

THE INSANITY OF OBEDIENCE

WEEK 1: SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

“Behold, **I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves ...**” – Matthew 10:16

Jesus calls us to _____ Him.

Matthew 4:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, “**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**”

²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:14-17 (ESV)

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” ¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

In order to MAKE disciples, we must first BE disciples. – Robby Gallaty

Four essential elements of the Gospel:

- 1) God’s _____ is here. (a declaration)
- 2) _____ of sin.
- 3) _____ the Gospel.
- 4) _____ Jesus.

Following Jesus results in us _____ something, not just _____ something.

Recently, we led a training meeting with some believers in China. In public remarks, I commented on the significant spiritual harvest among the Chinese. I enthusiastically described how that harvest had been an encouragement to the global Body of Christ. My tone was almost boastful. That was not my intention, of course; I was simply overwhelmed by the work of the Spirit in drawing people to faith.

After my remarks, a Chinese house church leader asked me to join him for a meal. With unflagging gentleness, this church leader firmly challenged the number of believers in China that I had cited. His comment took me off guard; after all, I had used the most conservative estimate quoted by Westerners! I defended my figures and I explained to my host the source of my statistics. He listened to me patiently. Then, with a smile, he agreed it might be possible to support the numbers which I was using. At the same time, he suggested a different way of interpreting the numbers being bandied globally.

I will never forget what he said next: “Of that large number of believers that you described in your talk, two-thirds of those people are what we would call ‘members.’ Only one-third of those people are who we would call ‘true followers of Jesus.’”

I was puzzled by that distinction and I asked my new friend to explain the difference in those two categories.

He said, “Probably two-thirds of the people you mentioned regularly attend a house church. Most of those people have been baptized. Most of those people contribute financially to the work of a house church.” He paused before continuing: “*But we do not consider church members to be true followers of Jesus until they have led other people to Christ and until they have helped plant more house churches.*”

I found myself moving into the mode of researcher as I began to absorb his comment, but then I stopped short, seized by the implications of what this church leader was suggesting. The next question which entered my mind was intensely personal: *Am I simply a member of the church or am I a true follower of Jesus Christ?*

- *The Insanity of Obedience*, pp. xxv-xxvi

Jesus _____ those who follow Him.

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

As the Gospel of Matthew comes to a crescendo, Jesus gave His followers a final word of instruction. We often refer to these words as the “Great Commission.” With stark simplicity, Jesus set out the calling and the mission of those who would follow Him. “Go,” He commands, “and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). From that day until now, Jesus’ followers have endeavored to fulfill that assignment. Whatever else the church takes on, it is broadly understood that both “going” and “making disciples” are essential and defining tasks. The church cannot be the church unless it is going and making disciples.

Interestingly, Jesus’ final instruction was nothing new; it is utterly consistent with His overall ministry. Early on, as Jesus invited Simon and Andrew to follow Him, He explained that He would make them “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Later, Jesus designated twelve apostles. They were appointed “that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). He called them close, and then He sent them out. Consistently, this invitation *to walk closely with* Jesus is linked with the command *to go out with* Jesus. In fact, it becomes clear that an intimate relationship with Jesus necessarily leads to a life of ministry and service and mission for **all believers**. *God is a sending God*. Repeatedly, He draws people close and then He sends them out. In the Gospels, we encounter this same pattern over and over again.

- *The Insanity of Obedience*, pp. 1-2

“Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.”

Let that sink in for a minute. Quite a bold statement, isn’t it? This is a quote from the famous 19th Century British pastor and theologian, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He pastored one of the first megachurches of the modern era, The Metropolitan Tabernacle, in London. Thousands of people came to faith under his ministry and it’s estimated that he preached to upwards of 10 million people over the course of his life.

So, why would he say that every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor? Seems odd to me. Is he saying that every true follower of Christ should pack up their bags and move to Africa and become a missionary? That’s what a missionary is, right?

I grew up going to church all the time. I remember every few months, a missionary would show up at church. They were always kind of weird and looked odd. Their names were usually something like Herb and Martha. They always had slides with them. Not PowerPoint slides, but clear, translucent slides that were shown on an overhead projector. An overhead projector was basically this huge box that weighed about fifty pounds and sat on a table and had a bright light in the bottom of the box that pointed up at a mirror that displayed the slides on the wall.

Missionaries were varsity Christians. They traveled overseas, usually to Africa. We paid them money to keep up their missionary work. The rest of us were basically losers because we worked normal jobs here in the States, but we always made ourselves feel better by contributing a few dollars in the love offering. No, I’m not sure why it was called a love offering.

Unfortunately, this is the only thing that comes to mind when we talk about missionaries. However, in Spurgeon’s mind, the essence of what it means to be a Christian is that you live your life as a missionary, regardless of where you live, stateside or overseas.

In fact, if we take a look at the life of Jesus, he was a missionary. At least thirty-nine times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as “sent” on a mission. He left his home in heaven, left his family, and left his culture to come to the earth as a missionary to reach a people who would’ve otherwise never been restored to the Father.

Additionally, Jesus not only refers to himself as “sent,” he refers to every Christian as “sent.” We are all sent as missionaries here and now to the culture where we live.

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world (John 17:18).

This is why the early church made disciples at lightning speed. It wasn’t because they had fancy programs or great productions. It was because every believer operated as a missionary. There was no such thing as a “foreign missionary.”

I love what Michael Green says in *Evangelism in the Early Church*. He says that early Christianity’s explosive growth was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries.

Tim Keller communicates a similar concept in *Center Church*. He says, *Not only the apostles but every Christian did evangelism — and they did so endlessly. Numerous passages indicate that every Christian was expected to evangelize, follow up, nurture, and teach people the Word. This happened relationally — one person bringing the gospel to another within the context of a relationship.*

All believers must see themselves as missionaries sent by Jesus Christ, sent into the world, and sent on a mission. If your Christian life doesn't look like this, then you need to ask the hard question, "Am I a missionary or impostor?"

- Ethan Welch, Church Planter, Wilmington, NC

Jesus sends out His followers into _____.

Matthew 10:16-25 (ESV)

¹⁶ "Behold, **I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹ Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

Some implications:

- 1) Don't expect the _____ to _____ this message or its messengers.
- 2) Don't be a "wolf", but do be _____ and _____.
- 3) Do expect that _____, _____, and _____ are necessary parts of the Divine strategy.
- 4) Do expect that what happened to _____ will happen to those who carry the family _____ and _____.

Jesus sends out His followers into danger with the command to _____.

Matthew 10:26-33 (ESV)

²⁶ "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

How?

- 1) By realizing that the struggle is not _____ or _____. If we rightly represent the family name, we'll experience (a bit) of what Jesus did.
- 2) By knowing/believing that God will _____ His Word and _____ His servants.
- 3) By _____ rightly. What's the worst the world can do?
- 4) By trusting that you are in the _____ of God who _____ you much.