

THE MESSENGERS  
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*Jesus called his twelve disciples and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over unclean spirits. So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. Mark 6:7, 12-13*

I think we could call this a discipleship training exercise, don't you? The disciples had been around Jesus long enough to know what his message was. They'd seen him do, many times, the things he was now telling them to do. So, much like sales trainees, they were about to make their first "cold call". They were going to teach what they'd been taught and do what they'd seen done.

Mark doesn't give details about how this first missionary excursion went, but there are a couple things about this type of evangelism that are consistently true.

The disciples went out and proclaimed that all should repent. There's a red flag right there! This is a disturbing message and there aren't many folks who like to hear it. Our pride is strong and we don't like admitting that we even have REASON to repent. After all, I never murdered anyone, and I don't rob banks, and a lot of Sundays I even go to church. We have no reason to be this proud, but we still cling to our (foolish) pride as if it'll do us some good. Repent? Repent from what? Go talk to so-and-so; THEY need to repent!

If we ARE paying attention and we're willing to swallow our pride and take an honest look at ourselves, being told we need to repent doesn't make us mad: it hurts us, causes us pain. We're sincerely sorry, and so regretful. Well, who signs on to feel pain? But possibly the most disturbing thing about being told to repent is the fact that ... sorry, this is unavoidable ... we're going to have to CHANGE. Talk about resistance! We dig in our heels and want to talk about something else. ALL change is hard – even good change.

But the flip side of the message helps a lot. The disciples also brought the message of God's mercy: forgiveness, healing, and freedom. Compared to God's amazing grace, our pride, fear, and resistance to change look pretty insignificant. We may have to do some giving and some giving up, but look what we get! God promises us his forgiveness and eternal grace; he offers love and healing; he wants nothing more than to fill our hearts with deep joy and real peace. This is a good deal for us!

When we've received the message of Jesus, we must always be ready, even eager, to share his goodness with others. It's part of following Jesus, and God's unconditional love marks us as disciples of Jesus. Receive, and give it back. That's what he sends his messengers to do.