

Mark 6:7–13 — Jesus Sends Out The Apostles

March 28, 2019

Open your Bible to Mark 6. We are working our way through the Gospel of Mark and having a great time doing it. Every weekend, we are learning from Jesus. What could be better? This morning, turn to Mark 6:7. Today, Jesus sends his twelve apostles on their first short-term mission trip. Let's read the text together.

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Mark 6:7–13 (ESV)

This first short-term mission trip was very important. In it we find guiding principles that are followed for other mission trips in the Bible, and they are principles which should be followed in mission work today. This passage also gives us principles about what it means to be a faithful minister and a faithful pastor. Even if you are not a pastor or missionary, you will find the principles about ministry in these verses are important for us to know and follow.

Background

In Mark, we find the first verse of each section gives us a little background information to orient ourselves to what followed. The rest of the verses in that section give us the teaching. Nothing has changed in the section we are studying today. The first verse gives us background. The rest of the verses give us teaching. Let's look at that background.

...And he went about among the villages teaching. Mark 6:6 (ESV)

The key word in this sentence is the pronoun he. Up to this point, Jesus did everything. He was the only preacher. He was the only healer. He was the only one answering all the questions. For the first year and a half of Jesus' three years of ministry, Jesus did it all. Jesus handled the crowds of 10,000 or more by himself. This was Jesus solo pastoring a church of 10,000. That is a recipe for burnout, even if you are the Son of God.

If Jesus divided up his work, he could avoid burnout and reach more people. That is what he does in this section. Remember the apostles were with him 24/7 for the last year and a half. At this point, they knew Jesus' sermons. They knew his illustrations. They knew how Jesus thought because Jesus gave the same material in town after town. At this point, the apostles could quote most of Jesus' preaching material from memory.

The apostles memorized all the gospel information. Now it was time for them to apply it with some on-the-job application. To do that, Jesus sent them on a first short-term mission trip so they could put what they learned into practice. The way this worked is they would go on the trip, then come back and debrief on the trip so Jesus could coach them on necessary adjustments for the future.

This reminds me of seminary. In seminary you take academic classes for the first two years. After that, while you are still in classes, they want you involved in an internship so you can put your learning into practice and so they can coach your first steps in ministry. I found internships super important. Without a good internship, it is difficult to succeed.

This was the strategy Jesus used to train his apostles for ministry, and it is the right way to train people for ministry today. Start with teaching foundational information, then halfway through, throw in real life, hands-on application.

As we work through these verses, since they contain guiding principles for ministry, I want to study them under the heading of what they teach us about being a faithful minister, pastor or missionary. There are eight timeless principles these verses give us about ministry that those in ministry should follow today. This will be especially helpful for anyone going into full-time ministry, but it will also be helpful for anyone serving in lay ministry. Let's begin.

1. A faithful minister is called.

And he called the twelve... Mark 6:7 (ESV)

I don't want to spend too much time on this point, but it is worth noting that Jesus didn't ask for volunteers when it came to this short-term mission trip. He selected the twelve apostles. He chose them. He called them. They didn't volunteer for him. At this point, the importance of their role as apostles wasn't obvious to them, but as we go through the rest of the New Testament, we see God used them to be the foundation of the church. They also became the new leaders over the tribes of Israel. They were the ones who either wrote the New Testament or verified the books of the New Testament. They would have a huge job. They didn't volunteer for this. Jesus called them. He chose them. They didn't choose him.

Today, nothing has changed. God is the one who calls people into ministry. God calls people to be pastors. He calls them to be missionaries. They don't

choose those professions. God chooses them for those professions, and he calls them into those professions.

How does this work since Jesus is no longer on the earth so we cannot hear his audible voice calling our names? The best way I can describe it is God places in someone's heart a growing sense that he wants him or her to be a pastor or a missionary and that person cannot find peace and contentment doing anything else with his or her life.

