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The Missiological Method of Jesus According to Luke 10: Do We Follow In His Steps?

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**THE MISSIOLOGICAL METHOD OF JESUS ACCORDING TO
LUKE 10: DO WE FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS?**

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Cecil Stalnaker

abstract

When it comes to evangelism and missiological methods, should we follow in the steps of Jesus? Many missionaries are doing just that. In Luke 10 Jesus instructs his disciples, giving them a method to accomplish their appointed mission. This involves three phases: (1) searching for the “person of peace”; (2) supporting a house fellowship; and (3) securing a missionary base of operations. Such an approach is certainly worth examining but only in light of the biblical authority and context as well as the missionary’s cultural context.

When the writer asked a church planter in California how he plants churches, he replied with zeal, “We do it through publicity. We put an ad in the paper, and the people come. The start up Sunday can bring as many as 100 to 150 people.” A missionary in Africa confided that he preaches on the streets, where it is common to have fifty to one hundred people gather to hear the preaching of the gospel. This is how he begins to plant churches. What methods should be applied? What about the methods of Jesus? Should missionaries and church leaders follow in His steps? Many missionaries are doing just that. One missionary in India speaks of his experience, “When we enter a village . . . we look for God’s man of peace who will

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be the leader of the new church. Then we do as Jesus commanded in Luke 10. We
proclaim to him the Good News of the kingdom.”¹ In planting churches in Central
Asia, a missionary used Luke 10 as a “field guide” and “learned anew that the
Bible is timeless in practicality and application.” According to him, Luke 10
provides “guidelines and principles” for evangelism and church planting.² Neil
Cole speaks of five fruitful church planting principles based on Luke 10.³ It is thus
the intent of the writer to examine the methodological system of Jesus in Luke 10
in light of contemporary life.

the method of Jesus

In Luke 10, the disciples are ready and willing to follow Him in proclaiming the
kingdom of God.⁴ Jesus thus instructs them regarding their mission.

230 Carry no money bag, 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”
(Lk 10:4–11).⁵

Liefeld maintains that the instructions were “undoubtedly repeated frequently by
Jesus and in the early church.”⁶ His approach might be viewed as three phases.

¹ In David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 233.

² Tim Nickel, “Luke 10 Strategy for Village Church Planting,” *Missio apostolica*, no. 13 (May 1, 2005): 43.

³ Neil Cole, *Organic Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 172.

⁴ Although some believe that Luke 10 merely reiterated what Matthew said in his chapter 10 because of their similarities, many scholars maintain that these are separate instances [Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England and Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999 reprint), 198]. Chronologically, many believe that the Matthew passage occurred earlier on in the ministry of Jesus (Galilean period), whereas the Luke passage occurs in the later Judean ministry of Jesus. See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, eds. *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 9, 11.

⁵ All Scriptures quotations are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

⁶ Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., vol 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 937.

Stalnaker: The Missiological Method of Jesus According to Luke 10: Do We Follow phase 1: searching for a person of peace

The seventy-two disciples were initially sent out, two by two, into every town and village.⁷ This is significant, because “the disciples saw themselves as authenticated missionary witnesses giving testimony regarding the coming of God’s kingdom.”⁸ Initially, they were not to proclaim the kingdom of God in the streets and the marketplaces, but to discover a “man of peace,” as modern day missionaries call him, in the villages and towns of Galilee.

In attempting to open up cities, towns, and villages for the sake of the gospel, many missionaries are looking for this “man of peace.”⁹ For many missionaries and their organizations, this is chapter one in their church planter’s manual. David Hunt, a former missionary in East Africa, believes that the “role of the church planter is to find the person of peace.”¹⁰

Jesus told His disciples to make contact with a household or householder with the greeting,¹¹ “Peace be to this house!” Such a salutation signifies much more than a mere greeting and is highly significant. The background for such a peace greeting is rooted in the Old Testament term *shalom* (Gen 43:23; 1 Sam 25:6). The greeting is actually “an offer of goodwill from God”¹² and is symbolic of “God’s gracious offer” or “favor” on those who form this household.¹³ In reality, it refers to the gift of peace “which is associated with the coming of salvation of God” (Jn 14:27; Acts 10:36).¹⁴ It is important to know that such a greeting tests the receptivity of the recipient regarding reception or rejection, as well as their message of salvation.¹⁵ If the disciple-missionary is shown hospitality, he accepts the offer of God’s favor. Once this happens, God will show His grace and be present in this household.¹⁶

Who or what is a “man of peace?” Although missionaries refer to the person as “a man of peace,” the actual Greek expression translates differently in Luke 10:6.

