

# Called To Do Hard Things

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] The message this morning, we are going to be in Matthew. We're going to look at actually two or three different places in Matthew. So Matthew chapter 9 is where we're going to begin this morning.

So I'd encourage you, Matthew chapter 9, beginning in verse 35. If you have a Bible, please follow along. I know we always have the Scripture up here, but it's good to be in God's Word and flipping those pages and finding the Scriptures and following along.

If you ever forget your Bible, there's a whole rack of them back there. Grab one, keep it if you don't have a Bible. If you know someone that needs a Bible, take it to them. We need to get God's Word out into the world wherever we can.

Matthew chapter 9, we're going to begin in verse 35. And I'm going to ask again, I know you just sat down, but if you're able, I'd ask you to stand as we read God's Word together this morning. Matthew chapter 9, beginning in verse 35, and this is what God's Word shares.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] Then says He to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Lord God, we thank You for this morning. We thank You that we could take time to praise You. We could share our requests with You.

We thank You that we could sing to You. And now, Lord, I believe with all my heart that You have a message for us from Your Word. As we read Your Word, it is the truth. And I pray, Lord, that our hearts, our minds, our ears would be open to it, not just to listen, but to apply it to our lives, to consider our lives and see if there's things that we need to change, things we need to reconsider, priorities possibly that need changed around.

Just open our eyes to all those things, Lord, because of Your Word. Let Your Word accomplish in us what You want it to. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. You can be seated this morning. Amen. This verse, as we read it this morning, it answers a very simple question that I don't know whether we spend much time thinking a lot about.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] But the question is, what is needed in this world that we live in? This answers that question. You know, we can look around a lot. Can you identify any problems going on in our world today?

Could you identify one problem going on in our world? Or our nation, whichever you want to look at, or our communities around us. Could you identify any problems? Wars, hate, violence, all kinds of problems.

And we like to think that, you know, we can come up somehow with some kind of solutions for these problems. But you know, as you look at the world, and as you look at it from God's eyes, God created it, right?

Everybody say yes. All right, thank you. God created it. He created us. He created every person living on this planet right now.

That means God knows. He created it all. He understands and sees what the problems are, but He also knows the solution. And Jesus, as He was talking here, He talks about what is needed.

[ 3 : 3 3 ] And what is needed? Prayer. Prayer. Prayer is obviously needed. But what else does He identify as needed in the last two verses, 37 and 38? Workers. Workers.

In the King James, He uses the words laborers. That is what it identifies as being needed in these verses. Those willing to do what?

Work. Work. Does it say in these verses, does it just say God needs more followers? Is that what it says?

What does it say? God needs more laborers. More workers. What is the difference? Is there a difference? Should there be a difference?

There shouldn't be, but is there sometimes? Labors. Workers. That's a whole different thing as you begin to think about it. Why sometimes do we not work?

[ 4 : 35 ] Lazy. You had no problem answering that. Not committed. And the other reason is, as you think about work, work is hard. Isn't it?

Work is hard. Work means effort. You can't work without there being any effort. The two are tied together. If you work, that means you need to put in the effort.

God needs people. God wants people. God desires people that say, hey, I want to put in some effort. I want to put in some work, even though it's hard.

Because you know what? God asks us to do the hard things. And that's really what we're talking about this morning. The things that God calls us to are hard. Do you agree with that?

Think about the things God's Word calls us to. Well, first of all, God's Word calls us to repentance, doesn't it? Don't you agree with that? To repent, what do you have to do?

[ 5 : 40 ] Ask forgiveness. Do you have to admit that you were wrong? Is that easy or hard? Admitting that you were wrong? Nobody wants to really answer that question.

Really, we understand admitting you're wrong is not an easy thing, is it? Does God call us to do that? Yes. So the very core of being saved is God asking us to do something that's sometimes hard, and that's admitting we're wrong.

God wants us to ask for forgiveness. Is that always an easy thing to do? No. God tells us that we then need to forgive who? Others. Others that we like?

