

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership  
Leader's Guide

## THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

### LESSON 6: THE CALL TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled The Church and Worship. This series of lessons examines what the Bible teaches concerning the purpose of the Church and how it came into being. Church leaders need to be grounded in their understanding of why Jesus Christ established the Church to function as His Body (His ambassadors in the world) after He ascended into heaven. The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, has been instructed to spread the Gospel around the world and to serve in its local community. It also meets regularly to worship God, be instructed in His Word, and to support and encourage one another.

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is emerging leaders who are preparing for specific ministry within the Church.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

## LESSON 6: THE CALL TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the Church's role in making the Gospel known to the whole world.

### LEADER'S NOTE

In this series on the Church, we have looked at the purposes for which it exists, who we are as Christians, and what we do when we meet together. To finish this series, we must examine the important task of evangelism – making the Gospel known to all people. Jesus commanded us to start with those around us, and then take this message to every corner of the earth. This mission of the Church might seem daunting and frightening, but we must remember that Jesus promised that He would always be with us. It is something Jesus and the Church accomplish *together*. Additionally, it is not an impossible mission, it is an inevitable one! The book of Revelation states that at the end of time, every tongue and tribe and nation will worship Jesus. Help your participants to envision a passionate church that is reaching the lost. The Great Commission is not accomplished alone, but together as the Body of Jesus Christ, and empowered by Him.

## INTRODUCTION

*Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.*

- ❖ What should the Church be in its community? What should it do? What should it accomplish?
- ❖ If you asked unsaved neighbours and friends what the Gospel is, would they know what you were talking about?
- ❖ What strategies have you seen churches use for proclaiming the Gospel? Were they effective?
- ❖ What motivates you to do something you've never done before? Curiosity? Reward? Sense of adventure? Relationships? Love? Fear?

## STUDY

*Instruct the group on the following points.*

### TEACH:

- ❖ **What is the Great Commission?** We have looked at the purposes of the Church, why it exists, what it does when it comes together, and who it exists for. One of the defining markers of the



Church is making disciples. But why do we do this, and what should our strategy be? God's Word gives us everything we need to know through the words of Jesus.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He left His disciples with a very specific command. In Christianity, we refer to this command as the Great Commission. We are sent to carry out a mission on Jesus' behalf, and He promises to be with us while we are accomplishing it. Let's look carefully at this passage.

- **Matthew 28:16-20:** This message was given to the eleven disciples, some of whom were not steadfast in their faith. Some doubted! This fallible group of men was given a mission. They were to make disciples and teach them everything that He had commanded them. There are four 'All' statements in this mission given to us, and they are important to consider.
  - o **All Authority:** Jesus is given equal authority with God the Father. He has the right to tell us what to do and how to live. He is the 'author' of all things, including our faith, and Creator of heaven and earth, which is why He has all 'authority'. Helping every person know that Jesus Christ is ruler and the author of all things is the Great Commission.
  - o **All Nations:** God's blessing and the spiritual riches of having a relationship with Him are not limited to one group. The Gospel is available to everyone – every language, people group, and nation. We will have fulfilled God's great design when every person has heard the Gospel.
  - o **All Commandments:** We are not only to inform people about Jesus, but to go further and help them come to terms with His Lordship. They must learn the commandments and be instructed in all the things Jesus taught, including the Great Commission itself! We must teach all these things to all disciples.
  - o **All the Time:** Jesus promises His presence with us every day, all the time, each day of our life. When He says "I am with you always", He wants this to be an encouragement to us in fulfilling this commission. This is not accomplished in our own strength or with our own passion, but as part of our relationship with Jesus. He works through the Body of Christ and provides the power, the words, the "all things" needed to complete His mission (verse 20).
- **Complete and Incomplete:** We are given this command to obey, and we have been promised that at some future time it will be fully accomplished! However, at this point in time the work is incomplete, and people perish each day without having heard the Gospel. But the message has reached more people today than ever before. Someday, the Church will be alive in every community of the earth! It is a mission that is promised to succeed, yet that should not diminish our passion for the work!
  - o Revelations 7:9-12
  - o Matthew 24:14