⁷ There is some dispute concerning the number of disciples, depending on the Greek text. Were there seventy or seventy-two? Bock believes that the larger number, 72, is more likely the case for textual reasons [Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 251].

⁸ Roger W. Gehring, *House Church in Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 53.

⁹ Some writers do not make the link to missionary methods concerning the issue of peace but merely make reference to mutual sharing of peace between parties [Sathianathan Clarke, “Global Cultural Traffic, Christian Mission, and Biblical Interpretation: Rereading Luke 10:1–12 Through the Eyes of an Indian Recipient,” *Ex auditor: An International Journal of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, vol 23 (Jan 1, 2007): 177].

¹⁰ David F. Hunt, *A Revolution in Church Multiplication in East Africa: Transformational Leaders Develop a Self-Sustainable Model of Rapid Church Multiplication* (Seattle, WA: Bakke Graduate University, June 2009, D.Min dissertation), 123.

¹¹ The word *oikos* in the context of Luke 10 signifies “household” according to I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 419.

¹² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 997.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 998.

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel, ed., “εἰρήνη,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol II, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 413.

¹⁵ Kittel, 413.

¹⁶ Bock, 998.

It is not a “man of peace” but a “son of peace” (υἱὸς εἰρήνης). It has two basic meanings, (1) a person who has a peaceable nature, or (2) “a man worthy of, destined for peace.” It expresses both the person’s character and “the destiny he is worthy of.”¹⁷ The second meaning is what is meant in the passage and relates to an individual who is willing to receive salvation.¹⁸ A “son of peace” thus refers to an individual “whose heart is ready to welcome the kingdom.”¹⁹ In essence, this is an idiomatic way to speak of an individual who is responsive to the message of the kingdom of God. Bock understands it to mean a “child of the kingdom.”²⁰ The household and its salvation is a common theme in the New Testament.²¹ The evangelistic process of Jesus started with the “son of peace” or “householder.”

Cole maintains that the person is to have a good reputation.²² Biblically, this may or may not be totally accurate. Cornelius, who is likened to be a “son of peace,” was described as “an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation” (Acts 10:22). He certainly represents a man of good reputation. However, Matthew, who is also sometimes described as a person of peace, does not appear to have such a good reputation, since he was a tax collector (Mt 9:9) and was believed to be as an unclean leper or a bribe taker. Many amassed significant wealth at the expense of their own people.²³ Of course, he probably had a positive reputation among tax collectors and sinners (Mt 9:10–13). However, being of good reputation seems to be more of an implied assumption in the Luke text.

What is the importance of the “son of peace?” Although Jesus does not specifically say in the passage that such a person “becomes the conduit for the passing of the message of the Kingdom to an entire community of lost people,”²⁴ it is implied. The person of peace is “someone whom God has already prepared, who is interested in spiritual matters, and who opens the community to the gospel.”²⁵ This is certainly a possibility and may be on the mind of Jesus. For one, Cornelius had “called together his relatives and close friends” (Acts 10:24) to hear the preaching of Peter (Acts 10:24, 34–43). Although many missionaries place the emphasis on finding the “man of peace,” this is not the intent of the passage.

¹⁷ Liefeld, 938.

¹⁸ Marshall, 419–420.

¹⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 411.

²⁰ Bock, 998.

²¹ See Acts 11:14; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15.

²² Cole, 182.

²³ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 292; John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 8–15* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 60.

²⁴ Cole, 182.

²⁵ Hunt, 123.

