Facilitators: Read these recommended responses to the questions ahead of time to help you prepare to lead the small group discussion.

Participants: Reinforce what you have learned by reviewing these recommended responses after your group discussion and before you go on to the next lesson.

A. Review the Context

Discussion Leaders: Take a brief moment to review the context and what was learned last week. If you like, use the following question to encourage discussion:

- Of all the things you learned about Jesus from Matthew 9, what was the most meaningful?

B. Read the Story

Discussion Leaders: If there is time, have someone read each passage before it is discussed.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Jesus Gives his Disciples Authority: Matthew 10:1-4

1. What do you suppose is the significance of Jesus selecting twelve apostles? (For help with this question, see Luke 22:28-30 and Revelation 21:10-14.)

The number twelve is significant in that the nation of Israel was built from the twelve sons (tribes) of Jacob, who was called Israel. Ten of those tribes disappeared into exile in 722 B.C., and the others were taken into Babylonian captivity less than 150 years later. Jesus came to restore the lost tribes and to reconstitute Israel around himself. By selecting twelve disciples, Jesus shows that while he is not literally bringing back the same tribes that were lost, he is structuring them anew on these men. The twelve apostles are the foundation stones of the new Israel: not replacing the twelve tribes, who remain as gates to the kingdom, but being, in a spiritual way, the reality to which those tribes pointed.

2. a. Read the names of the twelve apostles. Who is named “first” at the head of the list?

“Simon, who is called Peter” and who was the first disciple (with his brother) Jesus called, is given primacy over the others from the start.

b. Are any of the others familiar to you from the preceding chapters of Matthew? What kind of men were those who have been described already (see Matthew 4:18-22 and 9:9)?

Answers will vary. The disciples were men of faith who left everything behind to follow Jesus. For the most part they were humble men, of low social standing. Peter and Andrew, James and John were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector and tax collectors were outsiders looked on by many Jews as traitors because they worked for Rome and hated for collecting more taxes than were owed.
c. **Think about it:** At the end of the list is "Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." Surely Jesus knew what kind of man Judas was and that he would betray him, yet he chose Judas to be one of the foundation-stones of the new kingdom. Sometimes we see people in positions of authority in the church whom we believe are betraying the Lord or who seem otherwise unworthy. What does the fact that Jesus chose Judas as an apostle suggest that our attitude should be toward those people and their offices?

People in positions of religious authority, whether they be priests or cardinals or even the pope himself, are human, sinners like the rest of us. Some are blatant sinners who do terrible things—like Judas, or some priests and some of the past popes. This does not mean that we disrespect the office or write off the God who set up the system. All authority comes from God, and sometimes there is a reason God allows or gives someone who is not of his mind and heart, a place in office for a time.

**The Mission of the Apostles: Matthew 10:5-15**

3. a. **What charge did Jesus give his apostles, and how did he empower them?**

Jesus charged his Apostles to go to the lost sheep of Israel, preaching that good news of the kingdom and healing, raising from the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out demons. In other words, to be like him and to do what he had been doing. He didn’t just tell them to do that; he gave them a share in his own authority (power) over illness, death and demons so they would be able.

b. **Who were to be the initial recipients of their ministry? Is this significant? (Recall what you learned regarding Matthew 4:12-16.)**

Even though Jesus first healed those outside the kingdom, the disciples were not to go first to gentiles or Samaritans, but rather "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These would be descendants of the scattered Northern Tribes of Israel, who had returned and lived among gentiles in the region of Galilee. Jesus chose this area to begin his ministry specifically for that reason, because he is restoring an Israel that had been lost and scattered. Now he is having his disciples follow suit.

4. a. **What additional instructions did Jesus give the Twelve?**

The disciples were to spread without charge the good news they did not pay to receive. Neither were they to depend on their own resources for provision by taking along money, extra clothing or even a staff. Rather they were to depend on those to whom they ministered, staying with "worthy" people in each town they visited.

b. **When Jews left “unclean” gentile territory for their own land, it was customary for them to shake the dust from their feet. What is the significance of Jesus’ instructions in verses 13-15?**

To shake the dust from their feet represents a warning of judgment on Jews who do not receive the apostles; they may not be ritually unclean in the eyes of the law, but by their refusal, they render themselves separate from the true kingdom—as the gesture symbolizes.

**The Cost of Discipleship: Matthew 10:16-39**

5. a. **Read verses 16-24. Jesus has asked his apostles to deliver fantastic news, news that everyone has been longing to hear. Not only that, he has given them the wherewithal to transform people’s lives for the**
better, healing diseases and raising the dead and casting out demons. Yet what kind of reception does he say they can expect?

