

Jesus' Little Instruction Book • Luke 10:1-24

Probably you have seen the best selling *Life's Little Instruction Book* by H. Jackson Brown, Jr. The introduction explains what the book is all about. It says:

This book began as a gift to my son, Adam. As he packed his stereo, typewriter, blue blazer and other necessities for his new life as a college freshman, I retreated to the family room to jot down a few observations and words of counsel I thought he might find helpful.

I read years ago that it was not the responsibility of parents to pave the road for their children, but to provide a road map. That's how I hoped he would use these mind and heart reflections.

I started writing, and what I thought would take a few hours took several days. I gathered my collection of handwritten notes, typed them up and put them in a dime store binder. I walked to the garage and slid it under the front seat of the station wagon.

A few days later his mother and I helped him move into his new dorm room. When he was all settled in, I asked him to come with me to the parking lot. It was time for the presentation. I reached under the car seat and, with words to the effect that this was what I knew about living a happy and a rewarding life, handed him the bound pages. He hugged me and shook my hand. It was a very special moment.

A few days after I had given Adam his copy, he called me from his dorm room. "Dad," he said, "I've been reading the instruction book and I think it's one of the best gifts I've ever received. I'm going to add to it and someday give it to my son."

Every once in a while life hands you a moment so precious, so overwhelming, you almost glow. I know. I had just experienced one.

Here are examples of items that are given a page each in *Life's Little Instruction Book*:

- #1. Complement three people every day.
- #2. Have a dog.
- #3. Watch a sunrise at least once every year.
- #5. Over tip the breakfast waitress.
- #249. Hire people smarter than you.
- #261. Take family vacations whether you can afford them or not. The memories will be priceless.
- #263. Don't discuss salaries.
- #267. Lie on your back and look at the stars.
- #270. Arrive at work early and stay beyond quitting time.
- #367. Acquire things the old-fashioned way: Save for them and pay cash.

Chapter 10 of Luke's biography of Jesus is written in a somewhat similar style. Great pieces of advice are given one right after the other. They are not necessarily connected but they are all good. So let's take a look.

Jesus' instruction #1 in Luke 10:1-3 is: Go!... together:

... the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves."

Jesus wanted his followers to represent him and recruit others to become Christians. He knew it would be great. He knew the results would be fantastic. He knew it could get tough.

Jesus' instruction for every Christian is to go for it. Every day represent Jesus. Every day, everywhere, try to recruit more people to become followers of Jesus Christ, but do it together. Don't be a loner. It's easier, happier and more effective to team up with another Christian. Find another Chris-

Be a blessing every time you enter someone's home, visit another office or ride in some else's car. Bless them in Jesus' name.

tian at work and pray together. Find a Christian friend at school and become a spiritual team. Search out believers in your neighborhood. Always seek a partner in ministries at church. If you can't find a partner ask God to provide one and Go! . . . together.

Jesus' instruction #2 in Luke 10:4 is: Don't get cluttered with possessions, or, as Jesus put it, "*Do not take a purse or bag or sandals.*" Jesus was warning against gathering too much "stuff" in life.

Money Magazine had an article about lottery winners who wish they hadn't won. They said life was easier and simpler and better with less. One observer touring an English castle with all its wealth remarked with sadness, "These are the things that make it difficult to die." In other words, we get so attached to our possessions that heaven doesn't seem as appealing as it should.

Don't misunderstand Jesus. He wasn't forbidding shoes. He isn't telling everyone to throw your purses in the trash. He was telling us that life is better if we lighten up. Don't get cluttered with possessions.

Jesus' instruction #3 in Luke 10:4 is to stay focused: "*...do not greet anyone on the road.*" Jesus is warning us against becoming distracted from what is really important in life. If Jesus were saying this today he would probably say, "Keep your eye on the ball!" If you are looking at every other player, talking to the umpire or waving at your friends in the stands you will probably strike out.

Often people miss out in life because they won't stay focused. Everything is equally important; they lack priorities. Jesus wanted Christians to be Christians more than anything else.

Don't get distracted. Stay focused.

Jesus' instruction #4 in Luke 10:5-6 is to bless others: "*When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.*"

I really like this one. When you enter someone's home, bless them! Bless them with words of peace. Bless them with the love of Jesus. Bless them with the gospel. (By the way, Jesus didn't mean the building when he said "house"; he meant the people or the household.) Don't criticize them. Don't discourage them. Don't condemn them. Bless them. This is great advice for us all.

Be a blessing every time you enter someone's home, visit another office or ride in some else's car. Bless them in Jesus' name.

If the people you bless don't want to be blessed the blessing will bounce back to you. This is like a greeting card or e-mail message that can't be delivered and is returned to you. You're sad it wasn't accepted but it's good to get a greeting, a blessing, a realization that you offered good even if it was rejected.

Bless others!

Luke 10:7-8 gives us Jesus' instruction #5: "Be content with what you get."

Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you."

Jesus was talking about those times when his followers were guests in the homes of others. He told them to be content wherever they were staying and not to keep moving from house to house until they got a better place to stay.

I was visiting a small African village just south of the Sahara Desert as part of a team from the World Relief Corporation that had provided a well for this desert village. Previously the women had to walk several miles to a well and return with heavy jars of water on their heads. Now they had a deep well right by their homes. They were grateful to God and to us—so they killed an animal for a feast. I never knew what kind of animal it was. When we arrived it was cooking in a large cauldron over an open fire. Someone handed me a large grappling fork to hook whatever I could get out of the pot. To me it didn't smell very good and it certainly didn't look very good. But I was told that these people were able to eat meat only about once a year and they had made a great sacrifice to give us their very best. I ate what they served.

