

DISCIPLED

Unveiling the Commands of Matthew 28:20

By

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Discipled

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*To my loving, supportive, selfless, Kingdom-minded wife,
who continually stands with me for
the furtherance of the Gospel.*

I love you, Jillian.

~ Introduction ~

I cannot take it any longer. I must say those three words that start well, yet end tragically: Saved. Baptized. *Pewscipled*. The first two words, a Divine miracle; the last word, a grammatically incorrect massacre! Historically, you do not need another comparative church report that denotes how far away Christianity has drifted from its solid roots. Statistically, it will do no good to sicken you once again over factual percentages that display the inconsistent lifestyle of a “professing” Christian as it derails from the standards of Jesus Christ our Lord. All the reports, stats, and facts really speak volumes in a language that is more visible than it is vocal. That language is a Christian population today that has been predominantly discipled *without* the commands of Jesus Christ.

Bill Hull is my favorite voice on the subject of discipleship. He offers a variety of comments that supplement my pleading argument at hand. In his book, *The Disciple-Making Pastor*, Hull states:

I have thrown down the gauntlet. I maintain that the evangelical church is weak, self-indulgent, and superficial, that it has been thoroughly discipled by its culture. As Jesus said, “*When a disciple is fully taught, he will be like his teacher*” (**Luke 6:40**). Furthermore, I believe the crisis of the church is one of product, the kind of people being produced. I propose the solution to be obedience to Christ’s commission to “make disciples,” to teach Christians to obey everything Christ commanded.¹

Larry fits this description perfectly. He came to me for the purpose of seeking answers to some Bible prophecy questions. Toward the end of our discussion, I asked him this question: “Have you been discipled?” I will never forget the look in Larry’s eyes. He was searching desperately to justify his church attendance, Bible knowledge, personality, and prayer life as an attempt to satisfy the demands of my question. When I realized that he was speechless, I proceeded with the scriptural source of my question found in **Matthew 28:20**. Immediately, he broke down into tears. I was silenced in awe at the penetrating power of Holy Scripture. In the wonder of that moment, I said to this Christian man, twice my age, “Larry, after you were born again and baptized, no one discipled you, did they?” He feverishly nodded his head side to side.

Sadly, the profile of Larry’s Christian caliber is the norm for most believers today. They have not been discipled; the local church has failed them. That is precisely why churches are full of “Larry’s” who are *pewscipled*—the essence of their walk with Christ is sermonized from a pulpit to a pew! Elaborating yet again on this subject, Bill Hull says:

The test of a congregation, apart from personal holiness, is how effectively members penetrate the world. American churches are filled with pew-filling, sermon-tasting, spiritual schizophrenics, whose belief and behavior are not congruent...the truth we have sacrificed is the command for quality. The Great Commission has been worshiped, but not obeyed. The church has tried to get world evangelization without disciple making.²

¹ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1988) page 19.

² Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1988) pages 20, 23.

Do you know what this means? We are reaping what we have been sowing. The result is a catastrophic, evangelistic disaster. Like a cow giving birth to a parakeet, so just as frightening and abnormal is the “reproduction” coming from the Body of Christ. However, Christianity did not start out this way. In fact, though neglected and dusty, the original plan that Jesus Christ Himself instituted is ready to resurrect once again! What is that plan? What does it say?

Matthew 28:20 says, “*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...*” THAT IS THE PLAN. Saved. Baptized. **Matthew 28:20**. Discipled...Christ’s way. Clearly, Jesus is telling His disciples to “reproduce” in others what He has produced in them. For structure, Jesus gave the disciples a guideline. First of all, He says *teach*. The Greek meaning (*didasko*) translates “to give instruction.” Jesus then tells His disciples how to teach new believers: *observe*. The Greek meaning (*tereo*) is interpreted as “guarding from loss or injury; keeping your eye upon; to prevent escaping.” Finally, Jesus exhorts His disciples what to teach: *commands*. The Greek meaning (*entello*) stands for “enjoining up; charging with.”

