

Fulfilling the Great Commission – Part One

1. Matthew 28:18-20 says, *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
 - a. This passage is preached and taught in every evangelistic church in our world, with the emphasis upon winning people to Christ. But there is a problem. Do you see the phrase “making converts” in the text? I find the word “make disciples” in the text followed by “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
 - b. **The Great Commission is about making disciples.**
 - c. So what is a disciple?
 - i. The word “disciple” (*mathetueo*) means “to learn by use and practice”
 - d. And what is the “everything” that Jesus commanded the disciples to teach their disciples to “obey?”
 - i. Obey – preserve, observe, protect, guard, keep, attend to.
 - ii. “everything” I have “commanded” or “ordered you to do” (correct transl).
2. So perhaps the questions we ought to be asking is:
 - a. If the Great Commission isn’t about just getting people saved, what is it? (it is about getting people into the Kingdom of God: Both saved, and discipled)
 - b. What is a disciple and how is one to become/live/learn like one?
 - c. What is the “everything” we are commanded to observe or obey?
3. There is only one way to get the answer to these questions. That is to go back to the text of the Gospels and examine exactly how and what Jesus taught His disciples and determine His expectations for His followers.
 - a. And this is precisely what we will be doing over the next few weeks in this sermon series.
 - b. But we are also going to be working diligently to live out the Great Commission in our church.
4. Let me share what got us here. As many of you are aware, we had five or six families leave over the past few months because of differences in beliefs, some of which I thought we had been clear about, only to discover that our teaching on these critical beliefs was about as clear as the Grand River.
 - a. After reading Ephesians 4:11-16, it became very clear what we must do to ensure that we can both preserve the unity of the faith we have been given, as well as to fulfill the great commission.
 - b. *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*
 - i. God has chosen certain people in the church to be prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to do something very important... *“to prepare (furnish as in a household, equip, or mend) God’s people, SO THAT the body of Christ might be built up...”*
 - ii. Did you see the “goal” of this passage? It is found in verse 13 *“until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature...”*
 - iii. The goal of discipleship is to become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. To do/be all that Christ commanded us to do and be. And to help others arrive at the same goal.

- iv. Verse 14 tells us what happens when this ISN'T working in the church:
 1. "...*be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming*"
 2. As I look at the faces of people who have left and the reasons that they gave, I can only conclude that we/I have not done a very good job of equipping the saints.
 3. But let me tell you why.

5. How/why we have failed:

- a. We have baptized and we have made converts, but we have not made disciples. **Making disciples involves teaching them to do/be everything Christ commanded the first apostles.**
- b. The church in western society, especially over the past 100 years since the industrial revolution, has lost the concept of apprenticeship and has moved into a model of classroom instruction and large group seminars and preaching. This wasn't Jesus' method of training His disciples, and I wonder why we think we can do it differently and expect it to work.
- c. **To accomplish true mentoring/apprenticeship, 7 things need to occur.** I have put them on the screen behind me:
 - i. **Mentor tells us how to do something.**
 - ii. **We ask questions while he clarifies.**
 - iii. **We watch the mentor do it (we watch and say, that looks easy enough, can't wait to try)**
 - iv. **The mentor watches us to it (we mess up, give up and try again.)**
 - v. **We do it by ourselves and check back with the mentor for fine tuning.**
 - vi. **We do it by ourselves and prosper (we experience the applause of our mentor)**
 - vii. **We become mentors to others.**
- d. **What is non-relational mentoring? Answer Preaching!**
 - i. It can motivate us to try, but we're all programmed from years of going to church to lose that motivation about the time we hit the parking lot after the meeting.
 - ii. It's common to talk about putting a discipleship or training series on a DVD to change lives.
 - iii. Can you see the problem? It takes 7 "relational" steps to make a disciple and accomplish real change, yet our churches operate with only one or two steps. It is little wonder that the church isn't growing or making an impact like it did in the first several centuries!
- e. Examine what your church experience (and that of 80% of folks who attend church) has been.
 - i. Come to Worship service and listen to a sermon. No room to ask questions. No opportunity to try it out or get feedback. If we are really motivated, we try it out, fail and give up.
 - ii. We rarely get past step one in a church setting, do we?
- f. The 20% of folks who actually attend Bible Studies in a church or attend seminars; they might get to the end of step two. The very best of teachers, might demonstrate how to do something like praying, but by and large, we don't often get past step two in most Sunday School classes either.
 - i. I wonder how many of you have ever taken a pottery or ceramics class? Did they just show you a dvd or talk about how to do ceramics? Of course not. They showed you, they guided you, they evaluated you, and let you try it and fail and eventually succeed.
 - ii. How many of us would feel comfortable having our kids read a book or attend a lecture as the sole requirement to get a drivers license? I can guess that we'd stay off the road if that were the case!
 - iii. Why not? Because mentoring is part of the process of learning. But it is missing in the church. But it wasn't always that way!

