

## **Small Group Leaders Notes - Matthew 8-10**

### **Matthew 8:18-23**

#### **Context and Structure**

##### **8:1-17**

Chapter 8 begins a new section in Matthew's gospel that runs from 8:1-10:42. It's made up of two chapters (chs8-9) that are almost entirely narrative as we see Jesus authority in action. Then in ch10 Jesus sends out the disciples with authority as messengers of the kingdom.

In 8:1-17 we see Jesus' authority in action. Here is God's king coming into our broken world and showing us that he has the authority to reverse the curse of God's judgment that has hung over the world since the fall. He cleanses an unclean leper (v1-4), he heals the centurion's servant (v5-13), he heals Peter's mother-in-law (v14-15) and he heals big crowds and drives out evil spirits (v16.) Matthew tells us that as Jesus did this he was fulfilling Isaiah's prophesy of the Servant of the Lord (v17, Isaiah 53:4.) We also see that Jesus has the authority to say who will be in and who will be out of his kingdom (v10-12), and the key criteria is faith in Jesus. One day Jesus' disciples will be feasting with him in his kingdom in the new creation. That's the destination for those who recognise Jesus' authority and put their faith in him.

##### **8:18-23**

Having seen Jesus' authority in action it's no surprise that there are big crowds flocking to Jesus. But following Jesus is not going to be easy and that's what Jesus' words in these verses emphasise. Having seen Jesus' authority in action we now hear Jesus' authoritative call for us to follow him. Those who put their faith in Jesus and follow him will one day feast with him in his kingdom, in a world where the curse has been reversed, but the journey to get there will not be easy.

v18 begins with Jesus giving the order to cross Lake Galilee and go to the other side. The crowds now immediately have a choice to make. Will they leave the comfort and security of their families and homes to follow Jesus?

Having given the order to cross the lake in v18, it is only now in v23 that Jesus gets into the boat and they depart. That means that the conversations in v18-22 take place on the jetty or the beach. We can picture the scene as the crew of the boat make their final preparations, some people are getting on board to go with Jesus, others are standing on the jetty and now two people come to Jesus expressing their willingness to follow him. Here are two people who face the big choice, will they stay or will they go with Jesus?

##### **8:24-34**

In these verses we again see Jesus' authority in action as Jesus calms the storm and drives out demons. Jesus has warned the would-be-disciples that following him will not be easy (v19-22) and now we see that.

Can you see how the two narrative sections (v1-17 and v24-34) form a sandwich around Jesus' words in v19-22? The narrative sections show us Jesus' authority and then sandwiched in the middle Jesus challenges us "Will we submit to his authority and follow him in faith whatever it may bring?"

## **Tricky Bits**

### ***“Must we be homeless to follow Jesus? Are Christians allowed to own their own homes”***

We must not read this verse in isolation. We've just been told that Peter had a house (v14) and there are plenty of other examples in the New Testament of Christians who own homes and are not rebuked for this (Matthew 9:10, Romans 16:3-5.) So it's clearly not wrong for Christians to own homes. Jesus is not saying all Christians must be homeless. Yet Jesus did not have a home and following Jesus is going to be costly. It will involve sacrifices, stepping out of our comfort zones and going without some things that we may feel are essential.

These words also remind us that Jesus did have a home, heaven. Yet he left that home to become homeless to rescue us and give us an eternal home with him! When we come to Jesus we get a new home, a heavenly home which immediately means that we are now aliens, strangers and exiles in this world (1 Peter 1:1.) This world is not our home, we are only sojourners passing through and therefore we should not hold so tightly to our earthly homes.

### ***“Is Jesus saying we shouldn't care for elderly relatives?”***

The first question to deal with in v21-22 is whether the man's Father is dead already or not. When someone died they would be buried that very same day. If the man's father had died that day then it seems very unlikely that he would have the time to be talking to Jesus like this. It therefore seems more likely that the man's Father is elderly. The man is therefore saying, “I'll follow you, once I have done my duty as a good son by caring for my dad in his old age.”

