

# As You Go

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I'm Reading from Matthew 10:5-7:

*“These twelve Yeshua sent out with the following instructions: ‘Don't go into the territory of the Goyim [Gentiles], and don't enter any town in Shomron, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Isra'el. **AS YOU GO**, proclaim, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near,'..”*

Later, Yeshua sent out his disciples (all Jewish men) with an expanded commission, and he talked with them and said (and I quote from Matthew 28:18b-20a):

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim [disciples], immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh [Holy Spirit], and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”*

Those first disciples of Yeshua multiplied to become hundreds, thousands, and millions, and we of Ohev Yisrael today are among them, carrying the same covenant obligation as the first twelve, to go out and make disciples of all peoples. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans expressed it this way:

*“For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16).*

Ohev Yisrael has been in Yeshua's service for 38 years; first led by David Chansky for 13 years, then 14 years by elder Scott, these past 11 years by yours truly, and we look forward to being led by our Associate Rabbi Aaron in the years to come. Ohev has had its strengths and weaknesses and ups and downs over the years, but its history has overall been one of consistent forward progress, and has led us to where we are today, at the threshold of a great new chapter of increased emphasis on evangelistic and service outreach, and on intercessory prayer. How do I know that? I believe that I received it from the Holy Spirit, and circumstances confirms it.

It is no accident that the Lord has brought us to the ICC in this season, for each of our congregations has strengths that complement the other, and with which we can serve each other. Ohev Yisrael, being Jewish, has a unique understanding of the Scriptures, an emphasis on education, and a *Torah*-oriented lifestyle that, over the centuries, has been lost to much of the Christian Church. Complementing Ohev, the ICC is ahead of us in its intercessory prayer ministry and its various outreaches, and so each of us have things of importance to learn from the other. There are also similarities that help us work together, not the least of which is our family orientation, our reliance on the Holy Spirit, and least but still important, our appreciation of good food.

All of this is too much to tackle in this one message, so I will confine myself today to what I believe is one of our critical needs, which is for us to more fully embrace bringing the Word of God and the Good News of Yeshua to our Jewish brothers and to others whom God brings across our paths. Yeshua's directions to his disciples to reach out beyond their communities were not the first that were given. God's words in Exodus 19:5-6 has required it from us from the time of Moses, as we read:

*"Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of cohanim [i.e. priests] for me, a nation set apart.' These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra'el."*

And years later, in chapter 61, verse 6a, the prophet Isaiah said of the Jews who were coming out of captivity:

*"..but you will be called cohanim [priests] of ADONAI [the Lord], spoken of as ministers to our God."*

Although the word "outreach" is not used in any of these Scriptures, the word "go" in Matthew and the Hebrew word "priests" in Isaiah, make it clear that outreach to communities and individuals outside of our own is what God has always intended.

Make no mistake. Ohev has engaged in evangelism and outreaches of a variety of kinds throughout its existence. Nevertheless, as often happens with congregations, Ohev has acquiesced to the comfort of serving mostly within its own membership, and has become lethargic in reaching the outside world both institutionally and personally. We have lost our sense of salvation urgency, and have become so consumed with family matters, work matters and school matters, that we have left little priority time for reaching the lost of our fallen world. Naturally, there are those among us who are exceptions to what I have said, some who do prioritize their time for outreach and, if you are one of these, you should know that God is pleased with you and wants to use you to energize and challenge the rest of us. If you want to know which of these you are, ask yourself: "What outreach activity am I currently involved in?" "When was the last time that I spoke to someone about Yeshua outside of my congregation and my immediate family?" I think you will get the point.

Adjusting priorities of how we spend our time is not easy for most of us for, if it were, we would probably already have done it. The truth is, if we are not convicted by God that changing our priorities regarding outreach is necessary, we are not likely to do it merely on the strength of hearing this message. I beseech all of us, therefore, to take the matter of priorities to prayer, ask God whether what I have said is true and, if it is, ask God what He would have us do about it.

Now establishing programs of congregational outreach are the responsibility of our elders, so I will not dwell on it here other than to point out that organized outreach can take many forms. From Beth Messiah to Ahavat Yeshua to Ohev Yisrael, I recall door-to-door visiting, handing out salvation tracts on street corners, organizing debates between rabbis, singing in parks, driving

through neighborhoods with sound systems blaring, and praying at designated locations in the District of Columbia. Yes, praying for others is a form of outreach.

