaim** this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. (vv.7-8)

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We see that as Jesus sends the disciples *outwards*, he calls them to both: **proclaim the message**, that the kingdom of heaven, has come near, that is Jesus is here; and to also **demonstrate** what that kingdom, or at least a glimpse, looks like in practice.

- Often, we see these two elements played against each other.
- **At one end of the spectrum....**  
*people say as Christians it's not important what we do, it's all about what we say...*
- **At the other end of the spectrum...**  
*people say as Christians, well proclaiming the message is not our words, it's only action.*
- But Jesus simply won't have that.  
There is absolutely a primacy on us proclaiming the message.

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- The word for PROCLAIM means that we should be speaking it, sharing it.  
*We see examples of that in open-air preaching, in homes, and with individuals.*
- But it's also clear that it's essential that we demonstrate the Gospel with our lives.
- We've got to both TELL and SHOW the Good News.

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When Bettrys and I have been expecting a baby, there's always the inevitable conversation of, 'when are we going to tell people about this?'

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When it comes to the Gospel, you don't need to have that conversation!  
It's time to go public!

- There's no **confidentiality clause**,  
Jesus doesn't want us to **guard it as a secret**,  
we don't have to wait for an **embargo being lifted**.
- Yet if you observed the lives of Christians sometimes,  
you might be tricked into thinking that our job is to keep it under wraps.
- We can all too readily slip into a complacent sought of introspective faith,  
for which we're comfortable to show it here and there,  
but we'd much rather adhere to a code of never speaking about what we believe.

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- **But here's the thing:** *Christianity is not meant to be just an inward-spiritual experience, designed to keep us warm and fuzzy.*
- The Gospel being driven inwardly into our lives is a life-long endeavour, as the Gospel being proclaimed outwardly from us, is a life-long endeavour too.
- It's Good News with which Jesus has thrust us urgently into the world to share.

*That can feel pretty uncomfortable sometimes.*

*We'd prefer to outsource that job, but Jesus is clear: **it's for everyone.***

- **And we need not feel overwhelmed,** because Jesus promised that *he would be with us.*
- The God of the Universe, who made the world, has overturned sin and evil, has sent and empowered you to declare this great and glorious news!
- That means that as we go, we must go with a great reliance on him. When we start relying on ourselves, we're trying to do things in our own power and by our own authority, which frankly, is not a great plan!
- Jesus makes really relying on him very practical for the disciples... He says, don't take these things with you.
- You've got all you need. Jesus' authority, Spirit, and Gospel.
- *The Gospel is not just to reside in us, **it is to GO outwardly from us.***

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## #2 GO WITH OPPOSITION \\ VERSES 16-31

Second, as *followers of Jesus we go, with OPPOSITION.*

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16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves

17 ...you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues.

18 ...you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

22 You will be hated by everyone...

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- **You might think that that doesn't really sound too enticing, but Jesus doesn't hide it in the fine print: it's plain to see.**
  - People might reject you, persecute you, or even kill you.
  - *Why?* Because of him...
- 

18 **On my account** you will be brought before governors and kings

22 You will be hated by everyone **because of me**

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- Do you see what Jesus is saying?  
It's because of him that we will face persecution, because that's exactly what happened *to Jesus.*

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- That's what Jesus is saying (in verse 24) when he says that a student is not above the teacher, nor a servant about his master, or that we have a cross to bear.
- Jesus has said, if he, who was the Son of God, was called Beelzebub, *then it's no wonder that those who are sent by him, in his name, for him, and with him, we will face similar things.*

The disciples were to know that first-hand.

- Jesus is, most likely, foreshadowing (in verse 23), a time of great persecution in AD70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, and the Jewish Christians had to leave.
- In Acts we read of severe hardships the apostles faced.
- But they didn't just tentatively whisper the Gospel, *and then at the slightest indication that someone wasn't interested dust their feet.*
- Paul describes dusting their feet only after having been persecuted.
- And of course this still happens today.
- *I heard some missionaries who had spent a lot of time in China say that, they found that people looked at ministers with great suspicion if they had never been locked up in prison before!*
- In the last century and a half, there has been more Christian martyrs, then in the previous 18 centuries combined!

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- Instead of persecution causing us to shrink from proclamation, and embolden the focus on ourselves;
- The opposition we face should embolden our proclamation, and shrink us from focusing on ourselves.

That's what the disciples did.