Years ago, when I was applying for pastoring jobs before I came to CrossWinds, I remember one church interview that felt very odd. A man on the committee asked me, "If you could do anything you wanted with you life and you didn't need to be a local church pastor, what would you do?" I looked at him like a dog that heard a whistle. If God gave me peace doing something else, I would have done something else. The reason I am a pastor is not because I chose this job but because God placed it on my heart that the only way I find peace in my heart is if I am teaching the Word of God to the people of God. The man in the interview who asked me about my dream job didn't know I had a background in computer science and programming and had worked for IBM and AT&T Technologies. I could have done other things with my life that were more lucrative but God didn't give me peace in my heart about the way I was spending my time unless I was about to teach the Bible to people. I didn't ask for that shape in my heart. God placed that shape in my heart. Early on, I came to the settled conviction that it didn't matter if I was teaching the Bible to three people or 3,000

people, it was OK. Helping God's people encounter Jesus in the Bible is the desire God placed in my heart.

It should work in a similar way for everyone else that is in the ministry today. If you can comfortably do something else, you should do something else. You don't go into ministry because you were fired as a Starbucks barista and you are looking for a paycheck. You must know in your heart that this is what God is calling you to do.

The other thing, I want us to notice is the way God called his apostles. He called them in stages. If we put our fingers in the New Testament and look through the text, we find Jesus didn't call the apostles to every aspect of their calling at once. He matured them into their full calling. First, the Holy Spirit opened their heart to Jesus. Second, Jesus called them to follow him and be with him full-time. Third, he designated them as apostles. Fourth, he sent them on a short-term mission trip for them to begin use their gifts. Fifth, he sent them out after the resurrection on the Great Commission, which was their final full-fledged calling. In the same way, Jesus often calls young men and women into ministry and missions, gradually using small steps along the way to mature them into a greater and more substantial calling on their lives.

For me, God first placed a desire in my heart to serve him in high school while on a summer mission trip. That led to other short-term mission trips. That led to seminary and serving as a youth pastor, which eventually led to serving as a lead pastor today. God takes us and matures us into our full callings.

2. A faithful minister is not a lone ranger.

...began to send them out two by two... Mark 6:7 (ESV)

Jesus didn't send his apostles out to fly solo. He always sent them out in pairs. There are many good reasons for this. That way, they could support one another and protect one another. They also had double the gifts and double the witness. They went out as dynamic duos. Like Batman and Robin traveled together, Paul and Barnabas traveled together. The early church followed this pairing principle and didn't send missionaries out alone.¹ If missionaries were not sent out in pairs, they are sent out in groups of four.

There is great practical implications of this for pastors and missionaries today. Too often we hear missionaries are sent to the field by themselves. They suffer from of a lack of companionship and support. Mission work is hard work. It can be discouraging work. Missionaries face hardships. It is not God's desire, nor is it biblical practice, that they should face those hardships alone. Christian community and support is incredibly important for spiritual life and health.

This principle doesn't just apply to missionaries. I think it should also apply to church planting and campus launching. I don't think it is wise, nor is it biblical, to plant a church on the back of one person. It is too much weight. There is not enough support. I look back on our launch of the Spencer campus and the stress placed on Pastor Jordan, and if I could do it over again, I would have launched the Spencer campus with two staff, not just one. The support, wisdom and encouragement found from a team is incredibly important.

¹ Acts 13:2,3; 15:39-41; 19:22

Thankfully, by virtue of the Spencer campus being a campus that is connected with the Spirit Lake campus, there was help from the Spirit Lake campus to make the Spencer campus a success. Even now Pastor Jordan tells me how important it is to him that we meet weekly for encouragement and to share staff resources to help carry the load. We are so thankful that because two campuses worked together to support one another, the fifth anniversary of our Spencer campus is in a few weeks.

The application we must remember is that faithful ministers do not try to fly solo. They do not act as lone rangers. That is not the way Jesus designed the gospel to go forward. God calls us to work as teams and work together in community.

