



As you read through the Gospels, it becomes apparent Jesus displayed a great love for those He met. He journeyed through the deserts, villages, and cities demonstrating His love in tangible but substantive ways. His love showed no partiality between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich or poor.

Matthew 9:35-38 is one of my favorite accounts of Jesus' love for people, which begins with this summary: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Matthew describes the persistence of Jesus' love because He "went about all the cities and villages..." Jesus was not content to just minister in His hometown or His preferred locations, but He consistently traveled through all the cities and villages.

Application: How far does your personal ministry reach? Admittedly, not all of us are called to the same traveling style of ministry Jesus conducted, but do you reach beyond where you are planted?

Knowing Jesus traveled extensively, Matthew goes on to inform us that Jesus went into these cities and villages teaching and preaching. Both words are interesting in the original language. “Teaching” (διδάσκων) means to provide instruction while “preaching” (κηρύσσων)

carries the connotation of heralding or proclaiming truth, especially in a religious sense. Matthew clearly is driving home the point Jesus went through all these locations with the purpose of instructing them and proclaiming the good news of the gospel.

Application: How diligently do you study the Scriptures so you will be prepared to instruct or proclaim the truth to others?

What specific plans do you have for improving your knowledge of Scripture?

Matthew concludes this broad summary of Jesus’ ministry by saying, “[He was] healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” Jesus traveled and proclaimed, but He also healed individuals as part of His loving ministry. We are not going to be able to wield the same authority over sickness Jesus

did, but we can learn from His interest in helping people. Meeting the physical, mental, emotional needs of people creates an environment where they can hear the truth of the gospel in a different way. The adage is true: people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Application: Are you in touch with the needs of your community? How do you seek to alleviate the hurts of those around you? Do you tend to be a person consumed with your own hurts and needs or are you more focused on the pain of others?

Missionary Moment: As a North American Ministries Church Planter, we look for every viable opportunity to intertwine our lives with those we are hoping to reach. This union makes us aware of hurts and issues these individuals face.

Amanda has focused on the families in our neighborhood and has made friends with a Muslim woman from Yemen who lives

two doors down from us. By paying attention to this family, we have had multiple opportunities to meet their needs.

In fact, Amanda is the only American woman this lady's husband has permitted her to speak to. Many hurdles existed between the two (language, religion, culture), but Amanda noticed their children were

playing with a flattened soccer ball and found a way to demonstrate the love of Jesus to this family. At this point in the relationship, our neighbor fixes dinner for us once a week and she and Amanda spend time together as friends talking about life.



Matthew now moves from the general ministry pattern of Jesus to some very specific details. Verse 36 says, "But when he [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Matthew has strategically moved from the "what" of Jesus' ministry to the "why."

Why did He travel to all the cities and villages? Why did He take the time to instruct and proclaim? Why did He heal every sickness and disease? "He was

moved with compassion..."—
(ἐσπλαγγίσθη) His heart went out to them.

The literal meaning of the Greek word is "to feel in the viscera or bowels." As Americans we often think of our emotions as being rooted in the heart, but the connection between our stomach and our feelings is not totally lost on us. We've all talked about "gut-wrenching emotions" or feelings that have literally made us "sick to our stomach." Matthew explains that Jesus looked at the Jews and what He saw and heard from them created such

strong emotion in Him that He felt it in His stomach.

Application: When you consider the culture around you or observe the lives of the people in your town, what emotions do you feel? It's easy to feel anger or disappointment towards those with whom we connect, but was this what Jesus portrayed?

What should change in the way you view of people so your emotions are more in line with how Jesus felt?

What was it about the condition of these people that caused Jesus to feel all He feels? It wasn't that their sin grieved Him to the point of frustration. It wasn't that they wouldn't listen to Him and He was angry. Rather, He felt compassion for them because they lacked good spiritual leadership. The Pharisees and Sadducees had abused their authority as spiritual leaders in Israel by exploiting the poor and rigging the religious system so that they remained in power. Jesus looked upon the people and felt compassion for them because they were like "sheep having no shepherd."

These counterfeit Jewish religious leaders were pretending to be the shepherds of Israel, but they lived in stark contrast to Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus' concern for the spiritual well-being of people is apparent on every page of the gospels. In fact, Jesus taught His disciples how to go and make disciples around the world, because His desire is for people to have competent and accurate spiritual leadership.

Application: Jesus commanded His followers to focus their energy on making disciples. Who are you discipling? Does it deeply move you when you observe people and cultures that are "sheep without a shepherd?"