6. Can you recall Jesus doing these seven steps? Of course! He taught the disciples, he answered questions, he showed them how to proclaim and demonstrate the kingdom of God, He sent them out under His supervision, He followed upon them and then He commanded them to make disciples!
- a. **Look at Matthew 9-11**
 - i. **Matthew 9:18-32**
 1. **Jesus Raises Jarius' daughter from the dead (Mt 9:18-26)**
 2. **While on his way, a woman touches his hem of garment and is healed (Mt. 9:20-21)**
 3. **He heals 2 blind men (Mt. 9:27-31)**
 4. **He heals a demon possessed mute man (Mt. 9:32)**
 - ii. **Immediately after these events, we find a pivotal passage. Mt. 9:35-38**
 - iii. *³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*
 - b. And then look at the very next verse in the very next chapter! Matthew 10:1, 5-8. (they didn't have chapters and verses when they read this or when this occurred).
 - i. *¹He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*
²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.)
⁵*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*
 - c. He gives instructions on what they are to do and what life will be like as a disciple in the next verses. Look down at verse 24 & 25 with me:
 - i. And then he tells them, *"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master."*
 - d. **Now Matthew doesn't tell us what happened to the disciples when and after they went out. But Luke fills in the blanks in his account:**
 - i. **Luke 9:6,10-11** *"⁶So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere."*
 - ii. *¹⁰When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.*
 - iii. A little later, Jesus sends out the 70 with the same instructions, and when they come back, he praises them and then tells them what to take pride in (not the power they possess but the fact that their names are written in the book of life).
7. **So how do we get to step 7? This is the question I asked myself. And came to this plan I will share with you.**
8. Beginning in the next month or so, we will be launching a three pronged (fork) model to allow us to become disciples and to make disciples.

- a. **Large Group (BF&M “Beliefs”)** – 40 minutes of large group teaching, questions, answers, and small group break outs for prayer and wrestling with the truths we believe. Not only that, but our new member class will consist of a 6-8 week class during bible study time to help our newest members get on the same page as the rest of us.
- b. **Small Group – “Practices”** which will deal with Christian practices. Things like tithing, worship practices, prophetic words, testimonies, prayer will be discussed and learned in a small group setting where folks can get themselves to understand and personally practice these things in their own lives.
- c. **One2One “Lifestyles”**: Highly relational meetings of two people with a short meeting guide to help them intertwine their lives and to promote spiritual disciplines and maturity. Long term goals will be to learn prayer, quiet time, journaling, personal bible study, sharing your faith, praying for sick people and developing a miraculous lifestyle.

9. Does that excite you?

- a. Questions you might have:
 - i. **Who can disciple another?** Technically speaking, any person can disciple another so long as their life is grounded in the Lord. You may feel you aren’t able to or that you aren’t qualified.
 - 1. If you aren’t sure of yourself, you can be disciple and be a disciple-maker at the same time!
 - 2. Who needs disciplined? All of us! But if you have been a Christian for less than 5 years, or haven’t seen substantial growth in your walk with God, then you need to be disciplined!
 - ii. **Training for Disciples:** On Sunday nights (and/or other times) we will have small group meetings for those who are discipling others so they can handle challenges, and so we can equip them better.
 - iii. **Bible Study:** Adult lessons are being written now on the BFM (which is the statement of faith for our church) and youth and children will have studies/lessons prepared for them that will enable them to grasp the essentials. SS Teachers will have a briefing session each Sunday before classtime to be on the same page.
 - iv. **Small Groups:** Will be child friendly and inclusive. They will be the last to start...perhaps in the Fall of 2010.

10. *15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

- a. Unity is not gained by willpower. And it is not gained by simply believing the same things. Unity comes as a result of love, deference and maturity. Artificial unity comes by believing the same things, but at the cost of uniformity. We must be committed to loving one another, and possess enough maturity to understand that being different isn’t a liability.
- b. You have in your bulletin, an insert, signifying your interest/willingness to participate. No shame in not doing it, but you will miss out. You may say “I don’t know a lot” but if you have a quiet time and know how to listen for God’s voice, you can be a mentor.
- c. Let’s fill them out now. Ushers please stand ready to collect them.