

XXII. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Discipleship 101”
Matthew 28:16–20

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We are going to look at a familiar text to many of you in this study today. Matthew 28:16–20 says [16] *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] 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, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There is very little doubt in my mind that this text, for most of you, is a familiar text. It’s called the Great Commission. The book of Matthew contains two very important texts for us, but obviously everything is important in the Bible. One is this text, the Great Commission, and the other is in Matthew 22 that is called the Great Commandment. Matthew 22:36–40 says [36] *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” [37] And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment. [39] And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [40] On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”* One of the most important things, by God’s grace and empowered by the Spirit of God, you and I can make a great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. What is the Great Commission actually saying?

I grew up in the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination which is a wonderful group of people who love the Lord and love the Word of God. I didn’t come to Christ under this denomination for it was in a Bible Presbyterian Church but the seeds were planted continually in that wonderful CMA denomination for me. Their big commitment in the CMA was to missions so this text on the Great Commission gets preached with great regularity. We have about two mission’s conferences here at Briarwood but in the CMA we had about five every year. It also seemed like any outside speaker who came to speak would always speak on this text and I have never forgotten some of what I learned from those speakers.

I remember one speaker saying that this Matthew 28 text was the most important text in the Bible and that it contained the most important word in the Bible which was the word ‘go.’ He went on to say that if you take ‘go’ out of God then you have ‘d’ and you take ‘go’ out of good and you have ‘od.’ You take ‘go’ out of Gospel and you have ‘spel’ and as a 12 year old I wondered ‘how long can he go on like this?’

Then I get converted and God calls me into the ministry. I go to Westminster Seminary and spend a lot of money to learn Greek. I find out that the word ‘go’ is not the most important word in that text. Every word is important but ‘go’ is not even the imperative or the command in this text. So I began to embrace and study this text and have had the privilege to preach it on many occasions. This will be a foundational text in where we’re headed in this coming year.

This past year we embraced the theme of L.E.A.D. which stands for Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship. I have thus far preached 21 sermons/studies on personal evangelism. I have also gone into an expositional series on the book of I Peter as an equipping text of how to give an account for the Hope that is within you to go along with the theme of L.E.A.D. Our lifestyle doesn't evangelize and it can hinder or accelerate evangelism but evangelism is bringing the Gospel to someone so that they are brought to Christ by faith and repentance. And faith comes from hearing not looking for no one is going to heaven because they admire your Christian life. They only go to heaven because they put their trust in Christ by faith for faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ.

This year we are looking to do more in our lifestyle of personal evangelism and discipleship as we focus even more on discipleship. Thus I have called this study Discipleship 101 as we look at this text in Matthew 28 for the next couple of studies. We will be looking at just the basics of discipleship as we come to this text with a fresh and anew look and I do believe this is one of the most important texts in the Bible. This is the reason we continue to come back to this text.

One reason I say this text is important is because of who spoke these words. It is Jesus who tells us to go and make disciples. Are you being disciplined? If you're not then that means one of three possibilities. One is your ignoring it and don't think you need to be disciplined. Two, or Jesus is not that important to us in what He says or three, we don't really understand what it means to be disciplined and how you go about it.

In evangelism we said it is each one reach one. We have two ministries here where people can learn to share their faith known as Evangelism Explosion (EE) and Bridge to Life. I want to go to five 'E's' where Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Every day. This is a lifestyle of evangelism. Now we go to discipleship because the same Christ that gives us direction and calls us to proclaim the Gospel is the same One who tells us to go make disciples.

So in discipleship let 'each one is one' where each one of us needs to be disciplined. In reality when I say 'each one is one' therefore each one will make one. If you are one you will make one because part of being disciplined is to become a discipler. Who is this Matthew 28 text addressed to? Immediately it is to His Disciples and ultimately it's to us because the Holy Spirit will be with us to end of the age. So it's not just for the Apostles. Jesus had been discipling them for three years and now He is telling them to disciple. If you have been disciplined then you were disciplined to start discipling so it's not just each one be one but it's each one make one. Therefore this is life on life, life to life and life on lives.

The recent it goes to lives is because the best way and the Biblical way to make disciples in terms of arrangement is with a discipler with a small group. So when you make one it's also in the context of community. Jesus would disciple one on one for a season and a reason. His basic way of discipling was a group, a small group – three, twelve, 70 – because you not only get from the disciple but you get from the community you are being disciplined with. So when you are making one in the context of a small group you are making more than one. We went from addition to multiplication to geometric expansion. Therefore this text is important because of Who gives it.