Matthew concludes this section of Scripture with two famous verses, the first of which is, “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;’” Jesus has changed the metaphor from shepherding to farming but the heartbeat of the passage is still the same. The immediate context makes it clear this harvest refers to unbelievers—the same people for whom Jesus felt compassion.

Jesus emphatically highlights the problem, saying there are not enough laborers to bring in the robust harvest. The problem is not that people wouldn’t believe in Jesus; the problem is an insufficient number of workers. The clear implication is the world is ripe with individuals who are ready for inclusion into the Kingdom of God but the work stalls due to an insufficient number of workers.

Application: Have you ever considered how plentiful the harvest is around you? When you think about Jesus’ description of the harvest, what specific names come to your mind?

The second famous verse that completes this section is, “therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Since the harvest is ready, Jesus tells us we are to pray for more workers.

Application: What do you think is the connection between your prayers and God sending out laborers? How do you think praying for laborers will affect the way you engage those around you?

Missionary Moment: Our church seeks to find as many ways as possible to show care for the people of our community.



Annually, we host two events, Family Fun Day Carnival and an Easter Egg Hunt, which are free of charge and designed to bring joy to those that attend. We also serve our community by adopting a section of our highway, providing free lunch events for employees of local small businesses, providing breakfast to local teachers, offering the Financial Peace University course, and many other ministries focused on tangible demonstrations of the love of Christ.

Our church is very focused on demonstrating Christ's love because we are convinced this was the ministry Jesus modeled. Remember, Matthew started this section of Scripture by reminding us Jesus went throughout all the region doing good and preaching the Good News of the Gospel. However, simply doing good is not enough. Jesus loved on people as He presented the truth to them.

The concept of sending out laborers into the field is an interesting one, especially when this illustration of Jesus is brought into the real world through the spiritual exercise of discipleship. For too long, the modern church describes evangelism and discipleship as two separate exercises. The current thought process goes something like this: the evangelist reaches the lost one (conversion) and a teacher comes along and discipled them (sanctification). However, this two-pronged approach is foreign to the pages of the Bible. Acts

18 is a fitting example of the correct approach where Paul in verse 8 preaches and “many of the Corinthian’s hearing, believed and were baptized” but Paul in verse 11 “continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

The Great Commission Matthew records at the end of this book requires all believers to “go and make disciples of all nations,” which is very different from “go and make converts of all nations.” The heart of the Lord of the Harvest is that all nations become disciples of Jesus. Could it be the laborers are few in our generation because we have failed to disciple those that have made a decision to follow Christ? Could it be the answer to our prayer for more laborers is actually answered our taking seriously the command to make disciples?

Application: Who discipled you and what did that process look like? Who is currently discipling you and how teachable are you in that process? Who are you actively discipling? How closely are you monitoring their life for the purpose of feedback and intentional spiritual growth?

Missionary Moment: Our church has adopted a three-point strategy in the discipleship process of our people. The first step is our Sunday Celebrations, in which we try to be very conscious of our audience. For those who haven’t surrendered to Christ, we seek to expose them to Scripture so they might come to know the truth.

The second approach of discipleship for us is small groups. Our small groups are based around the Sunday sermon, so that the text is driven deeper. Our small group discussion centers around our head, heart, and hands in relation to the passage. The “head” questions are information questions and what we want them to know. The “heart” questions are emotional/internal and focus on what we want them to feel. The “hands” questions are all about action and help that explain what they should do.


The third point to our discipleship strategy is something we call “d-

groups.” This term is not unique to us and you can find several different models for these gatherings. Our d-groups consist of three to five people and they spend 18 months studying the entire Bible together.



D-GROUPS *and* DEAF MINISTRY

They journal every day, memorize Scripture, hold one another accountable, and work toward the goal of starting their own group when the current group completes their study. These are slow to get started, but once you begin to see the ripple effect of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation, the methodical pace of discipleship has proven well worth it in our opinion.

For too long, the church has neglected her commission to “go make disciples.” The amount of believers who go through their daily life without ever engaging others with the gospel is frightening. As we see the world around us and all of the turmoil and pain, we can’t stand by and watch others spiral into eternity. Pray that God sends workers into the harvest. Ask Him to open your eyes to the harvest around you. 

About the Writer: Tim and Amanda York are church planters in Depew, New York, which is a suburb of Buffalo, New York. The Yorks were commissioned by North American Ministries to plant a church with an emphasis on the large Deaf population in the area. Tim and Amanda have two sons, Bryson and Haddon, and another one on the way.