

## SESSION 10

# GO MAKE DISCIPLES

BEFORE JESUS ASCENDED TO THE FATHER, He gave His disciples a commission to make disciples of all nations. Based on the authority of Jesus, we are to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded us. As we go, we trust in the presence of Christ, who promises to be with us on mission.

### STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read the main passages for this study, recording your insights and questions:
  - ▷ Matthew 28:16-20
2. Review the Teaching Plan (pp.105-108).
  - ▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
  - ▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.
3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp.109-114).
  - ▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
  - ▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.

### LESSON OUTLINE

TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION, CHRISTIANS ARE TO...

- 1. Submit to Jesus (Matt. 28:16-18).**
- 2. Obey Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20a).**
- 3. Depend on Jesus (Matt. 28:20b).**

# SESSION 10

## TEACHING PLAN

# GO MAKE DISCIPLES

## CONNECT

### OPTION 1

Recount the writer's story of Jim coming to faith through the obedience of Tom and Kevin to the Great Commission (p.109).



*Consider the actions of Tom and Kevin in this story. What aspects seem easy to you? What aspects seem difficult? Why?*

Mention the various questions that arise in considering the Great Commission. Then summarize the lesson (p.110).

### OPTION 2

For this option, write out the titles of Army officers (listed below) in random order on a white board. Working as groups or individually, challenge students to rank the officers in the correct order of authority, from bottom to top. Feel free to help them or give them a clue if necessary. (The following is the correct order.)

*Private, Corporal, Sergeant, Captain, Major, Colonel, Lieutenant General, General*

After the activity, use the following questions to help facilitate conversation before moving to the transition part of the session. Be sure to explain that just as there is a rank of authority in the army, whereas people submit to the authority above them, Christians also submit to the authority of Jesus over their lives.



*What are some other areas of life where people submit to authority (ex. police officers, coaches, etc.)? Why is this important in these areas?*

### TRANSITION

In this session, we will seek to arrive at a clearer understanding of what Jesus intended when He commanded that His followers make disciples. Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He gave His disciples a commission to make disciples of all nations. Based on the authority of Jesus, we are to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded us. As we go, we trust in the presence of Christ, who promises to be with us on mission.

## ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

The TV show *The West Wing* is about a fictional president and his staff. One of my favorite characters is named CJ Cregg. Midway through his second term in office, the president's chief of staff passes away. When the president approaches CJ about stepping into the role, she is hesitant. But because it is the President who is asking, she feels that she must answer his call to serve. CJ provides a wonderful example of submitting to authority. Those of us who have placed our faith and trust in Jesus are under His authority. Because He is the ultimate authority, we must submit to Him in humble faith.

► How should the knowledge of Jesus' authority affect your thoughts and actions?

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

All throughout my teenage years, I served as a Bible teacher in my church. My group went from being made up of girls who already knew the Bible to girls who had never heard about Jesus or the Bible. It was such a blessing to be able to share with these girls about the gospel every week. Obeying the Great Commission of Jesus can be done at any age and in any place.

► Who can you share the good news with?

## CONVEY — TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION, CHRISTIANS ARE TO...

### 1. SUBMIT TO JESUS.

Set the context for the Great Commission as requiring Jesus' total authority; then read Matthew 28:16-18. Show how Jesus' authority results in our worship of Him and our obedience to His command (p.x).



At this point, consider using the story "Ultimate Authority" in the Personal Study Guide (p.85) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*Who obeyed the Great Commission in leading to your own conversion?*



*Why is the authority of Jesus so important for understanding the Great Commission?*

### 2. OBEY JESUS.

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:19-20a. Note that the main verb of this passage is the imperative "make disciples." Explain that a disciple is a "learner." We "make disciples" through a lifestyle of "go[ing]" on mission and "baptizing" those who believe in Christ (pp.110-112).



At this point, consider using the story "Sharing the Good News" in the Personal Study Guide (p.87) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.

We also make disciples by "teaching." Explain *who we are teaching* (p.112).



