

LESSON ONE

TITLE Looking to the Harvest

SCRIPTURE Matthew 9:35–38

MEMORY VERSE

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything

MAIN IDEA OF TEXT

We get to be a part of Jesus’ work of growing his kingdom.

BEGIN this time in prayer, confessing any Sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of his Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study.

1 GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

TEACHER TIP

Start your lesson by telling a story that relates to the main idea of the lesson to grab the attention of your participants. In this section, we have provided you with two options, but feel free to develop your own.

OPTION 1: CHARIOTS OF FIRE AND ERIC LIDDELL

Even though *Chariots of Fire* came out in 1981, my guess is that most of you will recognize the soundtrack. The movie retells the story of two British Olympians who win gold medals in track. Eric Liddell brought tension to the story because he would not run in his best race because it was held on a Sunday, the Lord's Day. Instead, he ran the 400 and won that race. Liddell was a strong Christian that spent most of his life on the mission field in China and died in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. (play clip)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odtqtlhsv4E>

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why would people be surprised by Eric Liddell refusing to run his best race?
2. How did his theology impact his daily life?
3. What would he have given up by going to be a missionary in China after winning gold in the Olympics?

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: Eric Liddell's faith was the driving factor in his decision making. Liddell did not compartmentalize his faith to the places where it was most helpful. Instead, everything from the day of the week to his life purpose came from faith in Christ. That faith took him from being an Olympic gold medalist to the mission field. He was willing to go to share the good news of Christ to those who needed it. Let's see from Matthew 9 how Jesus describes the mission field and the way we can be a part of it.

OPTION 2: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Mission is a frequent word now. Your employer probably has a mission statement. Missions can also be tasks given to an individual to complete for the good of a government. (play clip)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uaycln0M5KY>

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does a typical mission look like in the *Mission Impossible* saga?
2. Why is the mission emphasized as "if you choose to accept it"?
3. What types of dangerous missions are you given an opportunity to take part in?

Transition Statement from Attention Grabber to Text: *Mission*

Impossible as a genre borders on the ridiculous. The over-the-top action draws in the audience. But the missions in the end are made up and can do nothing more than entertain. We are called on a better mission—one that can be dangerous; but because we know the one who is sending us, we are glad to join in his kingdom work.

2

SET THE STAGE

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find the historical, cultural, and literary context you need to properly interpret and apply the text.

OUTLINE

- I. The Message of the Mission
- II. The Heart of the Mission
- III. The Power of the Mission

CONTEXT

Jesus spent most of chapter 8 and 9 of Matthew doing miracles. Jesus calmed the sea, expelled demons, and healed the sick. His powerful miraculous works displayed who he is. Matthew established Jesus as the one that people look to for healing and power.

FALLEN CONDITION & GOSPEL RESPONSE

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS

The competing kingdoms of the world leave people lost and in need of a shepherd.

GOSPEL RESPONSE

Jesus brings the lost and downcast to himself through the proclamation of who he is.

3

LOOK AT THE BOOK

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find exercises you can use to lead your class through the process of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. As the teacher, work through all the exercises below to ensure you gain a good understanding of the text.

Jesus looked at the crowds and reflected on the work of healing and preaching. He told his disciples that the harvest was plentiful but he needed more workers who will follow him in showing compassion to the world's people as they bring the gospel to those who need it most.

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: UNDERLINE THE VERBS

Read through the passage three times, on the third reading circle the verbs. Remember that verbs are action words that usually follow the subject of the sentence.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: SEARCH THE CONTEXT

Look back and read Matthew 8 and 9. Write down the different ways that Jesus's description of the people in 9:35-38 reflects the context of Jesus's ministry in the chapters.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: EXAMINE CROSS-REFERENCES

Examine the following passages. Write down how the shepherds and sheep are described.

Numbers 27:16-17

Ezekiel 34:1-6

Luke 10:1-3

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: PROCESS THE VERBS

The verbs in these verses make a clear statement about the work of Jesus

and the work of disciples. Come up with two big ideas—one for the work of Jesus and another for the work of people who follow Christ. Write these sentences down.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: CONTEXT IS KEY

Ask and answer the following questions:

1: Matthew 8:23–34 — How do these two healings give similar emphasis about Jesus? How do they show Jesus’s power?

2: Matthew 9:1–8 — What type of authority does Jesus demonstrate with this healing? How does his authority affect others?

3: Matthew 9:18–26 — How does the double healing in this story show the heart of Jesus?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: CROSS-REFERENCING EXERCISE

Read Ezekiel 34:1–6 and Luke 10:1–3 then answer the following questions:

1: How are the people in Jesus’s day like what was described in Ezekiel?

