

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

February 8, 2026. "Prepping for the trip: what do I need to get rid of first?"

I Intro.

We're plowing through winter— and waiting for spring. We hope you're having a good year so far. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

Lent begins in a week and a half. Lent is our journey preparing us for crucifixion Friday, Holy Saturday, and then Resurrection Sunday— Easter. Lent gives us a path, journey, of specific things we can do to prepare us for our destination of Easter. So, we're using the familiar idea of taking a trip, and all the things we have to do, to make that trip the best one possible. Think about any kind of trip you've taken. Vacation or just a day trip. What did you have to do to prepare for that trip?

Choose a destination. Decide what NOT to take. Decide what to take. Then actually leave on the trip. The work of preparing ourselves mentally, spiritually to get in the mindset for that spiritual journey, we're finding truths and wisdom from actual trips to help us do the work of Lent. The first week our emphasis was, choosing and committing to a destination. In this context of a personal spiritual journey asking; **Who do I want to be? Am I willing to do the things to become that person?** Today, we're considering the question; **What do I need to clean out, let go of, get rid of, that will be a hindrance on my journey?** Most of you know. Letting go, getting rid of, cleaning out, 'depacking', is infinitely more difficult than deciding what you're going to take. English professors will tell you it's easier to expand a 5 page paper to a 7 page one, than it is to condense a 7 page paper to a 5 page one. Why do you think my messages are so long and meandering? Today, the work of deciding what not to take with you on your journey.

III Sunday.

I want you to think about a; 'cleaning out', or 'getting rid of' you have to do before you go somewhere. **What do you keep in your car, or other places, that you have to clean out before you can take a trip, or use something for a trip?**

Both my wife and I keep things in our car that have to be removed before we can take a trip. Or for us, it's flying somewhere. We like the freedom of packing whatever we want when we drive somewhere. That it allows us to be less concise and thoughtful about packing. We just pile up all sorts of stuff in the car. But when we fly, we definitely have to pack smaller and lighter. Things we would normally take with us, we have to intentionally not pack.

Sometimes we have to think as much about what we're not taking, what we have to get rid of, as we think about what we're taking. It's an entirely different thought process to 'declutter', 'depack', to lighten, than to actually decide what you are going to take along with you. In "***prepping for the trip***", after you decide where you want to go, but before you can decide what you're going to take, you have to give some thoughtful attention to what you're not going to take.

What will be my criteria for making that decision? What is essential? What do I really need?

What have I convinced myself that I need— but really don't. And a really important question.

Am I willing, and able, to do what I need to do to let the things go that I actually don't need?

There are three accounts in scripture of Jesus sending his disciples out. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They're very specific instructions from Jesus about what a life following him would be about. Because they're dated, we can't just overlay this specific teaching on our lives. We'll see the specifics as dated examples of larger truths that we'll pull out. Imagine instructions from a master plumber 75 years ago. You can't actually do the specific things that a plumber would have told you to do. But the overarching truths are still the same. The specific details are the surface (not superficial) interpretation. Have to dig past the specifics to pull out the bigger truths.

Let's look at the 'depacking' instructions from Jesus as he sent the disciples out.

Luke 10:1-12. The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. These were his instructions to them: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. Don't take any money with you, nor a traveler's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don't stop to greet anyone on the road. "Whenever you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.' If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you. Don't move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve their pay. "If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you. Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.' But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!' I assure you, even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a town on judgment day.

A deeper interpretation looks at the historical details and facts. Those details give us a window into that time period. But a deeper, more universal, interpretation will speak into our lives as followers of Jesus. Asking; **What would it look like to live the life of a disciple (an apprentice of Jesus) in our day in age?**

Have to dig deep, pull out, and practice the same insight and wisdom Jesus was imparting to his disciples. See how these larger truths fit into our current world, and how we live them out. This is going to be the personal cleaning out of things we all carry that weigh us down. Going to slog through the specific truths of this passage, and what it says into our work of cleaning out what we don't need.

1. The harvest is great but the workers are few. "He sent them in pairs". Expect to be the minority. Don't expect people who don't understand to affirm your journey. To agree with how you're living. They aren't on the same journey as you are. Your job is not to make the world Christian (things

cannot be Christian. Christian is not an adjective) You're going to be living differently, making different choices. Be okay with that— but don't do this alone. Jesus did send them out with others. Find others who are traveling in the same direction, making the same choices, and make this trip with them. ASK GOD TO PUT OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WHO CAN HELP YOU ON THIS JOURNEY. Find a small group to plug into. Ask; ***Are the people I'm doing life with going to be helpful on my journey?*** Seek out relationships with others who will support and encourage you.