3. A faithful minister shares both parts of the gospel.

...and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. Luke 9:2 (ESV)

Some of you noticed this verse is not from Mark. It is from Luke, and you are wondering why I referenced this as our key text. The account of Jesus sending out the twelve on their first short-term mission trip in the Gospel of Mark is short; it almost reads like CliffsNotes. If we turn to Luke 9 and Matthew 10, which are the parallel accounts of the sending out of the twelve in those Gospels, they add more details about what Jesus said.

In Luke, Jesus told them their job on this mission trip was to proclaim the kingdom of God. Their job was to share the gospel. Proclaim means to make a public announcement. In that day, news was carried by a herald. He would run to a town and proclaim the news of the day in the public square. They didn't have

cable. They didn't have Fox News and CNN. The herald came to town and proclaimed the news you needed to hear.

As faithful ministers, the apostles' job was to serve as heralds. They were to make a public announcement of what God has done for us through Jesus. All those who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will be part of the kingdom of God. They will be saved. The apostles were also to proclaim the exclusivity of that claim.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 (ESV)

What I want us to notice is their job was not to just proclaim the good news of the gospel. They were to also proclaim the bad news of the gospel. The bad news is that we are sinners and desperately caught in the web of our sin. There is no way for us to save ourselves. We deserve the wrath of God and eternal punishment. If we look in Mark 6, we find they were to proclaim the bad news of our sin and the need everyone has for repentance, not just the good news of Jesus.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. Mark 6:12 (ESV)

Far too many preachers have a one-sided proclamation. They proclaim that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Their message is more about how to be a better person. They are health, wealth, and prosperity preachers.

Jesus said that is not the proclamation of a faithful minister. A faithful minister must proclaim the bad news of our sin and the good news of Jesus. I realize that preaching our sin is depressing. Nobody likes to look into the three-

way mirror of his or her soul. We don't like to face the truth about our lives and the helplessness we have before our sin. If we don't preach sin, people won't see their need for Jesus, our great savior.

One of my favorite sayings summarizes this point. Sin is always the problem. Jesus is always the solution. Both parts need to be preached.

4. A faithful minister shows compassion.

...and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Mark 6:7 (ESV)

Jesus gave his apostles authority. This word means power or ability. Jesus delegated to his apostles power over demons to cast them out of people, just like Jesus cast out demons. Notice Jesus didn't delegate this authority and power to all people. He just extended his authority and power to his apostles. If we look at some of the parallel texts, we see Jesus delegated more than just the ability to cast out demons.

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases... Luke 9:1 (ESV)

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons... Matthew 10:8a (ESV)

Jesus delegated to them the ability to heal diseases, to raise the dead, and cast out demons. Jesus delegated all of his miraculous powers to them so they could do the miracles he was able to perform.

The apostles kept the ability to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons for more than just the time period of this short mission trip. They kept this ability for all of their lives. The Bible tells us one of the ways apostles were recognized was by the miraculous abilities that were delegated to them by Jesus.

The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles... 2 Corinthians 12:12 (NIV84)

Why did Jesus give these miraculous powers to them? Let me give you two reasons.

First, these powers validated the truth of their message. When they rolled into a town, and told people to repent of their sin and trust in Jesus, that was a big claim that didn't have much evidence behind it to help people know why they should believe. After the apostles raised a few dead people and healed a few sick people, people took their words about Jesus more seriously. They paid attention to what they said.

Second, notice none of these miraculous signs were random demonstrations of power. They were all demonstrations of compassion to people in need. Jesus didn't reorder the stars in the night sky or levitate a building just for the fun of it. All of Jesus' miraculous powers were focused on compassion toward people in need. In the same way, all of the power Jesus delegated to his apostles was to demonstrate compassion to people in need.