Another reason this text is important is because of when Jesus said this. This Great Commission is given by Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts. He gives it before He goes to the cross (in John), after His resurrection prior to His ascension (in Matthew, Mark and Luke) and then He gives it directly before He ascends in Acts 1:4–9. In other words, this is put in the category of what is known as 'last words.' I collect last words of believers, what they say

and how they say it because I know when you get to last words you're not going to talk about trivial stuff like sports, weather, etc. Right before Jesus ascends from the earth this is what He focuses on.

A third reason this text is important is because of how Jesus says this. When you ascend in an airplane to about 30,000 to 40,000 feet the things that are really important so that plane actually lands instead of crashes is that there are more than one of those important things on that plane and it's called redundancy or repetition. When I look in the cockpit I prefer to see a pilot with gray hair or no hair and that there are two of them. There is more than one hydraulic system and one engine. It's redundancy.

When the Bible, a 66 Book canon of holy writ, takes the time to repeat something then that tells you what God is saying is pretty important. Redundancy in the Bible is pretty important and the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28, Mark 14, Luke 24, John 21 and Acts 1. It is expanded, enlarged and focused in those various ways but it is repeated which tells us this message is crucial and important for believers and for His church because of the way the Lord gives it to us.

So what is it that is exactly being said in this Great Commission? I would like for you to think of this text as a multifaceted diamond that has at least three facets when you look at it. These three facets all deserve their own study but I won't be doing that in these couple of studies that we look at the Great Commission.

The first facet is a command with four-fold implementation. We know the command is not 'go' but it is make disciples which is the imperative verb. Then that imperative verb has three modifiers. Go should be translated as going so as you are going from the church you make disciples which is the first implementation. What do you do with the disciples? The second implementation is the disciples are to be baptized so as you are going you are baptizing and enfolded, adding to the church. Most forget to add to the church in discipleship. Thirdly, you teach them and you are teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded you. As they are rooted and embraced in the body of Christ they are being taught in order to equip them to go and make disciples. The fourth implementation is found in Matthew 28:9 for as soon as they saw Him they worshipped Him. They exalted Him.

The second facet is the command with its four-fold intention. How do we intentionally do this? When you are going that is referring to evangelism – you seek to save the lost. You are going to find them but praise God there are times He brings them to us. Many times you have to go find a net and a fishing hole like at a mall or in a classroom or on a team. You intentionally throw the Gospel net out to people. Next is baptizing. The one converted is not just related to the one who shared the Gospel with them or the one who is discipling them but they are enfolded into the body of Christ, His church. Then they are being equipped through the worship services, small groups and the relationships that are being formed in the church communities, as they are being taught all that Christ has commanded. They are being enfolded into the church. Fourthly, they become worshippers.

I want to try and illustrate this by using baseball. To win in baseball your team has to score more runs than the team you are playing and you can't score a run until the runner touches home plate. You can't get to home plate until you touch first base, then second base and then third base but you haven't scored until you get to home plate by going through each base in order. Here you have Discipleship 101 homerun right here in this text.

First base is going with the Gospel to people and bringing them to Christ. Second base is enfolded them into the body of Christ and if this isn't a part of your discipleship then you're not

discipling. Discipleship from this text is bring people into a vital, participatory, dynamic relationship within a Bible-believing church, and receiving the covenantal sign of baptism, where they have been added to the church. If you're not actively discipling them you're not discipling them. That is woefully lacking. As people respond you bring them into the body of Christ. As they are added to the body of Christ then the full orb of grace begins to teach them which includes, worship services, small groups, life on life, life to life discipleship and they are now being equipped. That is third base and then you have touched home plate when the person who used to live in the idolatry of sin where it's all about 'me' now dies to themselves and praise God it's all about God as they exalt Him in their lives. They become worshippers of the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now you are doing the work of discipleship. We bring them to Christ through evangelism. We bring them into the body of Christ as they are being enfolded. Then they are being equipped with mentoring and modeling that they might be conformed to Christ. When that happens lives are transformed from self-absorption to self-denial and God-exaltation as they are being absorbed with the passion and joy of the gathered church worship. For they now worship the Lord because of the preeminence and joy of Jesus Christ so that whatsoever they do they do all for the glory of God. Then He gives this promise that He will be with us all the way to accomplish that.