*How can we encourage one another toward making disciples rather than just participating in "discipleship"?*

Explain four aspects of *what we are teaching* (pp.112-113):

- **Knowing and Communicating the Big Story of the Bible.** This helps make sense of what Jesus did for us, what He is doing in us, and what He will do in the world.
- **Encouraging and Equipping Others to Read the Bible.** Reading the Bible is not simply a "spiritual discipline"; it is our spiritual nourishment.
- **Helping Others Encounter Christ.** The Scriptures testify of Christ, and we need to know Him in whose image we are being made.
- **Challenging Others to Obedience.** We are to be obedient to the teaching of the Bible as we call others to obedience.



*Which of these four aspects of teaching comes easiest for you? Which of these aspects is most challenging? Why?*

Finally, explain *where we teach*, not just classrooms but everywhere. We must also remember the worldwide scope of the commission—of all nations (p.113).



*Where are some places you go often that you can be more intentional about making disciples?*

### 3. DEPEND ON JESUS.

Read Matthew 28:20b. Emphasize our need for Jesus' presence, through the Holy Spirit, for security, power, and direction in fulfilling our mission (p.114).



*Have you ever doubted the presence of Christ in your life? If so, what do you think caused you to doubt?*



At this point, consider using the story "God with Us" in the Personal Study Guide (p.89) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



*In what ways has the presence of Christ been apparent to you as you have followed Him?*

## GOD WITH US

*You have probably heard the phrase, "What would Jesus do?" This phrase originated from the novel In His Steps by Charles M. Sheldon. The book begins with a homeless man visiting a church. He humbly chastises the church for their lack of compassion and for not following the command of Christ to show love to those who are hurting. The pastor of this congregation is cut to the quick when he hears these words. So this pastor challenges the members of his church to make a pledge. For an entire year, they are to ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" before every action. As those who have been redeemed, we have received the promise that Jesus will never leave or forsake us. As we walk through life, we are to walk in His presence. And as we depend on Christ, we can do great and marvelous things for the glory of God and the advance of His kingdom.*

► *How are you depending on the presence of Jesus?*

## NOTES:

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**COLLIDE**

As we continue through this unit, highlighting how the church lives, we stop in this session to discover the meaning of discipleship. The term *discipleship* or the phrase “making disciples” can often be misunderstood from its biblical meaning.



*What was your understanding of discipleship or making disciples before going through this lesson?*

For many, the meaning of making disciples is simply equated with evangelism or making converts. As a result, students may take an unbiblical position on being a disciple, reducing it to the cognitive level of belief in Christ and eternal security in heaven. However, becoming a disciple is much more involved than that. While it does begin at someone coming to faith in Christ and experiencing forgiveness of sins, it certainly doesn't end there.



*How would you now describe discipleship to someone who might ask?*

Because this session focuses on what it means to be a disciple and make disciples, it should correct any misunderstanding that may exist, and also challenge students that as followers of Christ, they are called to be on mission with God in making disciples.



*What are some practical ways you can help increase your own discipleship and the discipleship of others?*



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](https://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](https://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**

## SESSION 10

*by Jason C Dukes*

## EXPANDED LESSON CONTENT

**GO MAKE DISCIPLES**

TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION, CHRISTIANS ARE TO SUBMIT TO JESUS, OBEY JESUS, AND DEPEND ON JESUS.

## OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER



Jim was rough around the edges. Blunt and brash; independent, yet insecure. Tom and Kevin went to school with Jim and played baseball together. In addition to spending time together for baseball practice, they ate lunch together, carpooled to school together, and hung out together on weekends. You would call them friends, not just acquaintances. And that was a good thing because Jim was walking through a tough breakup.

What Jim didn't need were friends who only invited him to a Sunday event or offered worn out clichés. He needed friends who would listen, walk beside him, and bring the love and goodness of God near to him in everyday language and everyday rhythms. Tom and Kevin spoke about the Bible in ways that defined their perspectives and relationships. They identified themselves by Christ and with Christ. And it made Jim curious.

Jim eventually asked Tom and Kevin if he could "go to church with them." They had invited Jim before, but this time Jim wanted to go. So he did. One year later, Jim was in the baptismal waters, declaring himself as a follower of Jesus. And Tom and Kevin were still obeying the Great Commission.