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Rather, the emphasis falls on the household or *oikos*. In reality, the missionary teams of two are to look for “houses of peace.”

How was this person to be found? Through prayer. This is the reason for Jesus giving them the initial instruction, “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk 10:2). These individuals, once found, will be the laborers to accomplish Jesus’ mission.²⁶ Many church planters pray and fast for the discovery of this person. Some Indian missionaries spend up to three months in prayer in a particular town in order to find this person. As they walk in town and pray, they attempt to meet as many people in the community as possible, engaging people in spiritual conversations and hoping to find a son of peace. In time, sometimes a very short time, a person of peace may be found. One missionary in Asia, following the instructions of Jesus in Luke 10, declared, “We prayed, ‘God we know you’re at work here or we wouldn’t be here. We need a man of peace who will take care of us until we can feel our way around this village and know if it’s safe or unsafe.’ . . . I started my stopwatch. We walked into the center of the village where the well was. A person approached me out of nowhere and said, ‘Have you eaten?’ We said, ‘Not yet.’ He said, ‘Well, come to my home.’ His name was Li, and he was the person of peace we wanted. I stopped my watch: three minutes, 21 seconds.”²⁷ Of course, this is not always the case.

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Some missionaries contend that this person might “not be a believer, but he or she is willing to host a Bible study in his home and invite relatives and friends. This person is easy to recognize. One can almost see the peace of God resting on a person who welcomes the man of God into his home. The man of peace usually anticipates and welcomes the blessing that a ‘God meeting’ brings to his home and family.”²⁸ However, this seems more like a “person of good will” and not a son of peace, since the Luke passage appears to be speaking of a situation where the gospel enters into the life of the household.

phase 2: supporting a house fellowship

According to David Garrison, this “son of peace” will be a person of influence. If found, they are to be disciplined in the faith and to become the leader of the church in his family and community.²⁹ In the instructions of Jesus, He tells the

²⁶ This concept will be developed as this writing evolves.

²⁷ Erich Bridges, “Biblical ‘Man of Peace’ Approach is Key to Effective Outreach,” Baptist Press, republished with permission by the Ethnic Harvest (accessed February 9, 2012, http://www.ethnic harvest.org/links/articles/bridges_man_of_peace.htm).

²⁸ Nickel, 45.

²⁹ Garrison, 45.

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seventy-two, “. . . remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Lk 10:7–9). It is evident that the missionaries were to accept the hospitality of the son of peace and minister to those within the house. Hospitality in the form of taking guests into the house was a critical gesture performed in the first century. Jesus instructs them to stay and not move from one house to another.

At the center of Jesus’ plan was the *oikos*. The Greek term *οἶκος*, in its first sense, refers to a physical house or building and is generally translated “house” (Lk 10:5). However, the term can also be translated as “household,” that is, a social unit or “inmates of the dwelling.”³⁰ This is true for Acts 16:15 and 1 Cor 1:16.³¹ The LXX’s use of *οἶκος* extends it to include the family, clan, and possibly to heirs and descendants (2 Sam 7:11).³² From a sociological perspective, an *oikos* may be composed of two parents, children, slaves of the household, and even clients.³³ The head of the household or householder was normally the father of the family.³⁴ His authority extended to his spouse, children, even to his children’s children, to his servants, and all others in the household.³⁵ In such a setting, the gospel would flow through the *oikos*, from one person to another, making the home a spiritual entity.

Not only did the home play a religious role in the family, but also, in some cases, it played another role, as some were known to have religious meetings in them. Although formal synagogue structures dotted Palestine, “house synagogues” existed at the time of Jesus.³⁶ Any room in any private home could house a synagogue and be employed for public worship.³⁷ For this reason, many hold that in the ministry of Jesus and the disciples, the house would be a place where new converts would assemble.³⁸ In fact, Peter’s house may have “served as a kind of prototype of a house church with most of the key elements. . . . But . . . Jesus and his disciples, as good Jews, most likely attended a synagogue as their main form of public worship.” Thus, “it would be premature to speak of the pre-Easter house of Peter as a house church in the complete sense.”³⁹ House fellowship is a good possibility.