Permit me to share one outreach event that I would not recommend, and that I would rather not repeat. A group of us from Ahavat Yeshua were invited by the New York chapter of Jews for Jesus to join them in street ministry at the entrances of Macy's department store, and then to sleep overnight in their Manhattan office. It was Friday. We travelled to New York, handed out tracts until late afternoon, and were going to return to the J-for-J office for the night, when one of the J-for-J leaders asked if we would like to experience visiting a conservative synagogue for its *Erev Shabbat* service. We said we would, so he guided us there and, not wanting to be a distraction (after all, we were a group of ten or so), we made our way to the synagogue's balcony. Now among our group was a young man that was somewhat clumsy, and in Jewish terms would rightly be referred to as a *schlemiel*. Well, he was sitting in the front row of the balcony and decided to get a better look at what was going on below, so he propped his knapsack that contained left-over Jews for Jesus tracts on the balcony railing, leaned over, lost control of his knapsack, and hundreds of Jews for Jesus tracts floated to the floor below. Needless to say, we denied knowing him and left by the nearest exit.

Now back to being serious. What I have so far described has been organized congregational outreach for which the elders are responsible. But what I want to speak to you about mainly, is our personal responsibility for outreach. The title of this message is "As You Go," which is taken from Matthew 10:7:

*"As you go, proclaim, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near',.."*

It was said by Yeshua to his disciples when he sent them to minister the Kingdom of God to their Jewish brethren. Although they were sent out with purposeful guidance, their outreach commission was given to them individually; it was not an organized congregational activity. The disciples did not know who or what they would encounter in their respective journeys, and their only instruction was to "go," heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those afflicted with leprosy, and expel demons. Clearly, they could not do these things in their own power, so Yeshua sent them out with his Holy Spirit power, even before the Holy Spirit made himself available to all on that famous *Shavu'ot* that believers call "Pentecost."

The point of my telling you this is that we are Yeshua's present day disciples, and we have the advantage of the *Ruach HaKodesh* [Holy Spirit] dwelling within us. We have inherited the same mission of outreach as Yeshua's first disciples – first to the Jew and also to the Gentile – and we have every reason to believe that, because of the Holy Spirit within us, we have the same power and spiritual authority through the *Ruach HaKodesh* [Holy Spirit] as they had, and possibly more.

I noticed, over the years, that whenever I exhorted believers to outreach, I sensed resistance that was mainly due to fear. Fear of speaking to strangers, fear of not knowing enough of what the Scriptures say, fear of being persecuted (e.g by supervisors and co-workers), and fear of being rejected. I am certain that right here in this room, some who are listening to this message are

experiencing such fears as you contemplate changing your sedentary and private ways to launch into a lifestyle of reaching out.

The antidote for fear is faith, but *“let not your heart be troubled,”* for there are many ways to do outreach, and there is something suitable for everyone. But before I get into those, I urge you to consider the foundational words in Matthew 10:7, “As you go!” I am sure that God is pleased when we participate in organized outreach events, but mainly He wants us all to reach out to persons we encounter “as we go” through a typical day. It is the rare individual whose typical day is spent all day at home, encountering no one from the outside. And even if that is the case, computers nowadays allow us to communicate outside of our homes, virtually all over the world. But most of us encounter people outside of our families almost every day – at work, at school, at stores, in restaurants, and in so many other places. What we need is to develop a consciousness of whether the Lord has brought an individual we encounter across our path for a purpose. We can receive it prophetically or we can assume it and let some words slip from our mouths to see if it takes hold and starts a conversation. If launching into an evangelistic exhortation is scary to you (it may be inappropriate anyway), consider that that is not the only way. Something as small as saying “Have a blessed day” to a store checkout clerk can lead to a short conversation and, even if it does not, your remark will not be forgotten, so that when you encounter the clerk again, he or she will remember you and a relationship may gradually develop.

