Introduction

Who bears the burden for people coming to faith in the gospel? We may misunderstand our responsibility in this matter, which may shape how we think and speak about the gospel.

In Luke 24:1-24, Jesus sends out his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. This passage clarifies who bears the burden of the gospel.

Sending Out

Luke 10:1–3 "1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."

What did Jesus do to prepare for His visits to various towns? Luke 10:1 "1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go."

- Manuscript evidence is divided concerning whether there are seventy or seventy-two disciples. Jesus sent them out in pairs (cf. Mk 6:7). He sent them to towns and places where He intended to go. There is a sense in which they were to prepare the way for Him (similar to John the Baptist).

If this is not a one-time event, who bears this responsibility for proclaiming Jesus? This is not just a task for apostles; this is a task for every follower of Jesus. *Are you delegating this responsibility to someone else?*

How did Jesus compare their mission to a harvest? Luke 10:2 "2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus makes this statement in the context of His compassion toward the crowds who were helpless and without a shepherd. This is the same motivation we should have in sharing the gospel. Sharing the gospel comes from a love for your neighbor.

What does Jesus mean when He describes them as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3)?

- Matthew expands on this statement. Matthew 10:16–18 "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."

Luke 10:4–8 “4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.”

Why did Jesus tell them to take so little with them (Luke 10:4)?

- Jesus gave this same instruction to the twelve apostles (Luke 9:3). They had to depend solely on God. **Notice** that this was given to all of Jesus’s followers. I fear that we are tied down by our possessions more than we want to admit.

Why does Jesus say they should eat and drink whatever a household provided for them? Luke 10:7 “7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages …”

- Notice also the qualification - Luke 10:8 “… eat what is set before you.” This is often a difficult guideline for missionaries. *Why might Jesus instruct them to eat what they were offered?* Since they were taking nothing with them, whatever they were offered was a gift from the Lord. If they went beyond Israel, it is possible that they would be offered food that was forbidden in the Mosaic law.
- In 1 Cor 9:7-14, Paul argues that those who proclaim the gospel should earn their living by the gospel. He quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 “4 “You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain” and argues that those who do spiritual labor should be compensated with material things. In 1 Tim 5:17-18, Paul makes the same point - that elders who labor in preaching and teaching should receive a wage, quoting from Deut 25:4 again. He ***also*** quotes Luke 10:7 - the laborer deserves his wages. Significantly, 1 Tim 5:18 refers to both Deut 25:4 ***and*** Jesus’s words in Luke 10:7 as Scripture.

Luke 10:9–12 “9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 11 ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

They are commanded to heal the sick. *How would they heal them?* Luke 9:1 “1 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,”

What are these missionaries to proclaim? Luke 10:9 “9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” The **kingdom of God** refers to Jesus’s rule over God’s people in all nations. Jesus said the kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36) and was not visible (Luke 17:20-21). It is a spiritual kingdom that Jesus’s established in His lifetime (not in the future).

Why does Jesus say it will be more bearable for Sodom than the town that does not receive His disciples? God totally destroyed Sodom for their lack of faith. These cities, however, are rejecting Jesus, which carries a greater judgment (Heb 2:1-4). God displays His mercy through Jesus, so those who reject Him are rejecting the mercy of God.

Unrepentant Cities

Luke 10:13–16 "13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. 16 "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.""

What had been done in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida? Luke 10:13 "… if the mighty works done in you …" The NT gives little information about what those works are, but in the context (verse 16), it is clear that Jesus is talking about the things (miracles & teaching) that He had done.

What did Jesus say Tyre and Sidon would have done if they saw those works? Luke 10:13 "… if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." Tyre and Sidon were about 20 miles apart, both on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Isaiah describes Tyre as an ancient city (Isa 23:7). According to the historian Herodotus, Tyre was founded around 2750 B.C. (Ferry). Sidon was founded by Noah's great-grandson (Noah > Ham > Canaan > Sidon) (See Gen 10:15, 19). The judgment of Tyre and Sidon is described in Isa 23 and Ezek 26-28.

What did Jesus say would happen to Capernaum? Luke 10:15 "15 And you, Capernaum … You shall be brought down to Hades." Jesus lived in Capernaum for some time. Mark 2:1-12 says that Jesus forgave a paralytic man and healed him in Capernaum. Matt 9:1-8 says that event happened in Jesus's own city. Matt 4:13 says that Jesus left Nazareth and lived in Capernaum (presumably soon after His baptism).

Who should be the missionary to your hometown? God has appointed **you** to spread the gospel in your hometown.

*How do you warn people of judgment in **love**?* Speak the truth of the gospel (including judgment). Speak out of compassion for their lost state. Speak out of humility for God's grace to you.