Jesus' reply would seem at first to suggest that following Jesus and caring for elderly relatives is incompatible. Again we must read Jesus' words in the context of what he says elsewhere. In 15:1-9 Jesus will rebuke the Pharisees and teachers of the law for using their supposed devotion to God to excuse their lack of honour and care for their parents. The Old Testament made it clear that children should care for and support their parents (Deuteronomy 27:14-16) and nowhere does the New Testament remove this. Jesus makes it clear that he has come to fulfil the Old Testament law not cast it aside. This context therefore helps us to see that Jesus is not saying we should not care for our elderly relatives. Instead what he is saying is that where there is a choice between him or our parents then he must come first every time. Jesus comes back to this point in 10:37-38. Jesus uses the strong language of hate to make the point that he is to come first even above family. We are to love him so much that in comparison it is as if we hate our family because we're so devoted to following and serving him.

The big point therefore that Jesus is making in v21-22 is that following him must come first and without delay. The man wants to delay following Jesus because of his parents. In a similar way we might say, “I'll follow Jesus when I'm older and I've lived a bit.” Or we might say, “I'll move to be a missionary overseas when my kids have left home.” Jesus calls us to put him first above everything else and to do it without delay.

When Jesus says “let the dead bury their own dead” it wouldn't make sense if he meant “let the physically dead bury their own dead.” It therefore seems more likely that he means “Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.” Let those who think this life is all there is be bothered about those sorts of things.

## **Big Idea**

**Follow Jesus whatever the cost and without delay!**

## **Applications**

### **Don't think that following Jesus can be comfortable**

We need to recognise that the healings and happiness of v1-17 give us a glimpse of the destination (heaven) not a description of what the journey there will be like. V18-22 tell us the journey will involve hardship and homelessness. Jesus isn't looking for a big crowd of comfortable people who admire him. He's looking for followers who will embrace cost and discomfort to follow him. Are our lives as Christians marked by sacrifice? Are we trying to have our cake and eat it by trying to follow Jesus and enjoy a comfy middle-class life? Jesus calls us to put him first even if that means embracing real sacrifice.

As a student I heard a talk where the speaker was encouraging us to consider giving our lives to full-time mission work overseas. He challenged us that if we stayed in Britain we must stay for the sake of the kingdom and to live our lives in such a way that everyone could see that we are here for Jesus and the kingdom. Not all of us will go overseas to serve Christ or move to other parts of the country where there's real gospel need but if we don't go we must make sure we are staying for Christ and his kingdom not for our comfort.

### **Don't delay in following Jesus**

Jesus must come first even above family. So often we can tell ourselves that we will do this or that for Jesus (e.g. mission work or increased giving) once this or that has happened. Jesus calls us to sacrificially follow him now and not delay. Delaying is so dangerous because every time we say 'no' or 'wait' to Jesus it just makes it easier to say it again the next time and the next time and so on. It's like rolling a big heavy stone. At first it's really hard, but after a while you build up momentum and it gets easier and easier. Are you telling Jesus to wait? We need to repent and get on with serving him as we know we should today, whatever the cost.

## **Questions**

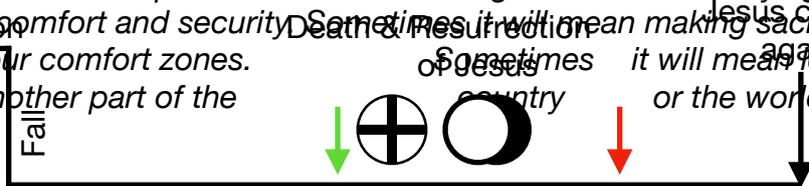
### **Starter - Have you ever missed a real important train/plane or boat? What happened? How did you feel? What were the consequences?**

*I've chosen this question because of the context of the two encounters. Jesus is literally just about to get in a boat and sail across the lake. The crowd have to decide whether they will get in and go with Jesus or not. Disciples are those who get in the boat with Jesus even if that means costly sacrifice. By starting with examples of how we have missed a boat it should help us to see that we need to make decisions to follow and serve Jesus now. If we put him off it may be too late.*

