

## **The Calling of the Apostles**

### **Matthew 10:1**

In Matt. 9:36 after Jesus called them to pray for workers He then called to become workers. As they began to see the world as He sees it, looking out on lost humanity through their Lord's eyes and with His heart of compassion, they also began to see that they themselves were called to go out and warn that lost world of the coming harvest of judgment and to invite them into the Lord's kingdom.

Vital as it is, prayer is not all that is required. The believer who prays for God to send workers but is unwilling to go himself, prays insincerely and hypocritically. The Christian who genuinely prays for God to send witnesses is also willing to be a witness.

William Barclay reports that when Martin Luther became convinced that the biblical way of salvation was by God's grace working through man's faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, he began earnestly preaching and contending for this doctrine that became the hallmark of the Protestant Reformation.

A friend of his was equally convinced of this truth, and the two men agreed that Luther would spend his time out in the world preaching, writing, and debating, while the friend would spend his time alone in a monastery upholding Luther and the cause of the Reformation in prayer. As Luther visited the friend from time to time and reported the difficulties and obstacles of the work, the friend would intensify his praying. One night the friend had a dream in which he saw a gigantic field that stretched over the whole earth. But only one lone figure was working in the field, and when he looked closer the man saw that the lone figure was his dear friend Luther. When he woke up he immediately went to find Luther and tell him that God made clear to him through the dream that it was not enough simply to pray. He, too, must give himself directly to the work of spreading the good news of salvation. He did not forsake praying, but he set aside his pious solitude and began to labor beside Luther in the heat and dirt of battle.

Until this stage of His ministry, Jesus had ministered alone. He had the companionship of the twelve disciples and the company of vast multitudes who followed wherever He went, but none of the twelve, and certainly none in the multitudes, participated in His ministry except as an observer or recipient. After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus was God's sole worker in the great field of the world. Then He began the preliminary stages of commissioning those twelve to join Him as fellow workers.

The major thrust of Jesus' commissioning process begins in [verse 5](#) of Matthew 10 and continues through the chapter as the Lord sets forth His foundational instructions for ministry. But in the first four verses Matthew gives three essentials of the commissioning. In [verse 1](#) he tells of Jesus' initiation of the disciples and of the divine impact their ministry was to have on the world. In [verses 2-4](#), which will be discussed in the next several chapters, we are given the disciples' identities.

## **Their Initiation**

**And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority ([10:1a](#))**

**The phrase defining their commissioning:**

The verb behind **having summoned** is *proskaleo*, a compound of *kaleo* (to call) and *pros* (toward, or to). It is an intense term that means to call someone to oneself in order to confront him face to face. It is used of God's calling the Gentiles to Himself through the gospel ([Acts 2:39](#)) and of His calling His chosen men and entrusting them with proclaiming the gospel ([Acts 13:2](#); [16:10](#)).

When Jesus **summoned His twelve disciples**, He was making more than a casual request. The writer's choice of verbs seems to imply that this summoning was connected to an official commissioning to the Lord's service. Here Matthew refers to the **twelve** as **disciples**, whereas in the next verse he calls them apostles.

*Mathētes* (disciples) refers to those who learn under the instruction of a master teacher.

*Apostoloi* ("apostles," [v. 2](#)) refers to qualified representatives who are sent out on a mission.

During their training period, the twelve were learners and were primarily called **disciples**, but as they ventured forth themselves in obedience to Christ's commission and in His power, they were most often called apostles. They still had more to learn before they could be fully sent out to represent their Lord, and it is on their further learning that Jesus next concentrated His attention and effort.

There were **four general phases** in Jesus' training of the disciples to be apostles.

The first two, were their conversion (John 1:35 – 51), and their initial calling to follow Him (Matthew 4:18 – 22). From the many who came to trust in Him as Messiah and Lord early in His ministry, Jesus hand-picked the twelve for special and unique service. He called them away from their former occupations and gave them a completely new vocation.

The third phase of their training could be called an internship, which they experienced as they lived with Jesus constantly for three years, to be taught both by His instruction and by His example. It is this phase that is highlighted in [Matthew](#)

10. From Mark's account ([Mark 6:7](#)) we learn that this involved their going out in pairs on short-term assignments to practice what their Lord had been teaching them. During this phase they were never far from Jesus, who closely monitored their progress; and the greatest lesson of this phase was that they were totally inadequate without Him. After such short periods of active service, the **twelve disciples** returned to Jesus for further teaching.

The fourth and final phase of the disciples' training began after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, when He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit as the supernatural Helper who would be with them forever ([Acts 1:8](#); [2:4](#); cf. [John 14:16](#)).

### **The Process of their Choosing:**

**Chosen sovereignly** – Mark 3:13 “those whom he would.” John 15:16a “...you have not chosen me but I have chosen you. Rom 8:28b – “the called according to his purpose.”

**Chosen prayerfully** - after a night of prayer Luke 6:12, 13.

**Chosen to be trained** – all “on the job” training, the best kind.

It is encouraging to realize that Jesus did not call those **twelve disciples** who became apostles on the basis of their innate worthiness or personal capabilities or **faithfulness**, but solely on the basis of what He could make of them by His own power working through them. It is a mark of authenticity and honesty that the gospel writers, like all the other Scripture writers, make no effort to mask the faults and shortcomings of God's people, including those of their most outstanding leaders. During the disciples' three years of training under Jesus, we see few signs of maturity and reliability but many signs of pettiness and inadequacy. It is a marvelous insight into the grace of God toward us to see Christ dealing so lovingly and patiently with men who are so weak and unresponsive.

The Lord had to deal with 5 inadequacies:

1. Lack of spiritual understanding – Matt.15:15,16; 16:21-23;Lk.18:31,34; John 13:6-8
2. Lack of humility – Mark 9:33-37; Matt. 20:20-28
3. Lack of faith – Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Mark 4:40
4. Lack of commitment – cf. Lk. 5:11 & Mark 14:50
5. Lack of power – Matt. 17:14-21;

**4. Chosen to be sent** - vs. 1 disciples, v. 2 apostles – “sent ones”

### **Their Impact**

**He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (10:1b)**

*Exousia* (**authority**) is from a verb that means “it is lawful,” and it therefore refers to a right or power that is legitimately delegated. They “turned the world upside down” Acts 17:6

**Illustration:**

“One night in the East End of London a young doctor was turning out the lights of a mission hall in which he was working. He found a ragged boy hiding in a dark corner, where he begged to be allowed to sleep. The doctor took the homeless boy to his own room, fed him and tried to get his story. He learned that the boy was living in a coal bin with a number of other boys. He persuaded the boy to show him where these boys were. They went through narrow alleys and finally came to a hole in the wall of a factory. “Look in there,” he said. The doctor struck a match and looked around, crawling into the cellar. Finally he found thirteen boys with only bits of old burlap to protect them from the cold. One lad was clasping to him a four-year-old brother. All were sound asleep. The doctor caught a vision then and there of service for his Lord. He cared for those boys and started the Bernardo Homes for neglected children. At the time of the death of Dr. Bernardo, the newspapers reported that he had taken, and surrounded with a Christian atmosphere, more than 80,000 homeless boys and girls. Hundreds of them became fine Christian citizens. O that we might have eyes to see the need about us! Thousands will drift into a Christ-less eternity if Christians do not take Christ to them.”