Others that we get along with? Others that see things all the same way we see them? Is that who God asks us to forgive? Who does He ask us to forgive? Everyone.

Is that easy or hard? Okay. We've talked about love. God says that He loves us, and we are then to love others, right? Right? Right. Okay. Is that always easy, or can that be a hard thing?

[ 6 : 45 ] Hard thing. You know, we talk about our church family here, and I hope it's an easy thing for you all and for us all to love each other. I hope that's an easy thing. Is there anybody in your life that you have a hard time getting along with?

Is there anybody in your life that just gets under your skin? Which one? That maybe doesn't even treat you well. What does God say to do to them?

As a matter of fact, the Bible says, love your enemies. It doesn't just say, love the people that like you. That's easy. Isn't it? The rest of the world can do that.

No problem. Love people that like you back. But God doesn't ask us to do easy things. He asks us to do hard things. He says, go a step beyond that.

Do the hard thing and love your enemies. All these things that God is asking us to do are hard. God says, who are we to put first in our lives?

[ 7 : 49 ] God goes. Okay. So God goes number one. Who are we supposed to put second? Well, we'll let God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

We'll group them together as number one. Who does He want us to put second? Others. Right? Esteem others more highly than yourself.

Isn't that what the Bible says? Isn't it? Okay. So God calls us to put Him first. Others second. So where are we at in that? We're after that, right?

Is it easy not to put yourself first? Is it easy to put yourself in third place, not first or second? So again, God is asking you to do something that is hard.

All these things that God wants us to give up our desires and put His desires first. Is that easy? Okay.

[ 8 : 45 ] Can we agree God asks us to do hard things? But so often we expect it to be easy. We expect to somehow be able to do it without putting a lot of work into it.

All these things we've just talked about are hard. God wants us to do the hard thing. Being laborers, as it talks about here in these verses, is a hard thing.

You know, we celebrate this weekend, and I know we can go through the whole Memorial Day weekend without really thinking what we celebrate. But as Becky shared, we are celebrating those that gave their lives for our country.

Is that an easy thing or a hard thing? It's hard. It's a sacrifice. It was made. It is a hard thing that we celebrate. Were there wonderful results from that? Yes.

The freedoms that we have today. We think, as Becky shared, about Jesus Christ. Did He do hard things for us? Yes. He sacrificed His life for us.

[ 9 : 49 ] He went through the beatings and the mockery and being nailed to a cross for us. He did the hard thing. And was there a wonderful result from that? Yes.

How many wonderful results do we get without some hard work? Think about that question for a minute. None. You think most of the things that have great results take some hard work to begin with, don't they?

Yes. Body loving. And if you don't do the hard work, are there consequences for that? Are there? Right. Sometimes we don't want to take the time. Sometimes it just seems like too much work.

And so we just don't do it. Think about things that we can understand. Let's say at your home, you have a leak in the roof. All right? And you think, you know what?

I know there's that leak up there. But you know, I'd have to get the ladder out. I'd have to get the hammer out. I'd have to get the nails out. I'd have to get some pitch or tar or some sealant out.

[ 10 : 50 ] And then I'd have to purchase some shingles to patch it. And then I got to get up there on the roof. I got to climb the ladder. I got to take all this stuff up there. And then I got to actually do it. And then I got to clean it all up. That just seems like a lot of work.

So you know what? I just don't know that it's really worth it. I'm just, eh, I'll do it later. I'm just going to ignore it. Can we make that choice? But again, when we choose not to do the things that are hard, is there a consequence for that?

If you choose not to fix the roof, is there a consequence for that? What is the consequence? Okay, that leak's going to continue. As that leak continues, what's going to happen?

The wood underneath is going to rot. Eventually that rots enough. And what's going to happen?

Your roof's going to fall in. You're going to have a bigger hole in your roof. There is a consequence for not putting in the hard work.

And that goes for so many areas of our lives. What is the hard work that God is asking us to do here? To share His Word.