If you look at false teachers, they did the opposite. Mark 12:38-40 tells us false teachers have a reputation for taking advantage of people and preying on the poor. The apostles were to be the opposite. They were to be people filled with compassion toward the poor.

While Jesus' miraculous healing powers were only given to his apostles, so we don't have that ability today, faithful ministers are to still be filled with compassion toward people in need.

This past week, I had a conversation with some of the pastoral staff about this very topic. We discussed the importance of genuinely caring for the people God places in their pastoral care not because it is their job but because they genuinely want to, because that is the heart of Jesus. As pastors do we care for people perfectly? Of course not. Do we miss opportunities to care for people in need? Of course. For those times I have failed to be compassionate toward any of you, I ask your forgiveness. That was not my intent. All faithful ministers must genuinely care about their people.

In the church, pastors must lead the way in compassionate care for people, and the people of the church should follow in the footsteps of the pastor of the church. At CrossWinds, my hope and prayer is that you always feel loved. When you are sick, I want meals delivered to your home. When you are absent, my hope is people call you because you are genuinely missed. Compassion for people is what marks faithful ministry.

5. A faithful minister trusts God to meet his needs.

He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.
Mark 6:8–9 (ESV)

Jesus told them that on this missionary journey, they should not take anything but a staff. The parallel passages in Luke and Matthew are slightly different but emphasize the same thing. The apostles were not to prepare or pack for this mission trip. They were to leave their credit cards home. They were totally reliant on God to provide for all their needs.

Why did Jesus insist on this? Remember this mission trip was part of their training. As part of their training, they were learning that they could trust God to

provide for their needs. They needed to know from firsthand experience the truth of Matthew 6.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:31–33 (ESV)

They needed to know that where God guides, he promises to provide.

When we read this, at first it sounds like a hardcore church planting strategy. Don't plan. Don't prepare. Just go to the mission field! God will provide. If we wanted to take this to its local logical conclusion, I could skip packing lunch and trust that God would send someone to provide me lunch every day this week. That might turn into a great weight loss strategy.

Before we get too carried away, we need to realize these stringent stipulations were only temporary. Jesus was not asking them to take vows of poverty nor was Jesus saying every mission trip should happen without prayer and planning. Look what Jesus said about this mission trip before he went to the cross.

And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." Luke 22:35–36 (ESV)

From that point forward, Jesus told his apostles to prepare and to plan. Planning and preparing is the normal way ministry goes forward.

What was Jesus trying to teach them by sending them on a short-term mission trip where they had to trust God to provide for all their needs? Jesus strategically put them in a temporary time of scarcity so they would learn they

can trust in those hard times. By facing a short period of scarcity at the beginning of their ministry and seeing God provide, they learned that later in their ministry, when they faced a similar period of scarcity, they could have confidence that God would come through and provide for their needs.

One of the best things any Christian can go through to mature their faith and build their confidence in Jesus is a period of short-term scarcity where everything they need is provided without their strength but by God's miraculous intervention. These are moments where God provides our daily bread. Jesus didn't want his apostles to be that way all the time but he wanted them to experience scarcity and his provision for a short period of time. That way they learned to face the future with confidence that God can and would provide for their needs no matter what they faced.

In the past, Cindy and I faced financially difficult times, in particular, when I was between jobs. In those times, when we prayed for our needs, we saw checks show up in the mail from long forgotten friends so we could pay our bills and feed our children. Sixty days before coming to CrossWinds, we had almost no money in the bank. Just before we came, Cindy's father passed away leaving her an inheritance so we could have a down payment on a house. We always look back on God's provision in the lean seasons of the past and they give us the confidence that he will provide for us in the lean seasons we face in the future. If God takes care of clothing the lilies of the field, will he not take care of clothing us?

Faithful ministers live trusting God to meet their needs. They don't live in scarcity all the time but they have experienced seasons of scarcity some of the time and seen God provide.

