

Be Shepherds to God's Flock: The Kingdom is Near! Luke 10:2-9



Background for Leader

Find a quiet space to read the scripture. Be sure to have pen and paper in hand. After getting still and comfortable, slowly read the text out loud. If it is familiar to you, try to imagine that it is not. After reading the text, ask God to speak to you through this scripture revealing all that God would have you to hear in it. Take your paper and make a list of words that stand out in your memory from your reading. Read the scripture again and end by thanking God for speaking to you through the Living Word.

Take a moment to pray for the women for whom you will facilitate discussion. Name their names if you know them.

Notes from Writer (*Please be sure you have done the above personal study and prayer before reading the following*):

The following personal thoughts of the writer are provided to aid you in leading the Bible study. Please be sure to follow your own personal study to know where the Holy Spirit is guiding you and the group. Use these thoughts, if needed, as further discussion material.

There is so much covered in these short eight verses. There are lots of questions that can arise. For example, what in the world could Jesus have meant when He said, "I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves"? Was He simply speaking of the difficulties of this life on earth or was He speaking of the larger evil that remains unseen, but is nonetheless present? This one verse provides plenty of discussion potential. When have we felt like lambs among the wolves? When have we been the wolves?

There are also a lot of questions that can arise when reading verse 4. Why would Christ send out disciples without anything at all? He says to not even take sandals! Are we to take this literally and believe that Jesus would have us live a life of poverty without any material possessions? Or could He have been simply trying to make a larger point, one that tells us that there are good people in the world who will allow God to work through them and help us along our way?

One of my personal favorite moments in this scripture is when Jesus says in verse 5, "first say, 'Peace to this house!'" Always, Jesus brings peace first and foremost. Before we go any further, before we make any other choices or try to bring in more laborers for the harvest, first and foremost, there must be peace. He is indeed the King of Peace!

Our Bible study, however, focuses more on the final words of the given scripture. In verse 9, Jesus says to tell the people, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." Now, hold on to your pencil because this is good stuff. Look at the previous words of the text, He is saying that you enter a town, eat with them, and cure the sick and then say those words. Do you know what this means? It means that we bring the kingdom of God near when we do these things! You and me! Amazing! As we seek to learn better ways to reach out to others, to be Shepherds of God's Flock, to share the good news of Christ with the world, we can rest assured that we are acting as agents for our very Creator and bringing the kingdom of God to everyone we meet.

This can also raise some questions about what happens when we fail to do God's will.

When we act in ways that are not Christ-like, when we present ourselves in an ungodly manner, does this mean that we are keeping the kingdom of God from others? Yes, according to this scripture we have that kind of power given to us by Jesus Himself. It would do us all very well to keep that in mind every moment of our lives. With that at the forefront of our thinking, surely we will continue to Glorify the Lamb!

A Note to the Leader

Choose from the following activities as time and your desired focus permits. You may have had insights come to you through your personal study (above) which will help in choosing activities or which may even lead you to create new ones. Use your personal study and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making these decisions and aiding you in facilitating discussion among the group.

As the facilitator, be sure to practice good listening skills, especially during *Searching the Word*. Through your personal study and then listening to the group's discussion, be prepared to connect the activities back to scripture and focus on the highlights which seem to be coming up again and again.

Materials Needed: Magazines, scissors, a dry erase board or newsprint, markers, pens, paper, Bibles, copies of "Here I Am, Lord," small scrap papers for each participant, a table, candles, and matches.

Leading the Bible Study

As participants arrive have various magazines available to participants and instruct them to search through the magazines for one or two images which symbolize a time in life when another person represented Christ to them. Provide scissors for them to cut the pictures out. Ask them to keep their images a secret until the whole group arrives.

Activity One: Opening

Once all the participants have arrived and had an opportunity to pick one or two images from a magazine, ask everyone to sit in a circle and share their pictures and a story about what the image represents. (For a more structured activity, inform the participants that you will be the time keeper and that each person will be timed for two minutes as they relate their stories. During the two minutes, encourage the participant to fill up her time. You can ask questions to help if someone is stuck, but do allow for silence as well. Do not move on to the next person until the two minutes is up.) As leader, you should go first.

