

A person's legs, wearing blue jeans, are visible on the left side of the frame, standing on a dark asphalt road. A large, white, hand-painted arrow points from the bottom right towards the center of the image, passing behind the text. The overall scene suggests a journey or a path forward.

Chapter 6

Jesus: Preparing His Way by Prayer




Jesus: Preparing His Way by Prayer

The Lord...sent them ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. Luke 10:1

On one occasion, Jesus sent seventy followers to specific cities so that they might bring about a welcome for him. Their task involved prayer of a sort that could not be done from a distance.

Jesus Received or Grieved by Whole Cities

Approaching the city of Jerusalem just before his death, Jesus “saw the city and wept over it” like one bereaved. He saw devastating things in store because the city, as a responsible entity before God, had not recognized “the time of [its] visitation” (Luke 19:41-44)



Jesus: Preparing His Way by Prayer

Visitation: His Arrival, Our Revival

By using the term visitation, Jesus was not referring to a brief social visit or a series of supercharged religious meetings. What might have happened if Jesus had been welcomed? He implies that his visitation could have meant a huge manifestation of peace thorough the city for long times to come. “If you had known in this day, even yopresence. u, the things which make fore peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42). It’s hard not to think that a fully welcomed Jesus would have brought a citywide infusion of God’s nearness in a glory so vast that the word revival would barely apply.

Jesus announced to everyone at Zaccheus’s party that he had come “to seek and to save” the lost, apparently household by household, toward a transformation of the life of the city.

In recent generations many have noted that the momentum of Christ’s seeking and saving sometimes erupts into citywide movements we have called revivals. Perhaps we could more accurately call them arrivals because of the centrality of Jesus’ word and manifest



Jesus: Preparing His Way by Prayer

The Seventy: Forerunners to the Nations

A demonstration of Jesus' continuing purpose to visit cities with his saving presence is found in the sending of the seventy. "the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come" (Luke 10:1).

The seventy went to so completely embody Jesus' life that he could say, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). Matthew records Jesus' words to a similar sending of the twelve. "He who receives you receives me" (Matt. 10:40). Their task was to prepare a welcome for Jesus in "every city and place where He Himself was going to come" (Luke 10:1).

What then was the point of so carefully selecting cities, especially in conjunction with the number seventy? The number is significant. Seventy was the accepted figure in that society of the full number of nations.

Jesus had selected twelve apostles with obvious reference to the tribes of Israel. Now he selected seventy, symbolically encompassing all nations."

The Seventy: Forerunners to the Nations

If the seventy somehow correspond to the nations, we must also consider the prophetic significance of what they did at Jesus' instruction. Jesus was showing disciples of every generation his intentions to advance the gospel through every nation until the end of the age.

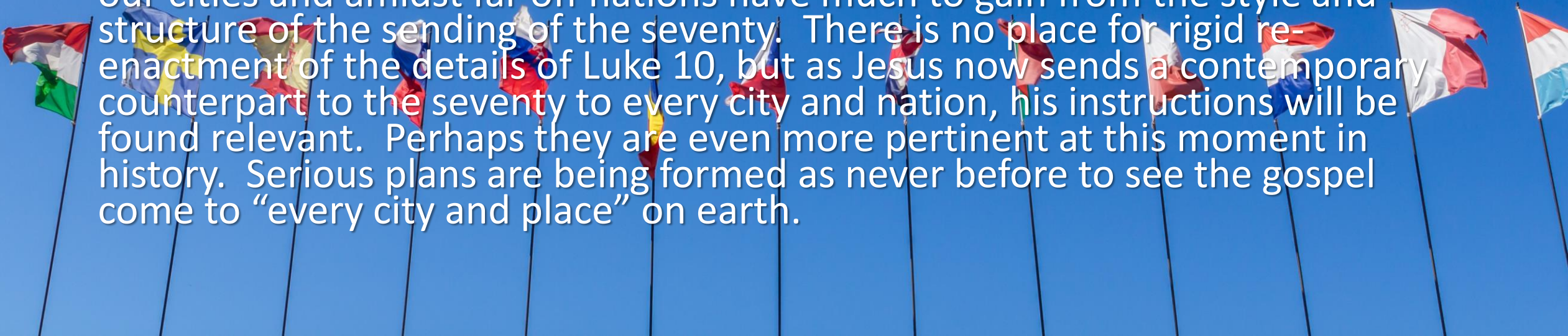
The sending of the seventy stands, by Christ's design, as a prophetic portrait of the completion of his kingdom purposes. There was an aspect of closure to their mission to initiate a movement in "every city and place."

