

## The Command in Discipleship

Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

After several weeks of discussion and consideration, I hope to conclude our series on discipleship. Hopefully we have been enlightened regarding discipleship, having a greater knowledge of what is expected, and how to be better equipped as disciples. It is impossible to function independently or corporately in a way that pleases the Lord apart from discipleship.

Our text verses today are very familiar, and yet a study of discipleship would be incomplete without their consideration. These verses record what is considered the Great Commission. Sadly for many modern believers, these verses are viewed as the great suggestion. If we will be honest, for the most part in recent church history, they have become the great omission. If Fellowship is to remain vibrant in the future, seeing souls saved and believers equipped for ministry, we must embrace and follow the teaching of Christ in the Great Commission. I want to examine the facets of service Christ reveals as we consider: [The Command in Discipleship](#).

**I. Our Attention to Discipleship** ([Matt.28:19-20](#)) – Here Jesus reveals the great responsibility every believer possesses. If we are to be pleasing to the Lord and effective in service, we must give great attention to discipleship efforts. Consider:

**A. The Exhortation** (19) – **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.** We have spent several weeks discussing discipleship. I hope I have shared something that has encouraged and challenged you regarding discipleship. I hope you have a better understanding of the concept of discipleship. I trust you are aware of the great need for discipleship today. However, knowing is not enough. We must be willing to put our knowledge into action.

- Jesus commands the disciples to go out into all nations in ministry. The word literally means “*to transport one’s self; to go from one place to another.*” This involves determined and committed action. As followers of Christ, we are commanded to go forth into the world for Christ!

**B. The Instruction** (19) – **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.** Jesus reveals the disciples were to go into all the world and make disciples. The word teach has the idea of “*instructing with the purpose of making disciples.*” We are not called to simply share the knowledge we possess and move on to the next listening ear. We are to teach with the intention of making another disciple for Christ.

- As I considered the command of Christ, I was reminded of what is involved in making disciples. We must:
  - **Evangelize** – If our intent is to make disciples, it stands to reason that we must share the Gospel and win them to Christ first. One cannot follow Christ apart from a personal relationship with Him.
  - **Baptize** – The Lord calls for new believers to be baptized following their conversion. As Baptists, this is essential for church membership. We do not teach that baptism saves, but we do encourage others to follow through with baptism, publicly professing their faith in Christ, and becoming an active member in a local body of believers. We must strive to encourage those we reach for Christ to be baptized and join the local church.
  - **Equip** – Once they are baptized, and join the local assembly of believers, we then become responsible to equip them in the faith. As we are called to make disciples, the new convert receives the same call. We are to make disciples, who in turn make other disciples. The body is responsible to equip new believers in the faith.

**C. The Investment (20a) – Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**

This is actually part of the equipping process, but it deserves a closer look. We are called to teach the new disciple all the things we have been taught of the Lord. As you think of that command, you quickly realize it can't be done in a hurry or in a short amount of time. Those who commit to making disciples for Christ are committing to making an ongoing investment in the life of the new disciple. This involves instruction by word of mouth, literally sharing the truth we have received with them. We must be willing to invest our wisdom in the lives of others.

- When considering this process, one would rightly discern that it would take a lifetime to share all that one has gleaned from the Word of God. Genuine discipleship really has no beginning date and targeted end date. We must be willing to continue to invest in their lives as long as we have opportunity. Each of us, regardless of our maturity level, should continue to be disciplined as well. I pastor the church here, but I am being actively disciplined by others who have much to share with me. As I continue to learn, I continue to invest in those I am discipling. Discipleship involves long-term commitment and investment.

**D. The Influence (20b) – and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** When considering the facets of discipleship, I will admit that it can be overwhelming. There is much we are responsible to accomplish. Often we feel inadequate to disciple others in a way that will make a lasting impact. Fortunately, we are not expected to make disciples alone. The Lord, through His Spirit, is with us each step of the way. We have the assurance of His guidance and wisdom as we

strive to disciple others. He will enable us to make a positive impact on others. None of us have a complete understanding of Scripture. We have not arrived spiritually, but we can influence others in the faith through the help of the Lord. He equips us as we seek to equip others.