The third facet is the command is comprehensive with a four-fold implication. This is shown by a Greek word in this text that is repeated four times and that is *pantas* which translated means every. *All* authority has been given to Me and there is the perspective. Why are you making disciples? Jesus sent you. Who is Jesus? He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. People who hold leadership positions in our country and states have authority. You as a parent have authority. Every authority that you see is not inherent but is derivative for it came because God gave it to the person. It's not we have authority therefore we give authority to Jesus, no, He has all and every authority. He is the One who distributes authority. As a believer He has just given you authority to be His ambassador – an ambassador of Jesus Christ – to kings, governors, rulers, men, women, rich, poor, etc. So don't tremble. Certainly respect authority but don't cower.

Here's an illustration. In the Bible do you remember King Herod Agrippa? He had to sign off on Jesus' crucifixion. There was another person in authority Jesus had to talk to but he listened. This was Pontius Pilate who was a governor. Normally kings are more important but King Agrippa didn't do a single thing that Pilate didn't approve of, why? It was because behind Pilate was Caesar. So you go, not flaunt, but with confidence in the Lord, to anyone and everyone, closed or open country for there is no such thing as a closed country if we're willing to die, in the name of Christ. All authority belongs to our King and He is the One who has commissioned us.

Secondly, we are to go to *all* the nations. Acts 1:8 says [8] *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* In our country our Jerusalem is Birmingham, Alabama. Our Judea is the state of Alabama. Our Samaria is the southeastern part of the US and into the all the earth is the rest of our country and the world. Normally each Sunday here at Briarwood we have a flag raised to represent a nation where we have sent missionaries and we remember them that week in prayer. Now while we start with our own Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria we don't stop there for the text in Matthew tells us to make disciples throughout all the nations, beginning right where we find ourselves. That is the scope of discipleship.

Thirdly, we are to observe *all* of His commands. That is our objective for we are to teach the whole Word of God. Parts of the Bible are more important than other parts and I did not say the other parts are unimportant. II Timothy 3:16–17 says [16] *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* Paul says in I Corinthians 15:3–4, [3] *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures* (the Gospel).

Paul is saying that the Gospel is of first importance, meaning it is more important than other things in the Bible. For instance, if you get baptism wrong you can still get saved, unless you think that baptism saves and then you have a real problem. Church government is important but you don't get saved by being a Presbyterian. In other words, everything in the Bible is important but some things are more important. While we make a distinction primary, secondary or tertiary in which our curriculum would reflect that but let's get to the basics and then build on that superstructure. We do know that we are to get the whole Bible to the whole person so that they may know the whole Christ. That's how we observe all that He has commanded us for that's what He calls us to do.

Notice that it is not only in content but in purpose. Paul says to the Ephesians in Acts 20:26–27, [26] *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, (why) [27] for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.* He started with the Gospel but didn't end with the Gospel. He took the Gospel to its heights, breadth, depth and length by taking the whole counsel of God, *all of God's Word*, to people.

One, as you disciple you will never get to the depths of the Bible for the deeper you go the bigger the nuggets, the richer the water. Basically you will not exhaust the Bible in your life time but if you were to give everybody all that you know of the whole counsel of God and they get it in their mind, is that discipleship? No, for the Bible is clear. It's not simply that they cataloged the knowledge of the Bible but that they observe for it's obedience to God's Word that discipleship is about. Now you can't do what you don't know but you can know something and not do it.

James 1:22–25 says [22] *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. [24] For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. [25] But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.* Fourthly, our commitment is that they would be disciplined with life salvation and life transformation *all* the days.

So here are some takeaways in closing. One, don't make a separation with evangelism and discipleship. Many churches do this by going out to get people to come to Christ and then later on they devise a way to get them into a small group for discipleship. No, Jesus didn't bifurcate. When He went to someone to evangelize He said to them 'Come and follow Me.' Jesus did not separate evangelism and discipleship. The Bible says we are to confess Christ as Lord and Savior. Following Christ as Lord is not an a la carte menu where you choose what parts to do or not to do in Christian life. You're not a believer if you're not a Christ follower. You haven't trusted if you're not following. Will we follow perfectly? Absolutely not, but we will follow personally and intentionally because we have trusted Him as Savior. It's not our

following that saves us for it's only the blood of Jesus that saves us, but the saved receive Jesus as Lord *and* Savior.