Comparing the instructions given to the twelve and to the seventy shows slight differences. The seventy were not named apostles, as were the twelve (Luke 6:13), suggesting that Christ's task is entrusted to ordinary believers along with those ordained as apostolic servants. The seventy were not advised beforehand of every aspect of the spiritual power entrusted to them as the twelve had been (Luke 9:1). They discovered soon enough that vast spiritual authority had been given them (Luke 10:17-19). The twelve were sent to preach and heal (Luke 9:2,6). The assignment of the seventy was similar but simpler, focused almost entirely on prayer. Their preaching was to accompany their praying.

The Seventy: Forerunners to the Nations

Jesus repeated to the seventy what he had told the twelve about asking God to send out workers into the harvest. For the twelve, this admonition to pray for workers had come before their sending (Matt. 9:37-38). But for the seventy, prayer for workers was the foremost item of the instructions. Prayer was primary, not just preliminary. To their task whether it was blessing homes, praying for the sick or asking for laborers, every part of their instructions involved specific dimensions of prayer. The plan was bold and simple: Go to specific cities and pray for people.

We are not attempting to press the sending of the seventy into the mold of today's prayerwalkers. Our point is just to reverse: Today's prayer efforts in our cities and amidst far off nations have much to gain from the style and structure of the sending of the seventy. There is no place for rigid re-enactment of the details of Luke 10, but as Jesus now sends a contemporary counterpart to the seventy to every city and nation, his instructions will be found relevant. Perhaps they are even more pertinent at this moment in history. Serious plans are being formed as never before to see the gospel come to "every city and place" on earth.





Jesus' first directive established the basic purpose of their venture: harvest for God. "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Jesus knew that their praying eyes would see people differently. Their hearts would almost break at the spiritually magnified sight of wounded, wasted lives. Without a large hope of harvest, frustration over the immense need could have easily diverted them into a fervid activism.

A Vision of the Harvest

Praying in this way, the disciples were established in hope as they lifted their attention toward the stupendous mastery of God over the affairs of the gospel. The Father's lordship is constant, governing the harvest with infinite wisdom. It is his harvest, planted from his hand and to be reaped unto him again.

Jesus taught them to prepare the way for the harvest by prayer. They were not clearly commanded to sow or reap. Instead, they were to intercede on-site for a huge harvest, larger than anything that they themselves could have ever brought about.