- *Sometimes we can find ourselves puzzled as to why the Good News is opposed, after all... it's Good News that the true and proper **King** is going to return, It's Good News that that all of our **sin** and **evil** has been conquered on the cross, It's Good News that the **good order** of God's Kingdom is breaking in, BUT, all of that Good News requires repentance. It requires a turning in sorrow from one world view to another.*
- That's why there's opposition, because we can find that just so offensive. God's Kingdom opposes so much of what is happening in the world. It's Good News for the world, but the world resists it... Because...
- **If there's a true and proper King, it means:**  
*we've got to turn away from whoever or whatever we make the centre of our lives;*  
**If sin and evil have been conquered, it means:**  
*we've got to turn away from everything that is not of God;*

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**If God's good order is breaking in, it means:**

*we've got to be open to reordering our own selves according to his desires.*

- Christianity is not just an add-on, a tweak here and there, it's not just a type of additive religious experience, that might bring some more value or enhance your lifestyle, it's submitting to Jesus and his Kingdom.

That doesn't mean we go searching for trouble...

- We are to be as **shrewd as snakes, innocent as doves**.
- We are to be wise in recognising what is evil, but innocent in our response to it.
- *Sometimes when we recognise something is wrong, we feel justified in responding with whatever force is necessary.*
- *Other times as we seek to live peacefully, we're naive to the evil that is happening.*
- It seems easy to be shrewd or innocent, but Jesus says, I want you to be both, at the same time.
- Enduring it, not because that's how we earn our salvation, but because it's part of the evidence that we're saved.

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### **#3 GO WITHOUT FEAR \ \ VERSES 32-39**

We can go outward, even with opposition,  
because ultimately *we go without FEAR*.

Jesus not only says, 'do not worry',  
he says 'do not be afraid' three times in verses 26-31 alone.

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26 "So **do not be afraid of them**, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed...

28 **Do not be afraid** of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

31 **So don't be afraid**; you are worth more than many sparrows.

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If you're like me, the idea of being a disciple, of facing opposition, can seem really scary.  
*And that's without the prospect of any serious persecution.*

- That fear can immobilise us.
- The idea of mentioning church or Jesus can fill us with trepidation.  
The disciples being sent off for the first time must have been tentative.

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- But they can go out, *we can go out without fear,*  
*not because we won't be hurt or won't suffer,*  
*not because he will always ensure you're comfortable,*  
*not because he'll give a superficial peace that glosses over the serious.*
- But because of three reasons:
- **First, true justice will be done.** *There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known (v.26).*
- Which means, when we feel wronged, when we think evil is winning, we keep trusting that Jesus, is the rightful judge, and the day is coming when that will be made known, and we will be vindicated, despite what the world says.
- **Second, what matters can never be taken away.**
- That's verse 28: *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul....*
- That when you trust in Jesus, nothing, not even death itself can separate us from God. *evil and death have been defeated, and the day is coming when they will be destroyed.*
- *Not 'they can take our lives, but can't take our freedom',*  
BUT, they can take our lives, but they can take our salvation.
- **Third, you are richly loved by God.**

13

- You're worth more than many sparrows,  
he knows the number of hairs on your head,  
which is to say, he's ultimately in control, he's got your eternity in his hands,  
and he loves you and knows you intimately.
- That's why we need not be afraid.  
When we really let the truth of what Jesus said here sink into our reality...
- **It shifts our focus from 'what if's', to what we really know is true.**  
**It takes our concern from losing the temporary, to being assured of the permanent.**  
**It replaces our uncertainty, with the security of God's eternal love.**
- That's why we can go, even in the face of opposition, without fear.

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## CONCLUSION \ \ MORE DISCIPLES, DEEPER DISCIPLES

Yesterday I was up on the roof, checking out the progress on STAGE TWO,  
looking out from the roof of our church, I couldn't help but think of this:

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What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight;  
what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs (v.27)

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- Friends, God has whispered in your ear,  
the most amazing news the world can ever know.
- And it's not that we just know some facts,  
it's news that we know the creator of the universe  
and so can every single person in Toowoomba.
- So I wonder, if this week, and in the weeks that follow,  
it we could all just talk about Jesus more,  
and show the shape of his kingdom to those we encounter.
- We all have spheres of friendships and colleagues that we can only reach,  
*and I want to encourage you this week to pick three people who don't yet know God.*

15

- Write their names down. Put their names on your heart.  
And then every day, pray that their hearts would open,  
that God would open up opportunities to share the Good News,  
and that we would have the courage to actually do it.
- And when God opens up the opportunity,  
to talk about Jesus, or invite the person to something,  
or show them God's extravagant love,  
and you're afraid thinking about everything that could possibly go wrong,  
and you're thinking, this is the exact moment that I dreaded from the sermon,  
don't be afraid that you might be rejected, or simply embarrassed,  
you might be, but it actually doesn't matter, because it's not about you.
- It's about Jesus and that person knowing his love.

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