

# The Training of the Twelve

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald explores the training of the twelve disciples, emphasizing prayer, sacrifice, and the radical teachings of Jesus for effective ministry.*

**Duration:** 29:51

**Scripture:** Luke 6:12-38

**Topics:** "Twelve Disciples"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the four woes pronounced by Jesus in Luke 6:24-26. He emphasizes that these woes were not only directed towards unbelievers, but also towards Jesus' own disciples. The first woe is directed towards the rich, warning them that they have already received their consolation. The second woe is directed towards those who are full, indicating that they will eventually hunger. The third woe is directed towards those who laugh now, warning them that they will mourn and weep. The fourth woe is directed towards those who are spoken well of by others, reminding them that the same was done to the false prophets. The speaker highlights that these woes serve as a reminder that discipleship requires sacrificial living and a focus on the spread of the gospel. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of prayer, as Jesus spent the night in prayer before embarking on the task of world evangelization.

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## Transcript

Shall we read in Luke chapter 6, beginning with verse 12? I'd like to read verses 12 through 26. Luke 6, 12. And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose 12, whom he also named Apostles. Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zolotys, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and accompanied his disciples, and a great multitude of people, out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases, and they that were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed.

And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed

are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven.

For in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. As we come to this portion of the word of God, the Lord Jesus was moving on towards the cross.

Following that, there was the task of world evangelization. And it was as he looked forward to this task that this passage opens up before us. Supposing you were faced with the task of world evangelization, how would you go about it? Well, as I think of this myself, the natural response would be to organize some committees, it seems to me.

First of all, it would be very important to have a finance committee. I think we would think of that first of all, because after all, you can't do anything without money. Then secondly, it probably would be quite in order to have a food committee, because it seems that you just can't get the crowd unless you're able to serve some refreshment.

And then it's very good, of course, to have an entertainment committee nowadays. It just seems to help to draw the people. And finally, it would be good to have a public relations committee, because, well, it's good to be thought of well by the neighborhood, isn't it? I say this is the way we would respond from a natural standpoint.

But in this portion, we're going to see how the Lord Jesus faced the task of world evangelization and how different his approach was from what ours would be. What is the first thing he did? Well, we read in verse 12, the first thing he did was spend a night in prayer. He went in to a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.

What a picture that is. The Holy Son of God, prostrate, at the side of the mountain, crying out to God and spending the whole night there. If he, God's Son, felt it necessary to spend a night in prayer, how much more should we feel it necessary in our own lives? And yet how few of us know anything about this.

How few of us have ever really experienced a night in prayer. But what was the Savior praying about? Well, I think it's very clear from the verses that follow that he was praying about the selection of 12 disciples. The following day, he was to choose 12 disciples.

And the Lord Jesus was a dependent man as he walked on this earth. He did all things in the will of God, in the Holy Spirit of God. And so here he was praying to God concerning the selection of the 12 disciples.

The second step in his strategy was to choose the 12. And to me this is most interesting. Notice that he chose only 12 disciples, not 12,000, not 1,200, or even 120.

He chose only 12. And of them, one was a traitor. So we might say he had only 11.

Now this is most significant. If the Lord Jesus can get 11 men filled with the Holy Spirit, imbued with the teachings of the kingdom of God, men who will go out fearlessly, wholeheartedly, devotedly for the Lord Jesus Christ, then the world can be evangelized. And so he chose the 12.

Now the names of the disciples are given here. And as far as I can learn from the scripture, these were just ordinary men. There was nothing great about them in themselves.

In fact, in some ways they were just little nobodies. The most wonderful thing about them was their connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it was Spurgeon who said, the most wonderful thing about any one of us is our connection with Calvary.

And this is what gave greatness to these men, that they came into relationship with the Lord Jesus and walked with him and learned of him. God is looking for men who are nobodies in themselves, whom he can use so that all the glory will be his. And then I think it's good to remember that these men were young men when he chose them.

Perhaps you think of the disciples as aged, bearded men. If so, perhaps that's because you have been looking at too many religious pictures. The truth of the matter is that these men were probably in their twenties when Jesus chose them.

He himself was about 30 years of age at this time and we know that he was older than some of them at least. So think of the disciples as being young men, probably in their twenties when the Lord Jesus chose them. Why young men? Why did he choose young men instead of old men? Well, someone has said that God knows that youth is his best chance with the human soul.

And that's true. The metal is still molten in youth. In age it has become set and hardened.

And so the Lord Jesus turned to 12 young men to teach the great principles of the kingdom of God. And that is the third step, the training of the 12. And that is the thing that we are going to think about particularly at this time.

It says he came down with them and stood in the plain. Now this is very interesting. It says that he stood on a level place.