Envision ingathering

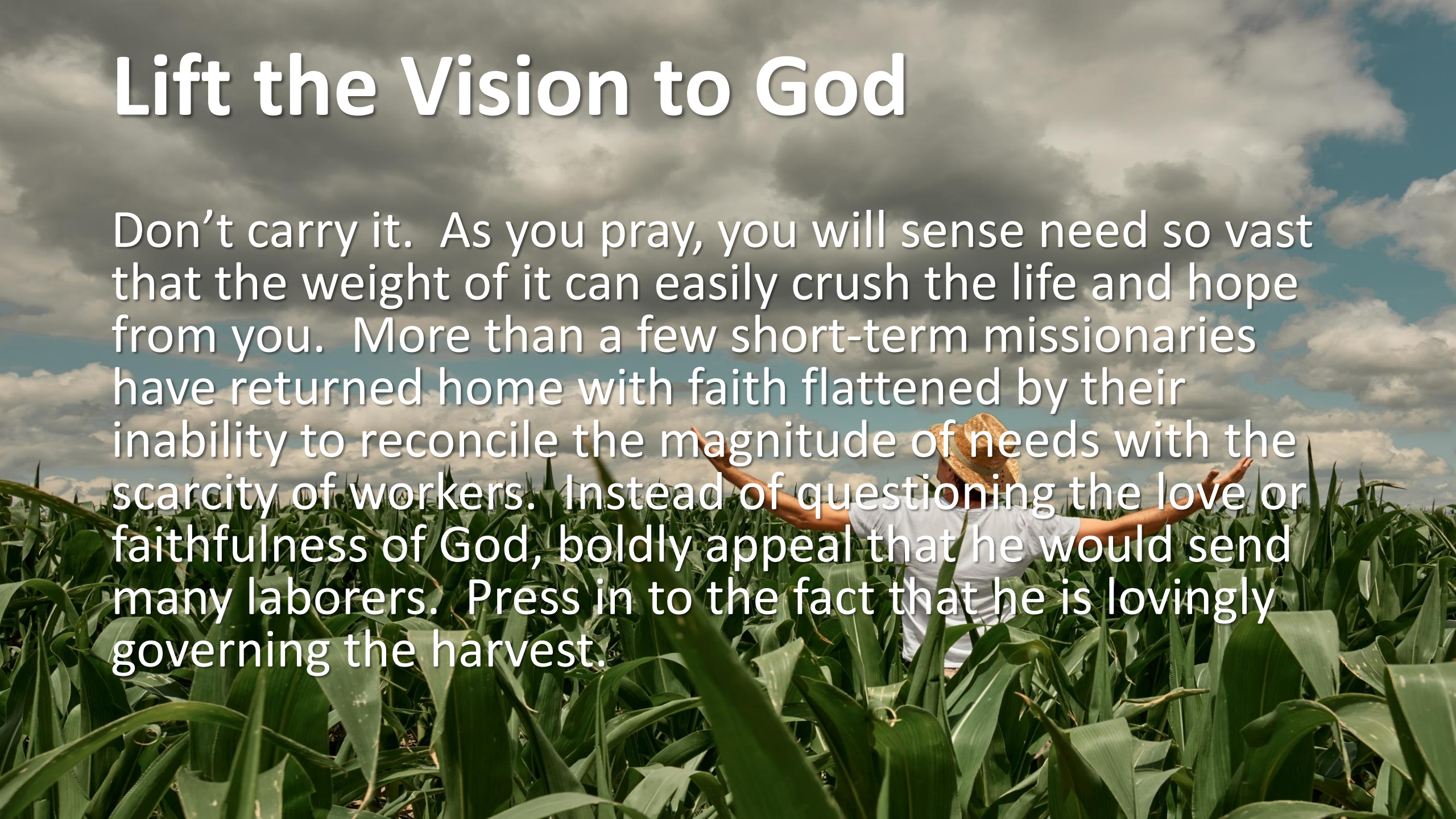
Exalt God as Lord of the harvest, worthy of the fullest ingathering of life.

Implications for
Today's
Prayerwalkers

God said of one city what is true of every people group and most cities: "I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). Who has God been "growing" in your city for himself?