*Setting the scene - You might find it helpful to explain that Jesus has demonstrated his authority and the crowds are flocking to him. Jesus is about to leave by crossing the lake. The people in the crowd have now got to make a choice. Will they get in the boat and follow Jesus or will they choose the comfort and security of family and home? Two people who say they want to follow Jesus come to him. We are not told whether or not they get in the boat and go with Jesus or not. That doesn't really matter, what matters is whether we will respond to Jesus' call to follow him!*

**1. Have a look at v19-20. What is Jesus saying about himself? What are the implications of this for following Jesus?**

Jesus is saying he's homeless. He didn't enjoy many of the things that we take for granted as basic necessities. The implication is that following Jesus is not always going to be compatible with comfort and security. Sometimes it will mean making sacrifices and stepping out of our comfort zones. Sometimes it will mean leaving home or the world for the sake of Jesus.



**2. In what ways are we tempted to choose comfort over sacrifice?**

Try and challenge the group to give real answers that are true for them not just bland general statements. To do this you will need to have thought about your own answer before hand. Do we put homes and our kids schooling above serving Jesus? Do we choose to be part of a larger comfortable church like BEC rather than serving in a local church that might be smaller and less comfortable?

**3. What title does Jesus give himself? Why does this give him the right to call us to follow him in this costly way?**

Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. This is the first time he uses that title in Matthew's gospel but it won't be the last. It might be helpful to look up Matthew 16:24-27, 20:18-19 and 25:31 to see what Jesus says about himself as the Son of Man. Think about what has done for us and what he will do? Why does this give him the right to call us to make big sacrifices for him?

**4. In v21-22 Jesus isn't saying that we should neglect elderly parents (just look at John 19:25-27). What is he saying about priorities?**

Try to avoid getting into a big debate over whether than man's dad was dead or not. If necessary get the group to have a quick look at John 19:25-27 to see Jesus isn't anti-parents. Lead the group towards thinking about what Jesus is saying about priorities. Jesus is saying that he must come first above everything and everyone else even parents.

**5. In what ways can we be guilty of putting family and friends above serving Jesus?**

This is the natural follow on question from the previous one and may pick up some of the things you have talked about in question 2. Perhaps we put a non-Christian partner above Jesus, or we put our kids education or our friends opinion as more important than Jesus?

**6. The man wants to delay following Jesus. Do we ever want to put off serving Jesus until later? How do you complete the sentence, 'Lord, first let me \_\_\_\_\_ and then I'll serve you.'**

Again challenge the group to be honest rather than just giving the 'right' answer. The 'right' answer is "No, I never put off serving Jesus" but that's not necessarily the honest answer is it? Perhaps we delay making a sacrifice for Jesus until our kids have left home or we've paid off the mortgage etc.

This should then naturally lead into praying for one another asking that God would give us the grace we need to put him first and serve him now whatever the cost may be.