There are essentially three ways to be a witness for God; they are (1) by speaking; (2) by serving; and (3) by modeling. One of the best ways to initiate a conversation that can lead to sharing is to ask a person about himself: “What has your day been like?” “Do you have children?” “What do you do for fun when you’re not working?” Benign questions like those generally result in an answer that gives you a small window into a person’s life that can be followed up on. Suppose you have encountered a person to which you have asked such a question, and he lets a remark slip from his mouth such as “I’m exhausted and really need to be in bed.” You could respond with “I’m familiar with those kinds of days and, when they occur, I find that prayer helps. Would you like me to say a short prayer for you?”

I want to tell you of an encounter that I had this past week. Marie and I called for an electrician to service a 220-volt power line for our air conditioner. A young man from the electric company responded and fixed the problem, and as he was leaving, it occurred to me to engage him in conversation. I asked him if he was married, and he said that he was separated. I offered condolences and asked him if there was any hope of a reconciliation. He said there was none. I then asked him if he had any children, and he said that he had a 5-year-old son and that he was devoting his life and all of his time outside of work to his son’s upbringing. I asked him if he was a Christian; he said he was, but was not going to church. At that point, I told him that I am a Messianic Jewish Rabbi, which means that I and others like me believe in Jesus. He seemed surprised and said that he did not know that any Jewish people believed in Jesus. At that point, I felt that I had license to offer him some personal advice. I asked him if his estranged wife would object to his bringing his son to church and, when he said “no,” I told him how important it was for him and his son to partake of spiritual life together in a good church, and that the Bible taught that believers should not fail to assemble with one another and be disciplined by church elders. I told him that that would cement his relationship with his son more surely than anything else would. He seemed to listen carefully to what I advised, so I gave him my phone number and

invited him to call me if he wanted to talk some more. I don't know if he will call me but I know that I planted a seed that he will consider.

Well, that example and the previous ones involve speaking, so let me now say a few words about outreach by serving. Our communities, no matter how well-to-do and perfect-looking from the outside, have people within them who are in need, and are suffering in various way. Even the most prosperous communities have hungry and homeless people, people who have encountered tragedies, and people who are sick, old, and disabled. These are needs with which some of us can assist by volunteering our service. We can serve food in soup kitchens, man homeless shelters, visit old age and convalescent homes, and volunteer in hospitals. How, you might ask, are such acts of service connected to sharing the Gospel? They are connected in that your Messianic Jewish or Christian faith will eventually become known, and your voluntary acts of mercy will become associated with your faith in Messiah. Your witness will be your acts of service, which can speak as loudly as words.

Finally, let me say a few words about outreach by modeling. Modeling what? Modeling the life of a believer. As a believer, you do your best to lead a holy and *Torah*-obedient life, and that becomes your silent witness. One thing, however; in order for it to be a witness, someone has to witness your witness. What I mean by that is that God wants you to be among people and in places where you and your way of living can be seen; Matthew 5:14-16 instructs us this way; it says:

*“You are light for the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Likewise, when people light a lamp, they don't cover it with a bowl but put it on a lampstand, so that it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”*

You may have heard the saying: “We are to be in the world but not of the world.” The saying comes from John 17:9-18 which is so very important because we cannot outreach in any way, even as a silent witness, if we do not allow ourselves – in fact cause ourselves – to be in the world. Yeshua emphasizes this as he prays for his disciples whom he is about to leave as he returns to heaven to be with his Father; he says to His Father:

*“I am praying for them [meaning his disciples]. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given to me, because they are yours. Indeed, all I have is yours, and all you have is mine, and in them I have been glorified. Now I am no longer in the world. They are in the world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, guard them by the power of your name, which you have given to me, so that they may be one, just as we are. When I was with them, I guarded them by the power of your name, which you have given to me; yes, I kept watch over them; and not one of them was destroyed (except the one meant for destruction, so that the Tanakh might be fulfilled). But now, I am coming to you; and I say these things while I am still in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world- just as I myself do not belong to the world. I don't ask you to take them out of the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to*

*the world. Set them apart for holiness by means of the truth- your word is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”*

Thank you Lord for giving me this message. If there are any here who want prayer for reprioritizing their lives or for Holy Spirit boldness to encounter and converse with strangers, please come up at the end of the service.

In Yeshua’s holy name,

Amen.