[ 11 : 56 ] He says, the harvest is plentiful. That means there are plenty of people out there that haven't heard about Jesus Christ. There is plenty of work to be done. Would you agree with that? That's what Jesus is saying.

The harvest is plentiful. There are lots of people out there that don't know about me. And He says, what is the problem? The laborers, people that are willing to work, there aren't enough of them. There aren't enough people that are willing to say, yeah, I'm willing to do the hard work. I'm willing to get out there and do it. But He's saying that there are too many times that there are Christians that you and I even can be in this group, can't we?

We don't like to think of us being in that group, do we? But can we be? Yes. That we're satisfied. We've accepted Jesus in our heart. We were. So I'm good. So now I can just glide.

I can just put it on cruise control, go through the rest of my life and not have to worry about it, not have to think about it. Is that what God wants? No, because that's easy. Setting the cruise control and just going, is that easy?

[ 12 : 57 ] Yes. That is not what God calls us to. How many times did God call people to easy things in the Bible? How many times? Yeah, that's not what God's Word talks about.

And we can go all the way back to Noah. Did God say, Noah, I'm going to give you something really easy to do so that your life will just be a cakewalk? Is that what God told Noah?

He told him to build an ark. It had never rained. Yeah, close to 100 years later, he finishes the ark. Is that easy or hard? God calls Abraham.

He says, all right, I want you to leave the land that you're in and I want you to go there. I'm not going to tell you exactly where. You just head that direction. I'll let you know when you get there. Leave everything that you have right now and just pick up and go.

Easy or hard? Hard. We can go on. You think of Daniel in the lion's den and, you know, they could have knelt there. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

[14:01] They could have knelt down and just did whatever. But God asks them to do the hard thing. That's the same way all through the Bible. God asks us to do the hard thing.

Are we willing to do it? That is really my question this morning. Are we willing to do it or are we just too comfortable being on cruise control and just sliding on through life? I want you to look in Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 and 30.

28 through 30. Matthew chapter 11. So just flip a few pages in your Bible. Matthew 28. Jesus is...

Or chapter 11, verse 28. Jesus is talking here.

Come to me, all you that... Huh. What is that next word? Labor. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Who is Jesus calling there? Those that labor. Those that labor. Those that need rest.

[15:09] Well, that implies that we need to be doing some work in the first place, doesn't it? I mean, if you sit home all day in the chair and it comes to be 5 o'clock in the evening and you say, Boy, I'm tired.

I need to get some rest now. Would that make any sense at all? The only reason God says here, those of you that labor, that Jesus says, And I will give you rest. He's assuming that we're doing the work.

If you're not doing the work, you don't need to rest because you haven't done anything yet. If you went to work and hadn't done any work at all, and then you say, Boy, I need a break now. What would your employer think?

I haven't done anything today, but I need to take a break now. It's break time. See, you're crazy. You haven't done anything yet. Why do you think you earned a break? So often we're in that category.

We think about all this rest we need when we haven't done anything to start with. And I'm not trying to get on you, but I'm trying to get on all of us. Because this is what God calls us to.

[16:06] And it's over and over again in the Word. Look in Matthew chapter 16. Flip back a few more pages. Follow along. Matthew 16, verse 24.

Matthew 16, verse 24. Then said Jesus to His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

What did Jesus tell them to do there? Deny themselves. Deny themselves. Deny themselves. Follow Him. One other thing it says. Take up your cross.

That taking up your cross part, does that imply you're going to be doing something? That there's some work involved? Do you think it was easy to carry a cross? No.

Jesus did it until Simon of Cyrene had to carry it for Him. But taking up your cross means you need to be doing something. There needs to be some action in your life. Folks, this is what God wants from us.

[17:12] Jesus is saying there, you need to do the hard things in life. Things that I ask you to do are not always going to be easy. And you think about Jesus when He was here.

What kind of life did Jesus live when He was here? Just sat around and just kind of, you know, took it easy? What did Jesus do? Constantly labored.

