

Discipleship Seminar 2 Niagra Bible Conference
The Great Commission: Baptizing & Teaching
Matthew 28:16-20 & Selected

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "
(Matthew 28:16-20)

Review

The first step in fulfilling The Great Commission is going out to make disciples. It is evangelism, but evangelism is not saving people. It is telling people about Jesus and inviting them to come and learn more. It is not marketing the gospel or selling Jesus for those would lead to false professions of faith. It is entreating them to be reconciled to God by explaining who Jesus is, what He did, what He is offering and the consequences of both following Him and rejecting Him. I like J.I. Packer's definition of evangelism, *"Evangelism is the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message of Jesus Christ to sinful men in order that through the power of the Holy Spirit they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church."* They may come to trust Him, not will come to trust Him.

Some will trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, and others will not. Some will show an initial interest only to later reject Him as hardships, persecution, the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches expose what is really in their hearts. That was true in Jesus' day and it is still true now.

Those that do believe and start on the journey of becoming a disciple of Christ will want to be identified with Him regardless of the consequences. This brings us to the second aspect of making a disciple mentioned in the Great Commission - baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Baptizing Them

I am not going to present a detailed study on baptism here because all of you should already be very familiar with what baptism is, why believers are to be baptized, the mode of baptism that should be used and what baptism accomplishes. If there are any questions, I do have a paper we hand out at Grace Bible Church that explains it including why believers are commanded to be baptized. It also addresses the false doctrine taught by certain Christian sects that you cannot be saved until you are baptized. However, I do want point out a couple of things to note.

First, we are to baptize those who believe *"in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."* The word, ὄνομα / "name," here is singular. We are baptized into one name - not three. This verse backs up the doctrine of the trinity. God is Triune. He is one God self-revealed in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All are co-equal and share the same attributes.

Second, though Christian baptism arises out of and has some similarities with the baptism of repentance practiced by John and Jesus in that both are the response of a repentant heart, they are different. The Christian is cleansed by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, not water baptism (Titus 3:5-6). Romans 6 makes it clear that Christian baptism is personal identification

with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian baptism is a symbol of what occurs spiritually within you at salvation. You die to sin and are raised to new life in Christ. That is one reason why the proper mode of Christian baptism is by full immersion.

Such an identification with Christ may seem like a "so what" to many in America, but I can assure you that it was a very serious matter during the time of the early church and it is still a serious matter today in many countries of the world and even in certain segments of our own society. There are many places in the world, particularly Islamic countries and societies, where you risk becoming a martyr if you undergo Christian baptism. I have known people in this country that were tolerated by their family until they were baptized at which point they were rejected. The family of one Jewish believer held a mock funeral for her. When she would try to call her parents, they would tell her that no longer had a daughter for she died. Many who have come from traditions that practice infant baptism are ostracized when they are baptized as a believer. Their families see it as stepping over the line in rejection of them and their religion and becoming a fanatic. Some people will put off being baptized for years - even decades because of this kind of pressure. Yet it is for this very reason that baptism is part of making a disciple.

Baptism is a personal identification with Christ that tells the world that you believe what Jesus has said about Himself and that He is your Lord and Savior and you are committed to following Him. It is a public proclamation that you are a disciple of Jesus. There must come a point in the life of those who are evangelized where they have to either make their identification with Christ known or they will have to turn their backs on Him, and trying to sit on the fence is turning your back on Him. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, *"He who is not with Me is against Me . . ."* Those who refuse to be baptized show that they have not really placed their trust in Jesus. It is legitimate to question their profession of repentance, regeneration and salvation. Baptism is a step of obedience in publically and personally identifying with Jesus. That brings up the next aspect of making a disciple of Christ.

Teaching them to Observe All His Commandments

Obedience to Christ is really the central aspect of making a disciple for it not only encompasses both going and baptizing, but it is also the practical result of being reconciled to God and entering into a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount concludes with analogy of two houses. The wise would hear and obey Him and so would be like a house built on the rock. Storms would come, but the house would remain. The foolish would hear and not obey and so they would be like a house built on the sand. It would collapse when the storms came. Obedience to Christ is the difference between wisdom and standing firm and foolishness and collapsing.

In Matthew 12:50 Jesus states clearly that it is obedience to God that demonstrates a relationship with Him - *"For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."* He states the same thing in John 14. In verse 21 He says, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."* He adds in verses 23,24, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."*

Obedience & The Gospel: Obedience is not some optional part of the gospel message or some later step in the Christian walk. It is a vital aspect of the gospel. Consider how the gospel writers conclude their gospel accounts with statements that include elements of obedience to Christ as part of telling others about Jesus. Luke 24:45 *"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things.* Mark 16:15 *And He said to them, "Go*

into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. Matthew 28:20 just states directly what the others imply. Repentance, baptism and even belief are predicated upon obedience to what Jesus said for all are commanded.

