

¹ One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. ² Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

³ “Take nothing for your journey,” he instructed them. “Don’t take a walking stick, a traveler’s bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes. ⁴ Wherever you go, stay in the same house until you leave town. ⁵ And if a town refuses to welcome you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate.”

- **Matthew’s version of the story goes into a bit more detail as to Jesus’ instruction to his disciples when he is sending them out...**

¹⁶ “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. ¹⁸ You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. ¹⁹ When you are arrested, don’t worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. ²⁰ For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹ “A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ²² And all nations will hate you because you are my followers. But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

²⁴ “Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵ Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

²⁶ “But don’t be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ²⁷ What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

²⁸ “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

³² “Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Don’t imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ ‘I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law

³⁶ Your enemies will be right in your own household!’

³⁷ “If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

⁷ When Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, heard about everything Jesus was doing, he was puzzled. Some were saying that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead. ⁸ Others thought Jesus was Elijah or one of the other prophets risen from the dead.

⁹ “I beheaded John,” Herod said, “so who is this man about whom I hear such stories?” And he kept trying to see him. (Luke 9:1–9 NLT-SE)

- **Here’s a little more of the back story of John the Baptists’ beheading...**¹⁷ For Herod had sent soldiers to arrest and imprison John as a favor to Herodias. She had been his brother Philip’s wife, but Herod had married her. ¹⁸ John had been telling Herod, “It is against God’s law for you to marry your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ So Herodias bore a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But without Herod’s approval she was powerless, ²⁰ for Herod respected John; and knowing that he was a good and holy man, he protected him. Herod was greatly disturbed whenever he talked with John, but even so, he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Herodias’s chance finally came on Herod’s birthday. He gave a party for his high government officials, army officers, and the leading citizens of Galilee. ²² Then his daughter, also named Herodias, came in and performed a dance that greatly pleased Herod and his guests. “Ask me for anything you like,” the king said to the girl, “and I will give it to you.” ²³ He even vowed, “I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom!”

²⁴ She went out and asked her mother, “What should I ask for?” Her mother told her, “Ask for the head of John the Baptist!”

²⁵ So the girl hurried back to the king and told him, “I want the head of John the Baptist, right now, on a tray!”

²⁶ Then the king deeply regretted what he had said; but because of the vows he had made in front of his guests, he couldn’t refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner to the prison to cut off John’s head and bring it to him. The soldier beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a tray, and gave it to the girl, who took it to her mother. ²⁹ When John’s disciples heard what had happened, they came to get his body and buried it in a tomb. (Mark 6:17–29 NLT-SE)

- There are really two events unfolding here:

- **Jesus is preparing and releasing the Disciples** to go out into the countryside to minister in His name. Their assignment is virtually the same as the message of John the Baptist (Matt 3:1) and Jesus as well (Matt 4:17). In addition, Jesus told them to limit the proclamation of their message to the nation Israel. Like Jesus, their message would be authenticated with miracles (Matt 10:8).
- **At the same time, there is something stirring in the heart of Herod** concerning Jesus and his ministry in Galilee. Herod was fascinated by John the Baptist, especially the messages he preached. Herod knew that John was a holy and righteous man, showing his respect by protecting him from his wife’s wrath. The ESV says that Herod “was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.”

- When you look closely at the ministry of Jesus, there is always more going on than what you can see on the surface.

- **The Disciples** had been with Jesus for almost a year at this point. They had seen him heal people, cast out demons, even bring the dead back to life. While witnessing all these miraculous events, there is no account of them actually

- **Insecurity...** They had been rebuked by Jesus numerous times already (Luke 8:22-25, 9:40). He had called out their lack of faith dealing with rich people, sick people, prostitutes, and even storm. Even when it came to serving lunch to a bunch of hungry people or going fishing when they hadn't caught anything the night before (Luke 5:1-11). Their confidence was not exactly soaring at the moment!
- **Fear...** Sure, the Romans had oppressed them and controlled every aspect of their lives. At least they had a life. When Jesus showed up it seemed that everything he did infuriated the religious leaders who in turn, forced the hands of the Romans to put an end to Jesus' ministry (Matt 27:20). Now they were under attack, not from the Romans, but from their own spiritual leaders. Who wouldn't be scared to death.
- **Excitement...** In spite of all the turmoil between Jesus and the local leaders, that had seen him perform numerous miracles. To this point, they had only heard about God's miracle power in OT stories. But now they had seen limbs grow (Mark 2:8-11). They had seen the blind see (Mark 8:22-25), the deaf hear. They had watched as Jesus brought someone back to life (Luke 7:11-17), delivered people possessed by demons, even quiet the wind and waves of a horrendous storm (Luke 8:22-25). What did he plan to do through them on this "ministry trip?"
- **Confusion...** Jesus wasn't even letting them go out as a group, but was making them travel in teams of two. They had almost always stayed together as they traveled ministering with him. Now he was splitting them up. Why? He sent them out with no food, no clothes, no place to stay, NO MONEY! This made no sense at all.
- **The Religious Leaders** were undoubtedly perplexed by the life and ministry of Jesus. He was like a magnet that attracted a strangely diverse group of followers. More importantly, he felt no obligation to center his ministry inside the synagogue. Instead, Jesus was drawn to "the least of these" (Matt 25:34-40), while also making time for a tax collector, a Roman soldier, and women with chronic illness.
 - **If he was really sent from God**, he would have chosen his disciples from among the proven spiritual leaders of the day, because they deserved the honor.
 - **If he was really sent from God**, he would follow the established rules of worship to the letter (Mark 3:1-6).
 - **If he was really sent from God**, he would come to the religious leaders asking their permission to minister to the people .
 - **If he was really sent from God**, he would have delivered them from the oppressiveness of Roman rule (John 1:11).
- **Even Jesus himself** didn't really seem to have a plan. He was continually talking about "The Kingdom of God" (Matt 5:20, 6:31-33, 7:13-14, 11:12). Yet, the driving force behind this kingdom was not strength, intimidation, and force. Instead, Jesus talked about faith, trust, hope and love as being the keys to this kingdom (Matt 16:19). They wanted a Savior who would rescue them and set them free, but what they got was a tenderhearted servant who cared for the poor, payed attention to those who suffered, and demonstrated his love to those who were his apprentices by simply washing their feet!