6. A faithful minister is content with what God provides.

And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there." Mark 6:10 (ESV)

When the apostles pulled into a town, God provided a home for them to stay in. When they started healing the sick and raising the dead, their popularity shot through the roof. They would receive invitations from other people to stay at their nicer homes. I am sure somebody invited them to upgrade their accommodations and stay at their house because they had a hot tub. Another person would have invited them to their fancy home because it had a swimming pool.

Jesus told them not to accept those invitations. They were not to use ministry success as a ladder to financial success. They were to stay in the place God sent them and in the home God gave them.

In that day, false teachers were known as ladder climbers. The more popular they became, the better the home they stayed in when they visited a town. That was not to be the reputation of God's leaders. They were to be content.

For pastors, this can be a challenge. Some pastors are like false teachers. They are ladder climbers. They take a job in a small country church and serve, secretly waiting for the invitation from the big city church so they can move up the church ladder, have a bigger house and enjoy a bigger paycheck. I always

struggle when I see pastors follow that path. It violates this principle. If God wants a pastor to move to a different church, the driving factor should not be more money and notoriety. In 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul told us that godliness is not to be viewed as a means of gain. My motto is to bloom where you are planted. If God is providing for you, be content with where God placed you.

In the parallel passage in Matthew, Jesus challenges the entire idea of trying to make a fortune through ministry.

...You received without paying; give without pay... Matthew 10:8–10 (ESV)

In other words, don't put a price on your services. Can you imagine if the apostles turned their Jesus-given healing gifts into a business model? The apostles could charge \$5 for every demon they cast out and \$7.50 for every dead relative they raised. They would have made some good money. The problem is they would not have been using their God-given gifts to show compassionate to people. They would have been using their God-given gifts to make money off of people.

How can we can apply this to pastors today? This is especially challenging for the Christian publishing industry. While there are some publishing services where it is appropriate to charge because the publishing infrastructure costs money, many pastors use the publishing companies to make a ton of money. Just as it would be inappropriate for the apostles to monetize their God-given ability to perform miracles to make a fortune, it is inappropriate for those gifted by God with pastoring and teaching gifts to monetize their God-given gifts in hope of making a personal fortune. Their gifts were given to enable them to serve people, not to get rich off of people.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV)

While it is inappropriate to use ministry gifts to generate a financial fortune, 1 Corinthians 9:14 and Galatians 6:6 tell us pastors should be paid by their churches. Pastors should be financially loved by their churches.

Nevertheless, a faithful minister is known for contentment where God has placed him and contentment with the salary God has provided him.

7. A faithful minister is discerning where he spends his time.

And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. Mark 6:11 (ESV)

The assumption is there were some places that would not listen to the gospel message the apostles offered. Some places were filled with hard-hearted people that rejected the gospel message, just like Nazareth rejected Jesus. The apostles took comfort in knowing that just as Jesus was rejected in Nazareth, they shouldn't take it personally when a town rejected them. When a town was hostile against them, they were not to persist working in that place but should simply leave. When they left, they were to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against that town.

The Jews in that day, when they traveled outside of Israel, would stop at the border of Israel to shake the Gentile dust off their shoes. They would shake the Gentile dust out of their clothing and their hair. It was a way of expressing complete contempt to the Gentiles by saying the Jews didn't even want Gentile dirt in their country.

Jesus took that Jewish tradition and applied it to how the apostles were to treat hard-hearted Jewish cities that rejected the gospel message.

Think about this. When a pair of apostles pulled into town to preach the gospel, and they healed sick people and dead people, but people still drove them out of town for talking about Jesus, that was a place with hard soil. The apostles didn't have to stay there and keep casting good gospel seed on the ground of their hearts which were as hard as concrete. Look how Matthew talked about this in his parallel passage.

