

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study 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.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.



THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

LESSON 6: THE CALL TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

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

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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. This should fuel our passion for sharing the Gospel!

GETTING STARTED

1. If you asked unsaved neighbours and friends what the Gospel is, would they know what you were talking about?

2. What strategies have you seen churches use for proclaiming the Gospel? Were they effective?



STUDY

- ❖ **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.

- Read Matthew 28:16-20. What do you notice when you read this important passage?

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.

- Below is the text of Matthew 28:18-20. As you read it, underline or highlight each time you see the word ALL (because of different translations, you may find similar words like 'every' or 'always'). How many can you find?

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

There are four statements of the word "all" in the original language, and we should pay attention to them as we study this command and what it means for churches today.

- 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 the truth 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. Read the following verses and write down what you learn.

Revelations 7:9-12	
Matthew 24:14	

❖ **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.
 - o 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. The least accessible groups are the most difficult and costly to reach!
 - o God promises salvation to all people who believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, regardless of their race, nationality, family, or circumstances!



- **God’s Plan:** When we love God, we will serve and obey Him by fulfilling His plans and desires. What do the following verses tell us about God’s heart for the lost, and how He wants people from all nations to know Him personally?

Matthew 9:35-38	
Genesis 26:4	

- **God’s Purpose:** God wants all people to be saved and to know the truth. 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. What do the following verses say about God’s desire that all people know the truth?

1 Timothy 2:4	
Psalm 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. Jesus told these stories to reveal God’s heart for the lost. Read Luke 15 and in the chart below, write down what you learn.

Verses	What is Lost?	What is its Purpose and Place?	What Happens when Found and Restored?
Luke 15:1-7			
Luke 15:8-10			
Luke 15: 11-32			



- A sheep that has wandered from its proper place and purpose can no longer fulfil what it was made to do, that is to give fleece and milk. A coin which is lost is just a piece of metal with no worth; it can't be used to fulfil its purpose either. When the son returned home, he also regained his rightful place; he fulfilled his purpose within his family, and found acceptance and belonging again. When we share the Gospel with people, we are helping them be restored to the One who gives them real worth and purpose!
- Knowing these things, what should our motivation be for evangelism and discipleship?

❖ **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.

Read the verses below. Write down by whom and how this mission was carried out.

The Great Commission in the Early Church		
Method	Who did it? How?	Verses
Sharing the Gospel One-on-One (being ready at all times and places)		Acts 8:26-40
		Acts 16:31
		John 4:1-26
Preaching the Word in their Cities (to Jerusalem and beyond)		Mark 16:20
		Acts 5:42
Sending Missionaries to all Nations (Every corner of the earth)		Acts 13:1-4
		Acts 18:1-5, Acts 20:33-35, Philippians 4:14-16



❖ **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.
- As part of your local church, how can you get actively involved in the above tasks? Which are you already doing? Which do you need help with?

- What could a local church do to accomplish the Great Commission? (Think of things like being in close proximity to lost people, sharing the Gospel with them, preaching the Word, and sending missionaries.)

- How can a local church ensure that all their work doesn't result in converts only, but also in true disciples?



❖ **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:
 - o Looking for ways to serve people around us in order to build relationships that may lead to sharing the Gospel with them.
 - o Positioning ourselves where lost people are, and loving them because they are of infinite worth to our Heavenly Father.
 - o 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.

- Read Romans 10:13-15. How can you respond to these verses this week in a tangible way? How can you have 'beautiful feet'?

- **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?



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ The Great Commission is the command of Jesus that we go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, teaching them all that Jesus commanded.
- ❖ This work is currently incomplete, but its ultimate completion is promised to us!
- ❖ God's plan and purpose for His creation, as well as His heart for the lost, is what should fuel our passion.
- ❖ Our strategy for the mission should include our own city, the surrounding area, and all the nations of the world.
- ❖ The Great Commission requires an entire church effort, as well as a personal response.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1.

How do you feel about those who are lost? How does it affect your prayer life, your time, and your finances? What do you feel called to do or to change in your life in response to this lesson?

2.

How is your church involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission? What does it do well? What more could be done?

3.

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?