³⁰ G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1968, 3rd ed.), 312.

³¹ According to the *English Standard Version*, for example.

³² Colin Brown, ed., *The New Testament Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 247.

³³ Gehring, 8.

³⁴ Gehring, 2004, 54; Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 499.

³⁵ Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 103; Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 366.

³⁶ Gehring, 30.

³⁷ Edwin Fahlbusch and others, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 265.

³⁸ Gehring, 56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

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Many contemporary missionaries have followed in the footsteps of Jesus as they have entered households, found people of peace, and disciplined them for the sake of the kingdom of God. Many missionaries in East Africa appear to have followed the plan of Jesus. Speaking of a missionary, Hunt states,

Once discovered he or she should then spend considerable time with that family disciplining them to Christ and teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. The family of peace may then become the initial expression of the church and as they follow their natural web of relationships they will lead others in the community to join their fellowship. This church, growing out of a household of local believers will be an indigenous form of church that will be much easier to replicate in the next communities than many other more complex models of church.⁴⁰

phase 3: securing a missionary base of operations

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Crucial to the missional approach of Jesus is discovering the person of peace. His plan and methodology extends far beyond the person of peace, reaching into the very fabric of the home—to the *oikos*. In reality, “the house and the household were the immediate mission objective.”⁴¹ In other words, the plan of Jesus is much greater than one person, the householder.⁴² Many scholars believe that His plan involved the entire household, because it would become a missionary base of operation for reaching the entire town or village in view (Lk 10:8). Where did this idea come from?

It is well known that Jesus had an itinerant ministry in Palestine and that He moved from location to location, but this may not be completely accurate. He may have established a base of operations, a type of mission center, from where He launched His ministry. Such a base may have been from a home or household. This is why it was so important that the disciples pray for laborers, because the houses of these laborers were to become bases of operations for the mission plan of Jesus throughout the towns and villages of the land.

Although one cannot be dogmatic, a few factors seemingly lead to the idea that Jesus employed the same plan for His personal ministry, using Capernaum as a base of operations for reaching those within the “evangelical triangle,” the geographical area between Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida.⁴³ Although

⁴⁰ Hunt, 123.

⁴¹ Gehring, 54.

⁴² I. H. Marshall, Gospel of Luke, 419.

⁴³ Henry B. Smith, “Three Woes,” Associates for Biblical Research (August 15, 2007), (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2007/08/Three-Woes!.aspx#Article> , accessed Feb 17, 2012).

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Jesus traveled “throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and healing every disease and every affliction among the people” (Mt 4:23), approximately fifty percent of His parables were told and most of His miracles were performed within this geographical triangle. People were so attracted to Jesus, that they came from all over Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea (Mt 4:25). Where did they go?

They obviously followed Jesus in part, but it appears that they may have been drawn to Capernaum, the city by the Sea of Galilee, to view what was going on and to be touched by His ministry. Jesus lived in Capernaum (Mt 4:13) where His “mission center” may have been established. Many references are given to the life and ministry of Jesus in relation to this city by the sea (Mt 11:23; Mk 2:1; Lk 10:15; Jn 2:12, 6:17). People may have come to a specific home to hear His preaching. Scripture says that when Jesus “was at home,” the crowds gathered (Mk 2:1–3). This home may have been His base of operations.⁴⁴

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The fact that Jesus lived in Capernaum and ministered from it is important in reference to His itinerant missional strategy.⁴⁵ “Jesus’ missional approach consisted of finding a house and a household willing to commit themselves to his kingdom message. With this house as a social and material basis, he, along with his newly recruited followers, attempted to reach the entire town of Capernaum and from here the surrounding area within and beyond the ‘evangelical triangle’ by traveling from house to house and village to village.”⁴⁶

Employing Peter’s house as a possible mission base seems to fit well with the cultural context at the time for three reasons: (1) “in the ancient Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic world, a private home often provided the meeting place for religious and intellectual dialogue and instruction”; (2) in light of the social significance of the *oikos* (household) at the time of Jesus, it is very likely that it is to be considered as significant in his life and ministry; and (3) some synagogues were located in private houses.⁴⁷ Because Jews at the time of Jesus often met in homes