## Small Group Leaders Notes

### Matthew 9:35-10:15

#### Context

- For a big picture of Matthew's gospel then watch the Bible Project video on the website <http://bec.uk.net/resources/home-group-leaders>
- **Chapters 8-9** have been like a Show Home as Jesus has shown us what it will be like when his Kingdom comes in all its fullness. There are several things to notice in these chapters.
  - 1st - Right at the heart of the two chapters, sandwiched in between the miracles we find Jesus forgiving sins and calling sinners. This is the most important thing that Jesus does in these chapters. All of the healing, cleansing, driving out demons, calming the storm and raising the dead are secondary to this. Sin is the biggest problem. Suffering, defilement and death are all symptoms, sin is the root problem. Amidst the excitement about healing we must listen to what Jesus says about himself, he has come to call sinners.
  - 2nd - When you compare the miracles that Jesus performs in chapters 8-9 and the miracles that Jesus gives the Apostles the authority to perform in 10:8 we find that they are identical. In other words the apostles are uniquely given the authority to say and do exactly what Jesus has been saying and doing so that people believe that Jesus really is the long awaited Messiah. We see this again in 11:5 where the same list of miracles are given as proof to John the Baptist that Jesus really is the promised Messiah. Again we mustn't get so excited about miracles that we lose sight of why they are performed. They are to show the people that Jesus really is the Christ! The ultimate sign that Jesus is the Christ comes in his resurrection from the dead (see Acts 2:31-36 and Romans 1:4.)
  - 3rd - Jesus has gone throughout Galilee preaching and healing and yet the harvest field is vast and the spiritual needs are great (9:35-38.) This is what prompts Jesus to send out the 12 on this mission to the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus is multiplying his kingdom workers so that more people can be reached.
- **Chapter 10** - Jesus' instructions in 10:5-15 are given to the 12 Apostles for their specific mission to the lost sheep of Israel. This means that there will be some things that are unique to them on that mission that do not apply to us today. As Jesus moves on through chapter 10 he clearly begins to envisage their post-pentecost mission because he refers to them being witnesses before the Gentiles (v18) and having the Holy Spirit (v20.)
- **Chapter 28** - We must read Jesus' instruction to the 12 Apostles in light of what he says to all his disciples in the Great Commission (28:16-20). As we seek to apply ch10 to our situation we must do so in light of Matthew 28.

#### Structure

There is a flow to what Jesus does in these verses. First he sees the great spiritual need. Then he tells his disciples to pray. Then he sends out the Apostles on Mission and final he prepares them for what to expect. We will consider the passage using this structure.

- **See (9:35-36)**
  - Jesus has covered a vast area and preached to a huge number of people. As Jesus sees the people he sees their spiritual need - they are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. This has Old Testament connotations where God's people are the flock and the leaders of Israel are meant to be the Shepherds. A repeated charge against Israel's leaders is that they are bad shepherds who abandon the sheep. Jesus is the good shepherd that the people need.
  - Jesus' response to seeing the people is to be filled with compassion. This is a deep powerful word. It's not just a slight pang of concern. It is a deep gut-wrenching concern for people. Part of becoming more like Jesus is that we see people as Jesus sees them and feel for them as Jesus feels for them.
- **Pray (9:37-38)**
  - We might expect that Jesus would immediately send out the Apostles to reach these lost sheep and tell them that the good shepherd has arrived, but first Jesus tells them to pray. When we see great spiritual need around us our first instinct should be to pray. It may be right for us to go and speak, but first we must pray.
  - This simple prayer teaches us several things;
    - First - "the harvest is plentiful" teaches us that there are many people who are ready to hear the gospel and become Christians. This is a wonderful encouragement that we must hold onto especially in our country today.
    - Second - "but the workers are few" reminds us that the task before us is daunting. Here is why we must pray because there are so few people considering how vast the harvest field of the world is.
    - Third "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' teaches us that it's ultimately not about us it's about God. He is the Lord of the Harvest, not us. The world is his harvest field, not ours. This is why when we see great need for more gospel workers we should pray to him because he is sovereign not us. It's his work before it is our work and so we must plead with him to send out more workers into his harvest field. The fact that he is the sovereign Lord of the Harvest not us should be an encouragement to us. Our job is to pray and go and speak, we cannot control how people will respond and who will believe. That's his job, not ours, and that is a big relief!

### **Send (10:1-10)**

- Matthew is at pains for us to see that on this occasion Jesus is sending out the 12 with his authority. Just look at how many times he makes that point in v1, v2 and v5. We need to remember that whilst all disciples are sent by Jesus (Matthew 28), the Apostles are uniquely sent by Jesus with unique authority.
- At this point their mission is geographically limited (v5). There is a sense in which this is a short term training mission to prepare them for the bigger mission to come (ch28.) Just because at this time, Jesus only sends them to their own people does not mean that we are allowed to only try and reach people like us. Remember we need to read Matthew 10 in light of Matthew 28.
- As we have already noticed their mission is to replicate what Jesus has been doing in chs 8-9. Their message is to be exactly the same as John the Baptist and Jesus (3:2 and 4:17.)
- Their mission is to be marked by God's gracious generosity. They are to freely offer the kingdom to others just as it was offered to them. Think of the example of Matthew in 9:9-13. In the light of Jesus' death and resurrection we have seen even more of the

generosity of God to us and so we have all the more motivation to be generous with the gospel as we share it with others.