The words that follow, the words that we have already read sound a great deal like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. However, as you study it you'll find that it is not the same as the Sermon on the Mount. There are notable differences.

And here it says specifically that he came down from the mountain and stood on a level place. So in our thinking we should really distinguish this particular portion from a similar account that is given in the Gospel of Matthew. People gathered around him, they sought to touch him for virtue went out of him, it says, and healed them all.

That's an interesting expression. Virtue went out of him. That does not mean that Jesus was any less virtuous after he had healed them than he was before.

But it means that there was a flow of power from the Savior to those who were ill. It cost him something to heal them. And it costs him Christian service today in order that the multitude might be touched for God.

Now, the Lord Jesus begins to teach the disciples and this teaching is very, very radical. Very, very revolutionary. Remember that we said that the first committee we would appoint would probably be a finance committee.

The first thing the Lord Jesus said in training the twelve was Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Instead of giving the disciples a plentiful supply of money the Lord Jesus took their wallets away from them. The more we think about this, the more we realize that there is wisdom in this policy.

Supposing that the disciples had gone forth as rich men. What would have happened? Well, first of all, it would have given a very wrong presentation of the Lord Jesus to a world that lives in grinding poverty. It would have poorly presented him who was rich yet for our sakes became poor that we through this poverty might be rich.

And secondly, if the disciples had gone forth wealthy they would have got all kinds of people to follow them because of the hope of material gain. We must remember that all over the world today there are those who are in desperate need. People who are willing to grasp any straw that offers them a more comfortable position in life.

And if the disciples had gone forth creating the impression that when you become a Christian you can henceforth live in luxury and comfort and ease there would have been many so-called rice Christians to follow in their train. And so the Lord Jesus said that a special blessing would rest upon his disciples as they went forth poor because theirs would be the kingdom of God. Another thing is this, we think today that we can do anything with money.

The disciples were not going to go forth and fight the spiritual warfare with carnal weapons. They were going to go forth with prayer and with the word of God. And anything that would be accomplished would be clearly, would be manifestly of the Lord and he would get all the glory.

And so instead of appointing a finance committee the Lord Jesus sent forth his men as poor men to proclaim the riches of the kingdom of God. Then secondly, we said that probably the second committee that we would appoint would be a food committee. But the Lord Jesus said to the disciples blessed are ye that hunger now for ye shall be filled.

He not only took their wallets away from them he took their lunch pail away from them as it were. But what does this mean? Blessed are ye that hunger now for ye shall be filled. Is it a blessing to be hungry? All over the world today there are people who are hungry.

Supposing that we go to India and we see some people there living on the sidewalks of Calcutta and they have very little to eat. Not enough. And we say to them, never mind dear friend Jesus said that you are blessed because you are hungering.

They would probably look up into our faces and say, blessed? This is no blessing. This is a curse to be living the way we're living and to be hungry for daily food the way that we are. And that's right too.

It's no blessing of itself to be hungry. And that's not what the Lord Jesus was speaking of here. What then did he mean? Blessed are ye that hunger.

Well it seems to me that the key to the understanding of this and the following portions is found in verse 22. It's found in the expression at the end of verse 22 it says, for the son of man's sake. It's one thing to be

hungry because you were born into that station in life.

It's one thing to be hungry because you're lazy and don't want to work. But this is a different kind of hungry. This is hunger for the son of man's sake.

What does it mean? Well it means that these disciples were going forth and I suppose they could eat of the very finest of the land. They could eat in the very finest restaurants and adopt as their motto nothing too good for the people of God. But the Lord Jesus here says that a special blessing will rest upon them if they live sacrificially for the cause of the gospel.

If instead of catering to their physical needs and eating luxuriously if they will eat frugally and use the money thus saved in the spread of the gospel then a special blessing will rest upon them. Then I said that a third committee that we would perhaps appoint receives the entertainment committee. And this seems to be true all over Christendom today.

It's very hard to separate the entertainment from the preaching of the word. But instead of entertainment Jesus gave them the very opposite. He said, Blessed are ye that weep now for ye shall last.

The disciples were not only to go forth poor they would go forth hungry and they were to go forth weeping. You say, could anything be accomplished by men like that? Yes, much could be accomplished and much was accomplished. What does it mean to weep? Once again we, they say why does everybody weep sooner or later in this world of sorrow? Unsaved people weep as well as saved.

But of course that's not what the Lord Jesus is speaking about here. Once again it is important that we put the key in the door. The key is for the son of man's sake.

Blessed are ye that weep for the son of man's sake for ye shall last. This means that the disciples were going to go forth as serious, sober men weeping over their own failures and sins and shortcomings. Weeping over the desperate condition of fallen man and his appalling need.

