

## A Checklist While Serving the King

Luke 9:1-10

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for January 30, 2022

Stephen Davey

Summary: The Great Commission is more than just an abstract concept, it's a practical command for us to obey today. But does the idea of preaching the gospel and witnessing to others sometimes seem to be too daunting for you to do? The disciples felt the same way. After sitting under Jesus' teaching for two years, the disciples are sent out by their Lord to do the work of the kingdom, but Jesus doesn't leave them unprepared. He gives them—and us—a very practical checklist as we make disciples of all the nations.

We now arrive in our study through the Gospel by Luke at a brand-new phase in the ministry of Jesus as He begins His third year.

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 1; editor, Clinton E. Arnold (Zondervan, 2002), p. 399

John Phillips, Exploring the Gospel of Luke (Kregel, 2005), p. 142

And this is a particularly significant moment where His 12 disciples are given their first assignment.

The Gospel of Matthew adds that they were directed in this commission to the house of Israel where they will—first of all—deliver to Israel the news that the King has arrived.

Of course, Israel will need to believe their message, which they won't, and the

gospel will later be directed to all the nations of the world.

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1981), p. 193

Now, up to this point, the disciples have been in the classroom where the Lord has taught them; they've been in the observation room where they have watched the Lord at work.

But now, as Luke chapter 9 begins, a transition takes place that probably surprised the disciples: they're about to be thrust out on stage and into the spotlight.

The Lord is about to send them out two by two (Mark's Gospel tells us); this is what we would call a short-term impact trip, lasting several weeks at most.

And the narrative here seems filled with a sense of urgency and suddenness, **notice verse 1:**

*And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.*

*Luke 9:1-2*

Before they are sent off by the Lord, He essentially gives them a checklist for what must have been a rather startling announcement.

I've broken this narrative down to 7 points on a checklist that had immediate bearing on them and implications for us today.

Let me put the first one this way:

**Don't forget you are helpless on your own.**

If you go back to **verse 1** again, it's obvious that they are given everything they need from a source outside themselves. And that source is Jesus.

Jesus grants to them His own Messianic credentials—His stamp of **authority**—and in case somebody doesn't trust their credentials, Jesus also gives them **power**, the power to command the demons and to heal the sick. Essentially, He gives them the power to reverse the curse, which is a foretaste of the coming kingdom.

Authority and power will validate their message and it will validate they are true messengers of the King.

But listen: this is all from Jesus. In other words, you are helpless on your own. *"Without Me, Jesus said, you can do nothing."* (John 15:5)

But this is also a wonderful reminder that you have been given everything you need to live for Him; everything you need to run your race has been provided from your source, the Lord Jesus.

Number two on the checklist would be this:

**Don't try to be original.**

In other words, stick to the script. Here it is:

*And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God.*

*Luke 9:2a*

**Down in verse 6 we're told that:**

*They departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel...*

*Luke 9:6b*

Proclaiming the kingdom of God was preaching the gospel.

That was the script. The King has arrived; surrender; repent; believe; yield to the authority of the King.

The disciples aren't coming up with the message. These *original* apostolic preachers were never original.

In fact, the word for "**proclaim**" here in **verse 2** is a word describing a herald who, in ancient times, appeared in the village square to speak on behalf of the king. He unrolled his parchment and essentially delivered the king's message.

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 220

The disciples are now center stage; they're in the spotlight, but don't forget—for them and for us today—faithful preachers and teachers are never original; we are merely delivering the message of the King.



How can you display the message of Jesus in your day-to-day, ordinary conversations in life?

Don't try to be original.

Now, third:

**Don't depend on what you can pack.**

**Notice just the next verse—verse 3:**

*And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.*

*Luke 9:3*

I can hear Nathaniel saying, "Lord, I'm in the back of the room here and I'm not sure I heard You correctly; I think You said, 'Don't pack anything?' Would you repeat that?"

That's right, "Take nothing for your journey," and since "nothing" needs defining, let me break it down for you.

Don't take **a staff** is more than likely a reference to taking an extra staff along since one was typically used for protection.

Don't take **a bag**. The word here refers to the common beggar's bag used for soliciting funds; it could also refer to a knapsack of some sort.

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, p. 400

He goes on here to tell them not to pack any **food**, take any **money** or an extra **tunic**, which effectively refers to a change of clothes.