Lift the Vision to God

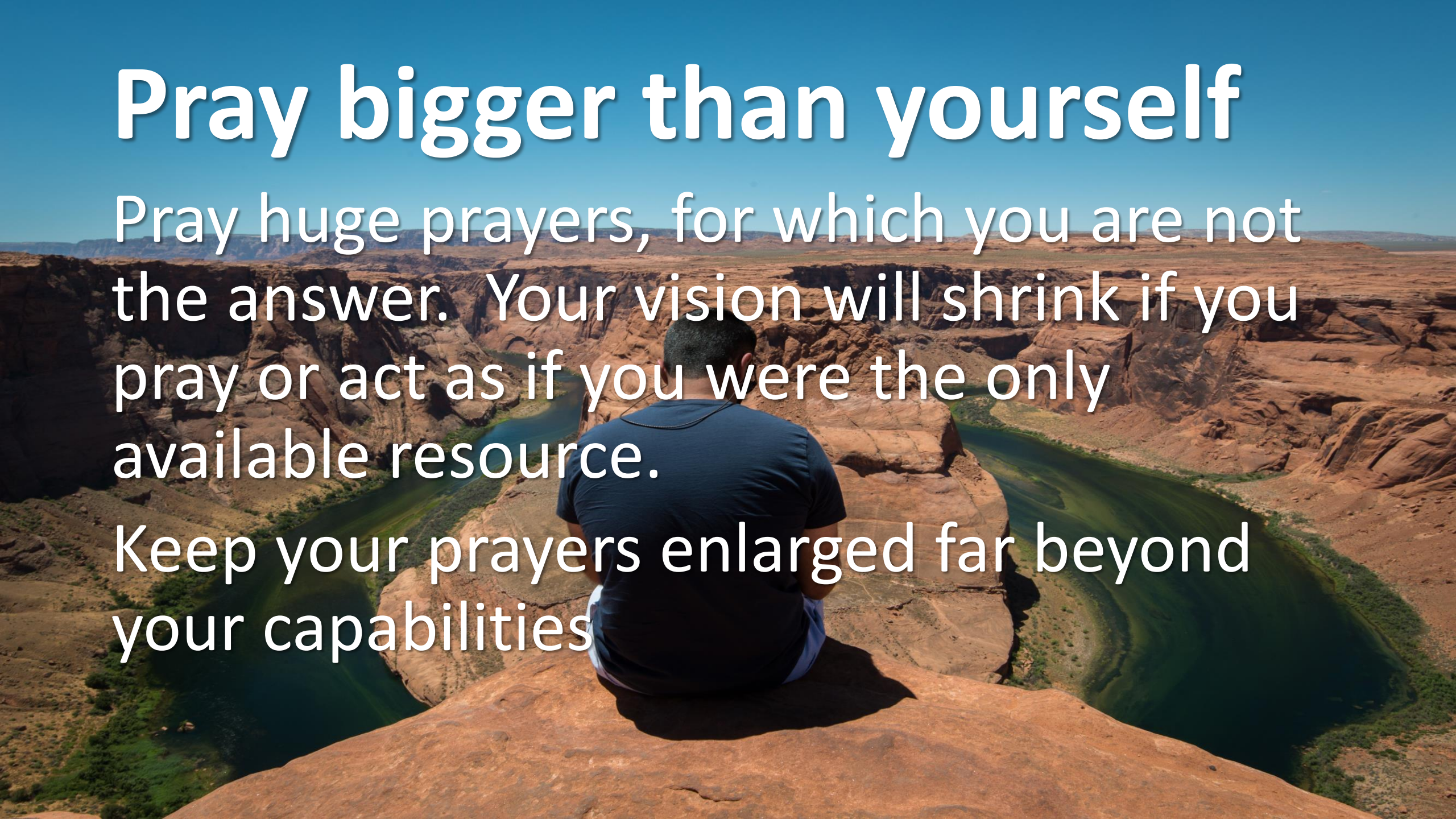
Don't carry it. As you pray, you will sense need so vast that the weight of it can easily crush the life and hope from you. More than a few short-term missionaries have returned home with faith flattened by their inability to reconcile the magnitude of needs with the scarcity of workers. Instead of questioning the love or faithfulness of God, boldly appeal that he would send many laborers. Press in to the fact that he is lovingly governing the harvest.



Pray bigger than yourself

Pray huge prayers, for which you are not the answer. Your vision will shrink if you pray or act as if you were the only available resource.