Weeping over the divided state of the church. Weeping over conditions in the world. To them life would not be a bowl of cherries it would not be a pleasant pastime but a passionate quest and sobriety would mark all their ways before other men.

That's exactly what the Lord Jesus is speaking about here. And then finally we said that we would probably appoint a public relations committee in order that we might have a good image in the community. But notice what the Lord Jesus said to his disciples.

Blessed are ye when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil for the son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy for behold your reward is great in heaven for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. The Lord Jesus never promised his disciples that they would be popular in the community.

Instead he promised that if they would live godly and if they would fearlessly proclaim the message of the gospel they would meet opposition and persecution from men of the world. And of course this is exactly what happens. The more faithfully a person declares the truth of God's word the more opposition and reproach he will come into.

The Lord Jesus forewarned the disciples that they would be hated and they would be excommunicated from the synagogue which they were of course and reproached and their names would be cast out as evil. But this was not to be a cause of discouragement for them. This was a token that they were being true to the Lord in the fulfillment of their ministry.

And so when this happened they were warned that they should leap for joy because their reward would be great in heaven and not only so because they were in good company. This is exactly the way the prophets in the Old Testament were treated in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. And so we have disciples going out poor and hungry and weeping and unpopular.

You might call it a four rank army of fools. And yet this is the army that turned the world upside down so that as someone has said their enemies had to confess with tears of rage in their eyes these men have turned the world upside down. But notice there are not only these blessings pronounced by the Lord Jesus but there are four woes as well.

Four woes as well. It says in verse 24 Woe unto you that are rich for ye have received your consolation. Now of course it would be easy to apply these woes to unsaved people to say that they have no relevance at all no application to believers at all.

But if we are going to be true and honest in our handling of the sacred scriptures we must realize that the Lord Jesus here was speaking to his disciples. Verse 20 He lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said He wasn't speaking so much to the multitude here he was talking to his own disciples and he said to them Woe unto you that are rich. Now what does this mean? Well dear friends there is a real moral problem connected with being rich in a world like the world in which we live.

A world in which ten thousand people die daily of starvation and the majority of the people in the world have never heard the lovely name of Jesus. How can a Christian justify the holding on to riches when he has in his hands the means for the evangelization of portions of the world and refuses to do so. Well I know we hear the excuse that you have to be rich to reach the rich but this is really a human reasoning and has no justification at all in the word of God.

The Bible never teaches that. Paul was able to reach Jesus household while he was in prison. All we have to do is obey the Lord and these are consequences with him.

Jesus said Woe unto you that are rich for he have received your consolation. And not only that he said Woe unto you that are full for ye shall hunger. Who are these people? Well these are people who only eat the very best.

They have a delight in going around to the very finest restaurants and of course the prices are very high but after all they feel these are some of the good things that they are entitled to and so they enjoy these things to the very full. The Lord Jesus said this type of behavior is utterly and absolutely inconsistent with a life of discipleship. We're engaged in a warfare and we must plunge all into this warfare.

We must live sacrificially for the spread of the gospel. And then thirdly Jesus said Woe unto you that laugh now for you shall mourn and weep. Who are these people? Well these are Christians who are not really serious about the things of God.

Seemingly they can make a joke out of anything. They can even joke about the scriptures and they can make puns on the word of God and they seem to be completely oblivious to the enormous need that is

about them in the world. The desperate condition of men both physically and spiritually.

And Jesus says if you can live in a world like this and just live as if life were just a bowl of cherries the coming day in that coming day you will mourn and weep. And then finally the Lord Jesus says Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you for so did their fathers to the false prophets. This was true of course in the Old Testament there were false prophets among the people and they were spoken well of by the people.

They said the things that the people wanted them to hear. But there is that in the gospel which is offensive to man. The gospel tells man that he's a sinner and he doesn't want to be told that he's a sinner.

The gospel tells man that he cannot save himself and this wounds his pride. He wants to think there's something he can do to earn God's smile of approval. And finally the gospel tells him that only Jesus Christ can save him and of course he thinks to be very narrow minded to think that there's only one way of salvation.

And so it seems that everything about the gospel is calculated to first offend man before he comes in penitence to the Savior. And so the Lord Jesus is saying to the disciples if you go forth and you carry on a ministry and you do so and you're popular in the community and people have nothing but good to say about you you can know that you are not being faithful in the presentation of the true word of God. The Lord Jesus was faithful to God in all things and he ran into a head on collision with the Pharisee that was absolutely inescapable that he do this.

The religious leader this is true even today a Christian is to walk with God and to be faithful to Jesus in all things he will even incur the wrath of other Christians. So Jesus says woe unto you

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