What Jesus is doing here is telling them to travel light and depend entirely upon God.

Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: Volume 1* (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 816

This 4–6-week ministry trip was to be an exercise in faith.

Jesus wanted them to learn the invaluable lesson that God's commission always included God's provision—sometimes at the last moment possible.

God will not send you and then abandon you.

Now don't misunderstand, Jesus isn't suggesting here that you're not to plan your mission, to make preparation for the journey, that you're just supposed to go out there and wing it.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 224

Later in **Luke chapter 22**, the apostles were sent out and allowed to take money, their staff and even a sword for protection.

But here on this initial road trip, the Lord wants to press on them this sense of urgency, as if the mission can't wait.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 221

There's also this sense of dependency. It's as if the Lord is teaching them, "You can't prepare ahead of time for everything you're going to encounter, so this time out, I want you to depend entirely upon me for everything."

And after this trip, the next one just might feel a little easier.

In fact, later in **Luke chapter 22**, the Lord refers back to this initial trip here and He asks them in verse 35:

*"When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing."*

*Luke 22:35*

We didn't miss a thing! You see, they never forgot this first time the Lord sent them out on the playing field; they never got over it.

Now the Lord adds another item to their checklist:

### **Don't become a snob.**

He says to them here in Luke chapter 9 and verse 4:

*"And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart."*

*Luke 9:4*

Now Matthew's Gospel clarifies it a little more; he records in chapter 10 and verse 11:

*"And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart."*

*Matthew 10:11*

The idea of someone **worthy** has to do with believing the message of the King.

If someone believes your preaching of the gospel and they invite you to stay in their home, accept their invitation.

But here's the caution: don't leave that home for someplace better, because somebody might believe in that town who has a nicer house. You've been sleeping on the floor, but this other family has a guest room, with air conditioning and a hot tub.



Why is it critical to never show favoritism among disciples? What damage can be done in the life of a new believer who feels neglected or less important?

Or the village chef gets saved and invites you to stay with his family, and you've been staying with a family who eats the same food every night because that's all they can afford.

God was good to save that chef, right? Not so fast.

Remember, the disciples weren't allowed to pack any food. So, get this principle here that will be ongoing: the Lord's provision is going to come through the Lord's people, and that's how the Lord is doing it to this day; primarily, *the Lord provides through people who believe the gospel.*

And the disciples are cautioned not to take advantage of those people. Don't treat them like stepping-stones to something more comfortable.

Stay in that first house, no matter what.

Checklist number 5:

**Don't expect a standing ovation from everyone.**

**Verse 5:**

*"And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."*

*Luke 9:5*

In other words, get ready for trouble. You're going to arrive at some village where not one person will believe. No one will offer you hospitality. No one will accept the message that the King has arrived.

They want you to leave! So, when you leave, shake the dust off your sandals.

This was a formal act of separation: "We don't even want your dust clinging to us—why—because you're heading toward the judgment of the King."

Adapted from Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, p. 400

You might notice that the Lord does not say to His disciples here, "Well, maybe the reason they ran you out of town was because you preached a little too hard; or maybe you didn't explain all the benefits of the kingdom; maybe you weren't positive enough with your message."

No, Jesus is preparing His disciples ahead of time for unbelief and rejection.

Some villages will invite you home for dinner; some villages will want to run you out of town.

And when that happens, don't water down the message so they invite you back; don't just slink out of town; make it clear to them that their unbelief is noted:

they have rejected the invitation of the King and by that they are in danger of the coming judgment of God.

And when you deliver that kind of gospel, don't expect a standing ovation everywhere you go.

J.C. Ryle adds this encouraging perspective that's also bound up in the Lord's direction here. He wrote this more than 100 years ago in his notes on the Gospel of Luke:

"All ministers, missionaries, visitation workers and Sunday school teachers would do well to lay the Lord's instructions to heart. Let them not be cast down if their work seems in vain. Let them remember that the very first preachers and teachers whom Jesus [commissioned] were given a distinct warning that not all would believe. So let us work patiently and sow the seed without fainting. Duties are ours. [Results] are God's."

Adapted from J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke* (Evangelical Press, 1985; originally published, 1879, p. 142

Well, what happens when the results are wonderful?