- They are to go without taking provisions (v9-10). This would make them vulnerable and depending on the generosity of others. Most of all it leaves them dependent on God to provide. They are workers (v10) and we have already seen that it is the Lord of the Harvest who sends out workers into his harvest field (9:38.) They therefore are being reminded that they are working for God and he will provide them with what they need to serve him in his harvest field. In many ways there are echoes here of what Jesus taught the disciples in 6:25-34. The Lord of the Harvest is our loving Heavenly Father who knows exactly what we need. We are to seek first the spread of his kingdom and trust him to provide what we need as we do this.

### **Prepare (10:11-15)**

- In particular Jesus seeks to prepare them for the sort of reaction they will receive as they go. Wonderfully there will be some who welcome them and their message (that is what is meant by worthy people, v10-13.) But they must also recognise that there will be those who do not welcome them or their message (v14-15.) Jesus will say more about this negative reaction in the following verses. For now we must notice two things. Firstly they are to move on (v14.) They are to leave and go on with their journey until they find someone who will welcome the message. Shaking the dust off your feet was something that Jews did when they left Gentile territory. It would therefore be shocking for the Apostles to do this as they left Jewish towns. Yet if these Jewish towns would not welcome the news that the Jewish Messiah had come then they were cutting themselves off from God and his true people. This is why Jesus says it will be worse for these Jewish towns than for Sodom and Gomorrah (v15.) These were two notoriously sinful gentile towns that were judged by God in Genesis. It will be worse on judgment day for the Jewish towns who reject Jesus because these Jewish towns have rejected a far greater revelation of God than Sodom and Gomorrah had. They just had the witness of Lot. These Jewish towns have had the Messiah's apostles come and share the Messiah's message and perform the Messiah's signs and yet they won't believe.

### **Tricky Bits**

- In many ways the trickiest bit about this passage is working out what was unique to them and what is applicable to us. There will be differences of opinion over this and so as group leaders we must ensure that we remain gracious to one another. We must also make sure that we do not spend all our time debating what is less clear. Instead as group leaders we must make sure that we focus on what is clear and that is that we are to be going to generously share the gospel with the lost. Perhaps it is actually the going and doing what Jesus commands us to do that is the part we find trickiest.
- You might find the following diagram helpful to think about how to apply tricky passages like this one. With every passage we study we need to ask, "Where in the big story of the Bible is this taking place?" We then need to think about where we are as we read this story. We then need to think about how the big Bible events that have taken place between the passage and us should shape the way we apply the passage to us.
  - So let's take Matthew 10.
    - The events in this passage come after creation and the fall but before Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost (as denoted by the green arrow.)

- But we as 21st century Christians are reading this passage after Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and giving of the Spirit (as denoted by the red arrow.)
- We always need to ask how the big Bible events between us and the events we are reading about should change the way we apply the passage.

**Big Idea - Pray for more workers and go out into the harvest field filled with compassion.**

### **Applications**

- **Pray!**
  - How much time do spend praying for more gospel workers? As we look at our neighbourhoods, workplaces, churches, towns, nation and world it should drive us to our knees with desperation, pleading with the Lord of the Harvest to send out more workers.
  - We should also pray expectantly and optimistically. We are praying to the Lord of the Harvest, the world is his harvest field and he tells us that the harvest is plentiful. This should be reflected in the tone and content of our prayers. Make sure your group has plenty of time at the end of the study to pray these sorts of prayers.
- **Go!**
  - A deep compassion for the lost will not only lead us to pray but to go to them with the gospel. This does not mean that we will all become missionaries overseas (though we should not dismiss this.) It also will not mean that we all become full-time gospel workers in this country (again we should be open to this.) It should mean that all of us go about our daily lives looking expectantly for people of peace with whom we can share the gospel. Instead of waiting for people to come to us we will go to them.
  - Perhaps some of us need to change our attitudes to work or hobbies or ordinary life. Maybe we need to make more time to be spending time with people. Maybe we need to be more deliberate about introducing Jesus into conversations.