*Consider the actions of Tom and Kevin in this story. What aspects seem easy to you? What aspects seem difficult? Why?*

The Great Commission is the label Christians have given to Jesus' words in Matthew 28:16-20. We agree on the label, but there's discussion about what Jesus' words mean.

**VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY**

Go ye into all the world, and don't start at the farthest point. The nearest point will do. You have but to open your front door and look on the mail carrier there, or open your back door and consider the person taking care of your lawn. In either case, the world is born and your global mission may begin.<sup>1</sup>

—Calvin Miller



## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*'But some doubted'...refers more to hesitation than to unbelief...[The disciples] may simply continue to exhibit an understandable confusion about how to behave in the presence of a supernaturally manifested, exalted, and holy being... Jesus can make the claim of v. 18 only if He is fully God, in as much as the whole universe is embraced in the authority delegated to Him. And yet He is still in some sense distinct from His Heavenly Father, so that Matthew can use the divine passive in speaking of His having 'been given' this authority. Clear allusions to the heavenly Son of Man figure of Daniel 7:13-14 appear here. Christ's exaltation, as the result of His resurrection, means that one day 'every knee' will bow and 'every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord' (Phil. 2:9-11), whether or not they do so voluntarily as part of His redeemed people. Because of this authority, Jesus has the right to issue His followers their 'marching orders,' but He also has the ability to help them carry out those orders.<sup>2</sup>*

—Craig L. Blomberg

## VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Jesus' authority compels us to go, for missions only makes sense if He has all authority in heaven and on earth. His worth is the fuel of our mission...His worship is the goal of our mission.<sup>3</sup>

—David Platt

- Was Jesus commanding us to evangelize? Certainly, baptizing people and teaching them implies that we are sharing the good news. But is that all?
- Was Jesus commanding us to “do missions”? Certainly, local churches ought to pray and send missionaries to the nations. But is that all?
- Was Jesus commanding us to “do discipleship”? Certainly, teaching people to obey everything Christ has commanded is part of making disciples. But is that all?

## TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION, CHRISTIANS ARE TO...

### 1. SUBMIT TO JESUS (MATT. 28:16-18).

The Great Commission is one of the most well known passages of Scripture. Most of the time, we think of it starting with “Go” in verse 19, but the word “therefore,” also in verse 19, points back to the strong statement of Jesus’ total authority at the beginning of verse 18. Let’s take a look at the verses that come just before Jesus’ command and why they matter.

*The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:16-18)*

Why is it important to remember verse 18? Because we only fulfill the Great Commission when we obey the Great Commander.

What is unique about this Commander is that Jesus’ power empowers and Jesus’ authority authorizes. He is unlike people in power who like to make their subjects feel powerless. No, this Commander invites His followers to experience His power—which is demonstrated in the giving of love.

Jesus also differs from authority figures who make subjects feel oppressed. Instead, He frees His followers to exercise the King’s authority over the forces of darkness who work to destroy life-giving love. He is the authority over all, who became subject to death on the cross and now calls His followers to subject themselves to His mission of love (John 13:35).

So, we go as a people under the authority of Jesus. But we also go as a people who worship Jesus. Before the imperative to His followers in verse 19 (“make disciples”) is the description of His followers in verse 17. They came to Him and “worshiped.”

Worshiping Jesus is a declaration of your high regard for the authority of Jesus. He is worth obeying. His Great Commission is worth submitting to.



*Who obeyed the Great Commission in leading to your own conversion?*



*Why is the authority of Jesus so important for understanding the Great Commission?*

## 2. OBEY JESUS (MATT. 28:19-20A).

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19-20a)*

As we look at these important words from Jesus, it's important to dig a little into the grammar. The only main verb in these verses is the imperative "make disciples." The subject, of course, is understood—"you." The Great Commission of Jesus is for His disciples, you and me, to "make disciples."

What is a *disciple*? It might be helpful to use the synonym "learner"—someone who follows or learns from someone else. But the word doesn't refer only to something we do. It's about who we are. As Mark 1:17 suggests, over the course of our being a disciple of Jesus, of our learning Him and His ways, He transforms us into "fishers of people." In other words, our being made a disciple of Jesus transforms us into makers of more disciples of Jesus. We learn Jesus (not just in an educational sense but also an experiential one) while helping others learn Jesus.

