

Discipleship Boot camp, Matthew 10:1-23

The First Commission. Before being sent on long range missions without immediate backup, U.S. Marines are field tested near their primary training facility in order to prepare them for the hardships of combat. Though the disciples were not being prepared for physical combat, they were being prepared for emotional and mental stress in excess even of that of military combatants. As they are sent out, Jesus warns the disciples, “you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

Pre-insertion briefing: Matthew 10:1-15

- A trip to the armory for spiritual gifts
 - Authority over unclean spirits and the gift of healing.
- The twelve participants, or apostles, named
 - They were singled out from many who had been following Jesus.
- Mission parameters
 - Primary target: only the lost sheep of Israel, not the Gentiles or Samaritans.
 - Actions: Preach the kingdom of heaven at hand.
 - Supporting actions: heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: and do these freely.
 - Prohibitions: travel lightly; do not take money, supplies or extra clothing.
 - Expect support as you go.
- Advisory: this is not a stealth mission, let your purpose be known, and warn those who do not heed you.
 - You are an official messenger of peace, v.11-13.
 - There will be a price to pay by those who don't listen, v.14

If not a pep talk, then a warning to keep faith: 10:16-23

- *I send you out as sheep among wolves; so be shrewd as serpents while innocent as doves, v.16.*
 - The world will not be nice to you.
 - Do not be deluded by talk of the “heart.”
- *Your faith will be tried in courts, ridiculed in high places, and political leaders will use you, v.17.*
 - Don't be disarmed by conciliatory and smooth talk,
- *Yet do not worry, the Spirit will not only give you words to speak, but will speak for you, v.19-20.*
 - Remember, it is not your great eloquence, but God's.
- *The true faith will even separate family members, to the point of death, and will bring hate toward you, v.21-22.*
 - i.e., the Middle East and the brutality and persecution toward converts.
- Yet the impact of the Gospel message will not cease to bring growth before Jesus returns, v.23.
 - A warning to those who wish to stop evangelizing because of the opposition and persecution.

Though there were some limitations to this first evangelical enterprise, such as restrictions to preach only to “the lost sheep of Israel,” they were there both to fulfill the original covenant, and to keep the mission short. On a larger scale, though, Jesus made it clear that the role of a disciple and apostle of the kingdom would never be easy.

If the practice of our faith has been “easy,” and comfortable, then perhaps we need to examine the faith we actually practice. Is our goal self-serving and self-glorifying, or is it self-effacing and God glorifying? Truly, before you say yes to the latter, examine your motives in the presence of God and submit them to him for wisdom.

How tough is your faith? *Are you willing to suffer persecution if necessary? Many around the world suffer severely. Will you die for him as he died for you?*