Activity Two: Searching the Word

Divide into three smaller groups. Instruct the groups to choose one person to lead them in prayer, one person to read the scripture aloud, and one person to act as scribe, taking notes on what the group says. Once they have appointed these positions, give each of the three groups an assignment of verses to work with. Group 1 will take Luke 10:2-3; Group 2 will take Luke 10:4-6; and Group 3 will take Luke 10:7-9.

Once assignments have been made, ask the prayer leaders to lead her group in a prayer asking God to speak through the scripture to each one of them. Next, the reader should slowly

read the assigned text aloud. Following the reading of the word, the group should work together to re-write the verses in their own words. The scribe should take down the new interpretation.

When each group has finished, ask the larger group to come together and share the verses with one another. Allow time for discussion and insights that came as the work was being done. *(See Notes from Writer for additional discussion material if needed.)*

Activity Three: Connecting to the Theme

Have written on a dry erase board or newsprint: “The Kingdom is Near!”

Ask the following questions:

- In the scripture that we have been studying, what is it that brings the “kingdom of God near to you” (v. 9)?
- In what ways is this group participating in bringing the kingdom of God near?

Allow time for discussion after each question. *(See Notes from Writer for additional discussion material if needed.)* Take notes on the board or newsprint so that the group can see what they are saying. If time permits, lead the group in naming ways each individual can work to bring the kingdom of God near to others and Glorify the Lamb!

Activity Four: Worship

Have copies of “Here I Am, Lord” for participants. Gather in a circle around a small table holding a lit candle. Give out the small pieces of paper to the group. Also, hand out the song to participants.

Say: *We call ourselves Shepherds of the Flock, but the Lord says the labourers are few. Jesus is here among us and asking what we will do to bring in that plentiful harvest. Let’s take time to tell Him what we are willing to do in order to bring the kingdom of God near to everyone we meet and Glorify the Lamb. Please write on your piece of paper a way in which you will work to do this starting right now. In a moment we will sing “Here I Am, Lord” and as you are ready, please bring your promises forward to the table at that time. We will lay them at the light of Christ and know that He will give us strength to fulfill our promises.*

Lead the group in singing the hymn and allow time for participants to leave their promises on the table. Assure them that no one will read them.

Activity Five: Closing Prayer

Either lead the group in prayer or ask someone else to lead the group using the following prayer or another.

God who calls us where we are, we hear you calling and want to answer. We hear you calling, but sometimes knowing how to answer is so difficult. You tell us that the harvest is plentiful. Give us the courage to believe that to be true! You tell us that through us the kingdom has come near. Give us the strength to live that out each and every day! Here we are, God, send us, send us now. Amen.

About the Writer

Tiffany Hall McClung is an ordained Cumberland Presbyterian minister. She is currently focussing on being a full-time mom to son, Ian. She also volunteers with the youth group at First CP of Savannah, TN where her husband, Andy, is pastor. She preaches once a month for a PCUSA congregation in the area and refers to herself as the “roving preacher” available to fill pulpits when needed. Tiffany is a member of the General Assembly Council and a Vision Enabler for Touch the Future. When she isn’t changing diapers or preparing sermons, she enjoys creative writing, reading, and travelling just about anywhere.

Commissioning **Luke 10:2-9**

“But, I’m not a missionary,” we claim when we hear this passage. I can pray for them (when I remember), and I can send money (well, not much), but don’t ask me to go. Yet, we are told we are the salt and light of the world. We need to salt the harvest and let the light within us shine to lead and guide those who are lost.

Jesus is very simple with His instructions:

Pray! (We need more workers.)

Go...now! (No excuses!)

Be brave! (There are wolves out there.)

Trust! (Don’t take a lot of stuff with you.)

Rush! (Don’t stop along the way.)

Bless! (Trust Jesus with what that blessing will do.)

Be content! (Don’t keep looking for more or better; take what you are given.)

Receive! (The hospitality really comes from Jesus.)

Heal! (No ‘buts’ about it. It is unnatural, but do it!)

Shine! (The Kingdom of God can be seen in your words and deeds.)

We don’t need to be foreign missionaries to do what Jesus says to do. We can start in our own backyards. Go...now!

PRAYER:

Lord of the Harvest, help me get over my fears, lack of trust, busyness, pride, and fault-finding ways. Help me to respond to You and just go. Let Your light within me shine to those all around. Amen

JoAnn Shugert
Missouri River Region