The gospel presented by most American preachers no longer contains this element of the need to obey God, but the fact remains that obedience to God is part of the gospel message for it is central to making a disciple of Christ. A person that claims to believe in Jesus yet refuses to obey Him only demonstrates that they do not believe He is Lord, a necessary element of salvation according to Paul in Romans 10:9-10. You have to have the right Jesus to be saved, and a Jesus that is not Lord is not able to save

Obedience is also necessary for the gospel to advance. God could have had Jesus remain on earth to preach the gospel or He could have used angels to proclaim the gospel (Angels will in fact will do just that in Revelation 14:6-7). However, God glorifies Himself by using people, people like you and me - just ordinary, weak, sometimes foolish people - to demonstrate His power and glory. Jesus did not use angels to preach the gospel and advance His kingdom, He chose to use us instead. If we do not obey, the gospel will not be preached.

In addition, God did not choose to use a professional class to proclaim the gospel. It is a message and responsibility given to every Christian. The job of the evangelist mentioned in Ephesians 4 is not to do the evangelism for the church, but it is actually to train believers to proclaim the gospel. As Paul preached the gospel in one area and people responded, he trained them to also proclaim the gospel. We see this principle at work in the epistles. For example, 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul writes, *"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."* The Thessalonian believers became disciples of Jesus Christ so they also carried out the work of evangelism in obedience to Christ.

Discipleship is the means by which Christianity spreads & continues. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:2, *"And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."* Making disciples is also the only means to transfer Christianity from generation to generation. That was the principle Moses taught the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Fathers were to use every situation of life to diligently teach their children to love the Lord God with all their soul, heart and might. Psalm 78:4 says, *"But tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done."* Paul instructs parents in the New Testament to bring up their children in the *discipline and instruction of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4).

Obedience and Maturity: Discipleship is also vital to living for Christ and maturing in Him. Hearing and responding to the gospel including being baptized should take place over a relatively short period of time, but learning to be obedient to all of Christ's commands will take up the rest of the Christian's life however long it may be. This then is the where the majority of effort in making a disciple is spent.

The Christian life is not an easy life for we face dangers at every turn. There are the normal troubles of life, but there are also the attacks from our enemy, the devil, and those he will use to discourage and persecute us as well as dissuade and entice us to sin. Then there is our own weaknesses that fall prey to

the pleasures of this world so that we must resist the lusts of our flesh, eyes and pride. Many professing Christians live in misery because they never have learned the goals of the Christian life and how to live according to them. Their profession was based on a gospel that promised a wonderful life with a loving God in which life would be easier and less troubled, but that is not what they are experiencing, so they are miserable.

I dare say that no one here has ever suffered anything that begins to resemble what the Apostle Paul went through, yet we are more apt to complain about life's circumstances and what we have to suffer than Paul. We are more apt to try to blame God for things that go wrong and cause us hardship or heart-ache. Too many Christians understand the sovereignty of God only enough to want to blame him for the troubles of their lives and not enough to praise Him in the midst of those same troubles. Why? Because they have yet to be made into a disciple who "obeys whatsoever Jesus commanded."

Paul did not achieve his level of spiritual maturity in a day. He had to work at it, but every day he understood more about God and His ways. He understood more about himself and his weakness. He applied these in his everyday life and he became more and more like Christ in his life and his outlook. To become more like Christ in life and outlook should be the goal of every Christian.

In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul wrote, "*Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*" Paul learned to be content, literally "self satisfied," regardless of his circumstances. He was self satisfied that he would do fine regardless of whatever situation he found himself in. Through the years of having Biblical truths forced upon him in personal experience he learned to apply those truths in daily existence so that he knew he could "*do all things through Him who strengthens.*" He could live in peace and serenity regardless of the situation because he could live in a Christ like manner and put into practice the commands of Scripture.

That was Paul's desire for the Philippians and it is the goal of teaching disciples to obey all the commands of Christ. The mature Christian should be able to make practical application of the truths of scripture into daily life and therefore present a model of Christ to the world. *I can do all things* - live for and model Christ in all circumstances - *through Him* - the Holy Spirit - who strengthens me. Paul had come a long way to reach that point of maturity, but he also knew God was not yet finished in maturing him. He said in Philippians 3:14 that he was still pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Again we find that learning to be obedient to Christ in everything is a life long endeavor and why disciples of Jesus will always be growing and maturity. But exactly what are the marks of a mature disciple of Christ and how does a disciple reach such maturity?

Marks of Maturity. I want to briefly describe five of the important marks of being a mature disciple of Christ. There are others, but these five are key characteristics.