⁴⁴ Some are opposed to the idea that it is the home of Peter [R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), 97; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 86]. Yet this is the view of many scholars—both older and more recent. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 502; A. B. Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, The Expositors Greek New Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980 reprint), 350; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966, reprint 1981), 193; Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 32. Robert H. Stein [*Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 116] summarizes more recent scholars by stating that they believe that it was Peter’s house. See also Robert H. Gundry, *Mark*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 110.

⁴⁵ This may be said of Jesus when He was located in the area of Jerusalem for ministry. That is to say, Jesus probably used the house of Mary and Martha, located in Bethany, as a base of operation. This is the impression when looking at John 11.

⁴⁶ Gehring, 46.

⁴⁷ Gehring, 29–30.

Stalnaker: The Missiological Method of Jesus According to Luke 10: Do We Follow for religious purposes, it may very well be that Jesus followed a similar pattern.

Reaching others through the *oikos* structure accords well with the testimony of the New Testament (Mt 9:10–13; Acts 10:24; 16:14–15, 31).

In the mind of Jesus, the house was to become a base of operations in such a way that the disciples and probably the household members became conduits of the gospel for the entire town or village. “Houses and households constitute not only the settings for the reception of the good news in Luke-Acts. As house churches, they represent the basic social organization through which the gospel advances from Palestine to Rome. Literally, the church spread ‘from house to house’ (Acts 20:20).”⁴⁸

The Palestinian culture was a “collectivistic” (as opposed to individualistic) culture where people were viewed in light of their *oikos*, that is, their household. Any devotion or commitment to Jesus would most likely affect family links.⁴⁹ This, of course, is a likely element that powered the spread of the gospel. Gehring, for one, believes that the rapid growth of the church after Pentecost may have been due primarily to “house conversions.” If the average *oikos* had ten to twenty members, and the entire household converted to Christ, it would take about one hundred and fifty *oikos* units to result in 1,500 to 3,000 new converts.⁵⁰ Preaching the gospel from house to house seems to be the approach that the apostles used in their outreach (Acts 5:32). If this is accurate, one can understand why the church grew so rapidly in the first century. The reaching into and baptism of entire households certainly created the possibility for a rapid spread of the gospel. Not only did the gospel spread *oikos* to *oikos* in the days of Jesus and the apostles, but a similar type of movement appears to be taking place today in India, China, and East Africa.

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great commission applications

The one central question to be answered is, “The Missiological Method of Jesus According to Luke 10: Do We Follow in His Steps?” In reality, the answer is yes, no, and maybe.

1. Yes, if the missionary takes biblical authority seriously.

Accepting the authority of Scripture takes the words of Scripture as the very words of God “in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word is to disbelieve

⁴⁸ John H. Elliott, “Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, Jerome H. Neyrey, ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 226.

⁴⁹ Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 226.

⁵⁰ Gehring, 87.

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God or disobey God.⁵¹ If Scripture is a word from God, it has authority over men and all of their clever ideas, thoughts, and practices. Sound missiology and the evangelization of the world are dependent upon the full inspiration and authority of the Bible. If we follow the Bible for doctrine, should we not follow it in practice? If God's Word is truth and is authoritative, then we need to build on it. For these reasons, it is important to follow in Jesus' steps when it comes not only to truth but also to methodology.

2. No, in light of the biblical context.

Although seemingly to be in contradiction with what was just said, one must be careful in applying all that Jesus said in light of the context, because the Luke 10 passage falls into a category often called "descriptive" text rather than "prescriptive." Descriptive passages describe what is taking place in a particular context, which may or may not communicate a principle. For example, Acts 20:7 says that Paul was preaching at midnight. Does this mean that the church should have its meetings only at midnight? The instructions given by Jesus are not necessarily to be practiced by all missionaries outside of those addressed for the following reasons. First, the instructions applied specifically to the disciples preparing the way for the Lord (Lk 10:1). Second, Jesus changed His instructions in other cases. In the Luke 10 passage, the disciples were not to take a moneybag or knapsack, but later they were to take these items with them on mission.⁵² Third, there is no indication that Paul followed the same approach in his mission, for he did not search for "sons of peace." However, he seemed to search for "God-fearers."