Let me add number 6 to this checklist— here it is:

**Don't get distracted by success.**

**Verse 7:**

*Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was*

*said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see Him.*

*Luke 9:7-9*

Literally, *he was seeking to see Him*; Herod is making repeated attempts to see Jesus.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 222

This means he would have sent messages to the disciples to arrange it, to come to his palace, to arrange a meeting for all of them.



**Have you ever been tempted by proximity to power or public attention in your life? How can you reflect all the glory back to God, and remain undistracted by your earthly successes?**

At this point Herod would have rolled out the red carpet for the twelve. He would love to have a private showing of their miraculous power. This was a far cry from being run out of some village.

Well, just imagine what it might be like for you, if God gave you the ability for 6

weeks to heal every sick person you encountered, to command the evil spirits that are at work in the world with just a word from you.

Adapted from Seth Davey, *Heart to Heart*, July 2021, p. 16

Every demonized person is set free; every cancer patient is immediately healed in your presence; every blind person you touch can see.

Imagine the accolades, the frenzy, the crowds, the news reporters; this is heady stuff.

This is also dangerous stuff.

Which is why in a few months the disciples are going to be arguing over who among them is the greatest. Where did they come up with that idea? It started back here.

“Did you know what I did back there in that village? I healed three lepers in one afternoon?”

“That’s nothing, I healed 10 lepers in one hour.”

“That’s nothing; I healed so many people the leaders gave me a key to the city”

“That’s nothing, I preached to one city and all of them believed. I am the greatest!”

Reminds me of the story I read about a little boy who was out in his backyard; he had his baseball cap on, socks pulled up to his knees; he had his plastic bat and that oversized wiffle ball. He’s out back practicing, and his mother overhears him saying, “I am the greatest hitter in the

world.” He threw the wiffle ball up and took a swing at it and missed it completely. He muttered aloud, “Strike one.”

He picked up the ball and said even louder, “I am the greatest hitter in the world.” And he threw that ball up in the air and took a mighty swing and missed it again. Dejected, he said, “Strike two.”

He picked up the ball and said even louder as if to give himself confidence, “I am the greatest hitter in the world.”

He threw the ball up in the air and swung with everything he had and completely missed it again.

He paused for a moment and then said, “What a pitcher! I’m the greatest pitcher in the world!”

There can be nothing more dangerous than the desire to succeed.

One author wrote many years ago on this text: “Defeat can often overwhelm your heart, but success can inflate your head – and both can be deadly.”

Adapted from Ivor Powell, *Luke’s Thrilling Gospel* (Kregel, 1965), p. 215

Which is why this final point in the checklist is vitally important for your heart and mine.

Number 7:

## Don't forget to tell Jesus about everything.

Look what happens at the end of their first trip, here in **verse 10**:

*On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.*

*Luke 9:10*

Jesus wisely and graciously takes them away for some rest and an opportunity to debrief their impact trip.

Each team of disciples had no doubt experienced all kinds of different reactions:

- some had more exciting results than others;
- some had suffered more than others;
- some had more conversions stories than others;
- some had more dramatic healing encounters;
- some had experienced more rejection than others;
- some had been better fed;
- some had been better treated.

How kind of the Lord here. And don't forget the fact that Jesus already knew all the details of all their experiences.

But He *invited* them. He evidently *wanted them* to tell Him, so He took them aside and listened as they told Him everything that had happened to them.

This also gave Him the opportunity to counsel them, correct them, affirm them, encourage them, teach them, and prepare them for the next time He would send them out.

There are timeless truths bound up in this opening scene—where the disciples step out on stage and represent the King—truths for them and for you and me:

1. Don't forget you are helpless on your own. You can't do this alone.
2. Don't try to be original. Stick to the script.
3. Don't depend on what you can pack. Travel light and trust the Lord.
4. Don't become a snob. People aren't objects to be used.
5. Don't expect a standing ovation from everyone. Be ready for trouble and don't water down the gospel.
6. Don't get distracted by success. Don't let it go to your head; remember you are helpless without Him.
7. And then lastly, don't forget to tell Jesus about everything. He wants you to tell Him everything.



---

© Copyright 2020 Stephen Davey  
All rights reserved.

Access the complete archive of Stephen Davey's teaching ministry at  
**wisdomonline.org** or on the **Wisdom for the Heart app**.