Jesus tells his apostles to expect the kind of reception a sheep gets from a pack of wolves! They will be dragged to court and beaten, delivered up to death and hated. In other words, they can expect the same reception he has gotten.

b. How does Jesus tell them to respond?

Jesus tells them to be wary, but not to think all is lost if they end up in court. This is actually part of the plan, for they will be able to bear testimony before governors and kings and gentiles. He also tells them not to be anxious about what to say, because the Holy Spirit will speak through them. If they are persecuted in one town, flee to the next, for they won’t be able to cover the whole territory before the Son of man returns.

c. What hope and comfort does Jesus give in these verses?

As ambassadors of Jesus, the Twelve should not expect to be treated other than he is who the Pharisees called Beelzebul (Prince of Demons). They should follow in his footsteps, doing as he does. If they endure to the end, they will be saved. He also tells them that the Son of man will come before they get through all the towns of Israel. [In a note on this verse (Matthew 10:23) the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible says: “As a prelude to his Second Coming, this initial ‘coming’ refers to his visitation of destruction upon unfaithful Jerusalem in AD 70, an event that destroyed his enemies and vindicated his words of judgment (24:2).” p.34]

6. a. Following this assurance of persecution, Jesus says “So have no fear of them” (verse 26). How can he say this?

Jesus’ assurance is based on the character of God, which does not change: On his power and on his love. There is no need to fear what others can do, because they cannot touch the soul. Even the worst they can do will have only a temporal effect. It is better to focus on a proper fear of God who has the power to destroy both soul and body forever. All will be brought to light and justice will prevail in the end. Keeping this eternal perspective is important. We can trust in the Father’s love! Each of his children is of inestimable value to him. If you doubt that, consider the sparrows. They are worth very little in comparison, and God watches over even them. God cares for his own. He will not let anything happen to his children without his permission. Jesus honors those who confess him. If you take the risk of acknowledging Jesus as Lord in your life, and of defending him to other people, he also will acknowledge you before his father in heaven. There is no need to fear those who persecute you for his sake.

b. Think about it: Refresh your memory of the first announcement of good news in the Bible, which comes in Genesis 3:15. In light of these words of God, why should Jesus’ insistence on the inevitability of persecution—and his admonition to not be afraid—not surprise us?

God told the Serpent after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Jesus is the “seed of the woman” who has come to bruise the head of the enemy. Satan will not take this lying down; all who follow Christ are joined in the battle and should expect to be bruised. But God and his Son will be victorious. There is no need to fear when you know you are on the side of the victor!
7. a. Are Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:34-36, where he says he has not come to bring peace but a sword, a contradiction to what he says in John 14:27 (“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”)? Explain.

Both are true. Jesus came to bring peace between God and man and among men. He also promised peace to his followers. Not the world’s peace, which is the absence of discord, but an inner peace and assurance in the midst of whatever the world might throw at them. As in the parable of the man who built his house on the rock, the storm will not prevail. But in the process of establishing the new order, there will inevitably be conflict with those who want to hang onto the old. This conflict may even extend to members of the same family—but the spiritual family he is founding is more important than blood ties.

b. What does the cross—a cruel instrument of execution that all Jesus’ followers would be familiar with—represent in verse 38?

The cross represents the total commitment required of Jesus’ disciples. Denying one’s self and even suffering and death may be required of those who follow him but as Jesus’ death and resurrection will soon demonstrate, that death will lead to true and eternal life.

Rewards: Matthew 10:40-42

8. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus pronounced judgment greater than that on Sodom and Gomorrah on those who would not receive the apostles (verse 14-15). What does he say is in store for those who do receive them (verses 40-42)? (Note: Jesus refers to the apostles here as ‘little ones.’)

Because the apostles are carrying on Jesus’ mission, those who receive them receive also Jesus and God himself. For this they will receive rewards like those due the prophets and righteous men. Even simple acts of kindness such as giving a drink of water to a disciple of Christ will be rewarded.

D. Application

Discussion Leaders: If time allows, have group members share their responses to the following application question:

Think about your daily interaction with the Lord. What changes might you make in your life in terms of study, prayer, observing needs, and doing, so that you can become a better disciple?

E. WRAP UP: Establishment of the Kingdom

Discussion Leaders: If there is time, ask if anyone can summarize Book 2 of Matthew’s Gospel, which covers chapters 8-10. Opinions may differ; the point is not to find a “correct” answer but to lay out the major points of the two chapters, considered as a prologue to the Gospel that follows. You might ask questions like: How did the kingdom of God begin to break in upon earth? In what ways was God’s power made manifest? What kind of foundation was laid for the kingdom?

As a follow-up to this discussion, listen to or watch Jeff Cavins’ talk on Session 10: Matthew 10, “Jesus Commissions the Twelve.”