3. Maybe, depending on the missionary's cultural context.

The cultural context of Palestine at the time of Jesus was an excellent fit in relation to the methodology of Jesus. The *oikos* depicts a "collectivist" cultural value in that people existed in tight-knit groups as opposed to being a unique individual in a culture. They were people who carried out their social obligations, promoted family and group goals, acted in cooperation with the family or clan, placed a high priority on loyalty to family, conformed to group behavior, and so forth. There is "a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group."⁵³ Jesus worked in this cultural context.

Interestingly, the major places of Christian growth today are in such places as India, China, and East Africa where the people have, for the most part, a

⁵¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: an Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press and Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Press, 1994), 73.

⁵² See Lk 22:35–36.

⁵³ Charles Horton Cooley, *Social Organization: A Study of the Larger Mind* (NY: Scribner's, 1909), 25.

Stalnaker: The Missiological Method of Jesus According to Luke 10: Do We Follow Collectivist or Primary Group Worldview.⁵⁴ To the contrary, the western world does not function in light of collectivistic cultural values but through individualistic values. This is certainly the case in traditional North America and most of Europe. The individualism of the West runs contrary to the biblical cultures of collectivism. However, does this mean that the instruction of Jesus should be disregarded?

Although the traditional *oikos* structure surrounding the family does not fit exactly with Western culture, other networks may be conducive to the flow of the gospel. In most cases, these networks are rather small but are found through friendships which exist in social organizations where friends gather or where friendships are formed. Examples of such groups are sports teams and clubs, school associations, social service programs, recreational clubs, and so forth. In Western culture, the gospel may make more even inroads here than through a family-oriented *oikos*.

4. *Maybe, depending on one's concept of a son of peace.*

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Missionary stories abound with finding sons or persons of peace in non-Western cultures. These, for the most part, appear to fit the biblical pattern—a head of a household who is receptive to the gospel. It appears that the instruction of Jesus to find a person of peace would be advisable to follow in such cultures. Do persons of peace exist, though, in Western cultures? One of my missionary friends who is actively sharing his faith on a weekly basis in Europe told me that he has been looking for one of these people for a few years now. However, nothing has surfaced as of yet. Others in Europe have been reporting the same. Does this mean, then, that missionaries working in places like Europe should not follow in the steps of Jesus?

Not necessarily. Due to the transmigration of people from one country to another, modern day missionaries in the West, for instance, might possibly find sons of peace when they encounter people from non-Western cultures in their very own backyards. Places like London, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, and so forth might reveal such key people. On the other hand, missionaries might more easily find “God-fearer” types, that is, those open to spiritual matters. After all, we know that God in His sovereign workings is constantly preparing people for the gospel. The numbers vary from one place in the world to another, but responsive people are coming into the kingdom of God as He is drawing people “from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages” (Rev 7:9).

⁵⁴ See Cua Wee Hian, “Evangelization of Whole Families,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 3rd ed., 1999), 613–666.

Having churches in houses fit especially well culturally at the time of Jesus and of Paul. This seems to be the case in many non-Western cultures. Although house churches are certainly known in the West, it might be that this approach, following in the steps of Jesus, might be more seriously considered, especially in light of the high costs in Western urban areas. Additionally, many house church movements, those that see themselves as “missional churches,” have made significant inroads in many places. Thus, it may be time for church planters in the West to seriously reconsider simple or house church methodologies and models.

In summary, although it may not be required to adhere to the instructions of Jesus, it may be wise for church planters in western cultures to take Luke 10 more seriously. They need to be searching more actively for responsive people (whether they be “sons of peace” or “God-fearers”), establishing house churches, and developing them as types of mission centers—especially if located in gospel-dry urban areas.

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