- ❖ **What is our Motivation for the Great Commission?** Obedience to Jesus should be the only motivation we need to complete His mission. Besides that, we should be concerned for those who may die without ever hearing the Gospel. But we all live with the debilitating effects of sin which can affect our relationship with God, and even corrode our desire and ability to fulfil the Great Commission. We have in our possession not only the Good News (the truth), but also Hope!
- **God's Promise:** By some counts there are 13,000 people groups in the world. The Church has spread to every major language group, but there are more than 3000 people groups that still have no church in their language, and many people who have never heard the Gospel.
    - God desires that the Gospel reach all people so that they have the opportunity to respond to it. This should motivate us to share the good news wherever God sends us and whatever the cost.
    - God promises salvation to all people who believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.
  - **God's Plan:** When we love God, we will serve and obey Him by fulfilling His plans and desires.
    - Matthew 9:35-38 shows Jesus' heart for the lost. He sees the people like sheep without a shepherd and is moved with compassion for them. Jesus' desire was to see people restored and blessed. This has been God's plan from the beginning of time.
    - Genesis 26:4 states the promise given to Abraham, that through his descendants (Jesus is His descendant) all nations would be blessed! Do we desire that all nations would receive the blessing of Jesus?
  - **God's Purpose:** God wants all people to be saved and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). People without knowledge of Jesus Christ are without the truth. They follow their own way and create their own version of the truth, but it isn't real. They might follow other gods, or even worship themselves, but the Gospel is the only truth that will change their lives (Psalms 96:3-5).
  - **Fulfilling Our Purpose:** Luke 15 gives us three parables that portray lost things (things that have lost their place and purpose). They should motivate us to reach out to people who are lost spiritually.
    - **Sheep:** In the first parable, a sheep is lost. Sheep are vulnerable and weak without a herd and shepherd- within the fold is the place they belong, and where they can fulfil their purpose. God rejoices when a lost sheep is restored! He will pursue and rescue the sheep at any cost. We should follow God and do likewise.
    - **Coin:** In the third parable, a coin is lost. When lost, a coin is just a piece of metal with no value because it cannot be used to fulfil its purpose.



God rejoices when a lost person is saved because they are restored to their purpose and true worth through the forgiveness of sin!

- **Son:** The last parable in this chapter depicts a son who is lost but who eventually returns to the Father. It most accurately represents lost people, in that God invites them to repent and turn to Him. The son regained his purpose, worth and identity when he came home.

➤ When we share the Gospel with people, we are giving them the truth, extending compassion to them, and restoring them to the One who gives them real worth and purpose! This is the heart of the Great Commission!

❖ **What is our Strategy for the Great Commission?** How can the Church grow to include every nation, tribe and people? Jesus has already given us the strategy – by making disciples. We are not simply to deliver the Gospel, but also to teach others to obey and follow Jesus. This takes time and considerable effort! Receiving salvation is like entering into a marriage or family. It is a relationship, a process that takes time, learning, and cooperative effort.

➤ **How the New Testament Church Participated in the Great Commission:** The early Church carried out the Great Commission in three ways.

The Great Commission in the Early Church		
Method	Examples	Verses
<b>Sharing the Gospel One-on-One</b> (being ready at all times and places)	Philip explained the Scriptures with the eunuch.	Acts 8:26-40
	Paul spoke to a jailer.	Acts 16:31
	Jesus shared the Gospel with the Samaritan Woman.	John 4:1-26
<b>Preaching the Word in their Cities</b> (to Jerusalem and beyond)	Peter preached to a crowd and in the temple.	Acts 2, Acts 3
	The Disciples went out from their city to nearby towns to preach the Gospel.	Mark 16:20
	The Apostles went from house to house preaching about Jesus.	Acts 5:42
<b>Sending Missionaries to all Nations</b> (Every corner of the earth)	Barnabus and Saul/Paul were set apart for missions and sent to Cyprus.	Acts 13:1-4
	Paul worked to make tents to fund his own missions, and also received some support from the church in Philippi.	Acts 18:1-5, Acts 20:33-35, Philippians 4:14-16
	Timothy travelled with Paul and was sent to oversee the Christians in Ephesus.	Acts 16:1-5, Acts 19:22, 1 Timothy 1:3
	Titus was a companion of Paul, and was left in Crete to oversee Christians.	Titus 1:5

❖ **What We Can Learn From the Early Church:** While we live in different times and circumstances, we can learn some things from the early Church about fulfilling the Great Commission.