Keep your prayers enlarged far beyond your capabilities



Confronting in the Opposite Spirit

Jesus was not actually warning them about the risks ahead. Instead, Jesus trained them to step into kingdom victories with the greater potency of weakness. They were to pay careful attention-*behold* is his word-to the way Jesus had designed the encounter with the entrenched evil of sin-gripped cities. The uneven fight was Jesus' idea.

They were prohibited from blitzing cities with amassed manpower. Instead, Jesus told them to “go your ways.” in other words, “Split up!”

To be sure that they ventured in the meekest, weakest way they could, he gave the specific instructions about traveling without replacement supplies. They were to break the patterns of the self-sufficiency for a special season. They were not to rearrange the encounter as a siege to be won by superior supply lines.

Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Keep the Battle Uneven

Aspire to a mentality of divine weakness. The truth of the believer's authority can be talked about with much chest-thumping hype. But that authority is best expressed by humility in the face of arrogance, kindness in the face of hatred and blessing in the face of anger. In the drama of your daily encounters, be ready to demonstrate the power of a lamb-like posture.

Contest by contrast

God delights to countermand enemy power with Christlike weakness. To demonstrate a spirit which is opposite to Christ's avowed enemies doesn't mean conceding supposed rights or forfeiting every open contest. You aren't called to lose, but to win in an unconventional way. As God guides you, be ready to demonstrate Christlike character in humble contrast to those hostile to the gospel. Opposite-spirit ministry is really a form of repentance, so avoid being cute or cocky; otherwise, everyone loses.

Establishing Entrance for Jesus

Jesus was pressing them to deepening their relationship by focusing them.

They were to search for people of proven worth and respect who already manifested some features of God at work in their lives...people of peace.

Jesus told them to find men of peace by speaking blessings upon households. A blessing isn't a perfunctory politeness. It's a statement which articulates and endows homes with the promise of the gospel.

Somehow the process of meeting people in their homes and speaking blessings would reveal the key persons of God's choice.

Jesus preferred to touch an entire city from one home. We can see this from the very start of Jesus' ministry with Peter's home in Capernaum (Mark 1:29-33).

They were to concentrate God's work in particular homes to leave an enduring entrance for the gospel into entire social networks.



A close-up photograph of a hand planting a small seed into dark, rich soil. The hand is positioned in the upper left, with the thumb and index finger gently holding the seed. The soil is dark brown and textured, with some roots visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the textures of the skin and soil.

Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Prayerwalking opens the way for church planting

Many contemporary church planters begin their efforts with people respected by their community, often using the terminology men of peace. The homes of such people usually draw friends like magnets. Their households become places of easy interaction with people throughout town because of the history of help they have given to their social network.

As you pray blessings of peace upon families, be alert to how God may establish certain households as lighthouses to their town.

Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers



Bless first

Prayerwalkers are beginning to find creative ways to prayerfully announce God's intended peace. For example, some intercessors have directly approached civic leaders, asking how they might pray; then they speak words of blessing as they pray with them.

Blessing is perhaps the most powerful form of affirmation. Don't be surprised if you find people open or even attracted to you as you exercise the art of blessing.

Pray then Proclaim

They were to address their testimony to the very ones for whom they prayed. But their proclamation was to come after they prayed. Their word was more of an explanation than a declaration. Few statements in Scripture are as dense with meaning as the announcement “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9). But the last two words titled the emphasis of their message toward being a personalized prophetic statement—that God’s mighty purposes have touched you, and that there is more goodness to come, specifically “to you.”


A background image showing a man in a grey shirt reading a Bible and a woman in a white shirt with her hands clasped in prayer. The text is overlaid on this image.

Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

With “answered prayer proceeding.”

While God often authenticates his message “with signs following” (Mark 16:20, KJV), we need to recognize the pattern of answered prayer proceeding testimony of the gospel.

God delights in answering prayer on behalf of those who have yet to even hear the gospel. Perhaps we should try the sequence that was clear for the seventy: first pray, then proclaim. Truth is eagerly believed when taught after answered prayer. Jesus healed and evangelized people more than once in this way (the demonized man in Luke 8:35 and the blind man in John 9:35-41).



Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Pray for people's needs as they understand them

Open the prayer agenda beyond physical healing, though you should avoid honoring more wish lists. Your purpose is to deal with matters in which something has been wounded, lost, violated or perverted.

If you present yourself as one who is willing to pray instead of one who merely wants to preach, you will find people coming your way with all sorts of serious life predicaments.

Serve people without trying to solve their problems for them. Sincere prayer might open ways for you to offer practical help, But never restrict your intercession to those for whom you feel you can afford the time or money to help.

The message is not that you have come to town, but that the kingdom of God is near. Jesus is coming, desiring to bring a visitation of God's kingdom-a piece of heaven lived out on the earth.



Preparing the Welcome

In Jesus' day someone was received by being offered some sort of special meal. Greater or lesser parties could be thrown to display the measure of honor extended to a visitor. Jesus commands them never to be offended by a meager reception. Any kind of greeting-even a cup of water from just on person-signals a worth acceptance (Matt. 10:42).

Jesus came to cities by invitation rather than by invasion. He did not give the seventy a fail-safe plan to conquer cities. In fact, he prepared them for possible rejection.

The public act of shaking the dust off their feet was to be done with all the grief that Jesus displayed in telling of the cities who had rejected him (Luke 10:12-15). It was a testimony against them which would have bearing on what Jesus referred to as "that day" or "the judgment" (Luke 10:12,14). Though this negative testimony would last forever, it did not have to be the only testimony of that city. God in his sovereignty could choose to allow more testifiers of his grace to visit the city.

The gesture was not a curse or a retaliating insult. It was a sober act to be done with mourning, documenting the incriminating truth that the kingdom had come near but was refused. Though they were prepared for rejection, few, if any, were rejected. In fact, they came back rejoicing.