## Questions

### **Starter Question - Who was influential in you becoming a Christian?**

*There is obviously no right or wrong answer here. We just want to get people talking and sharing their stories. We might have been in a group with people for years and yet not know how they came to faith. This exercise can be a wonderful way for helping a group bond together. Be aware that there may be some in your group who are not yet Christians. We don't want to make them feel uncomfortable.*

### **1) What is often your instinctive reaction when you see crowds of people?**

*To help people think about this you might want to give them an example of a crowd, e.g. crowds in Frenchgate or the Market in town. Crowds around Lakeside, crowds at the World Cup on TV, crowds at the school gate, crowds where you work.*

*If we are honest then often we don't see people as Jesus sees them.*

### **2) How does Jesus feel when he sees the crowds? (v35-36)**

*Jesus doesn't just see their physical and material needs he sees their spiritual needs and he is filled with a deep strong compassion. How do our feelings for people compare to that?*

### **3) How are we to pray?(v37-38)**

*We are to pray for more workers for the harvest field. That is more people who will go to the lost with the gospel. This will include praying for more pastors, evangelists, youth workers and missionaries. But also praying for more people to be more intentionally evangelistic in their day to day lives.*

#### **A. What encouragements are there in v37-38?**

*It's really encouraging to know that the harvest is plentiful. It's also really encouraging to know that we are praying to the Lord of the Harvest. The harvest field is his and bringing in the harvest is his great concern!*

#### **B. As we look around our church, our town and beyond, in what ways do we see that the harvest is plentiful? Where does it feel like there are few workers?**

*You might like to take different situations in turn. Some people might be very aware of needs, others will be less aware. Be prepared with a few examples of your own to get things moving.*

*Make sure that you have time to pray for these situations either by pausing the Bible study at this point or by praying at the end.*

### **4) As well as praying for the lost, Jesus tells us to go to the lost. In what ways will our mission be different to theirs? In what ways do you think it should be the same?**

*This is where we need to think carefully about what was unique to them and what is generally applicable. I would try and stay away from getting into a big debate about miracles. This means you may need to lead the group firmly. Don't be afraid to do this!*

*The obvious difference is who we are to go to. Our message is also slightly different to theirs because we have a fuller message to proclaim in light of the cross.*

*Whilst some specifics might be different the general principle of depending on God for what we need and seeking people who will receive the gospel are principles that do apply. What these look like in practice may be different in different situations and you could spend time thinking about what they will mean in our particular contexts.*

**5) What often stops us from going and sharing the gospel with someone? How will this passage help us overcome these?**

*Maybe we feel overwhelmed by the size of the task or the negative reaction we have received. Jesus encourages us that there will also be those who welcome the gospel so keep going.*

*Perhaps we don't go because we just don't care as much as we should for people. Reflecting on Jesus' compassion and praying that God would give us that same compassion will be appropriate.*

*Another reason might be that we feel like we are ill-equipped to talk about Jesus or to move somewhere new to serve him. If that's the case it will serve us well to reflect on who we are working for (the Lord of the Harvest who is our generous Heavenly Father.)*

**6) How will Jesus' words motivate you to go out with the gospel? Share particular situation or people where you want to share the gospel and spend time praying for one another.**

*Let's try and be as specific as possible so as to not just apply this passage generally but personally. As always be prepared to lead on this.*