- **We Must Be Where the Lost Are:** This might sound simplistic, but if we do not regularly interact with those who do not know Jesus, we won't have the chance to share the Gospel with them. This could mean going to another country, another community, or just making sure we regularly befriend those around us.
- **We Must be Ready to Explain the Gospel:** Being ready requires reading the Scriptures regularly, knowing our audience and their culture (as the Apostle Paul did), being trained and preparing ourselves spiritually for evangelism and discipleship.
- **We Must Assist and Support those Who Preach:** The preachers and teachers in the book of Acts did not minister alone. They had others to assist them. We should recognize those who have speaking and teaching gifts, and help mobilize them by taking care of organizational and practical needs.
- **We Must Go or Send Someone in our Place:** Not every person will go to a far off place to preach the Gospel. If we are not called to go, we must support those who do. This may involve financial giving, prayer support, and offering emotional and spiritual encouragement.

### TASK:

*Have participants form small groups of no more than five people. Have the groups imagine a hypothetical church that wants a strategy to carry out the Great Commission. Assume that they have people and resources and gifted members. Answer the following questions:*

- What could a church do to help individual members share the Gospel?
- What could a church do to create opportunities for people outside the church to hear the Gospel preached?
- What could a church do to select, prepare, train, send and fund missions in other countries?
- How could a church ensure that all this work doesn't just result in converts, but in true disciples being made?

### TEACH:

- ❖ **Our Personal Response to the Great Commission:** The mission is for the Church, and we are part of the Church. The Great Commission must be adopted and committed to by every follower of Jesus.
  - **Life Mission:** When we truly grasp the call of the Great Commission, we start:
    - Looking for ways to serve people around us in order to build relationships that may lead to sharing the Gospel with them.
    - Positioning ourselves where lost people are, and loving them because they are of infinite worth to our Heavenly Father.
    - Giving up something we want in order to direct money to missions work instead.



- o Committing ourselves to the discipleship of new believers and to welcoming newcomers into the Church.
- o Changing our life so that priority is given to the Great Commission.
- o Considering whether God is calling us to serve as a foreign missionary (either short term or long term), or to be a witness at home.

➤ **Your Response to the Call:** What is your response to God's call to reach the lost? Does it drive what you do? How can you influence others to have this same passion?

Consider these verses:

- o Romans 10:13-15
- o 1 Chronicles 16:24
- o Acts 1:8
- o Isaiah 52:7
- o John 3:16

*Let your participants write down their personal response to the Great Commission as you read the above verses to them. Have them spend time in prayer and contemplation about what God wants them to do, and how they can be a part of making disciples of all nations.*



## DISCUSSION

- ❖ Have you gone or considered going anywhere as a missionary, or visited missionaries working in another country?
- ❖ How is your church involved in the fulfilment of the Great Commission? What does it do well? What more could be done?
- ❖ What do you feel called to do or to change in your life in response to this lesson?
- ❖ How do you feel about those who are lost? How does it affect your prayer life, your time, and your finances?
- ❖ Why is the Gospel called 'Good News'? Why is it sometimes not perceived as 'good news'? How can we change this?
- ❖ Why is discipleship at the heart of the Great Commission, and not just preaching the Gospel for salvation? How does a new believer become a true disciple?

## PRAYER

*Close with prayer. Pray that each participant would feel the call to fulfil the Great Commission. Pray that this call would change the way they think and act and love. Pray that they would pursue it with their hands and feet and mouths, with their finances, time and energies, with their relationships and vocations, and with all that is dear to them. Pray that many labourers would go to every corner of the earth and that God's Word would accomplish His purposes. Pray that the Church would catch a new vision for reaching the lost, starting with your participants today.*