2: How does lacking a good shepherd bring danger to people?

3: How should followers of Jesus who go to work the harvest deal with the difficulties of evil shepherds?

TEACHER TIP

In this section, you will find questions to choose from that will help your group consider how God is calling them to respond to the text. Help your group set measurable action steps.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: Jesus said to “pray for workers.” How can we pray for the mission work in our church and beyond?

QUESTION 2: What are some ways that we can support the harvest work? How does giving strengthen the mission of God?

QUESTION 3: Where do you feel that God is calling you to go?

QUESTION 4: Where can our group go to advance the kingdom through missions?

QUESTION 5: Who are 5 people in your life that do not know the Lord? What are ways you can start to engage them with the gospel?

4

CHALLENGE

TEACHER TIP

End your time of study with one final challenge and prayer. Your final challenge should pull together everything you covered in this lesson and call your participants to action.

Jesus's life and ministry were about the people around him. He had compassion for them which motivated many of his miraculous works. The compassion also moved him to proclaim the gospel and teach about his kingdom. The mission of Jesus consists of meeting physical needs and proclaiming the way to find peace because of the spiritual needs. The people who triggered Jesus's compassion, were lost and without shepherds who were interested in meeting these needs.

The message of the kingdom and the gospel is that those who will put their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord become his people. Jesus's message was that people need to repent and believe. In our passage, Jesus sees the crowds with compassion as the gospel message goes out. He knows that the message will bring people to himself. It will bring a harvest. That harvest presents a new problem; Jesus needs more workers.

Did you notice what Jesus told his disciples to do because the harvest was great, but the workers were few? Pray. Jesus said the first thing that disciples do when the harvest is at hand is to pray for workers. We always begin with prayer. Missions make a kingdom impact when they are covered in prayer. Think about those names you mentioned and start praying for them. Pray for them and pray for the workers whom God is calling. But those workers cannot do it on their own. That's why we give. We give to help the kingdom work advance. And finally, we go. Just as Jesus said when he closed the book of Matthew, we go to make disciples. We can go locally and go globally. Where is God calling you to go today?

LET'S PRAY

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 9:35-38

The book of Matthew is about the kingdom of God being at hand. Barbieri, in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, writes about the kingdom and the need for shepherds.

In verse 35 Matthew summarized Jesus' threefold ministry (see comments on 4:23, with its almost identical wording). Jesus had been going through all the towns and villages of Israel, teaching and preaching about the kingdom. His healing ministry was for the purpose of authenticating His Person. The spectacular nature of Jesus' ministry attracted large crowds.

As Jesus observed the crowds, He had compassion toward them. The verb "to have compassion" is used in the New Testament only by the Synoptic Gospel writers: five times in Matthew (9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34), four in Mark (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22), and three in Luke (7:13; 10:33; 15:20; see comments on Luke 7:13). Suggesting strong emotion, it means "to feel deep sympathy." The related noun ("sympathy, affection, or inward feelings") is used once by Luke (1:78), eight times by Paul, and once by John (1 John 3:17).

Jesus saw that the people were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Like sheep bothered by wolves, lying down and unable to help themselves, and having no shepherd to guide and protect them, the people were maligned by the religious leaders, helpless before them, and wandering about with no spiritual guidance. The religious leaders, who should have been their shepherds, were keeping the sheep from following the true Shepherd. In response to the people's "helpless" condition, Jesus encouraged His disciples to beseech the Lord of the harvest, namely, God the Father, to send out additional workers (cf. Luke 10:2). The harvest was ready; for the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 4:17). But additional laborers were necessary to complete the harvest.

Michael Green, in *The Bible Speaks Today Commentary*, writes about these shepherds:

Matthew sees this mission of the Twelve as so important that he has added a variety of other sayings of Jesus about mission to the basis he found in Mark 6:7-13. For the most part these extra sayings emphasize the urgency of the mission and its costliness due to the rejection and persecution of the missionaries. What was becoming increasingly plain (earlier in the chapter) for the Master is about to befall his disciples: namely, ever-increasing opposition to the proclamation of the kingdom.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that Jesus passes on to them the authority he has wielded so powerfully in word and deed since chapter 5. Their ministry is carefully presented as parallel to his own. The words of 4:23, describing Jesus' mission as one of teaching, preaching and healing, are almost repeated of his disciples in 10:7-8. They are to go and preach, to heal every disease. The evangelist is making it plain that the disciples of Jesus share his calling, his authority and his mission. They are to do and to preach what Jesus did and preached.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Trent Butler, Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.
John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.
Warren Wiersbe, *Be Series*.
John Stott, *The NIV Bible Speaks Today Commentary*.