He traveled. He taught. He preached. He healed. He performed miracles. He was constantly sharing the love of God wherever He went and in any way that He could.

That's what God is asking us to do. Understand that we are to be workers for Him. That we are to do the hard things. There's one other scripture I want you to look at.

And this is in the Old Testament. This is the last one we're going to turn to. Look in Joshua. The Old Testament, the book of Joshua. Joshua. Chapter 1, verses 6 through 9.

[18:16] There are some promises in this chapter that we kind of look at sometimes. And we like to think they're for us. And I believe that they are. But I want you to look at something that's mentioned at least three times in these verses.

Joshua 1, beginning in verse 6. Be strong and of good courage. For to this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Only be you strong and very courageous that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that you may prosper wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then you shall make your way prosperous and then you shall have good success.

Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid and neither be you dismayed. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

[ 19 : 22 ] Three times here and God was talking to His people. They were ready to go into the promised land, but was that an easy thing? No.

What was the difficult thing about going into the promised land? There were enemies there. And they would have to do battle.

And they would have to fight with them. It was not going to be just walk in and here it is, it's yours. That's not what God did. He said it's going to be hard. But this is what I have for you.

So three times here in the midst of the hard thing that God asked of them, what did God say three different times? Be strong and of good courage. Do you think that message is for you and I today to be strong and to be of good courage?

Why would God tell us to be strong if He didn't have hard work for us to do? Why would God tell us to be courageous if there weren't some hard things He wanted us to do in our lives?

[ 20 : 26 ] Think about that for a minute. Why do you need to be strong and courageous? Because there's a tough job for you to do. You need God's strength and God's courage because He's going to ask you to do some difficult things.

Those things that we talked about that Noah did, that Abraham did, that you could talk about David. You could look at any of the patriarchs in the Old Testament. All those things that God gave them to do, did they need God's strength to do them?

Did they need to be courageous and have faith and trust in God? Yes. God says, be strong and courageous because I have some difficult things for you to do.

So, I hope we understand from all these verses we've looked at and all the things we've talked about that God asks us to do hard things. Here's my next question that I really want you to consider. What are the hard things that God is asking you to do? In your spiritual life, what is hard for you to do? What's that?

[ 21 : 31 ] To deny ourselves. To deny ourselves. To put God first. Is that a hard thing? God is calling you to do that. Is it hard for you sometimes to share Jesus with other people?

Is that ever hard? I'll tell you right now, God is calling you to do that. That's the harvest. That's what He said. There's plenty to do out there, but the workers are few.

God is calling you and I to tell other people about Jesus. Is that always easy? No. But God says, that's what I want you to do. What about sharing Jesus with maybe family members that don't know Him?

Is that hard or easy? It depends. Sometimes sharing with family is harder, isn't it? Not always, but there are some that it can be harder to do than to share with a complete stranger.

But is God calling you to do that? Yes. What are other hard things that God can call you to do? Maybe there's a position in the church that needs filled or a role that needs help.

[ 22 : 36 ] Maybe God calls you to that. Is that always easy? No. Maybe God calls you to teach a Sunday school class or a Bible school class or whatever. Is that always easy? Is it?

No. And sometimes when we're called to do hard things, what is the first thing we do sometimes when we're called to do something hard? I praise God. I will share this so often when something needs done in our church.

And so many of you, when I ask you, it's right away. Sure, I will. And I want you to know I praise God for that. But sometimes when we are asked to do something we're not comfortable doing or that is just hard, what can we do?

What can be our first response? Yeah, we can start to make excuses. Well, I would, but, you know, I really don't want to do that, so what is my excuse today? And we start thinking of all the reasons we can't.

There's some good, I mean, there's some good reasons we can't do some things. Don't get me wrong. But sometimes we create reasons in our mind just because we don't want to do them because they are hard. They make us uncomfortable.