## Small Group Leaders Notes

### Matthew 10:16-42

#### Context

- **The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few... so Jesus is sending out more workers**
  - 9:35 sets the context for this block of teaching. Jesus has been travelling throughout Galilee proclaiming the message of the kingdom and doing the work of the kingdom. Yet as he looks out on the vast crowds of people he says that though the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few (9:37). Jesus cannot do it all on his own, he needs more workers and so he now sends out the 12 Apostles to proclaim the same message of the kingdom and to do the same works of the kingdom as him. (10:7-8.)
  - This helps us to see that the teaching in chapter 10 was given first to the 12 Apostles. It applies to directly to them though there will be some indirect applications for us as we too are sent out by Jesus on mission.
- **Hostility against Jesus is rising... so Jesus' messengers should expect the same.**
  - Through chapters 8-9 opposition to Jesus has been slowly but steadily growing (see 9:3, 9:34.) This hostility and rejection against Jesus will only continue to grow (11:19, 12:14, 12:24.)
  - If that's what happened to Jesus then those who go out as Jesus' messengers should expect the same sort of reaction (10:24-25.)

## **Structure**

*I'm not going to provide detailed notes on each section. Hopefully the sermons on these verses are still fresh in your mind. What I have laid out below is the structure of the passage and how the different parts fit together.*

### **Jesus sends out his messengers as like sheep among wolves (v16)**

*(This stands over and summarises the big message of what follows)*

### **Jesus' Messengers should expect hostility (v17-23);**

*From Religious People (v17-20)*

*From Family (v21-23)*

Because Jesus faced hostility (v24-25)

### **Jesus Messengers don't need to be afraid (v26-31)**

*Because we know where history is going (v26-27)*

*Because we know how much our Heavenly Father cares for us (v28-31)*

### **Jesus' Messengers therefore need to decide whether they are going to speak up or stay silent (v32-33)**

#### **Because Jesus and his message will divide families (v34-36)**

Because Jesus calls for undivided allegiance to him that is costly (v34-39)

#### **But being a messenger of Jesus brings wonderful privileges (v40-42)**

## **Tricky Bits**

### **What is being promised in v19-20?**

*These verses are sometimes taken out of context and used to say that we don't need to prepare to speak when we are teaching the Bible or speaking evangelistically. The specific situation that Jesus is addressing in these verses is when disciples are on trial because of Jesus, such as in Acts 4.*

*Whilst God's Spirit undoubtedly does help us to teach the Bible and speak evangelistically we still need to be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15) rather than expecting God's Spirit to do everything for us.*

### **What is Jesus talking about in v23?**

*The big question in this verse is what is Jesus referring to when he says, 'before the Son of Man comes'? There are several options.*

*The most obvious option is that he is referring to his second coming in judgment. Yet this doesn't seem to make sense because the gospel has gone to all the towns of Israel and Jesus hasn't come again.*

*The second option that is sometimes put forward is that Jesus is referring to the destruction of the temple in AD70. This might fit a bit better than the previous suggestion but it's hard to find evidence for 'the Son of Man coming' alluding to AD70.*

*The third option (and in my opinion the better option) is that the coming Jesus refers to is his death and resurrection. The phrase 'the Son of Man comes' draws from Daniel 7 and so we need to understand how the phrase is used in Daniel 7 if we are to understand how Jesus uses it here. In Daniel 7 the Son of Man comes not to earth in judgment but into the presence of the Ancient of Days (God the Father) where he receives glory and honour, power and authority over the nations. In light of this we then must ask, "When does Jesus receive authority over the nations? The answer comes in Matthew 28 where the risen Jesus tells his disciples that "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him." It is as Jesus dies for his people's sins and rises for their justification that he is declared with power to be the Son of God and ruler over all things.*

### **In v40-42 is Jesus saying that we can earn our salvation or extra rewards in heaven by being charitable?**

*As always context is key. Jesus has already talked about people welcoming the Apostles in v12-14 and these verses need to shape our understanding of v40-42. In v12-14 to welcome the Apostles is to welcome them and the message that they bring. So to welcome the Apostles and their message is to believe their message and respond to it rightly in repentance and faith. Our charity doesn't earn our salvation, we receive it as a gift when we receive and believe the gospel. The offer of a cup of water in v42 is an example of the hospitality that Jesus described in v10-12.*

