

LESSON ESSENTIALS

THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

LESSON 6: THE CALL TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”
(Matthew 28:18-20)

The beautiful invitation of the Great Commission was not presented as an optional part of Christian living. How ought we to live it out, both as individuals and within the corporate Body of Christ?

To be most effective at living out the Great Commission there needs to be a like-minded, unified vision for evangelism within the church.

Speaking to His disciples, Jesus spoke the Great Commission to a small group of individuals. But we know that these individuals were the founding members of the first church. This indicates to us that we are individually responsible to obey the Great Commission; also it indicates that, as the Christian life is never to be lived in isolation, we are corporately responsible to obey the Great Commission. Practically speaking, how are we to do that?

To be most effective at living out the Great Commission there needs to be a like-minded, unified vision for evangelism within the church. We are most effective and consistent in our obedience to the Lord when the church as a whole and when the members as individuals are equally motivated to reach the lost for the Lord.

First, we know that developing strong personal relationships with people in our community is crucial to winning the opportunity to speak the gospel. Individual members of the church must be committed to being in the community and building relationships with unbelievers so that they actually know someone who needs to hear the Gospel.

Second, as those individual relationships grow, having a less-intimidating event or service available to invite them to, would be a very helpful next step in the evangelism process. When the church sees the Great Commission as a 'team work task' then they can intentionally organize loving, non-threatening, community-wide events to which individuals can bring their unbelieving friends. This connects the newcomers to an even wider circle of believers and shows them that there is a large group of people who care for them and who are committed to them.

Third, as the members of the community begin to feel more comfortable with the individuals and the church in these community events, they may begin to ask more questions about faith in Christ, and may be open to coming to a regular church service. In this case, the like-minded vision of evangelism is extremely important. Pastors who are mindful of the unbelievers and visitors coming to the main church services can be sensitive to their presence as they preach. While this should never mean that the truths of God's Word are weakened or avoided or ignored, it does mean that the pastor ought to preach in such a way that he takes into consideration the level of Biblical understanding the visitors may or may not have. Perhaps he could be careful to define Biblical or theological terms that would be foreign to an unbeliever, or figures of speech that Christians use and take for granted. There is a way to boldly, accurately, preach the Word of God while at the same time being considerate of the newcomers and their comfort levels.

Additionally, individuals and the whole church body ought to develop a vision for supporting distance missions. Yes, we need to be evangelising at home, but we ought to take the Great Commission seriously, aiming to make disciples of all nations. Not all of us are called to go far away to

spread the Gospel. Not all of us are circumstantially able to go. In a church where the Great Commission is taken seriously, there must be a strong emphasis on supporting missions-minded ministries and mission operations. Praying, giving money, giving resources, sending short-term teams, training and sending international missionaries, writing letters and sending encouragement to international workers: there are many ways to support missions worldwide.

God equips us by His Spirit individually to engage in the Great Commission, but He also places us in a church body so that we have support and help to most effectively complete the mission.

The best news about the Great Commission is that we are not left to do it in our own strength. This is the Lord's teaching, and it is His plan, so we can trust that He will truly do the transforming work in the hearts of those with whom we speak. By His Spirit, Jesus will stir up in our hearts a great desire to proclaim His truth in every corner of the earth. As followers of Christ, we are continually in the spiritual battle for the souls of men and women near to us, as well as those around the world. We ought not to engage in this battle out of a dry sense of duty and strict obedience to a command. Rather, we should be so grateful to the Lord for the work He has done in our own lives, and so convinced of His intention and ability to make disciples of all nations, that we joyfully obey His command.

Let us be individuals and churches who earnestly pray that this would indeed become our souls' supreme desire: to see all nations become followers of Jesus Christ.

The best news about the Great Commission is that we are not left to do it in our own strength. This is the Lord's teaching, and it is His plan, so we can trust that He will truly do the transforming work in the hearts of those with whom we speak. By His Spirit, Jesus will stir up in our hearts a great desire to proclaim His truth in every corner of the earth.



IN REVIEW

- The Great Commission was not given as an optional invitation. It is an instruction that still applies today, and we ought to be diligent to obey it.
- The Great Commission applies to individuals as well as to corporate church bodies, and when we combine our personal efforts with the strength of the church's abilities, we can more efficiently make disciples for Jesus.
- The Great Commission is not just for those nearest to us. We need to develop and foster a world-wide vision for evangelism, being quick to support missions on a global scale.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Have you taken seriously the call to participate in the Great Commission? Take time now to thank the Lord for this great opportunity and to ask Him to grant you the boldness to join the mission.

- Does your church have a passion for evangelism? Is your church's leadership prepared for new believers or unbelievers to be part of church life? If not, pray for an opportunity to humbly approach the leadership and to begin to develop a Great Commission mindset and vision for your church body.

- Where does the Great Commission rank on your priorities as a Christian? Pray that making disciples would, indeed, be your soul's supreme desire. Ask the Lord to use your love for Him to motivate you to share the Gospel with others.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.