If someone rejects Jesus, who else do they reject? Luke 10:16 "… the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." This refers to the Father. You cannot say you have faith in God, but not in Jesus. This is exactly the view that the Jewish religion has today.

Notice that Jesus connects this to the proclamation of these disciples. If they are proclaiming Jesus, the rejection of the gospel is a rejection of Jesus, not the messenger. We tend to hesitate to share the gospel because of how people will respond to ***us***. In reality, those who hear the gospel respond to Jesus (as long as we are proclaiming Jesus).

The disciples' return

Luke 10:17–20 "17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.""

In what did the disciples rejoice? Luke 10:17 "… the demons are subject to us in your name!" *What did Jesus say He saw?* Luke 10:18 "18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Jesus said in John 12:31-32 that Satan was cast out at the time of His crucifixion. Col 2:13-15 says that in Jesus's death, he triumphed over authorities. In the context of Luke 10:17, Jesus is probably referring to Satan's defeat in the proclamation of the gospel, not to Satan's fall as an angel.

What authority did Jesus say He gave to the disciples? Luke 10:19 "19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you." Some people have taken this statement, along with Mark 16:18 to mean that we display faith by handling venomous snakes and scorpions. There have been churches (mostly Pentecostal) who have handled venomous snakes as part of their church gatherings. This is the same misunderstanding that Satan presented to Jesus in Matt 4:5-6, where He told Jesus to throw Himself off the temple because God would protect Him (see Psa 91:11-12). Jesus, however, said that such an action would be testing God and it was forbidden (see Deut 6:16).

What did Jesus say should cause the disciples joy? Luke 10:20 "20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."" Throughout the OT and NT, eternal life is described as your name written in a book. Jesus's point was that the disciples should rejoice in God's grace, not in the authority they experienced.

Luke 10:21–22 "21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 22 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.""

For what does Jesus thank the Father? Luke 10:21 "… I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children …" Both sides of this have already been seen in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus said that He taught in parables so that people would remain without understanding. He specifically said that knowledge of the kingdom of God had been given to the disciples (Luke 8:10).

The contrast between "the wise and understanding" and "little children" is similar to what Paul writes in 1 Cor 1: 26-31, which states that faith in Christ is not based on wisdom, power, or noble birth.

This is why we pray for people to come to faith. Faith in the gospel is a spiritual matter of the heart, not an intellectual or moral matter. People do not come to faith because they are more intelligent or more moral. For that matter, people do not come to faith because the person who shared the gospel was more convincing (1 Cor 2:1-5). People come to faith because of the Holy Spirit's work on their hearts.

What did Jesus say had been handed over to Him? Luke 10:22 "22 All things have been handed over to me by my Father …" This does not mean that all things had not belonged to Jesus. Jesus created all things; therefore, all things belonged to Him (1 Cor 8:6; cf. Rom 11:36). However, Phil 2:6 says that Jesus did not grasp equality with God; that is, Jesus humbled Himself by taking on human limitation (Phil 2:7) and submitting Himself to the Father (Phil 2:8). Yet, in response to His right as God, His humility, and His faithfulness, God gave Jesus all authority (cf. Matt 28:18; Phil 2:9-11).

Who knows the Son? Luke 10:22 "… no one knows who the Son is except the Father …" *Who knows the Father?* Luke 10:22 "… or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." This aligns with Jesus's teaching in John 14:6–7 "6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." The only way to know the Father is through faith in Jesus.

Luke 10:23–24 "23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.""

What did prophets and kings desire to see and hear that the disciples saw and heard? 1 Peter 1:10–12 "10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." The OT prophets prophesied of the coming of Jesus. The disciples were blessed to witness their fulfillment.

Conclusion

Who bears the burden of people coming to faith in the gospel? We see three answers to that question in this passage.

First, ***all*** of Jesus's followers bear the responsibility for **sharing** the gospel. Some may argue that God will forgive those who never ***hear*** the gospel. However, it is clear from Scripture (including Luke 10) that ***hearing*** is necessary. Romans 10:17 "17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

Second, God is responsible for the understanding and conviction of truth. 1 Corinthians 1-2 explains that no one responds to the gospel because of something special within them or because of something special about the one who proclaims the message. Rather, we can only accept the gospel because of the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Again, this is why we must pray for the lost.

Third, those who ***hear*** are responsible for their response to the gospel. Just as Jesus Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, those who hear the gospel bear the own guilt in how they respond to the gospel. Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon are not free from their guilt just because they did not hear the gospel. But as Heb 2:1-4 points out, we are ***far*** more responsible for our response to Jesus than anything else.

Share the gospel. **Pray** for unbelievers. **Rejoice** in God's grace to you.