Adhering to the immediate principle taught in the Christian’s **Matthew 28:20** mandate, Bill Hull beautifully expounds these rich truths:

The imperative command of the text is *make disciples*. This is the formula for evangelizing the world and the methodology required to bring reproduction and multiplication to world mission. The Great Commission without multiplication is evangelism paralyzed from the neck down. By specifically commanding the making of disciples, Jesus specified the work product of the church. He did not say, “Make converts,” or, “Make Christians.” Being a convert or a Christian does not necessarily equal reproduction. Many Christians are spiritually sterile; many don’t take the Gospel forward...Therefore, disciples solve the crisis at the heart of the church. Disciple making creates a quality product and an effective work force. This is God’s plan for His church.³

So, in literal context, this means disciples are made, not born. Every Christian is expected to be under an ongoing transformation *into* a disciple of Jesus Christ. And, again, this is correctly accomplished by disciples of Christ “instructing” *new* Christians to “guard and focus” that with which Christ has “enjoined or charged” them. Wow, what a catalyst for inborn change! Obviously, a new Christian has a regenerated heart, but not a renewed mind. This is why it is essential to be discipled. His behavior is completely re-programmed through submissive compliance to the commands of Jesus Christ.

Bill Hull paraphrases an accurate description like I have never seen on this subject. So, by way of simplistic illustration, this is what Hull comprehends Jesus to mean by *making disciples*:

When Jesus said, “*Make disciples,*” by necessity, the disciples understood it to mean much more than simply getting people to believe in Jesus. They had seen hundreds come and go; had witnessed the multitudes of the needy, the takers, and the superficial scramble after the spectacular; and knew that getting people to say, “Yes, I believe,” was not enough. They had to interpret it to mean to make out of others what Jesus had made

³ Bill Hull, The Disciple-Making Pastor (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1988) page 53.

out of them...They needed to produce people committed to reaching the world, those through whom the Gospel could be multiplied...[Disciples] are born by the Spirit of God, with the right factory-installed equipment. Then they must be built, trained, taught, and led to commitment to Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus commanded more than evangelism; He commanded taking all Christians to His definition of a mature disciple...To the degree the church dedicates itself to disciple making it is obedient to Christ. Now the mission is in trouble because the church has stopped at the first step to disciple making. Too often the church wins and baptizes, but does not teach and train. The sad result is a lack of reproduction and multiplication. God desires that every Christian be His disciple. He wills that every Christian become spiritually reproductive.⁴

The conclusive summary of all I have shared with you is fascinating. Biblical, Christ-commanded discipleship will inevitably produce a light-bearing, salt block Christian (**Matthew 5: 13-16**) in society, not an immature, hypocritical, carnal, *pewscipled* believer. Jesus Christ our Lord does not deserve anything less. This entire book hinges upon **Matthew 28:20**, one verse of scripture! There is nothing added. There is nothing taken away. There are neither man-made philosophies nor creative ideologies on discipleship. Rather, herein contained are merely the commands of Christ to His disciples. All that is needed now is the “raw cut” of what Jesus actually commanded.

So, if Jesus Christ gave the commands, and the disciples knew what the commands were, the obvious question to ask is: *what are those commands?* That is exactly what the following pages contain. In them you will find EVERY implicit and direct command that Jesus gave *only* to His disciples, those “teachable moments” that were intended to be perpetuated. Think about that for a moment. These commands are the literal substance of your discipleship; you cannot be disciplined without them. So, until you are disciplined this way, Christ’s intended way, you have not *truly* been disciplined. Your life as a disciple depends on your willingness to discover these commands and then obey them.

Moreover, this book is broken down into a 52-week (1 year) study guide for the purpose of continuing the *exact* discipleship model established with the Church at Antioch (**Acts 11:26**), which will provide structure as you are disciplined. Also, within each teaching, you will discover a re-occurring format that correlates with the specific command being discussed:

- The Command ***Introduced***
- The Command ***Interpreted***
- The Command ***Illustrated***
- The Command ***Initiated***
- The Command ***Interrogated***
- The Command ***Indestructible***
- The Command ***Inquired***

⁴ Bill Hull, The Disciple-Making Pastor (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1988) pages 58, 59, 60.

Therefore, what you are about to read has as its very nature the power to transform you into a fruit-bearing follower of Jesus, not a broad-minded, semi-committed professor of Christ. It is my prayer that you will take on these commands from Jesus as a matter of life and death, endeavoring to reflect Christ's glory through your obedience to Him. Oh, may you truly be disciplined the way Christ intended. Whatever you do, wherever you go, whomever you see, be ALL that Christ saved you to be! It is time for your transformation to begin (**Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23**).