

So we've learned four truths about discipleship:

We are to realize the requirements of discipleship, v. 24.

We are to understand the reason for discipleship, vv. 25-26.

We are to realize the reward for discipleship, v. 27.

We are to remember the royal source of discipleship, v. 28.

Now, we turn our attention to two final lessons the disciples learned from Jesus.

5) They learned that Jesus gave His life to redeem sinners.

**The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28, NKJV).**

In this passage, Jesus was teaching against having unbridled self-centered ambition. To counter this mindset He used Himself as an example of selfless servanthood culminating in the giving of His own life "in the place of many" as a substitutionary atonement for sin to satisfy the justice and wrath of God against guilty sinners.

6) They learned that Jesus' plan for them after His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension was for them to go and make disciples of all the nations by the proclamation of the gospel.

**And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, 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" (Matt 28:18-20, NKJV).**

**And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15, NKJV).**

So, What Is A Disciple Anyway?

Disciple is a term that applies to every believer. It is someone who is a learner and a follower. And just as disciple refers to every true believer, so the Great

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Commission is Jesus' mandate for every believer—it is part of the pattern of the normal Christian life as part of the radical call to discipleship given in the Sermon on the Mount.

One author wrote, "The word 'disciple' occurs 269 times in the New Testament. 'Christian' is found only three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples . . . . The disciple of Jesus is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian—especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast lane on the straight and narrow way. It is not the spiritual rather than the carnal Christian.

So, what's the point of being a disciple and making disciples? What's this all about? What does God want us to learn from Him concerning His purpose in history? And, how does His purpose affect our purpose?

We covered some of this in our final message from our study in Mark and we will look at more next week.

God's Mission is rooted in His character the character of those on God's mission in rooted in God. The purpose of Scripture is the glory of God and its priority is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

God created the universe to be the stage whereupon He would display His glory.

You can think of God's glory as "the beauty of His manifold perfections" (John Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 43). God's purpose in creating the universe and redeeming fallen mankind is to display His glory through the manifestation of His divine attributes. God created the human race and has so orchestrated the events of human history including the fall, the flood, the formation of the nation of Israel, the incarnation and atonement of Christ, the creation of the church, and the coming end times events of judgment and restoration of creation all for the purpose of demonstrating His attributes.

This is difficult for many Christians to understand. They believe our purpose above all

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things is “soul winning” especially when Proverbs 11:30 is quoted from the KJV.

“as a whole makes better sense if v 30b is understood the other way round, as ‘the wise man wins souls’. The idea then is that the righteous have a life-giving influence on others, and the wise win others to wisdom.”

The context is about wisdom not salvation. Even though this wisdom is often a picture of Christ, because all true wisdom is found in Him and He is the all wise one.

Col. 2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Through the fall and redemption of man God has manifested His righteousness and His love. In the one act of Christ dying on the cross, God demonstrated His justice and His mercy. It was all in God’s infinite wisdom that He has orchestrated all of the events of history and it was all done to the “praise of His glorious grace.” All of history is moving to the day when “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14; Cf. Isa 11:9).

God is so glorious and He finds so much joy in His own glory that He wants others to behold Him and rejoice in Him as well. He doesn’t need His creatures, but He created man to take part in His own perfect happiness. It was out of the overflow of the joy that the Triune God possesses in His own being that He wanted others to participate in it and rejoice in it with Him.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Pet 1:2-4, NIV).

The Apostle John refers to this participation in the divine nature as “eternal life”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men (John 1:1-4, NIV).

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began (John 17:1-5, NIV).

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete (1 John 1:1-4, NIV).

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31, NIV).

So God’s plan to manifest His glory and share His joy with us concentrates on God’s plan to send Jesus to be the substitutionary atonement for sin in order to obtain a “bride” made up of a multitude from every people group who would worship and glorify and enjoy Him forever.

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:9-10, NASB).

This is what the Abrahamic Covenant is all about: God is calling out a people for His name.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:1-3, NASB).

From Abraham, God created the nation of Israel, out of which came countless descendants.

And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore (Heb. 11:12; cf. Gen. 15:5, NIV).

But this isn't just fulfilled by Abraham's physical descendants. The Apostle

Paul tells us:

You see, then, that those who have faith are Abraham's real descendants. Because the Scripture saw ahead of time that God would justify the gentiles by faith, it announced the gospel to Abraham beforehand when it said, "Through you all nations will be blessed." Therefore, those who believe are blessed together with Abraham, the one who believed (Gal 3:7-9, ISV).

God is blessing the nations through Abraham's seed—Jesus Christ. And we are called to take part in this through the Great Commission! God's desire to bless the nations is powerfully communicated by Jesus in the parable of the great supper.

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' "Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' "Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' "And the slave said, 'Master, what

you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner' " (Luke 14: 15-24, NASB).

