



CALVARY
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN
SEPTEMBER 10, 2017

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JOHN 14:15-21

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PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 14:15-21 and Matthew 28:18-20. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for our pastor, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS: We show our love for Christ by obeying His commands.

TEACHING AIM: The call to evangelize is a command. When we are not engaged in reaching out to the lost, least, and lonely, we are being disobedient to a clear command of Jesus.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: Matthew 28:19—
“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.”

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 Many people do not evangelize because they have not been taught how or because they are scared. What are some different methods or approaches to evangelism you have been taught over the years? (The Roman Road, the Bridge Illustration, Three Circles, etc.) Can you point to any of these as being influential in your own salvation story?
- 2 What are some fears or hesitations that keep people from sharing the gospel?
- 3 Regardless of how we feel about sharing the gospel, why must we? Why does God involve us in this effort?

Additional Introduction Option

Show a video of comedian Penn Jillette telling a story about a man giving him a Bible and sharing the gospel. The video is available on YouTube and is titled "A Gift of a Bible."

In the video Jillette asks, "How much do you have to hate someone not to proselytize?" Ask your group the same question.

As we continue through our series "The Church Is Not a Building," today we come across one of the most important aspects of the church's purpose and identity: The church is the people of God reaching out to the lost, least, and lonely. This is the model of ministry Jesus set during His time on earth, and it is the final command He left His followers before returning to heaven. This means that when we are not engaged in reaching out to the lost, least, and lonely, we are being disobedient to a clear command of Jesus.

Before we consider the Great Commission charge in Matthew 28, let's begin with a look at the importance of obeying Jesus' commands.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 14:15-19.

Notes:

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

John 14 is part of the record of what Jesus said to the disciples following the last supper. He warned them that He would be betrayed, and that even Peter would deny Him. But in the midst of these warnings, Jesus gave a new command: “Love one another” (John 13:34-35). The world would know that the disciples belonged to Jesus because of their love for one another. Then in John 14:15, Jesus gave His followers another command.

- According to John 14:15, how are followers of Jesus expected to act? In addition to loving one another, what are some of the specific commands Jesus expects us to follow?
- Now look at John 14:16-19. What is one benefit of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives? How does the Holy Spirit help us be obedient to Jesus?

- What is an area where you would like the Spirit to help you grow in obedience to Jesus?

Jesus told His followers that He would be leaving them, but that they would continue to see Him. We see Jesus through His Word and through His work among His people in the Holy Spirit. We can even see Jesus as we look back at the sanctification He has brought about in our own lives. However, one of the lesser appreciated ways we see and know Jesus is through our obedience to His commands. We may not always understand, but we learn something about Jesus' love as we obey Him. Just as a child obeys a parent, we as God's children obey Him.

Jesus encouraged His disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit (the fulfillment of which we read last week in Acts 2). One of the many functions of the Holy Spirit is that He enables Jesus' followers to keep His commandments. The Holy Spirit continues to enable Christians to obey Christ through means such as convicting us of sin, opening our eyes to the truths of Scripture, and giving us love for others and passion for the spread of the gospel.

- In verse 18, Jesus used adoption language to talk about His relationship with His followers. Spiritual adoption changes the way we live. Does your level of obedience to Christ bear witness to the reality that you are a child of God? Explain.

> Have a volunteer read John 14:20-21.

²⁰ *On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.* ²¹ *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.*

Counselor (John 14:16)

The word *Counselor* translates the Greek word *parakletos* that means "someone who stands beside someone else." It could be an advisor, an attorney, or an intercessor of some kind. In our text, it emphasizes the Holy Spirit's function in representing God to believers and encouraging them. The adjective *another* reminds us that their primary counselor was Jesus and that the Holy Spirit would take his place on earth. Some interpreters emphasize the legal aspect of the term. In its classical Greek setting, that certainly is true. But in our understanding, lawyers do not always comfort and they rarely teach, yet both aspects are strongly emphasized in this passage.

He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

In these verses, Jesus further expanded on our call to obedience and the relationship we have with Him. Jesus explicitly stated that we show our love to Him through our obedience. Furthermore, in drawing the connection between Himself, the Father, and us, Jesus helped us understand that His passions and His ministry are to become our passions and our ministry. But what does that involve?