The second takeaway is the Church mission and the Church context are inseparable. The Great Commission was designed to bring people into the church and send people from the church into the world to bring people to Christ and enfold them into the body of Christ. Much of our discipleship today is just hoping those we've evangelized get into a good church but if you are a discipler you lead them into the body of Christ as you have led them to Christ. Calvin was right when he called the church 'the nurturing womb that Christ has given to grow up His people.' This is because they don't just need you or your organization as a disciple for they need the body of Christ with the gifted called people of God to teach and equip them. They need the sacraments, worship, fellowship, shepherding, accountability and all those things in discipleship.

The third takeaway is that discipleship is comprehensive and intentional. We bring all of the Word that people might be redeemed in their life, saved and transformed by God's grace in every area of life to God's glory. I have two more and then I'm done. We will go further into this in the next study.

The fourth takeaway is that this is a mission impossible but it is a mission assured. Do you remember what was said on the show Mission Impossible? 'This is your mission if you choose to accept it.' If you are a believer there is no choice – we accept. Do you know who you will go to talk to? You are going to talk to dead people and you don't have the power to bring them to life. When they do come to Christ they have an old man living within in them and you don't have the ability to overcome that old man but praise God when you, this mission that is impossible is assured because He'll be with you all the days to the end – His relentless presence and power with His mission and His message.

I was away on vacation attending another church on Sunday and we sang a song that spoke of the reckless love of Jesus. Reckless means that it is without intention. I think I know what people are trying to say by using that but there is nothing reckless about God's love. The bumper sticker that says 'do random acts of love' is not Christian. Christians do not do random or even reckless love. God's love is intentional. It is purposed. It's directed. God so loved the world He gave His only Son (John 3:16). Romans 5:8 says *[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. That's the glory of this mission intentional work of lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship.

Fifthly, by God's grace when we're on the mission we have a message that the world needs to hear. As I was praying through and studying this material to get back into the theme of lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship, I was burdened about us getting this mission right. Why? It is because if you get the mission wrong the next generation will get the message wrong. Whatever your mission is, will affect your message. If you think we exist for people to get a better self-esteem then before long you get a therapy gospel. If you think we exist so that people can improve their lot in life where if you come to Jesus you will make more sales, be more successful then you have a prosperity gospel in the next generation.

There are many blessings that the Gospel brings, consequences, but don't let the blessed consequences become the mission. The mission is taking the Gospel by evangelizing, enfolded, equipping and exalting God with all kinds of benefits. Social justice will be a benefit but if that becomes the mission you will get a social gospel. You have to stay focused on the mission to maintain the message and the message perfectly fits the mission. It gives the bad news and the good news.

As I was preparing for this I went back to Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan and man wanted to take God's place but I get to give people the Good News. Here is the bad news – you were born with a sin nature where you want God's place and it's all about you. The Good News is that this God is so gracious that He sent His Son where God came and took your place that you could have everlasting life. That is our message and our mission is to take it to the world and make disciples. I wanted God's place which brought judgment. God by grace sent His Son to take my place and that is salvation. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Today if you heard that Jesus went to that cross to take your place, even though you tried to usurp His place, but He loves you that much to pay for your sins and now offers it as a gift, and you want to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd be happy to pray with you privately and confidentially. Don't let the day go by without being able to say 'in Christ it is well with my soul.' Lord, for those of us who know You as Lord and Savior, this mission that seems to be impossible has not only been accepted but we know it's assured because by Your Spirit, Your presence and power, You will go with us every day until the end which is the beginning of forever, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

EVANGELISM

“Each One Reach One”

Everyone Evangelizing Everybody Everywhere Everyday

DISCIPLESHIP

Each One Be One

Life on Life–Life to Life–Life on Lives

THE GREAT COMMISSION – THREE OBSERVATIONS

I. The Command and its Four-fold Implementation

- *going*
- *baptizing*
- *teaching*
- *worshipping*

II. The Command and its Four-fold Intention

- *going*...Evangelism
- *baptizing*...Enfolding
- *teaching*...Equipping
- *worshipping*...Exaltation

III. The Command and its Four-fold Implication

- All Authority...Perspective
- All the Nations...Scope
- All His Commands...Objective
- All the Days...Presence/Power

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

I. No Separation of Evangelism and Discipleship

II. Church Mission and Church Context

III. Comprehensive and Intentional

IV. Mission Impossible and Mission Assured

V. Mission and Message