[ 23 : 43 ] God calls us to do the hard things in life, folks. That is what God calls us to. God doesn't say, oh, yeah, I called you to me and I selected you.

You are special and I'm going to give you the easiest job out there. That's not what God does. And the more we grow in our faith, in reality, the more difficult things God gives us to do.

And I believe this is for our entire life. It doesn't matter what age we are. God says, I have things that I desire that you do. And I am calling you to do the hard things.

And the most important thing is to share me with the world around you. And folks, I want to challenge you and I'm challenging myself in this. In our lives, as we go through our day-to-day lives, this is what our lives should be about.

Jesus said, pray that the Lord would send forth workers. That doesn't mean, pray God said somebody else instead of you. That's not what it means, is it?

[ 24 : 50 ] Is it? Who is Jesus talking to when He said that? All of us. But who in particular at that moment was He talking to? The disciples. They were already working, right?

And He knew they were going to continue to work. So He's not telling them, pray somebody else will do it instead of you. That is not what He's telling them. He's telling them, you need to do it and pray that there would be more people to come and help you do it.

So I believe this is for all of us. And folks, you know, if this steps on your toes this morning, I don't know what to tell you because this is what God wants from us.

And if we hear what God wants from us and it steps on our toes, well, I guess good because we need our toes stepped on. Folks, God needs workers. God needs people who are not ashamed to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

And folks, it is not complicated. We can come up with excuses that I don't know enough to share with somebody. I don't know all the answers. I don't always know the words to use. You know what?

[ 25 : 54 ] I don't care. God still wants you to share. It's not complicated. Help people to understand, you know what? We're all sinners, right? We all understand that?

That's easy to understand. We're all sinners. Because of that, there's a penalty for sin, isn't there? What's the penalty for sin? Death. That's what the Bible says. So we're all sinners.

The penalty is death. So how do we get out of that? What's the solution? Jesus. Jesus. He came. He lived for us. He died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. Right?

You with me? Everybody look up here. Are you with me? All right. We're about done. Don't panic, but don't tune out yet. So Jesus died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven.

When we turn our lives over to Him and ask for His forgiveness and commit our lives to Him, what happens? What happens? We're filled with His power.

[ 26 : 50 ] Our sins are forgiven. And the slate is wiped clean. And our name is written in the book of life. Does everybody understand that? Is any of that really, really complicated?

Okay. You know enough to share with somebody. Period. Don't ever give the excuse, I don't know enough. That's not a valid excuse. Folks, God calls us to share. He calls us to be workers in the harvest because the harvest is ready.

Does that mean we can't do other things we enjoy in life? No, that's not what it means. Go on vacation. Take up hobbies. There's nothing wrong with any of that. Share the Lord while you do it. Wherever you're at, whatever you find yourself doing, share the Lord. Share the Lord. That is what He calls us to do. And I pray that we're not people that just want the easy things.

That we say, okay, God, You call us to do the hard things. I'm ready. I will be strong and courageous because of my faith and because of the strength You'll give me. So, God, I'm ready.

[ 27 : 48 ] I pray that's our heart. Let's pray. Lord God, thank You again for Your Word. And, Lord, You do call us to the hard things, not the easy life. You call us to the hard things.

And, Lord, I don't know what's hard for each person that's here today. Maybe sharing with a family member. Maybe sharing with a stranger. Maybe just sharing it all. Maybe teaching. Maybe doing something in the life of the church.

You call us all to different things, but You call us to work. And, Lord, I pray that we would be people that are willing to accept that call. And we would say, Lord, I'm ready. Remind us that there are consequences for not doing the hard thing.

When we don't fix the roof, it leaks. When we don't share Jesus with Christ with someone, they'll remain lost. That's the consequence. Help us to realize the importance of the work that You've given us to do.

And help us to have willing hearts. We know You'll give us the strength. We know that You'll help us to be courageous. So, Lord, help us to accept the hard things that You have for us. In the name of Jesus, I pray.  
[ 28 : 51 ] Amen. Thank you.