1) The mature disciple is committed to the teachings of Jesus - John 8:31-32, *Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, [then] you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

To "abide" is to "dwell in," "live in," "remain in." This is more than simply reading God's word for abiding requires knowledge and application. You have to both know the Word and apply the principles, precepts and commands of the Word to all the situations you face in life. Those who have a love for the Word of God grow quickly. Those that do not remain immature. A lack of desire and interest can even be a mark of a false profession of faith for those that love Christ will want to keep His word (John 14:23-24).

This characteristics develops in the disciple by giving priority to hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on the Word. The key is the meditating, for like a thumb on a hand, that is the element that can be applied to all the others. There are quite a few aides for this that now exist including audio presentations of the Scriptures, audio recordings of sermons and Bible lectures, and all sorts of computer programs to assist in Bible study. Those are all helpful, but there still must be discipline and tenacity to stick with the academics of listening, reading, studying and memorizing. The key to any of these is meditating on it. It is the mulling over of the Scriptures in one's mind that produces personal conviction and application to life. That is why Psalm 119 is David's love song for the Scriptures. Over and over again he express their effect upon him in drawing him into a greater understanding of God and being able to live righteously before Him.

2) The mature disciple is willing to deny self, take up a cross daily, and follow Him. Luke 9:23-25, *And He was saying to [them] all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and [the glory] of the Father and of the holy angels.*

Remember that the idea of taking up a cross is symbolic of death and not some inconveniences or minor persecution. Paul made a similar point with a similar analogy in Galatians 2:20 saying, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."* This is a daily thing and it is developed by doing what Paul commanded in Colossians 3 to *"consider the members of your earthly body dead"* to sinful practices, thoughts and attitudes. You set all those things aside and put on the *"new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him . . ."* The longer you walk with Christ the more you resemble Him with the new self in control and your old self becoming a distant memory. Your life becomes less and less self-centered and more and more Christ-centered. That is what *"taking up your cross and following Christ"* is all about.

3) The mature disciple puts Jesus Christ before self, family, friends and possessions. Luke 14:25-35, *"Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 'If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 'Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.'"* This is similar in some ways to what was just said in Luke 9:23-25 except that family relationships are added to it. In the context of the passage the idea of hating your relatives and even your own life is not with the idea that you despise or have malice, but rather the idea that Jesus is more important than anyone else you may love, including yourself.

It takes this kind of commitment to continue to follow Jesus. Many have been attracted to Christ, but opposition at home results in them forsaking Him. As a believer develops their walk with Christ they understand more and more the priority He has in their life. Their own physical life and the relationships they have with other people are temporal. They will pass away, but their relationship with Jesus Christ is eternal. The mature disciple has Christ at the center of their world and everything else revolves around Him. Family, friends and even their own life becomes secondary.

4) The mature disciple loves others in the same way that Jesus loves them. John 13:34-35, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'"*

The mature disciple loves others in the same way that Jesus loves them. This love is primarily seen in the relationships believers have with one another. The love that is to exist between Christians is to be of such a nature that the world takes notice and recognizes that they are Jesus disciples and a picture of God's love. This is developed by obedience to the many commands that describe and direct the relationship of believers with one another. Our relationships with one another should be characterized by a love that is sacrificial, committed, forgiving, compassionate and demonstrative. Those relationships should be without pettiness, bickering, back biting, gossip or being judgmental. When those things do occur within the church it demonstrates their immaturity. The more we all become like Christ, the more these things disappear because of the humility and love that exists in mature Christians.

5) The mature disciple abides in Christ, is obedient to Him, bears fruit, glorifies God, has joy and loves the brethren. These marks come from John 15:7-17 in which Jesus uses the analogy of being the vine and professing Christians as the branches. To abide in Him means we draw our very lives from Him. He is the source of our nourishment and growth. Without Him we would shrivel up and be worthless. This begins at salvation and as time continues the Christian grows and matures into bearing fruit.

Bearing fruit is the means by which we glorify God. Its presence is evidence that we are truly Jesus' disciples (8) and that we are abiding in Him (5). What is this fruit? It is the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 - Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In short, it is a godly life lived in obedience to His commandments. We also glorify God by living in a righteous manner and doing righteous deeds. That letting our light shine before men so that they might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

In summary, the marks of maturity as a disciple of Jesus Christ is living a life that is reflective of Him. That makes logical sense for as Luke 6:40 states, *"A pupil (disciple) is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."*

The task of the church is make disciples. That requires going out to evangelize, baptizing those who respond, and teaching all who desire to follow Jesus Christ His commandments and help them to obey them.

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Baptizing

Formula

Identification with Christ

Teaching them to Observe All His Commandments
Obedience & Discipleship

Obedience & Salvation

Obedience & The Gospel
Their Relationship

Necessity for Its Proclamation

Necessity for Its Spread

Necessity for Its Continuance

Obedience and Maturity

Marks of Maturity

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