

WE ARE TO MAKE DISCIPLES

**Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*,
vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 107–108.**

Matthew 28:16 – 20 (NKJV)

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.

17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came 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 of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

They Shared the Good News with Others

- Some Bible scholars equate this “mountain meeting” in Galilee with the appearance of the Lord to “more than 500 brethren at one time” (1 Cor. 15:6).
- Some of the people present doubted His resurrection, suggesting that more than the eleven Apostles were present, for these men were now confirmed, believers.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Our Lord's ascension did not occur at this time, but later, after He had ministered to His disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:44 – 53).

Matthew 28:18 – 20 is usually called “the Great Commission,” though this statement is no greater than that in any of the other Gospels, nor is it the last statement Jesus made before He returned to heaven.

However, this declaration does apply to us as believers, so we should understand the involved factors.

1. JESUS HAS ALL AUTHORITY (v. 18)

Matthew 28:18 (NKJV)

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

- In this verse, the word “authority,” means the right to use power. The entire Gospel of Matthew stresses the authority of Jesus Christ.

AUTHORITY IN TEACHING

Matthew 7:29 (NKJV)

for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

AUTHORITY IN HEALING

Jesus cleansed a leper:

Matthew 8:3 – 4 (NKJV)

3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Jesus healed a sick servant:

Matthew 8:13 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.

AUTHORITY IN FORGIVING SINS

Matthew 9:6 – 7 (NKJV)

6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

7 And he arose and departed to his house.

AUTHORITY OVER SATAN

He had authority over Satan, and He delegated that authority to His Apostles:

Matthew 10:1 (NKJV)

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

- At the close of his Gospel, Matthew made it clear that Jesus has ALL authority.

BECAUSE JESUS HAS ALL AUTHORITY...

- Since Jesus Christ today has all authority, we may obey Him without fear.
- No matter where He leads us, no matter what circumstances we face, He is in control.
- By His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated all enemies and won for Himself all authority.

**Christianity is a missionary faith.
The very nature of God demands
this; for God is love, and God is not
willing that any should perish.**

2 Peter 3:8 – 9 (NKJV)

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Our Lord's death on the cross was for the whole world. If we are the children of God and share His nature, then we will want to tell the good news to the lost world.

When reading the Book of Acts, we find that the early church operated based on the Lord's sovereign authority.

- They ministered in His name. There is power in the name of Jesus.**
- They depended on His power and guidance.**
- They did not face a lost world based on their own authority but on the authority of Jesus Christ.**

2. AN ACTIVITY (vv. 19 – 20a)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

IN V. 19 JESUS SAID...

- Jesus said, “While you are going, make disciples of all the nations.”
- The Greek verb translated *go* is not a command; it is a present participle (going).
- The only command in the entire Great Commission is “make disciples” (“teach all nations”).

**We should be witnesses
for Jesus Christ and seek
to win others to Him.**

ACTS 11:19 – 21 (NKJV)

19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

DISCIPLES

- The term “disciples” was the most popular name for the early believers. Being a disciple meant more than being a convert or a church member.
- *Apprentice* might be an equivalent term. A disciple attached himself to a teacher, identified with him, learned from him and lived with him. He learned not simply by listening but also by doing.

Our Lord called twelve disciples and taught them, so that they might be able to teach others.

Mark 3:13 – 15 (NKJV)

13 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.

14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

A disciple, then, has believed in Jesus Christ and expressed this faith by being baptized. He remains in the fellowship of the believers that he might be taught the truths of the faith.

Acts 2:41 – 47 (NKJV)

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Acts 2:41 – 47 (NKJV)

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

**He is then able to go
out and win others
and teach them.
This is the pattern
of the New
Testament church.**

2 Timothy 2:1 – 2 (NKJV)

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

MOST CHURCHES

- In many respects, we have departed from this pattern. In most churches, the congregation pays the pastor to preach, win the lost, and build up the saved—while the church members function as cheerleaders (if they are enthusiastic) or spectators.
- The “converts” are won, baptized and given the right hand of fellowship, joining the other spectators.
- How much faster our churches would grow, and how much stronger and happier our church members would be if each one were discipling another believer.

The only way a local church can “be fruitful and multiply” (instead of growing by “additions”) is with a systematic discipleship program.

John 15:2 – 5 (NKJV)

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

**Discipling is the responsibility of
every believer and not just a small
group who have been “called to go.”**

Luke 24:44 – 45 (NKJV)

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- Jesus had opened the minds of His disciples to understand the Scriptures.

44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

TEACHING & THE GREAT COMMISSION

- They disciples knew what Jesus wanted them to teach to their converts.
- It is not enough to win people to the Savior; we must also teach them the Word of God.
- Teaching the converts is also a part of the Great Commission.

3. AN ABILITY (V. 20B)

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

- Jesus is not only “in the midst” when His people gather together (Matt. 18:20), but He is also present with them as they scatter into the world to witness.
- Had He remained on earth, Jesus could not have fulfilled this promise. It was when the Holy Spirit came that Jesus could be with His people no matter where they were.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan told about an experience in his life that involved this statement. Early in his Christian life, Morgan visited several ladies once a week to read the Bible to them. When he came to the end of Matthew's Gospel, Morgan read, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of this age."

He added, "Isn't that a wonderful promise?"

One of the ladies quickly replied, "Young man, that is not a promise—it is a fact!"

JESUS IS WITH US!

There are no conditions for us to meet or believe, for *Jesus Christ is with us*. Paul discovered this to be true when he was seeking to establish a church in the difficult city of Corinth.

- Obeying this commission, Paul came to the city (Acts 18:1)
- Won people to Christ and baptized them (Acts 18:8)
- Taught them the word (Acts 18:11).

When the going was tough, Paul had a special visit from the Lord: “Be not afraid ... for I am with thee” (Acts 18:9 – 10).

WE MUST MAKE DISCIPLES

- The phrase “**the end of the age**” indicates that our Lord has a plan; He is the Lord of history.
- As the churches follow His leading and obey His Word, they fulfill His purposes in the world.
- It will all come to a climax one day; meanwhile, we must all be faithful.
- We must make disciples.