Sometimes we feel the pressure of thinking we have to know everything about Jesus or Scripture in order to make disciples. But biblical discipleship means you are not the *learnED* but the *learnER*. You are a learner of Jesus tasked with teaching and learning alongside other disciples.

How does one "make" a "disciple"? The first instruction given is translated "go," meaning we must be on the move for the purpose of making disciples. This command has also been understood "as you are going" or "while going." When we go, wherever we go, in both the going and the coming, whether common day-to-day paths or uncommon special trips or outings, we make disciples. Making disciples is a lifestyle involving conversations and relationships, not just curriculum and classrooms. Making disciples of Jesus is our everyday mission.

The second instruction given is "baptizing." As someone becomes a disciple (or learner) of Jesus, they make a public communication about their belief, commitment, and gratefulness by being baptized. It is a statement of our identity, of who we are in Christ and who we are becoming.

Jesus said to baptize in the name of the Father and Son and Spirit. This act lifts up the love and goodness of the Father. It exalts the Son who came to give us new life and a new name. At the cross, He killed off all the self-absorbed ways of living that grab after more than God's goodness and love (like the hand that reached for the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden), and with an empty grave He gave us the name of "Forgiven, Resurrected One" rather than our former name, "Condemned, Dead One." Baptism also declares that we live not according to sinful desires but are surrendered to the Spirit and belong to His people.

## VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

Our Master commands us to 'go.' We need permission to stay!<sup>4</sup>

—Henry Blackaby

## FURTHER COMMENTARY

*To 'make disciples of all nations' does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be. The verb 'make disciples' also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involves: 'baptizing' them and 'teaching' them obedience to all of Jesus' commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.<sup>5</sup>*

—Craig L. Blomberg



“Baptizing” is followed by “teaching.” Let’s look at the who, what, and where of teaching.

*Who are we teaching?* Are we teaching those who are already disciples of Jesus? The command to make disciples implies that the person starts out as someone who is not a follower of Christ.

Too often we think of “discipleship” as a believer learning more about God. A more biblical understanding doesn’t discount this idea but expands on it. In order to make disciples, we must commit to ongoing relationships with those who do not yet follow Jesus. The process of disciple-making and discipleship doesn’t begin or end when someone becomes a Christian. It starts with evangelism and doesn’t end until we see Jesus face to face.



*How can we encourage one another toward making disciples rather than just participating in “discipleship”?*

*What we are teaching?* Sometimes, Christians teach personal preferences rather than the actual words of Jesus. We emphasize moralistic behavior rather than reliance on the Messiah. We must instead show people Jesus—speaking truth with our lips and modeling truth in our lives.

Here are four aspects that should be part of our teaching others to obey Christ:

### **Knowing and Communicating the Big Story of the Bible**

You cannot properly understand what Jesus taught or what the Scriptures command without a foundational understanding of the big story the Bible tells and God’s plan of redemption. As we “make disciples,” we help people see themselves within the bigger story God is writing. Then they grow in understanding what Jesus did for us, what He is doing in us, and what He will do in the world.

### **Encouraging and Equipping Others to Read the Bible**

Reading the Bible is not simply a “spiritual discipline”; it is our spiritual nourishment. Jesus said that we must not live by bread alone but by God’s living Word (Matt. 4:4). We don’t typically force ourselves to eat. We eat because we need sustenance. The same is true with reading the Bible. We need constant nourishment to refresh and energize our starved way of thinking and our selfish way of living, and we must have ongoing nourishment from the gospel to keep remembering our need for grace.

Reading the Bible is necessary in order to better discern the leadership of the Spirit among the many voices daily calling for our attention. We need the Bible in order to bring the message into the flow of our thinking and talking and, of course, our actions. As Eugene Peterson said, “To follow Jesus is as much, or maybe even more, about feet as it is about ears and eyes.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Helping Others Encounter Christ**

The Gospels proclaim to us the story of Jesus, and this story is fundamental to our journey as disciples. The rest of the New Testament unpacks the

significance of the events in the Gospels. We need to return to the Scriptures to encounter Christ again and again, fixing our eyes on the Savior in whose image we are being made.