**II. Our Approach to Discipleship** (Acts 1:8) – Just prior to His ascension, the Lord again emphasizes the Great Commission, and our need for discipleship. These words reveal our approach to discipleship. Notice:

**A. Our Confidence** (8a) – *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.* Bear in mind, the disciples were well aware of how the multitude had treated Jesus. They knew that public opinion wasn't in their favor. If humanity had rejected the divine Christ, how would they respond to mere mortals sharing the message of the Gospel? Jesus knew their concerns and He assured them that they would not be expected to serve in their own power or wisdom. The Holy Spirit would enable them to speak with wisdom and power, while convicting and convincing those who heard the message at the same time.

- It is likely safe to say that none of us feel fully prepared to be an effective disciple. We have particular gifts, areas of strength, and yet we have weaknesses as well. We live in a world that is increasingly intolerant of our faith and cold to our message. The current environment presents challenges to disciple making. Thankfully we have the power of the Spirit working on our behalf. He has the ability to impart wisdom to us and tender the hearts of those with whom we speak. While it may be harder to make disciples today than in past generations, it is not impossible. We must continue to serve the Lord in an effort to evangelize and disciple others in the faith.

**B. Our Companion** (8a) – *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.* At this moment, the disciples could not have fully comprehended all that Jesus revealed. As they prayed in the Upper Room, ten days later, the Spirit would descend, filling each of them. Once He filled them, He would not depart. They enjoyed a constant Companion and guide. While they may have been abandoned by some they trusted, feeling alone in the journey, they would continually enjoy the presence of the Spirit.

- Discipleship is the mission of every believer. If we are not engaged in discipleship, we are living in disobedience to the Lord's command. The need is greater today in our society than it has ever been for believers to submit to the call of discipleship. We have listened to the adversary long enough. He continues his deceptive efforts, trying to make us believe our efforts are in vain and there is no hope for our generation. If it were up to us, I might agree; but we too have a constant Companion to guide our path. He will lead us as we strive to serve the Lord. He has the ability to

work in the heart of a disciple and those being disciplined at the same time. We are engaged in a super-natural effort for the Lord. As He leads, He will equip through the Spirit!

**C. Our Communication** (8b) – and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Let's consider the communication involved in discipleship. Notice:

- **The Price** – Jesus said we are expected to be **witnesses** of the Gospel among the world. The word translated witnesses comes from the Greek word from which our English word martyr is also derived. John is the only one of the eleven that was not martyred. We know the apostle Paul was beheaded for his faith. Jesus wanted to emphasize the cost involved and encourage their commitment unto Him, even in the face of death.
- We may not be called to give our lives for the faith, but we too are expected to remain faithful, even in the face of great persecution. We cannot allow the demands and desires of society to silence our voices for Christ!
- **The Place** – and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Jesus declared they were responsible to take the Gospel to the world. He would raise up disciples through their efforts that would take the Gospel message throughout the world. This small number of disciples would eventually multiply into an army of witnesses for the Lord, reaching the world.
- We continue to bear the responsibility of being a witness for Christ throughout the world. We must be willing to be a witness in our communities, the places we travel and work, within our nation, and even around the world. That is a daunting task, but it is possible and attainable in Christ. The world is more connected today than it has ever been. There are many resources and avenues to be a global witness. We must be a faithful disciple every day, in every situation.
- I also thought of the possibility of our influence in the lives of others. We have no way of knowing how or where God may choose to use someone we are discipling right now. They may be called to the mission field, and from there reach countless souls for Christ, equipping them to share the Gospel and make other disciples. Too often we look at ministry from a worldly lens rather than from a spiritual one. We can make a difference in our world if we will commit to making disciples for Christ.

**Conclusion:** I trust you have been enlightened and challenged through our study of discipleship. The need is great today for those who will commit to making disciples for Christ. We all know someone within our circle of influence that we can disciple. If you are not actively discipling someone, I urge you to seek the Lord for guidance and wisdom in that regard. If we fail to disciple and equip the next generation, the implications will be disastrous.

If you have yet to respond to the call of Christ in salvation, I urge you to respond by faith today. Come to Him with a repentant heart, confessing your need for Christ and faith in Him. He stands ready to save today!