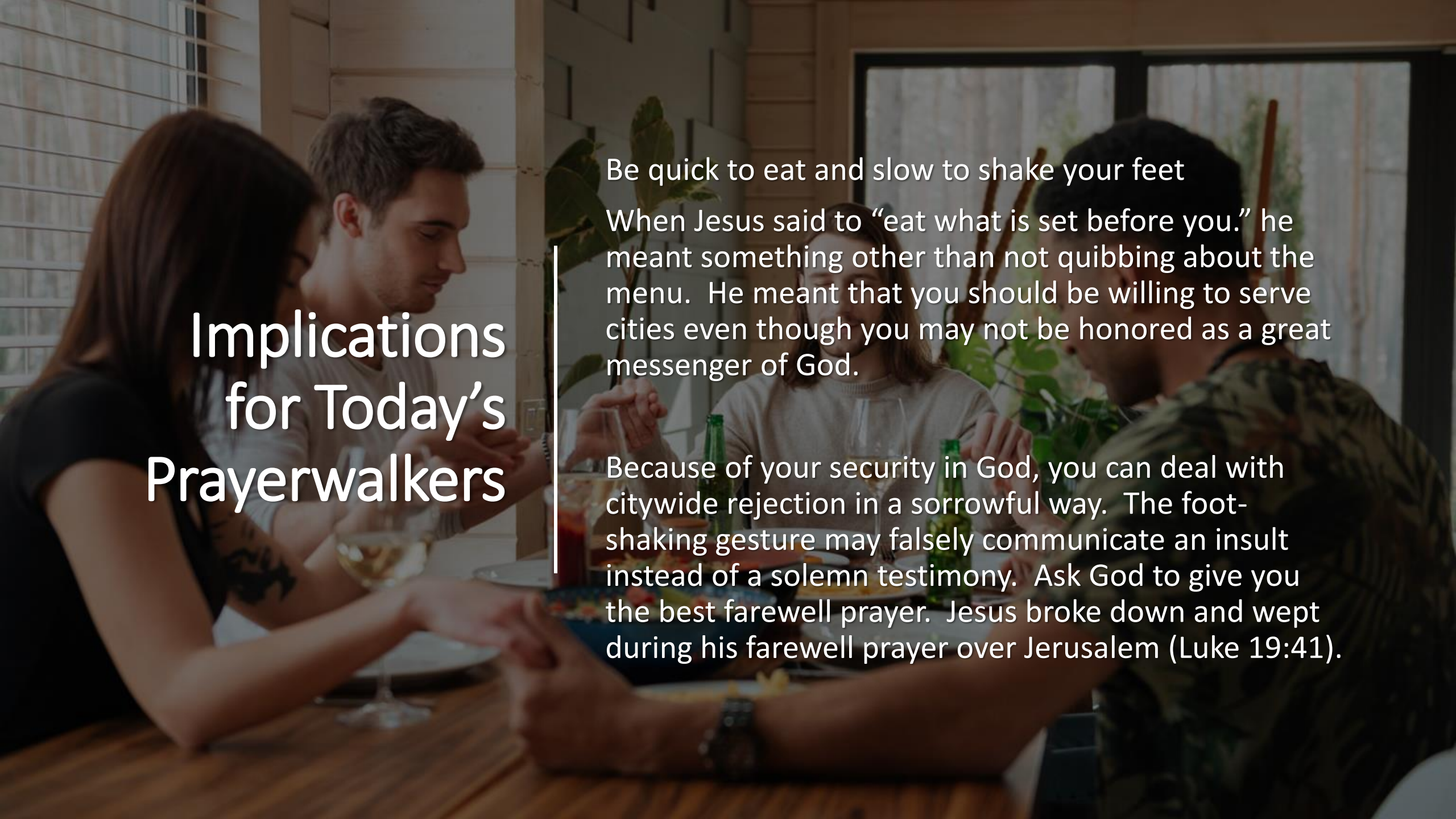


Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Pray for a citywide welcome

Ask God to turn so many to himself that the entire city becomes marked by the message of the kingdom of God.

Lift your prayers beyond the salvation of a few. In opening his famous conversation at a Samaritan well, Jesus was not aiming to lead one Samaritan woman to faith. He orchestrated an invitation into her city. Many believed initially at “the word of the woman.” A citywide movement began, welcoming him to stay for days. As a result of this visit “many more believed because of His word” (John 4:39-42)



Implications for Today's Prayerwalkers

Be quick to eat and slow to shake your feet

When Jesus said to “eat what is set before you.” he meant something other than not quibbling about the menu. He meant that you should be willing to serve cities even though you may not be honored as a great messenger of God.

Because of your security in God, you can deal with citywide rejection in a sorrowful way. The foot-shaking gesture may falsely communicate an insult instead of a solemn testimony. Ask God to give you the best farewell prayer. Jesus broke down and wept during his farewell prayer over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

Joy in the Return

Jesus had made specific arrangements for a time and a place to regather and to report what had taken place during the disciple's ventures. Instead of returning under the weight of unrepentant cities, they came back with joy. There were three kinds of joy during that debriefing.

First, they tasted the joy of surprise. “the seventy returned with joy, saying “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (Luke 10:17). They were happily amazed to find their prayers answered.

Second, Jesus opened their eyes to a deeper joy, the joy of their identity in God. “rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” Jesus said (Luke 10:20). They were naturally exuberant about experiencing the supernatural power of God. But Jesus pointed to a greater joy of being honored by name before God. Thus, Jesus gave them a taste of the joy of God over their testimony. As that very time, He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Your sight” (Luke 10:21, NAS revised)

Something about that very hour thrilled Jesus in the greatest recorded outburst of joy of his earthly days. Jesus knew that what had been stored up in the heart of God, hidden for generations, was now at last coming to pass. God was making himself known to whole cities through ordinary believers. When Jesus saw the seventy return, he knew he would eventually with a welcome in households of every people group and nation.