Notes:

In Luke 19:10, Jesus said of His own ministry, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” The details of His ministry throughout the Gospels show us His commitment to this mission. As His church and those tasked with carrying out His mission in the world (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19-20), one of the primary ways we obey Jesus is by reaching out to the lost, least, and lonely.

- If we know Christ, why should that drive us to go to those among us who are lost, least, and lonely?
- Just because we don't have the gift of evangelism, we must not believe it's not our responsibility. Specifically, how does the Holy Spirit help us obey Jesus through evangelism?

The call to evangelism is a challenge for most, but oftentimes that is because we put too much pressure on ourselves. Before we knew Christ, we were lost. We were the least. And we were lonely, whether we realized it or not. But then we encountered Jesus, and He changed our lives through His grace and mercy. When we think about those whom we are trying to reach as being in the same place we were apart from

Christ, it motivates us toward obedience. God and His grace should be so precious to us that we cannot help but tell others about Him. And because of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives, we can trust that He will give us the words needed to share the gospel.

When it comes to Jesus' commands, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) is the ultimate command of Jesus to His followers, so it goes without saying that we are to live in obedience to it. If we aren't doing this, then we aren't being the church.

> Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:16-20.

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ 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."

Jesus commanded His followers to share the good news, and He gave them the Holy Spirit to empower them to do so. Resistance to evangelism is not only a weakness, it is also disobedience to Christ.

- What are some barriers to evangelism that keep Christians from actively sharing their faith?
- Who all has the responsibility to make disciples? Why?

Did You Know?

In a recent LifeWay survey, 61% of churchgoers said they had not shared their faith in the last six months and 48% said they had not even invited someone to church in the same time period, even though 80% agree that sharing their faith is very important.

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- Look again at Matthew 28:18. Before Jesus commanded the disciples to go and make disciples, what did He tell them? How does that truth give you hope as you share the gospel with others?

Notes:

- Jesus didn't say "make converts," He said "make disciples." What is a disciple? How do we obey this command as individual disciples? How do we obey this as a church?

Jesus commanded His followers to "make disciples." The purpose of evangelism must be more holistic than eliciting a response. Evangelism includes seeing sinners turn from their sin and grow in godliness through intentional discipleship efforts of other believers and the local church. To reach the lost, least, and lonely, believers will have to be involved in their lives beyond the moment of conversion. A disciple is a learner, so making disciples means making a learner who follows Jesus actively. This takes time and intentionality. Obedience to Christ will always cost us something, but it is always worth it.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 1 The church is not a building; it is the people of God reaching out to the lost, least, and lonely. With this in mind, are you being the church? Are you living in obedience to this command of Jesus?

- 2 What would have to change in your life for you to be more effective in evangelism and discipleship in the lives of others?

- 3 What are some specific ways our group can help those outside the church see Jesus this week or this month?

Notes:

PRAY

Ask God to give us hearts for the lost. Thank Him for giving us the Holy Spirit to empower our obedience. Pray that we would have a passion for the lost that is greater than our fears of failure and rejection.

MEMORIZE

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. – John 14:21

JOHN 14:15-21

14:15-18. How do people know that they are Christians? How do you and I gain confidence that we are born again by the regenerating power of God's Holy Spirit? The world cannot know because the world cannot accept the Holy Spirit. But the disciples were told that the Holy Spirit lives with you and will be in you. Pentecost was still in their future, so at the present time the Holy Spirit was constantly with them. But after Pentecost, he would actually be in them and in every other believer since that day. Consequently, they were identifiable (as we are) as God's children, not orphans.

Notes:

What did Jesus mean by the promise at the end of verse 18: I will come to you? Some interpreters suggest this refers to the resurrection while others see another promise of the second coming. But in the context of these verses, it surely means the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus lives in us through the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit lives in us to identify his children. The doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit does not rest completely on this passage, but verse 17 is of great significance.

Not only that, but this indwelling will be endless—the new Counselor will be with you forever. No orphans in the family of God, no abandoned people with no place to turn. The Holy Spirit will be a constant presence of Jesus with all believers.

