
The Great Commission

After Jesus' death and resurrection he appeared to his disciples to declare that their work was just beginning. Jesus made reconciliation with God possible and now it was up to the disciples to spread the news.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

What is the significance of Jesus being given "all authority"?

Because Jesus has been given all authority he now has the power to set people free from sin and death. He sent out his disciples with the responsibility to let everyone know that he is accepting anyone who is willing, to become his follower and enter the kingdom of Heaven. Also, because Jesus has this authority, we need to listen to him when he sends us out with a mission.

When Satan was tempting Jesus he claimed that the authority over the world had been given to him and he would be willing to give it to Jesus if Jesus worshipped him (Luke 4:6-7). Jesus refused.

On what basis is authority over the world taken from Satan and given to Jesus?

Satan's authority over the world rested in his leading a rebellion against God, trapping people in their sin, and dooming them to eternal death. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has conquered the hold of sin and death and has opened a way for people to return to God and receive forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus now reigns as judge over the world and Satan is defeated in his goal of trapping mankind. Now people will only be judged, if they choose to reject God's offer of forgiveness – they no longer have to be controlled by Satan or be bound by sin.

What is a "disciple"?

In the Bible days, a disciple was a student who followed and modeled the life and teachings of a mentor. The master-disciple role was one in which the master held complete authority in directing and educating his students. It was expected that every disciple would, in turn, pass the teachings of the master on to others so that his knowledge and approach to life would continue to spread.

In our setting, a disciple is someone who chooses to become a follower of Jesus Christ, embracing his teachings and approach to life. All disciples of Jesus are expected to become disciple-makers, passing on the life and teachings of Jesus to others.

How does one become a disciple?

One becomes a disciple of Jesus as he hears teachings of who Jesus is and what he accomplished for us. When one wants to become a follower (disciple) of Jesus, they must repent of their old approach to life (sin), ask for forgiveness and embrace Jesus as their Lord (master).

The initiation rite that declares someone to be a disciple of Jesus is baptism. This is why Jesus commands that we go into all the world baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The task of teaching everything Jesus taught then begins. This is not just about teaching knowledge, but an approach to life and a relationship with God.

Why are we to go to all nations?

What do these following passages reveal to us?

God's Blessing to Abram

Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV)

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Psalms 67:1-2 (NIV)

*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, ² **that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.***

It has always been God's intent that all mankind would be in relationship with him. Through Jesus, he made it possible for us to be restored to that relationship. In order to do so, people need to hear and respond to the good news.

Faith with God was NEVER meant to be a personal, private affair between us and God. God never invites us into a one-on-one relationship, but into a family. Consistently through scripture we are called to proclaim the glory of God to all nations SO THAT all nations will respond to him.

When will Jesus return?

Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Luke 24:46-47 (NIV)

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Jesus claims that he will not return until all nations have had the opportunity to hear.

We are told in the Great Commission to teach people to obey everything that Jesus commanded us. **What is everything Jesus commanded us?**

We are to teach people all the principles Jesus teaches through the entire word of God. The goal of this teaching is not simply to convey content, but to change and free lives. We are teaching people how to experience a relationship with the Father through Jesus and how to represent him effectively in this world.

There are some general ways in which we REPRESENT God to people in this world.

- 1) Represent God's Character
- 2) Represent God's Message

Representing God:

How are we to represent God's character?

LOVE

Luke 6:35-36 (NIV)

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

How are we to love our enemies?

Don't Judge, Don't Condemn

God makes it easy for us; he removes any responsibility on our part to judge and condemn others, freeing us to simply love them instead – even when they are our enemies.

You can only LOVE others when you're not fighting them or punishing them.

Love Sacrificially

God calls us to love in the same way Jesus showed love to us. He set aside his personal interests in order to do what was best for restoring us to relationship with God and life. He knew that his needs were already taken care for eternity, freeing him to focus on others in the present.

Jesus tells us that the way we show love within the family of God will be a significant testimony to the rest of the world that he is truly from God.

John 17:20-21 (NIV)

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Do others around you know that God loves them by the way you are loving them?

Are there some who would come to the conclusion God does NOT love them by the way you are relating to them?

What can you do this week to represent God's love to people who desperately need it?

HOLINESS

1 Peter 2:11-12 (NCV)

Dear friends, you are like foreigners and strangers in this world. I beg you to avoid the evil things your bodies want to do that fight against your soul.

¹² People who do not believe are living all around you and might say that you are doing wrong. Live such good lives that they will see the good things you do and will give glory to God on the day when Christ comes again.

How are we to represent God's holiness?

We represent God's holiness by living holy lives.

It is difficult to effectively represent God to others when we ourselves are living in a way that is rebelling against his commands and character. In other words, we cannot lead people to Christ if we are in the process of walking away from him. All we represent at that point is hypocrisy – and no one is attracted to hypocrisy.

Is there an area in your life where you know you are walking away from Christ?

Is there an area of your life that you know is working against your representation of God's holiness to others?

How are we to represent God's Message?

Romans 10:14-15 (NLT)

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"



What does this passage say is the key to others coming to faith?

Your lifestyle will speak much about the love and character of God BUT it does not communicate the **MESSAGE** they need to hear about **HOW** to enter a relationship with God.

At some point in time you need to step out in faith and communicate **WORDS** that they need to hear; words that will change their eternal destiny; words that will give them hope; words that will give them peace and joy.

Have the people around you ever heard you TALK about God and a relationship with him?

Would they know how to respond to a relationship with Jesus because they have heard how to from you?

Have you ever had the privilege of leading someone into a relationship with Jesus?

Start praying that God will show you how to invest in someone's life so that he/she could enter into a relationship with God as well.

EVERY BELIEVER is called to make disciples. This requires intentionality and strategy.

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

What was Jesus' discipleship strategy for the early church according to this verse?

Start in the place where you **presently are** and then expand your influence into other places.

How can you start fulfilling this mandate through your life?

Questions for consideration:

Does every believer play the same role in reaching others?

Does every believer make disciples on his own?

What role does the "church" play vs. your personal role?