*On the question of earning rewards in heaven we should be careful. The group could easily spiral off into endless speculation about what these might be. We need to read these references to reward in the light of the rest of scripture which teaches us that eternal life is a gift that we receive not a wage or reward that we earn.*

### **Big Idea - Speak up for Jesus even when it's costly and scary!**

#### **Applications**

- **Expect hostility if you speak up for Jesus**
  - People hated Jesus for preaching about sin and the need for repentance and a saviour. We should not be surprised when people don't like us for preaching that message.
  - Sometimes the hostility can come from those closest to us and this is particularly hard. Be sensitive to those in your group who have difficult family situations because of their faith.
- **Don't be afraid to speak up for Jesus**
  - This is obvious from the passage but we need to work hard to see the reasons why we should not be afraid. Make sure that plenty of time in the study focuses on v26-31 where Jesus gives us the reasons not to be afraid.
  - You may well have spoken about this application in the last study. This can be a chance to revisit things and talk about how our efforts have been in the last week.
- **Serve Jesus wholeheartedly even when it's hard**
  - It's hard to escape the fact that Jesus expects us to be wholeheartedly devoted to him. We are to love him even more than our families and our desires and dreams.
  - What sort of things rival Jesus for our devotion?

## **Questions**

### **Starter - Who do you find it hardest to talk about Jesus with?**

*This is quite a direct starter question but it gets right to the heart of the passage. Jesus sends us out as his messengers. None of us find this easy and there is always a measure of cost and pain involved in speaking for Jesus. It's good to be honest about that right from the start.*

#### **1) Jesus tells us to expect hatred. Where will this hatred come from? Is that surprising? (v16-23)**

*In these verses Jesus tells us that hatred will unexpectedly come from religious people and even family. Not only is this surprising but it often makes the opposition even more painful because it is from those closest to us.*

#### **2) Why should we expect hatred? (v24-25)**

*Firstly because Jesus tells us it will happen. Secondly because Jesus experienced such hatred. Even his own family thought he was out of his mind (Mark 3:21.)*

#### **3) If we don't experience this, what might be some of the reasons?**

*There could be various reasons. One is that our culture has been and still continues to be fairly kind and sympathetic to Christians. Another reason could be that those closest to us (i.e. family) are all Christians. It could also be because we are silent Christians who are too scared to speak up for Jesus.*

#### **4) What encouragements does Jesus give to keep speaking for him even when it is hard? (v26-33)**

*It is worth getting the group to really focus on these verses because this is where the encouragement lies. We know the final score of history (v26), we know that one day Jesus' kingship will be seen by everyone so we should be unashamed about talking about it now. The other big reason is because of how much our Heavenly Father cares for us (v29-31.) The cross shows us how valuable we are to God.*

#### **5) In what ways does Jesus sometimes divide families? (v34-36)**

*Be aware that this may be a very raw personally issue for some in your group. There are all sorts of different ways that someone following Jesus can bring division in a family.*

#### **6) Why does Jesus bring division to families? (v37-39)**

*Jesus doesn't set out to do this but his call to his disciples is for undivided loyalty. Therefore this will inevitably have an impact on all our other relationships with family and friends. When we follow Jesus he is #1 now not family as it was before. This will inevitably bring tension.*

#### **7) Jesus calls for wholehearted devotion from his disciples. What sort of things rival Jesus for our devotion?**

*Family is probably one of the big ones but there are other things that can be rivals to Jesus including comfort, home, work, money, power and reputation.*

#### **8) What will it look like for us to take up our cross and follow Jesus? Is there anything in this passage that will encourage you to do that?**

*In some ways this repeats question 4 but provides a way of bringing the study to a positive conclusion so that we finish with encouragement not discouragement.*