

LUKE—WEEK 13

ADVANCEMENT



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Cover Picture is The Transfiguration

by Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1430–1516) on display at Museo di Capodimonte, Naples

The message of the kingdom of heaven gets more advanced as Jesus challenges His disciples to abandon worldly priorities. Kingdom power advances too when Jesus sends out six dozen followers and gives them more permanent powers than He gave the twelve.

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletters *Crosfigell* and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

Luke 9:46–10:30 — Advancement
Copyright 2025 F. Michael Slay
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.

1 Luke 9:46–50 (ESV)

An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.”

John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.” But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

This passage teaches an essential lesson—the kingdom of God couldn’t care less about status. The disciples are arguing over who is number one in their group (and anyone who isn’t even in their group would obviously be second tier.) Jesus totally refutes this nonsense by saying, “*he who is least among you all is the one who is great.*”

Then John pipes up. The Greek is literally, “But John replied.” “*Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.*”

The “but” doesn’t mean John’s making a counter-argument. It’s Luke saying something like, “Here’s another example,” or, “It gets worse.” They actually tried to enforce a hierarchy on the kingdom of God, as if only “the few” are supposed to cast out demons. What’s up with that?

Maybe they’re jealous that this guy can cast out demons, while they can’t. In any case, Jesus patiently notes that they shouldn’t stop someone from doing good works.

Anyone casting out demons is obviously a good guy.

The point here is that the big shots in a church are just like everyone else. Church leaders are just doing their job. We have prayer-warrior giants in our midst who have no title; they just pray. Miracles spring from roots such as these. The power of God is unleashed by mere Christians merely following Christ.

Our culture of celebrity can infect the church. We must fight this at every turn. The kingdom of God has one king and the rest of us are privates in a glorious army.

People serve in a myriad of ways. Some low-profile activities are the most glorious. Sure, church leaders perform essential tasks, but so do a lot of other people. Exciting stuff happens throughout the body.

One way we can fight against worshipping “stars” is to praise people for their service. The king is glorified every time you say, “Thanks.”

And, of course, pray that those who need to be humbled will learn humility, and that everyone will treasure everyone else’s role in the king’s army.

Ask God to give His church a spirit of unity and fellowship.

2 Luke 9:51–56 (ESV)

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

The colloquialism “*set his face*” is intended to convey His determination to accomplish this mission (as if words could ever do His determination justice). Jesus is going to Jerusalem to die. He has set His GPS to the cross and clicked start.

But His advance team can’t find anyone in this Samaritan village willing to give them lodging, which really sets them off. They want to wipe the place out—like Sodom or Hiroshima.

Yikes! Would you give that kind of power to someone who would use it to obliterate a village just because they put up a no-vacancy sign—even if they denied you lodging because of racism?

So, Jesus *rebuked them*. They’re not thinking like Christians. Like any normal person, they want to be respected. They can’t handle this rejection by the Samaritans.

But the kingdom of God isn’t about human priorities like being respected; it’s about heavenly priorities. The disciples had better get used to rejection. This is nothing compared to what they’ll soon be suffering.

They desperately need to replace their worldly perspective.

Professor Christ’s rebuke may have included a long lecture. His students are not ready, and time is running short.

He’s now literally walking on the road to the cross.

If the original disciples can be that immature, imagine how bad we must be. What can we do to encourage our maturation?

A church’s fellowship groups are the hubs of spiritual growth. Sure, we learn a lot in worship and Sunday School, but the back and forth in a fellowship group challenges us more.

We need other Christians to hold us accountable. There are few things more valuable than a friend who’s willing to rebuke you.

Pray that your church’s fellowship groups will have deep, substantive fellowship. Ask God to give them true *koinonia*.

And pray that anyone who is not already in a group will find one that suits them.

3 Luke 9:57–62 (ESV)

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Taken out of context, this passage is totally confusing. What’s happening here is that Jesus is hammering home the point He’s been making—that they need a total change of perspective.