14:19-21. How well we remember the song that states, "Because he lives I can face tomorrow; because he lives all fears are gone." Perhaps the idea for the lyrics had its birth in John 14:19. When did the disciples (later called the apostles) realize that Jesus was in the Father and that they dwelt in him?

Did they have to wait for the second coming for that? Of course not. The reference to that day must refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That frightened, hesitant group of believers huddled in an upper room knew the power of the Holy Spirit broke forth upon them because it literally blasted them around the city, around the country and around their world.

Notes:

But notice again the emphasis on behavior. A person does not show that the Holy Spirit lives in him by bizarre behavior or belief, but by knowing and obeying the commands of the Lord Jesus. How desperately we need balance in the church. Making too much of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit leads to mysticism; making too little of him leads to legalism. Only the balance can lead to unity. How like sinful human beings to divide the church over the Holy Spirit, sent by God to unite us.

As we might expect, interpreters have debated the meaning of the words on that day, although the context seems to point to the resurrection.

MATTHEW 28:16-20

28:16-17. Some time during the forty days of Jesus' post-resurrection stay on earth (probably soon after they heard the news that Sunday), the eleven disciples and many more of Jesus' followers proceeded to Galilee, where Jesus had instructed them to go (26:32; 28:7,10). Here Matthew's focus was back on the eleven, the foundation stones of his church.

Jesus had apparently specified a particular mountain as their meeting place. (Note mountains as locations for other important events in Matt. 5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 26:30.) At the end of the journey, presumably on the designated

mountain, they saw him. Imagine their joy! It was only natural that they worshiped him.

But some doubted (the word doubt means “to duplicate,” “to be of two minds,” or “to waver, hesitate”). All wanted to believe, but their faith was weak. Some experienced the internal tug-of-war between “two minds”—the one wanting to follow their fledgling faith and the other wanting to follow “reason.” Even those presented with clear evidence for the truth can still have doubts.

Notes:

But the word some implied there were others who believed everything they saw. These were the followers of the Messiah-King who would continue on into Acts, willing to take any risk in obedience to their master. This was true faith in action, living on the edge of “risky” obedience.

28:18-20. The Great Commission passage is reminiscent of Acts 1:6-11. In Matthew, Jesus issued a similar commission in different words with a different emphasis. However, the setting in the Acts passage was in Jerusalem. It coincided with Jesus’ ascension into heaven at the end of the forty days. Jesus probably met with the disciples in Galilee and then instructed them to return to Jerusalem. All of this was done in preparation for their receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5) and their continuation of his Spirit-empowered ministry in Acts 2 (in Jerusalem).

Matthew did not record Jesus’ ascension into heaven, as it likely would have distracted from his emphasis in 28:18-20. He wanted the Great Commission to linger in people’s minds as they finished his Gospel. Jesus had a big job in mind for his followers. All is a key word in 28:18-20. It emphasizes Jesus’ divine identity: all authority, all nations, all things.

Before issuing his commission, Jesus laid the foundation for the success of their future ministry: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. This was critically important. Without the Messiah's authority, the mission of the disciples and our mission today would be doomed to failure. The reader of Matthew's Gospel should know well by now the nature and power of the Messiah's authority.

Notes:

The heart of the Great Commission is 28:19-20, the last words of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew knew the principle that "last words are lasting words." He chose carefully, under the Spirit's direction, the words he wanted to linger in his readers' minds. Therefore identified Jesus' authority (28:18) as the reason the disciples must carry out his orders.

The central command is make disciples. At the heart of our mission is the reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in us: faith, obedience, growth, authority, compassion, love, and a bold, truthful message as his witnesses. They were learners commanded to produce more learners.

Jesus' disciples were to reproduce other disciples of all the nations (the word translated *x* is the plural of *ethnos*, meaning "peoples, ethnic groups," as in 24:14). He was hinting that their fulfillment of their commission would ultimately lead to his second coming. It is significant that Matthew ended his Gospel with one more reference to the Gentile mission, challenging the Jewish Christians to lose their prejudices and unify the church. This also challenges us to break down any artificial boundaries erected by our culture. We must minister impartially. Jesus was an equal-opportunity Savior.

