

LET'S UNDERSTAND THE GREAT COMMISSION (Matthew 28:19-20)

I. The message.

- A. Again, listen to the passage from the English Standard Version, which is very similar in this to the American Standard Version (Matthew 28:18-20).
- B. Notice, in particular, the phrase “make disciples”.
 - 1. In the original language, this phrase is in the imperative tense.
 - 2. The key verb, the one we translate “make”, is an imperative.
 - 3. “Go”, “baptize”, and “teach” are all subordinate to “make”.
- C. This means that going, teaching, and baptizing are all supportive to the only imperative in the Great Commission, which is “make disciples”.
 - 1. This in no way makes the subordinate or supportive clauses optional.
 - 2. We have to go and teach and baptize, which are all essential to making disciples.
 - 3. You cannot make disciples without going, teaching and baptizing.
- D. The phrase translated “all nation” is a reference to all people, with each individual person in mind.
 - 1. We are to disciple each person in the world.
 - 2. Isn't this consistent with what Jesus taught about the importance of the value of the individual soul?
 - 3. Each soul is inestimable in value, therefore, each soul is to be disciplined.
 - 4. One person said that the Greek structure reveals that Jesus was saying, “As you are going, bring all nations under my discipline (teaching), baptizing them by the authority of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
- E. There are at least two things we should take away from this understanding of the Great Commission:
 - 1. You don't obey the Great Commission only by going overseas or to a mission field.
 - a. You can't fly over, drive past or sail past people on your way to go make disciples.
 - b. We are obligated to everyone we come in contact with to share the Good News with them.
 - 2. Jesus placed the emphasis on as you are going make disciples.
 - a. As we move about our daily lives, we should be trying to make disciples for Christ.
 - b. Disciple making is a way of life not something we can turn on and off like a radio.
 - c. We don't compartmentalize this aspect of our lives.
- F. This is something I personally have a problem with.
- G. Disciple making is not a one or two hour segment of our week.
- H. One writer said, “You don't go soul winning because you are soul winning as a way of life”

II. The meaning.

- A. Since the message of the passage is to make disciples, we need to know more about the meaning of the word disciple.
- B. The Greek word translated disciple comes from a word that literally means, "a learner; to learn; a scholar."
- C. There are four major ideas that can be meant when this word is used:
 - 1. It can refer to a person who is a student of someone and is used to contrast the student with the teacher (Matthew 10:24).
 - a. When making a disciple, we are to help people be students of Jesus and His word.
 - b. We do this through our actions and teaching as we are going in our world every day.
 - 2. A disciple is one who professes to have learned certain truths and principles from a teacher and lives his life according to them out of respect for the teacher's position and authority.
 - a. We can call this the reception stage of discipling.
 - b. It should occur after we have shared the gospel with someone.
 - 3. In every case "disciple" implies that a person not only accepts the view of the teacher intellectually, but also carries them out in his life.
 - a. We can call this the application stage of discipling.
 - b. Through this process, the student becomes like the teacher.
 - c. It is our goal to have ourselves and those whom we are discipling to be like Christ as much as possible.
 - 4. A disciple is one who follows his teacher.
 - a. He is with his teacher everywhere he can be with him.
 - b. This way, he not only learns from his words but also from the teacher's actions.
 - c. This can be called the demonstration phase of discipleship.
 - d. We might say this is the "do as I say and as I do" part of discipleship.
- D. Hopefully, we understand that making a disciple is not a short process.
 - 1. It takes time and effort to make disciples.
 - 2. John 4:2.
 - 3. It took Jesus three years to make 12 good ones and they still didn't grasp everything.
 - 4. We aren't through with someone who we've just baptized.
 - 5. We must continue to teach him all the things he needs to know.
- E. Another key word in this idea of discipling is the Greek word translated follow.
- F. In classical, non-biblical Greek it was used several ways:
 - 1. For soldiers following their leader;
 - 2. Used to describe a slave following his master;
 - 3. It described a person who followed someone's advice;

4. It referred to a person who was following a certain law;
 5. It was used to describe a person who was able to follow the logic in an argument;
 6. It was also used to describe someone who attached himself to another person with a desire to get a favor from the person.
- G. Everyone of these uses of the word for follow is applicable to the relationship of a Christian and Christ.
- H. It has everything to do with what we teach people.
- I. As we live our lives and disciple others, we are trying to get them and ourselves to follow Christ in all things.
- J. This particular Greek word translated follow is found numerous times in the New Testament.
1. Mark 2:14 - Jesus called men to follow Him.
 2. Matthew 16:24.
 3. Mark 1:18; Matthew 4:20.
 4. Matthew 10:34 - some followed Jesus out of thankfulness.
 5. Luke 9:59, 61 - we must count the cost to follow Jesus.
 6. Luke 5:11 - it involves a sacrifice.
 7. John 12:26 - following Jesus brings a reward.
- K. It is a must to make sure that we let the one we are teaching know that every area of his life is to be yielded to the Lord.
1. It is not an impulsive decision to make and he needs to know the Lord warned against that.
 2. We can't become so numbers oriented that we fail to stress the demands that Jesus makes.
 3. People need to know that on the front end.
 4. Jesus wants men and women who will follow Him on His conditions (Luke 6:46).
 5. Being a disciple of Jesus costs and we have to help people count that cost.
- L. This doesn't mean that a person has to be 100% in to become a Christian.
1. This is a learning process.
 2. It takes time because no Christian is born full grown (1 Peter 2:2).
 3. This is God's method of growth once one has been baptized.
- M. A person must be told the seriousness of discipleship on the front end so that they know what they are getting into.
- N. A person has to count the cost on the front end in order to make an informed decision.

III. The method.

- A. When we study the Great Commission, it should be clear that winning souls occurs during all phases of our daily lives.
1. It is something for which we are held responsible.
 2. We should be aware of the fact that men need the gospel of Christ and it is our responsibility to share it with them.
 3. We can't get someone to share the gospel for us any more than we

- can get someone to eat for us.
- B. It is called personal evangelism because it is one person sharing with another and is the biblical way.
 - C. It is a grand thing to think of evangelizing the world, but we can't get caught up in thinking about the needs of the human race and not look out for the individual near us.
 - D. Its not that hard to stand in front of a camera or a microphone and preach to large groups of people.
 - E. It is much more challenging to sit across the table from an individual, eye to eye, and attempt to teach them the gospel.
 - F. We can't take the focus off the individual when going into the whole world.
 - G. Think about it this way:
 - 1. What if 12 of us spent one year with each of discipling one person.
 - 2. At the end of the year, we would have 24 capable of discipling others.
 - 3. What if we did that for 10 years?
 - 4. At the end of 10 years, there would be over 12 thousand disciples made.
 - 5. That is just 12 people in one congregation taking time to teach, baptize, and ground in the faith one person each.
 - H. Just imagine if every Christian would become a discipler of others.
 - I. If we left it up to just preachers preaching from pulpits it will never get done.
 - J. Disciple makers are multipliers aren't they?
 - K. What we are doing is reproducing aren't we?
 - 1. You produce after your own kind.
 - 2. Christians should be producing Christians.
 - L. Paul encouraged the Corinthians and others to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).
 - 1. The truth is, those that we bring to Christ will follow us to a certain extent.
 - 2. We are what they know and who they know.
 - 3. The ones we teach will become, at least to a certain extent, what we are.
 - 4. The pressure on us then, is to be imitable.
 - 5. We will reproduce the kind of person we are.
 - 6. We can't develop in others what we don't have in ourselves.

From a book entitled "How To Have Biblical Church Growth" by J.J. Turner.