### Challenging Others to Obedience

There's no point in reading the Bible if we are unwilling to do what it says. Part of disciple-making means we teach others to obey. This implies that we are to be obedient as we call others to obedience. Jesus summed up the law with two commandments: love God and love your neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40). He demonstrated His compassion for the poor and the sick—the kind of people who get overlooked in society. He challenged His disciples to love others the way He loved them—not based on how lovable, likable, or valuable they were but based on His great and sacrificial love for them.



*Which of these four aspects of teaching comes easiest for you? Which of these aspects is most challenging?*

*Where do we teach?* Classrooms and auditoriums are certainly one place where teaching takes place. But this can't be the only place. If we are to make disciples the way Jesus did, we have to be around and among others. We are to make disciples everywhere we go.

I have some friends who speak of disciple-making in terms of “gospel pathways.”<sup>7</sup> Gospel pathways are those places you frequent. Intentionally. Kind of like my dog marked a pathway in the grass in the backyard wherever he ran the most. Wherever you go most and the people you see most—these are the places where and people with whom God would have you share the good news.

God wants us to be letters of His love to the people we encounter along our path. As we go with our family. As we go in our neighborhood. As we go to school. As we go to gather with God's people. Where we go to shop and eat and converse. Making disciples as we go is the *where* of our teaching.

Let's not forget three other words in verse 19 that expand the *where* of our disciple-making activity. Those three words offer the scope of the commission—“of all nations.” The commission has a worldwide scope. We are to be a people who go make disciples of the nations that reside in our own towns as well as the nations that have not heard the good news on the other side of the world.



*Where are some places you go often that you can be more intentional about making disciples?*

### 3. DEPEND ON JESUS (MATT 28:20B).

As we submit to the authority of Jesus and obey His Great Commission, we are reminded of His breathtaking promise of presence:

## VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

[Jesus] reminds them also of the consummation, that He may draw them on more, and that they may look not at the present dangers only, but also at the good things to come that are without end.<sup>8</sup>

—John Chrysostom

## REFERENCES

1. Calvin Miller, *The Vanishing Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 72.
2. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 430–31.
3. David Platt, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Matthew* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 373.
4. Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God Day-by-Day* (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 255.
5. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 in *The New American Commentary*, 431.
6. Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 22.
7. Bryan E. Beyer, “A God for All Nations,” *Biblical Illustrator* (Spring 2009): 42.
8. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, XC. 2, trans. George Prevost, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 10, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1888; reprinted 2004), 531.

*And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20b)*

It sounds like a simple question, but what would be different if God actually walked present with you everyday and everywhere? Doesn't He?

Jesus promised His presence as we are going to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching. This has been the message of God's love and goodness from the beginning—He is with us. And this is the security and power of our mission—His presence.



*Have you ever doubted the presence of Christ in your life? If so, what do you think caused you to doubt?*

We need King Jesus' presence. We need to be reminded of it whenever we worry about our ability to obey the Great Commission. Joshua wondered about his part in the great mission of God, and the Lord promised Joshua His presence in the midst of Joshua's worry and fear (Josh. 1:1-9). We need to remember His presence when we are afraid. Whether we are afraid of failure, rejection, or our own safety, we can rest assured in the One who is with us.

We need King Jesus' presence to know where to go and what to say and to whom to say it. He promised the Spirit to help us with the right words to lift up His name (John 14–16). We need the power of His presence to be seen in our efforts rather than the perfection of our efforts. Paul spoke of the early Christians as “jars of clay” (2 Cor. 4:7) that display the all-surpassing power and glory of Christ. We need His presence to encourage us on mission as we spread the news of His kingdom.



*In what ways has the presence of Christ been apparent to you as you have followed Him?*

## CONCLUSION

The Great Commission (make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching) is surrounded by power and presence. The power and authority of Jesus is the basis for His command to make disciples (v. 18). The presence of Jesus is the promise and power for our fulfillment of His command (v. 20). As we go, we make disciples, confident and blessed by the King who has saved us.