
The Command

*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go therefore and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” -Matthew 28:18-20*

Go Make Disciples Check-in: How did others respond to the following question: How would you respond to the statement that Jesus is lord over all creation, including you?

In Matthew 28 there is one central command “Make disciples” alongside three qualifying commands (“Go”, “Baptize”, and “Teach”) which further clarify how we are to make disciples. For this week, we will be focusing on the first two commands: “Make disciples” and “Go.”

We saw last week that because Jesus is our Lord, he has the authority to command us to do what He desires. And, we as Christians, should want to do what He desires because He is good and because we love Him. Here in v. 19 we see that His desire is for us to go and make disciples.

- | |
|--|
| <p>1. How would you explain to a non-believer or a new Christian what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?</p> |
|--|

According to Francis Chan in “Multiply”, disciples in biblical times would follow their rabbi wherever he went, learn from his teaching, and begin to live how he lived. It would be impossible to be a disciple of someone and not end up like that person. Jesus teaches us this in Luke 6:40:

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” -Luke 6:40

Therefore, in basic terms, a disciple of Christ is a follower of Jesus who is helping others to follow Jesus. We imitate him, we become like him, and we carry on his ministry to others. This means that our primary purpose on this Earth is to go make followers of Christ, who are then able to go make more followers of Christ.

Group Check-in: How does this compare with how most people would define what it means to be a “Christian.”

2. Why do you think we see so little disciple making in churches today?

As we seek to lovingly obey Christ and this command we must first understand the difference between making disciples and other church activity. While programs and events can be used as a means of reaching the lost and equipping the saved, they are not in and of themselves making disciples. Rather making disciples involves asking people to “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15) and to “Take up their cross daily” (Luke 9:23) and to become “Fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). It is an invitation to trust in Jesus followed by a life-long commitment to following him, including going and making disciples themselves.

Dawson Trotman writes:

“If I were a minister of a church and had deacons or elders to pass the plate and choir members to sing, I would say, “Thank God for your help. We need you. Praise the Lord for these extra things you do,” but I would keep pressing home the big job—“Be fruitful and multiply.” All these other things are incidental to the supreme task of winning a man or woman to Jesus Christ and then helping him or her to go on.” -Dawson Trotman

Scripturally speaking, there is no such thing as a follower of Jesus who is not making disciples. Yet, the church is often filled with people who have been “Christians” for many years, who have faithfully attended worship, serving in ministry, and gave generously, but never led someone to Christ or trained others to go make more disciples.

Group Check-in: How do you think the church can go about recovering the biblical definition of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus? In other words how does this definition become the norm and not the exception for what it means to be a Christian?

Hopefully we now see from Jesus that disciple-making is not necessarily about starting a new program or hosting a series of events, but rather about intentionally inviting others to believe in Jesus and then intentionally teaching them what it means to follow Him. Discipleship is not something we do on the weekends or do mid-week, but a way of living in which we are helping those God has placed in our life take the next step in their life with Christ, whatever that might be.

That brings us to Jesus’ command to “Go!” Often we think Jesus is introducing a new command to the disciples here. However, this command actually has roots all the way back to Genesis 12 in which God calls Abram with the following words:

“Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” - Genesis 12:1-3

Therefore, we should see Jesus’ ministry and the Great Commission as a continuation of the mission God had all the way back in Genesis. Just as He commanded Abram to go and to be a blessing to others, so we are called to go and be a blessing to others as we tell them about Jesus.

Furthermore, it is important for us to understand that Jesus’ command in Greek has the meaning of “As you are going.” In the Bible we see Jesus constantly making disciples on the go for, “The Son of man has no place to even lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

3. What are some examples of Jesus making disciples on the go?

The application for us is not necessarily to sell our homes and head out on the road or to the far corners of the Earth (although for some that is true). But Jesus does call us to be ready and willing to make disciples wherever we do go, whether that be our homes, schools, our workplaces, soccer fields, neighborhoods, vacations, etc.

Group Discussion: What are the environments you believe God has called you to “Go make disciples!”

Furthermore, we need to understand the difference between Christ’s command to “Go!” and our preference to “Come!” Jesus’ intent was for his disciples to go to the lost, to meet them on their turf, to eat in their homes. Therefore, loving obedience to this command involves going to particular individuals and inviting them to follow Jesus; not setting up shop somewhere comfortable or sending out a mass invite to an event or program.

- 1. On the following page, make a chart noting the differences between churches (and individuals) who have a “Come” strategy to disciple-making compared to a “Go” strategy to disciple making? Then be thinking about some simple ways you can begin to “Go make disciples.”**

Come make disciples:

Go make disciples:

Go Make Disciples

How would you define what it means to be a Christian? How does that compare with what Jesus says about following Him?

Praying This Week

- Thank God that he is working to make disciples out of us.
- Ask God to forgive us and renew us for our half-hearted attempts to go make disciples.
- Invite the Spirit to put upon our hearts ways we can be “Going” this week.