We see three participles here that are subordinate to the central command to make disciples. Each of

these clarifies the way in which Jesus' disciples are to make disciples.

First, in the emphatic first position, even before make disciples, is the aorist participle go. In the context, this Greek participle is best rendered, "when you have gone." "Going" is one of the three means by which to fulfill the central command to make disciples. Going means more than traveling across geographical borders, although this is part of Jesus' meaning. The point is that we believers are active; we are not inert. Going means crossing boundaries to make disciples—going across the street, going to dinner with an unbelieving friend, going into the inner city, going beyond one's comfort zone to make the gospel accessible to the lost. Living life is "going" with a purpose, every day.

Notes:

Going also implies our support of people who are literally going to other cultures. We must support global outreach financially and support the people going emotionally and personally as well as through prayer. We are a part of their team. In all these ways we "go," in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

We also "go" when we support efforts to equip indigenous ministers in different cultures. We help equip them to lead people of their own culture and language. This enables them to fulfill the Great Commission at home and in cultures where they will find a better reception than we would.

Second, we come to the participle baptizing (present participle of baptizo, meaning "continually immersing them"). Because baptism was so closely associated with the decision of faith (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 10:47-48), it may be best to see baptizing as Jesus' way of summarizing the evangelistic half of the disciples' ministry. The third participle, teaching (Matt. 28:20), represents the other half of the disciples' ministry—the

edification of those who are already believers. Baptism is an initiating rite that “immerses” the believer into a whole new world. Baptism is not a step to salvation. Rather, it is an initial step of obedience that results from a person’s decision to trust the Messiah. Baptism represents the identification of people with this new way of life and faith. Baptism should be experienced as soon as possible after a person trusts Christ.

Notes:

Jesus specified that we are to baptize disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The use of the singular name implies clearly that this listing of three persons should be thought of as one name. Here is a clear affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity—one God, three distinct persons. The believer who chooses to submit to baptism into this name identifies with God’s name as well as the spiritual family of all others who are identified with this same name.

This is a good summary of the evangelistic task of the church. It is bringing those who identify with the world into a new identification. It is seeing themselves anew as citizens of God’s kingdom, as children of God, as brothers and sisters of the Messiah, and as brothers and sisters with the rest of the family of believers. Our mission is to bring people to a point where they see themselves differently—because they have become different through the transforming work of God’s grace.

Third, the participle teaching (present participle of *didasko*, meaning “keep on teaching them”) completes the series of three means by which we fulfill the Great Commission. This represents the other half of our mission—the edification or building up of those who are believers.

Jesus instructed us not only to teach content, but to train people into obedient action: teaching them to keep everything I have commanded you.

The teachings of Jesus recorded in Matthew are the essence of the practical teaching we are to pass on to new disciples. There is much more teaching from Scripture beyond Matthew that the church needs. But his teaching in Matthew serves as a strong foundation.

Notes:

By fulfilling the teaching portion of the Great Commission, we take believers at every stage of spiritual maturity to the next stage of growth. This can range from the infancy of a brand-new believer to various levels of spiritual adulthood. Every believer should progress toward the perfect character of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16), but none will arrive there short of eternity. So we must see ourselves as learners in a family of teachers, who themselves are also learners. The believer who is most mature will be most ready to listen and learn, even from the newest member of the family (cf. Matt. 18:4).

Matthew's last words are a concluding promise from the Messiah-King. Surely adds a note of assurance, similar to Jesus' "I tell you the truth." A paraphrase of the phrase I am with you always would read, "I myself am continually with you always until the end of the age." Among other things, Jesus claimed omnipresence, again laying claim to deity (note "Immanuel, God with us" in 1:23). He will be with us every step of the way. I am with you always reminds us of the great promises to saints of old like Moses (Exod. 3:12) and Joshua (Josh. 1:5).

This promise complements Jesus' claim to universal authority in Matthew 28:18, and it undergirds the believer's confidence in fulfilling the Great Commission. If we take out the three subordinate participial clauses from 28:18-20, boiling the commission down to its grammatical essence, we end up with this: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, make disciples of all the nations; and surely I am with you always, to the end of the age."