

The Great Commission

I would rather fail in a cause that was destined to succeed,
than succeed in a cause that is bound to ultimately fail.

“Jesus mission was to provide salvation for all who would come to Him in faith ... to make disciples. His second mission was to teach God’s truth to those disciples. That is the same twofold mission He gives the church.”¹

What is our mission as believers... why are we here?
Are we willing to do His will as our primary focus in life?

- 16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.
- 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.
- 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
- 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:16-20)

A summary of this text...

Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples.

I. A Final Gathering :16-17

Matthew records a meeting between Jesus and His disciples just prior to His ascension back to the Father. Imagine spending time with the Resurrected Jesus, confirming His victory over death, fielding questions, talking, eating, spending time. The rarest of privileges.

The disciples’ conflict.

- 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

¹ John MacArthur, *The Mac Arthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), p. 345.

Worship and doubt – It seems they were still in shock, seeing Jesus again – alive. Both worship and doubt are mentioned.

If we doubt our beliefs long enough, we may begin to believe our doubts.

28:17 some doubted The Greek verb used here **implies hesitation or indecision, rather than unbelief.** The disciples are struggling to comprehend what they are witnessing.²

But some doubted (the word *doubt* means “to duplicate,” “to be of two minds,” or “to waver, hesitate”). All wanted to believe, but their faith was weak. Some experienced the internal tug-of-war between “two minds”—the one wanting to follow their fledgling faith and the other wanting to follow “reason.” Even those presented with clear evidence for the truth can still have doubts.

How many people come to Jesus but are doubtful, double-minded, hesitant, or unstable in their convictions? Like Jesus’ first disciples we struggle. The coming of the Holy Spirit provided believers with the living and indwelling resurrected Christ. Paul wrote that the glorious mystery of the Christian life was

“Christ within the hope of glory.”

After Jesus ascended to the Father they were to wait until the arrival of the Holy Spirit who would fill them with power to be His witnesses.

Jesus’ Authority

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth...”

Much can be made of Jesus authority. A few examples of Jesus’ Exousia:

The resurrection is the ultimate validation of Jesus’ divine authority.

Paul writes,

“...which He [God] brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is His body the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:20-23)

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Mt 28:17). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Other major Scriptures of God placing all authority on Christ are many:

Daniel writes,

“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” (Dan. 7:13-14)

Speaking of Jesus’ humbling Himself to become man and die on the cross, Paul writes to the Philippians,

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9-11).

Paul Washer says,

“In light of this truth, and in light of the nature and extension of Christ’s lordship, it should be clear to all reasonable creatures that their personal response to Him is absolutely critical. Since God has made Christ to be both Lord and Judge of the universe, then every other concern for man is secondary, even trivial, in comparison. To be in right standing with the absolute Sovereign of the universe should be the greatest of all concerns for every man.”³

Jesus who has all authority commands His disciples.

II. The Priority Command:

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

The Command: Make Disciples

³ Paul Washer, *The Gospel’s Power and Message*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), p. 255.

Jesus' command to His disciples is to go and make disciples. To "make disciples *of all nations*" does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be. The verb "make disciples" also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involves: "baptizing" them and "teaching" them obedience to all of Jesus' commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.⁴

Baptizing

Baptism has been compared to a wedding ceremony in which public commitment is made by an exchange of vows. Afterwards their dating life is over, and they are exclusively married to each other.

Baptism has been defined as "an outward testimony of an inward work". Baptism isn't a part of salvation but is a step of obedience in following Christ, in which the believer identifies with Christ and His church. In this initial step towards becoming a disciple **baptism is a picture** of every believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection as someone goes under the water, dying to this world, and then comes up in newness of life.

Paul writes,

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Cor. 5:17).

Teaching

The old saying, "Disciples are made, not born" holds true, since being born again must be followed by spiritual growth.

Peter writes,

"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation... (1 Peter 2:2)

Paul agrees that God's word is a key ingredient in Christian maturity:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

(2 Tim. 3:16-17).

J. B. Phillips version illumines these verses,

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man's life and training

⁴ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 431). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

him in good living. The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work.”

Jesus said that disciples were to be taught to obey all that He commanded. When Jesus was asked about the Greatest Commandment, He said it was ‘to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and then to love your neighbor as yourself – that on these two commands hang all the Law.’

Another example of discipleship teaching is in responding to trials with rejoicing. Jesus spoke of responding to persecution,

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12).

Paul wrote that trials were tools in character development,

“... and we exult [greatly rejoice] in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance proven character; and proven character hope and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Rom. 5:3-5).

James adds,

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

Discipleship means that every believer needs to be trained in the Scriptures for spiritual growth. Peter in his second letter, includes the necessity of diligent effort for character development.

- 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,
- 6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,
- 7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.
- 8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter, in obedience to Jesus’ command, was making disciples.

All believers are in right standing with God because they have imputed

righteousness. They need is to grow in Christ-likeness and a change of behavior; they need practical righteousness. Having been saved from the penalty of sin, they need to be freed from the power of sin.

Paul wrote that the Roman believers needed to be

...transformed by the renewing of their minds. (Rom. 12:2)

Transformation – [Gk. metamorphosis] – is a change of character leading to a change in behavior - from the inside out. (opposite of religion – externals first)

Sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action reap a habit;

Sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character reap a destiny.

Discipleship means to bring the whole person into submission to Christ, until lives in him and through him. Paul spoke of this in his letter to the Colossians,

“...Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to the power, which mightily works within me.”

(Col.1:27-29).

A musician is a disciplined learner of a music teacher. A teacher is an advanced musician training a beginner in music and technique. A teacher ...

- Keeps him on track and practicing with small goals that improve skills.
- Moves him in the right direction and provides accountability
 - the teacher will know if you haven't practiced.
- A teacher provides a fast-track to growth.

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of growth through the Word of God.

In this instance due to neglect their spiritual growth has been stunted:

“Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (Heb. 5:11-14).

Jesus commissioned all believers to first become disciples themselves, who will then make disciples.

Everything in this world will pass away; all of our deaths are certain. We have a limited opportunity to accomplish the mission He has given us, before we stand before Him. Let's get to work! First become one, then make some! [Eddie]