

**2009 Illinois Mission Offering and Week of Prayer**  
**Youth Bible Study**  
By Grant Medford

**Title: From Here to Eternity**  
**Focal Passage: Matthew 9:35-37**

**Supplies needed**

- wax lips (or a picture of lips or someone talking to another person)
- a compass
- copies of an Illinois map for everyone present
- a laptop computer or a copy of a Google map page
- a GPS system

**Introductory Activity**

As students enter for your time together, have them group up into five teams. Give each team a few moments to select the most creative thinker in your group and have that person join you at the front of the room.

These five students will play a game that requires quick and creative thinking on their part. Give these students the following instruction:

*“Today we are going to be talking about travel-getting from one place to the next. We are going to look at different tools we use to help guide us as we move from here to...wherever! I’m going to give you a category to work from, and then you’ll have 2 minutes to think of answers to fit the category. We’ll go from one person to the next, allowing you to answer the question. Your team will get one point for a “common” answer and three points for a “creative” answer. You get no points for repeating an answer or if you take too long in responding. After the round, we’ll add up the points and see who came out on top. Here’s the category: Name ways you can get from here to there...”*

Allow students 2 minutes to think of their answers, and then begin with the responses. Here are some examples you might give to them to help them understand the difference between a common answer and a creative answer:

Common Answer: *plane, car, horse*

Creative Answer: *on the Millennium Falcon, using a time machine, Balaam’s donkey*

Award the winning “team” a prize, such as coupons to Sonic Drive-In or some sweet treat!

**Transition**

Say:

*“Going places is very important to us! We love exploration, whether it’s in a car, on the internet or even letting a good book take us places with a good story. Man has always loved travel. But, if we don’t know where we are going or how to get there exactly, the journey we take can be very frustrating.”*

### Basic Thought

Take time to show the students the following five different methods we use to get from one place to the next.

1. Wax Lips – the most common and oldest form of getting directions to travel is word of mouth; when one person tells another person the way to go.
2. Compass – this method of direction gives a specific point and we can stay on track by knowing the direction of North.
3. Map (paper map of Illinois) – this common form of direction lays out the terrain for us on a flat surface, allowing us to place all kinds of landmarks in full view for our journey.
4. Internet (computer) – with the invention of the internet, we can now be more specific on how we get our directions, by inserting information into certain fields and mapping out our directions with points of interest, total distance, best routes, etc.
5. GPS – all the technology of the internet in a portable format!

Give to each group one of the above mentioned tools for travel and have them answer the following questions:

1. How does this tool function in giving me directions?
2. What is needed for me to understand how to use this tool?
3. In what ways does this tool remind me of my spiritual journey?

*(Give each group opportunity to share their answers, especially the third question.)*

### Biblical Truth

Have students open their Bibles to Matthew 9:35-37. Enlist one student to read the three verses aloud for the group.

Use the following commentary to guide your discussion (biblical excerpts taken from the HCS translation):

1. *“Jesus went into all the towns and villages”* – This is a basic truth but one which we need to be reminded of. Jesus WENT. So often in our churches we are all about inviting people to events or activities and we forget that Jesus told us to “go”. He Himself spent significant amounts of time out where the people were – even those people that led questionable lifestyles – just to meet needs and engage them in conversation about spiritual things. Another small word we could easily skip over is the word “all”. He didn’t discriminate or target people that were simply like Him, He spent time visiting places, big and small, socially acceptable and socially unacceptable (Samaria).
  - a. *What are some socially unacceptable groups of people in our community?*
2. *“...preaching the Good News of the kingdom and healing...”* – We must be very clear to understand that Jesus didn’t hang out with tax collectors, sinners and people in need of healing to fit in, be cool or just to make them feel better. He had a purpose – to share the Good News of the Gospel. He wanted them to know that He had come to rescue them from their sin and to give them a new purpose for their lives. Too often, we go and serve people or justify hanging out with the wrong crowd by saying we are there to “be a light”. But, if we simply hang out or meet needs in people’s lives and don’t share with them the “why”, we are not obeying Christ’s command to us. We must tell people about the gift of salvation! We must be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ.
  - a. What exactly is the Good News?
  - b. How can we “heal” those around us?

- c. When Jesus talked of the Good News of the kingdom, what did He mean by “kingdom”?
3. “...*He had compassion for the weary and worn out...*” – This truth is key for us. When we look at our world today, it is easy for us to become negative or cynical towards people. That teacher that just won’t cut you any slack at school or the guy in the car in front of you that just cut you off, or the rude lady in the check-out line at the store can easily turn us into grumbling and negative people. But, Jesus looked beyond the surface of people and saw them at their deepest need. He looked beyond their sin (harsh words) and saw their heart (years of abuse by a parent). He saw them as God had created them to be and not how sin had marred them. We must be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to let us see people this way!
- a. Take the three examples above (driver, rude lady, teacher) and think about why those people might be responding or acting that way. How does this change your attitude or perspective toward that person?
4. “*Jesus said, ‘Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out workers...’*” – This command is both powerful and confusing. It is powerful in that Jesus shows us the method by which we respond to the needs in people’s lives. Prayer must be a huge part of the work involved in helping lead a person to Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:4 reminds us that Satan is blinding the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the message of the gospel. Prayer is the power that releases God to work and move. Our agreement with God on behalf of the lost removes those blinders and allows the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, softening their hearts and orchestrating circumstances to allow them to see a need for Him in their lives. It is also confusing because even though we are given clear commands in scripture to “go” and tell people about the Good News of the kingdom, Jesus is giving us a clear command here to pray for the people that will go. In this particular passage, Jesus is telling us to see the people around us who need Him, then pray that someone will go to them. Jesus doesn’t say to his disciples “go out there and get them, boys!”, He gives them a command to pray for those that will go out there and tell them. While we must be willing to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in our lives to tell people about Christ, we must equally be in constant communion with the Father, praying for those who will go places that we can’t.

### **Application**

Say: “*This final point is where we want to land today. Without neglecting our own circle of influence with the Gospel, we are clearly called to pray for those outside our circle. This month, our church is collecting funds to help various works across our state in reaching the Gospel. With nearly 12 million people in our state, 9 million of them are lost. The task is huge! But, taking the command we received today to “pray the Lord of the harvest to send out workers” we can make a tremendous impact.*”

Pass out a copy of a map of Illinois to each student present (these maps can be gotten for free at various places in your community of government office).

Challenge the students to select one of the three options below and to use it as a reminder to pray this month for the various workers across our state.

- Circle your town on the map, then circle another town that you can pray for specifically. Encourage the students to go home and Google that particular town and look for churches or issues that they can pray for there. Pray for the churches in that community, the

government leaders and if there's no visible evangelical work there, pray that God will rise up someone to take the Gospel to them.

- Take the map home and hang it on your wall in your room. Pinpoint places in Illinois where you personally have an influence (a cousin that lives in Rockford, a friend you met at camp from Metropolis, etc.) Pray for those places and those people that you know that God will give them everything they need to be able to share the Gospel with those in that community.
- Place a circle around the city of Springfield. As the seat of government, you can pray that God will give clear direction to our government leaders and to those who make decisions in our state. Springfield is also the location of the offices of the Illinois Baptist State Association. From the group, workers are trained and sent out to various mission fields across our state. Pray for the IBSA as they work to send out the workers into the harvest field.

### **Closing**

Close in prayer, asking God to both prepare the *students* to share the Good News with those in their circle of influence, and to also continue to pray for those *workers* who will go to other places around our state with the Gospel.