Understand what Jesus is saying. Be content. Be glad for what you have. Don't be a complainer. Don't be looking for something better. Be grateful for food, for clothes, for friends, for where you live, for what you drive, for where you work. Be content with what you get.

Jesus' instruction #6 is to give priority to those who are responsive. In Luke 10:9-17 Jesus talked

about those times when his followers would go into a town preaching the love of Jesus and offering to heal people but they would face opposition and rejection. Jesus referred to those situations saying, "... when you enter a town and are not welcomed..." He says that if this happens, move on. Get out of there. And don't take it personally. Rejection of you because of Jesus' message is really rejection of Jesus and rejection of Jesus is rejection of God.

The principle here is really quite simple. Focus time and resources on those who are responsive to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be patient with people who are slow to respond to the gospel. It does not mean we shouldn't pray for people who seem disinterested. It does mean that we shouldn't devote too much energy to those who outright reject Jesus. It may be that they will face a crisis in life and open up in new ways, but until then there isn't much we can do. Instead, go with those who are responsive. Teach those who want to learn. Disciple those who want to follow Jesus. Develop those who seek to be godly. Put your time, energy, money and everything else into those who say "yes" to Jesus.

Give priority to those who are responsive.

Jesus' instruction #7 is to stay humble. In Luke 10:18-20 Jesus said:

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Jesus was probably referring to something that happened long before the beginning of our cosmic history. Satan was a magnificent angel, perhaps the highest in heaven. He was more beautiful, more powerful, more intelligent and more important than any other creature. However, he became proud of all his assets and rebelled against God. God kicked the rebel out of heaven forever and Satan became

the evil adversary of God and good.

Jesus warns that Christians need to be careful of our attitude toward the blessings God gives us. He gave his disciples "*authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*" The danger was that they could confuse the source of the blessings they had and become proud.

The same thing is a danger to lots of people today. When God blesses us with good jobs, money, position, success, influence, nice houses and other possessions we are at risk to become proud like Satan. Pride often comes before a fall!

Instead, Jesus says, "...rejoice that your names are written in heaven." If there is anything to be

happy about it is not power, prestige or position; it is knowing for sure that you are enrolled in heaven because of personal salvation through Jesus Christ.

This is very good advice! Don't be proud! Stay humble!

Jesus' instruction #8 is in Luke 10:21 and it is to stay simple.

...Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

This was a typical Jesus-type statement. Jesus was insisting that people who position themselves as the smartest, best educated and most sophisticated often don't understand God's greatest spiritual truths. God delights in revealing the best stuff to children and those who take the simplest approach.

We have another way of saying the same thing: "don't be too smart for your own good! We get complicated formulas for beating the stock market and get a return far lower than the S&P 500. We insist on multiple prescriptions that end up less effective than an aspirin. We read all the child-rearing books but ignore the simple parenting prin-

If there is anything to be happy about it is not power, prestige or position; it is knowing for sure that you are enrolled in heaven because of personal salvation through Jesus Christ.

ciples in the Bible. We get graduate degrees in philosophy but ignore the basic truths of Jesus' teachings. Children aren't usually that way. Their faith is simple. Their approach is uncomplicated. Their trust in God is deep and powerful. Jesus is not arguing for anti-intellectualism or ignorance. He doesn't want us to put our minds in neutral, but he does warn against getting so smart that we miss the point.

Jesus' instruction #9 in verse 22 is to "keep your eyes on Jesus":

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Jesus is telling us something really important here. He has a relationship with God-the-Father that is absolutely unique! Jesus knows God-the-Father. God-the-Father knows Jesus. God-the-Father has committed all authority to Jesus. He is the Boss! The only way to know God is to know Jesus. Jesus is everything.

Think of Jesus the way you would think of the most important and powerful person you could know. Think of him as you would think of the head-of-state. Think of Jesus as you would think of the chief-of-staff. Think of Jesus as you would think of someone who can predict the future. Think of Jesus as you would think of the ultimate celebrity. Keep your eyes on him for everything you will ever need to know. Follow him wherever you need to go. Make Jesus #1.

Good advice — keep your eyes on Jesus!

Instruction #10 is found in Luke 10:23-24—be happy with your blessings:

"Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

The last on Jesus' list is one we all need to hear. It's a reminder that we all need to appreciate what we have.

Today we live about twice as long as people at the beginning of the 20th century. We live longer and healthier than most people in history. Yet, we complain that we don't live longer and healthier than we do. It's not that our pains and problems

aren't real but we've lost perspective. Earlier generations could barely dream of the wonders we take for granted.

Jesus says that the same principle applies to spiritual truth. Christians have a direct relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We have assurance that our sins are forgiven and that we are going to heaven forever. We have God close and on our side at all times and in all circumstances—more than most people in history could have hoped or dreamed. Yet, we too often take for granted the wonders of God's grand blessings on our lives. It's not that we are pain or problem free but that we often lose perspective and don't appreciate all God has given us.

Be happy with your blessings!

Ten instructions from Jesus Christ. Which do you most need to hear today? Which one are you going to believe and act upon this week? Here's the list:

- Go together.
- Don't get cluttered with possessions.
- Stay focused.
- Bless others.
- Be content with what you get.
- Give priority to the responsive.
- Stay humble.
- Stay simple.
- Keep your eyes on Jesus.
- Be happy with your blessings.

Faith Matters® is the Broadcast Ministry of
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church
6630 Shady Oak Road
Eden Prairie MN 55344
952-944-6300
www.faithmatters.fm
©Leith Anderson