



**CALVARY**  
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN  
JANUARY 27, 2019



## REPRODUCING OTHERS LIKE US!

MATTHEW 28:18-20

JANUARY 27, 2019

TEACHING PLAN

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### PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying 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 your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

### HIGHLIGHTS

**TAKEAWAY:** God's plan for the spread of the gospel and expansion of the Kingdom is through disciples making disciples.

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**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Disciple-making is the church's highest priority, and we need to discover the keys to disciple-making found in Matthew 28:18-20.

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION:** As an example of disciples who make disciples, Jesus first told his disciples to "come and see" then his disciples told their friends to "come and see" (John 1:39, 46).

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## INTRODUCTION

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

- 1 What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “making disciples?”
- 2 Who in the Bible was a disciple maker? What did he do to make disciples?
- 3 Are you the disciple of anyone? Do you disciple anyone? Tell a bit about that.

“Making disciples” may be one of the most uttered phrases in evangelical churches. At the same time, it is probably one of the least carried out the commands of Jesus, at least in the Western church. Jason Haynes believes that three key hindrances to making disciples are a lack of time, lack of trust, and a lack of connection.<sup>1</sup>

Others, like Spence Shelton, say that things like unrepentant sin and fear are the underlying hindrances to disciple-making.<sup>2</sup>

You may find other sorts of obstacles. Today we will deal with the most basic of hindrances. The text we are looking at clarifies two important matters. First, it explains that discipleship is a priority. If we don’t apprehend the gravity of this command then we won’t do it. Secondly, the verse explains how we are to go about completing the task. This is not a detailed guide to making disciples, but it does give us a broad outline to apply to our disciple-making context.

## ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

### What is an apprentice?

### How is an apprenticeship like discipleship?

Apprenticeship is a unique way to learn a skill or trade that combines on-the-job training, personal mentorship, and study with a view of becoming completely competent in the field. Christian discipleship is similar. The skill that the disciple learns is how to walk in obedience to Jesus. This is done through the study and explanation of the Scriptures in the context of a mentor-like relationship where there is accountability, responsibility, and friendship.

1. Hayes, Jason. “Connection, Trust, and Time Are Important to the Discipleship Process.” LifeWay. January 4, 2014. Accessed December 11, 2018. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/obstacles-of-discipleship-and-how-to-tackle-them>.
2. Shelton, Spence. “Two Obstacles Keeping Us From Making Disciples.” J.D. Greear Ministries. April 05, 2017. Accessed December 11, 2018. <https://jdgrear.com/blog/two-obstacles-keeping-us-from-making-disciples/>.

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## UNDERSTANDING

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

Notes:

The context for the Great Commission is that Jesus had been crucified, buried, and resurrected. He appeared to His disciples and they worshipped Him, though some doubted. In the midst of this worship, Jesus gave them the Great Commission. It's difficult to think of a moment in Jesus' earthly ministry where words would have been more important. What Jesus said here is paramount in the lives of His followers.

> Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:18-19a.

*18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19a Therefore go and make disciples of all nations*

The text uses the Greek word, *proselthōn*, which means *He came close to them*. Perhaps there was a larger crowd there and Jesus wanted to speak directly to the disciples. Or maybe He leaned in to them to emphasize the importance of what He was about to say. Whatever the case, His words were astounding. He spoke as one already seated at the right hand of the Father, with a global outlook on the present and future, and with all the resources of heaven at His command. Jesus had authority and power before His death and resurrection, but now He would no longer empty Himself of any authority or power (Philippians 2:7). His authority is boundless and includes heaven and earth.

- What does it mean for us that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth?
  
- How does this relate to the mission we have been given?

First, it means that we are under the command of Jesus. There are no lone-ranger, rogue Christians who have the right to draw up their own battle plans. The mission has been clearly stated and followers of Jesus are called to carry it out. Yes, how the mission is carried out is shaped by context, but it must never be shaped in such a way that the essence of the mission is compromised.

Notes:

Second, it means that we go to complete the mission with full assurance of our security and victory. Our Master has all the authority. This means that no ground upon which we set our foot is outside of the control and authority of our Command-in-Chief. There are no sovereign nations in the spiritual realm. All rulers and authorities are under the authority and command of the one true and living God.

> Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:19b-20a.

*19b ... 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.*

By His authority, Jesus commissioned the eleven disciples to make more disciples in “all nations.” The Greek here is *ethne*, which is better understood as “all the people groups of the world.” In the first century, this certainly would have required going to many places, but the primary emphasis of Jesus command here is “make disciples.”

- How should we understand “baptizing?”  
What does that mean for us?

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Does Jesus want us to go around only baptizing people? No. That's not the point here. For Jews, baptism was synonymous with conversion. It was a ritual that was used to signify and mark one's conversion. We can see this dynamic playing out in the book of Acts. Conversion is so closely linked to baptism that sometimes it seems that conversion is tantamount to baptism (Act 2:38), though a brief survey of the New Testament teaching of soteriology quickly dismisses that possibility. Nonetheless, it is an important step in the life of a newly converted follower of Christ. It is both his or her public confession of and identification with Jesus Christ.

Notes:

So, we should read *baptism* and think *conversion*. We know that conversion only happens when a person responds with faith and repentance to the gospel. Thus, if we want to obey the first part of Jesus' command to make disciples, then we must be evangelists. We must be about explaining the gospel to everyone with whom we have a hearing.

- How should we understand "teaching?"  
What does this mean for us?

Though this aspect of the Great Commission is much more straightforward, it generally isn't what we think of when we consider how we might accomplish the Great Commission. Being obedient to the command of Jesus in Matthew 28 is more than teaching the gospel through a one-time message, though it is certainly not less than this.

Jesus said that we should teach them "to observe all that I have commanded you." This is what we commonly call "discipleship." So, when we read the Great Commission, it is clear that Jesus' command is for us to be faithful in evangelism and discipleship. We ought not to be only concerned for the justification of sinners, but also the sanctification of the saints.

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> Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:20b.

*20b And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

Notes:

Jesus gave the disciples a promise at the end of the commission. He assured them of His presence. How significant this must have been. The disciples were looking at the one with whom they had walked and talked and followed for three years. They had given up everything to follow Him. They loved Him. So, Jesus' promise of presence was doubly comforting for those disciples. This isn't to diminish the profound comfort that it is for all believers, but we should acknowledge how those men must have felt in that moment.

- How might the promise of Jesus' presence shape our posture toward daily life in a fallen and broken world?

It must have been a mountaintop experience for the disciples to see the risen Christ, receive the Great Commission, and see Jesus' ascension. Their hearts must have swelled with love and joy. Blood and adrenaline must have coursed through their veins causing a heightened sense of energy, resolve, and optimism. Of course they would complete the Great Commission and Jesus would be with them!

But, what about when that memory began to fade and they grew weary with the work. What about when Stephen was martyred and believers were chased out of Jerusalem? The blessed and amazing promise of Jesus is that He will be with His disciples—all His disciples—in all sorts of days, sorrows, sufferings, weaknesses, and trials. The promise of the presence of Jesus is just as certain when it doesn't feel as though He is there, as when it does.

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- What sort of effect should the presence of Jesus have on how we work to obey the Great Commission?

Notes:

Jesus' promise wasn't intended to allow us complacently rest in our own wellbeing and security. Rather, it ought to be an incentive to pour ourselves out on the altar of service to our Lord for the completion of the Great Commission.

## APPLICATION

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

- 1 Do you see yourself under the authority of Jesus? How does that affect your life and ministry?
- 2 In what ways are you participating in the Great Commission? Who have you shared the gospel with in the past month? Who are you teaching/discipling?
- 3 How does the promise of Jesus' presence in your life compel you to participate in evangelism and discipleship? If it doesn't, why not?

## PRAY

Thank God for the mission of telling others about Jesus. Thank Him that He has promised to be with us and that His purposes are certain under His complete authority and power.

## FOLLOW UP

Notes:

*Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:*

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - Who do you need to share the gospel with?
  - What steps do you need to take toward this?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize Matthew 28:19-20.

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**MATTHEW 28:18-20**

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).

Notes:

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.

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.

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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.

Notes:

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.

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.

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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.

Notes:

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.

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.

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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."