Remember, the disciples had just squabbled over who’s the greatest disciple. Then John reports that they tried to stop someone from casting out demons in Jesus’ name. Then they want to nuke some poor town for refusing them lodging. Wow, just wow. This is not good. Consider this:

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. — Joshua 1:8

This verse doesn’t command people to give up on prosperity; it says if you obey God, you will be prosperous. The Old Testament teaches people that to be blessed you must trust and obey the Lord—but it doesn’t change the definition of “blessed.” Now Jesus does.

We often talk about how Jesus wasn’t the messiah everyone was expecting. They expected a conquering king, but got a sacrificial lamb instead. That’s not all. Not only is the messiah not the worldly leader they were expecting, His disciples aren’t supposed to be the worldly followers they were expecting. The meaning of savior changed. So did the meaning of being saved.

This is why it’s called the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven). It’s not like earthly kingdoms. The priorities of this world mean little to God.

Jesus needs His disciples to really “get it.” They’re supposed to lose the old perspective and take on the new perspective. The old perspective is like the bumper sticker that says, “The one who dies with the most toys wins.” How pathetic is that? If the disciples keep that view of what life is all about, they’re not really His disciples.

This passage makes perfect sense. Jesus is shaking them up.

Kingdom priorities should keep us from being irritated by the junk that life throws at us. But just like the disciples, who were ready to take out a Samaritan town that refused them, we’re still a work in progress.

But the secret isn’t more effort; the secret is to admit that we can’t do this on our own. We grow by asking God for help. Invite the Holy Spirit to teach you and to mold you and even to try you.

Ask and ye shall receive.

4 Luke 10:1–12 (ESV)

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. 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. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 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. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘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.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

This is similar to the earlier sending out of the twelve. The ministry is expanding. Jesus starts out by noting the great need for further expansion, and He tells them to pray for more workers. This establishes the pattern for all Christian evangelism.

Verse six can be confusing. *And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.* What’s a son of peace? What does it mean when the peace rests upon him and what does it mean if it returns? Verse seven begins with, “*And remain in the same house.*” Does that mean they’re supposed to stay there even if their peace bounces?

The last question is answered by a parallel verse in Matthew. No, don’t stay at a house where your peace returns. The reference to *the same house* just means, “Only stay in one house.”

And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. — Matt. 10:11–13 (ESV)

The other issues involve Greek idioms. The word translated as “son” can mean follower or disciple. The Greek word for peace means “shalom” (peace/welfare/health). Modern scholars are unsure of the exact meaning, but the bottom line is clear in context. (*I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*)

They’ll get a very hostile reception in some places. When their peace bounces, they’ll know it.

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. Local ministries (Reformed University Fellowship, Young Life, Campus Outreach, Campus Crusade for Christ, and many others) covet your prayers. They’re missionaries to our country, which needs the gospel at least as much as anywhere.

In the “Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth” scheme of things, we’re the ends.

5 Luke 10:13–20 (ESV)

“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. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

“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.”

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

When Jesus sent out the twelve in Chapter 9, He specifically gave them powers. We know that they lost those powers when they returned, because they failed to cast out a demon later.

But this time is different.

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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.”

The Greek word translated as “have given” here is in the perfect tense, which denotes completed action with an abiding result. In other words, the authority they were given is still good.

So, not only did Jesus send out six times as many missionaries this time, but they got to keep their powers. That’s a lot of progress.

Satan’s not having a great week.

This passage starts out with some strong words about God’s judgment on cities that reject Him. That’s pretty scary stuff when you think about some of the ways our country is wandering from the truth and from God.

Yet, we know that He cares about all people and appreciates repentance. We learned this from Jonah, when God spared Nineveh after the people repented.

Please pray for the Lord to bless our great nation. Pray that He will provide a path to repentance without the usual calamitous disciplining.

Also ask God to teach us how to be better witnesses for Him. We haven’t done that well lately.

We need a revival.