So from the divine perspective, the Great Commission is the greatest priority in this present age. If we believe that, then we should make it our greatest priority.

Now someone may object, saying that the primary purpose of the Christian is to glorify God and the Great Commission is only one way of glorifying God. In essence, I agree. But what's the best way to glorify God during this life on earth?

John Piper said, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church, worship is.

Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When people from all nations are before the throne, missions ends. Missions is a temporary necessity, but worship is eternal."

Let me add this as well. To be effective in this we must also be a Great Commandment church. A passion for loving God and neighbors feeds the priority of the Great Commission.

So what is this Great Commission anyway?

The One Command Of The Great Commission

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:16-20, NIV).

The heart of the Great Commission is one command explained by three participial phrases. The only command of this passage is to make disciples. The three participial phrases are: going, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey.

evangelizing, edifying, and equipping.

*going* – tells us that making disciples is a matter of lifestyle that takes place as we move about in the world and proclaim the Gospel to those we meet. This phrase describes the lifestyle of continually working to evangelize the lost for Christ. We don't baptize unbelievers, so it is implicit that we first evangelize as we are going so we would have some people to baptize and teach.

"Going" doesn't only refer to those who go to a particular place to proclaim Christ, such as missionaries who go to a particular country. This word, "going," really describes more the idea of "as you go through life." It's not about going to a particular place. Rather, it tells us to be witnesses for Christ wherever we go.

Some other translations translate this word as: having gone, when you go, wherever you go, as you are going.

Now does this mean that we don't go to particular places and preach Christ where He hasn't been named? Absolutely not. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "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" (NIV). That phrase, "ends of the earth" is literally "to the last part of the earth" (eschatou). So we haven't fulfilled the Great Commission until we have witnessed for Christ and made disciples among every people group until we have done so in the "last part" of the earth. However, we don't start there. We begin with our own Jerusalem. That is, we faithfully minister the gospel in our own city or town, then we move on to our own Judea and Samaria which would correspond the regions around where we live. Then we are to take the gospel to those far away places until we have reached that very last part.

So what we learn from understanding that this word "go" means "wherever you go"

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doesn't diminish international missions at all. Rather it calls us to have a missions mindset for all of life whether we are talking with a neighbor or traveling overseas to do pioneer missions.

*Baptizing* them – is a reference to the formal act of publicly demonstrating repentance and faith, our death and new life in Christ in Christ through water baptism. Teaching them to obey – is the process of equipping people to put their faith into action. A disciple is one who follows his master and desires to become like him. Equipping goes beyond teaching someone the Bible. It involves developing attitudes, and actions consistent with the life of Christ

Are you beginning to catch the dynamics of these words? They cover the entire process of making disciples: evangelizing, edifying, equipping. This process begins when we go to where people are, explain the Gospel to them, gather those who repent and ground them in the faith, and teach them to share Christ and His truth with others. There is a profound balance in this process; nothing dominates to the exclusion of other priorities.

It has been said that, among Bible-believing Christians it takes fifty Christian years to lead one unbeliever to Christ. That is, on the average, it takes fifty years for a Bible-believing Christian to win one person to the Lord, or it takes fifty Christians to win one in a year. At this rate, if each believer lived fifty years after his salvation, he would leave only one believer to replace himself (not considering any children or grandchildren that may, or may not, be/remain in the faith). Truly, this is a statistic of failure. It represents a dismal failure to obey The Great Commission. And it is really nonsense. It is a man centered view of evangelism/discipleship which is too popular.

Walter Henrichsen, in his book *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, wrote:



people to Christ every day. Each year he will have reached 365,000 people, a phenomenal ministry indeed.

Let’s compare him with a disciple who leads not 1,000 people a day to Christ, but only one person a year. At the end of the year, the disciple has one convert; the evangelist, 365,000. But suppose the disciple has not only led this man to Christ, but has also discipled him. He has prayed with him, taught him how to feed himself from the Word of God, gotten him into fellowship with like-minded believers, taken him out on evangelism and showed him how to present the Gospel to other people. At the end of that first year, this new convert is able to lead another man to Christ and follow him up as he himself has been followed up. At the start of the second year, the disciple has doubled his ministry—the one has become two. During the second year, each man goes out and leads not 1,000 people per day to Christ, but one person per year. At the end of the second year, we have four people. You can see how slow our process is. But note, too, that we do not have only converts, but disciples who are able to reproduce themselves. At this rate of doubling every year, the disciple leading one man per year to Christ, will overtake the evangelist numerically somewhere in the 19th year. From then on, the disciple and his multiplying ministry will be propagating faster than the combined ministry of dozens of gifted evangelists (Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born*, 141-42).”

What is wrong with this? Is this the example we have in the Scriptures?

We will examine that next week Lord willing.