2. "Lambs among wolves". Don't let fear overtake the choices you've made and will continue to make. The life you've chosen to pursue will be tough, and counter-cultural. This is a fundamental truth we have to accept in making this journey. I can be shocked at some of the things I have to deal with, but never surprised. WE ARE LIVING AMONG WOLVES!! Because this is a tough journey, make sure you're living as blamelessly as possible. Do a fearless, complete, inspection of anything that would get in the way of your spiritual journey. Ask; ***Is there anything I might be carrying that will compromise who I am on this journey?*** Jesus doesn't promise easy or safe. But he promises his presence. This is where we put on the full armor of God. Ephesians 6— Truth. Righteousness. The gospel of peace. Faith. Your salvation (relationship with God). And the power of the spirit. We still are; "gentle as doves, AND wise as serpents".

3. "Don't take anything with you". Condition yourself to be able to travel lightly. This is doing the inventory to see if you've acquired, held onto things, because they give you a sense of control or power. You may want certain things, and even need certain things. That's normal. But this comes from the temptation to control, be self-sufficient. "*I can do it myself*". Don't depend on 'things' to take you where God is taking you. Ask; ***Where do I tend to not trust God and want to do it myself?*** This is putting your trust in God. He will provide your needs. We don't sit and wait passively like Cinderella. We're doing the work. But letting go of the desire to heavily control how we get to where God is taking us. Control does NOT equal safety!

4. "Don't stop to greet anyone". This is NOT a command to be rude, ignore others, or isolate yourself. Or use scripture to justify when you're done 'peopling'. Deeper truth— this is an awareness of what could distract you on your journey. There will be so many distractions, possible detours, different paths you could go. Be aware of what your weaknesses are, and what could pull you off your path. Ask; ***What tends to ask for my attention that is more of a distraction than a help? What are things you know could take you off your journey?*** Be aware of what your possible distractions are, and how you need to handle them.

5. "Bring peace wherever you go". This is a big deal. And important to live out how you carry yourself. Your destination will disrupt relationships that aren't supportive of your journey. But the goal and purpose of your life journey is not to be disruptive. It's easy to confuse disruption with effectiveness. We will be seen as a disruptive force. But our goal, the trail we leave, is one of peace not disorder. Ask; ***Do the choices I make on my journey help bring peace to my world?*** Your bringing peace will upset anything that isn't making peace. It may remind others of the hollowness of their path. Our journey is not to disrupt things just for the sake of it. Our journey is to be peacemakers. So, live in a way to bring peace. Jettison anything that would keep you from bringing peace wherever you go. Like; anger, frustration, entitlement, impatience, unkindness, selfishness, despair, etc. Those things will definitely weigh you down.

6. “Don’t move around, accept hospitality”. Just a reiteration of the control issue. Your journey is going to ask and require a lot of openness and flexibility from you. And you’re going to have to do a hard thing too. And that’s sometimes asking for help. Ask; **Are the things I’m carrying on my journey leaving space to receive help?** Sometimes we just have to fight the urge to overprepare out of anxiety. Let go of the belief, and often the flaw, of thinking you’ve got this all figured out and you don’t need any help. Be open to others guidance on your journey.

7. “If you’re not accepted, shake the dust off your feet”. This is one of the most important ‘letting go’s’. Let go of; resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, wallowing in not being appreciated or respected. Anything that’s happened to you that’s weighing you down. And your relationships with others who may not see things the same way you do. If anything will weigh you down, ruin your journey, it’s holding onto old hurts, resentments, bitterness, unforgiveness. Going to just say this; **Hurt people DON’T HAVE TO hurt people.** Condition yourself to hold onto things loosely, and let go of hurt easily. Ask; **What, not if, am I carrying from the past that will weigh me down on my journey?** This is simply the art of learning to let unacceptance go.

8. You are on an important journey. Keep going! Don’t give up! Staying on the journey is only your commitment to your journey. God will guide and direct you on your path. He will honor the choices you are making towards your destination. It won’t always be easy. In fact it’s supposed to be difficult.

IV Challenge.

Goal of this specific aspect of the trip is continually doing a fearless inventory. Always looking deeply and honestly at all the things in your life. Dig them up, hold them, examine them, give them some sort of value as they relate to serving you on your journey. And letting them go if they don’t serve you.

Do the things I’m carrying serve me, helping me, to be a better me?

Or have they become an unnecessary weight, a burden, a barrier on my journey?

This is a difficult, and never ending task. And it MAY mean letting go of things that have become an accepted part of your life. Because we’re always picking new things up. Possessions, habits, practices, old things from the past, etc. Even friends, and relationships may not help you to become who you’ve committed to become. I know you can think of friends from your past. They were really good friends. But for whatever reason, you parted ways. And you’ve found you are a better person, because you chose to go separate ways. A good friend will choose to journey with you.

Let me give you this assurance. Yes— this is pretty difficult work. We all love holding onto things...for a really long time. Doing this work of ‘depacking’ will ‘feel’ painful and sacrificial. It may bring up unresolved issues. Letting go of ANYTHING is always a street knife fight. But if you do it right, do it well, there is a better life for you on the other side. Make sure your destination is a worthy one. And— make sure you are continually fearlessly inventorying what you’re packing or traveling with to make certain those things are helping you on your journey. And if they’re not serving you, helping move you towards your destination, who God wants you to be then— “*Let them go...let them go...*”