And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. Matthew 10:14–15 (ESV)

How does this apply to faithful ministers today? There are some places, and some churches, that are very hard ground. They are like Nazareth. They resist the gospel. Unless God makes it clear to a pastor that he wants you in that church or city, these verses tell us in those hard-hearted places, it is wise to consider moving to another place where you can spread the gospel seed on soil where it can grow. Be discerning how you use your time. It is not a wise use of your time to spend lots of time in a place hard against the gospel.

Let me look at this through the lens of a pastor. If a pastor finds himself in a church where the people are hard against the gospel and they are spiritually unresponsive, he needs to ask himself if his time would be better spend in another church where there could be some spiritual fruit.

From personal experience, I can tell you I have served in churches where every week was a new conflict people didn't like preaching through the Bible. I

preached the same sermons in other churches and the people loved the messages because they were hungry for the Bible. The sermon didn't change. The pastor didn't change. The people changed. Some people and places are like Nazareth. They are hardened against spiritual truth. Be discerning how you use your time. You don't need to stay in that kind of place. Shake the dust off your feet and move on.

As for missionaries that are working among unreached people, that is always challenging because those missionaries know the fruit they expect will be minimal. Nevertheless, this principle still applies. There should be some fruit. Be open to working with people where God has softened their hearts to receive the truth.

8. A faithful minister is obedient when the calling is costly.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Mark 6:12–13 (ESV)

At first, it doesn't look like this verse is particularly significant because they simply did what they were told to do. What I found insightful is reading the parallel passage for this verse in the Gospel of Matthew. When Matthew finished recording what Jesus said as he commissioned the twelve for this short-term missionary journey, we see Jesus followed it with 26 verses worth of warnings to prepare them for the suffering they would face. Their short-term mission trip would not be easy. Let me give you a sample of some of the warnings in Matthew that Jesus gave after he commissioned his apostles for this mission trip.

Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake... When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next...If

they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, **how much more will they malign those of his household.** Matthew 10:21–25 (ESV)

As faithful ministers, they obeyed Jesus even though obeying Jesus was costly. Faithful ministers do the same today. They obey Jesus even when it hurts.

Conclusion

This passage is a gold mine for truth about what it looks like to be a faithful minister of the gospel. These truths were not just true at the time of Jesus, but they should also characterize every faithful pastor, missionary and ministry leader today. Let's review them before I pray.

1. **Faithful ministers are called by God.** They don't volunteer to be pastors because their job in Starbucks as a barista didn't work out. Pastors and missionaries respond to God's call because God won't let them do anything else with their lives.
2. **A faithful minister is not a lone ranger.** The apostles always worked in pairs. That should be true in ministry today. Missionaries should not be left alone. Pastors should not be left to labor alone. Everybody in ministry needs encouragement and support.
3. **Faithful ministers share the whole gospel.** They share not just the good news about Jesus but the bad news about our sin.
4. **Faithful ministers are filled with compassion.** They genuinely care about people and want to help in their time of need.
5. **Faithful ministers trust God to meet their needs.** God sometimes give us periods of scarcity, where he provides for our needs in order to build our faith.

When we have seen God provide for our needs in the past, we have confidence he will provide for our needs in the future.

6. **Faithful ministers are content with what God provides.** They are not ladder climbers using ministry success as a means to financial success.
7. **Faithful ministers are discerning where they spend their time.** They know when to move from a place that is rejecting the gospel seed to find a place that is receptive to gospel seed.
8. **Faithful ministers are obedient when their calling is costly.** They know they will face difficulty for teaching the truth, but they accept that suffering as just part of their job.

Prayer

While not all of us are called into ministry, nevertheless we thank you for this text which teaches us what a faithful minister looks like and lives like. Many of these truths don't just apply to pastors and missionaries, but they apply to us today. Help us to learn contentment where you have placed us. Help us to be wise in the way we spend our time so we use our time for the greatest gospel growth. Help us to be filled with compassion for others, especially in their time of need. Help us to be faithfully sharing the whole gospel that includes the bad news of our sin with the good news of our savior. We thank you for your Word which guides us in truth. Amen.



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