

# The Church, Cooperation, Evangelism, and Missions

By Brent Ray

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week prior to the first sessions, participants will complete the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 28:18–20 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: According to Matthew 28:18–20, what is your role in the Great Commission?

### Assignment Two

Here are two plans for supporting missionaries and the expansion of the gospel in North American and around the world: (1) Each person can act alone, using their offerings to cover part of one missionary's support and to aid a few ministries that do kingdom work. (2) People can combine their offerings and, from that larger pool of funds, consistently support missionaries. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are the potential advantages of cooperative giving to support the expansion of the gospel in North America and worldwide?

### Assignment Three

Study the verbs found in Matthew 28:19–20. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What do you think would happen to your church if every believer were to embrace the call to go and make disciples, teach, baptize and multiply as Jesus commanded?

### Scripture to Memorize

*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 28:19–20*

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will develop a deeper understanding of the Great Commission, learn how believers can combine their offerings cooperatively to help fulfill this mandate, and embrace their personal role in relation to Christ's command.

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Brent and his wife Elaine served fourteen years in local-church ministry roles in central Texas and thirteen years as missionaries with the International Mission Board in Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Prior to joining the staff at Southwestern in 2012, he served for nine years as the president of the Hope Center Foundation, a multiminity campus that serves as the home for more than fifty evangelical Christian ministries in Plano, Texas, and as president of a local biblical counseling ministry.

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

The following is a true testimony: About a year after my wife and I married, we moved so I could begin my seminary studies. A young couple lived in the apartment building just across from us. For several weeks I put off the urge to visit them and share the gospel. I simply made excuses.

One day as I was arriving home from work I met "Susan" carrying boxes from their apartment to a small trailer. I called out, "Where's Chris?" She looked at me briefly and then sat down on the box in tears. With a broken voice she told me they had gone out over the weekend to celebrate the completion of his medical residency. During the meal, he took a bite of meat which lodged in his throat and he choked to death at the table.

I was stunned and heartbroken because I knew I had failed in my responsibility to be Christ's disciple. I learned one of the most painful lessons of my Christian experience: *never miss the opportunity to share Christ.*"

Read Matthew 28:16–20 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

The tumultuous masses that came to see Jesus crucified were now gone. The city of Jerusalem was returning to normal. The religious and political leaders prayed that the spectacle which had seized the attention of the city was over and could soon be forgotten. In fact, they contrived a lie regarding Jesus' resurrection (see Matthew 28:11–15) in order to refute the testimony of His disciples.

The apostles were in an emotional state between excitement and skepticism. From the last supper to the garden of Gethsemane, from the trial before Pontius Pilate to the bloody ground at the foot of the cross, from the cool, damp soil of the empty tomb to the mount in Galilee, theirs was an incredible journey. But their journey was far from over.

**Verse 16. Galilee.** They had just left the empty tomb and were now making their way to Galilee. During the two-day, seventy-mile walk, they had plenty of time to think about all they had just seen and heard.

**Verse 17. some doubted.** When they arrived and found Jesus in Galilee, some of them fell upon their faces in worship, while others fell again into disbelief. Jesus was, however, undeniably alive and standing before them once again!

**Verse 19. Go therefore and make disciples.** In this context, Jesus issued what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:45–49). The word *commission* is the act of entrusting a person or a group of people with the authority to accomplish and oversee an assigned task. In this instance, we (Christ's disciples) have been commissioned to complete the mission Christ began during His earthly ministry (see John 20:21).

We often think of missions as an activity of the church, but the truth is that missions is an attribute of the nature of God. *We serve a missionary God!* The mission that began in the garden of Eden when God, through sacrifice, sought to reconcile man to Himself, continued

through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus then commissioned us to take up this mission of reconciliation.

### **Assignment One Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: According to Matthew 28:18–20, what is your role in the Great Commission?

### **Discussion Question**

Why do you think some of the disciples were skeptical? How might you have responded?

### **Studying the Passage, vv. 19–20**

**Verses 19–20. baptizing . . . teaching.** God’s mission of reconciliation is our mission (see 2 Corinthians 5:17–20). We have been given Christ’s authority (v. 18) to share the good news, reach the lost, baptize them into the fellowship of local believers and teach them everything Christ has taught us. This commission then becomes their mission, and the cycle begins anew. The church has only one mission, and that is *God’s* mission!

God’s method is our method. From the creation account in Genesis to the return of Christ in Revelation, we see the triune God working *in cooperation*. Jesus’ charge in Matthew 28 is but one of several biblical texts that present a trinitarian understanding of God (see John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2). The Bible frequently presents God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit working together in the task of “reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

### **Assignment Two Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are the potential advantages of cooperative giving to support the expansion of the gospel in North America and worldwide?

### **Studying the Passage**

God’s mandate is our obligation. Only one command and mandate is given in this passage. That mandate is the charge given to all believers.

- **Go.** Go is a “foregone conclusion or presupposition.”
- **make disciples of all nations.** The only command in the Great Commission is the command to make disciples of all the nations (see also Acts 11:19–21).
- **baptizing them.** Evangelism leads to a public profession of faith through believer’s baptism.
- **teaching them.** Teaching multiplies disciples who will then reach, baptize and teach others.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What do you think would happen to your church if every believer were to embrace the call to go and make disciples, teach, baptize, and multiply as Jesus commanded?

### **Discussion Question**

What do you think would happen to your church if each member were to passionately embrace the Great Commission?

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, prayerfully describe at least five ways you can improve your response and obedience to the personal calling to be Christ's disciple.

### **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

### **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

### **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

### **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

### **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## At Home: Nail It Down

Hudson Taylor, the father of the faith mission movement, once remarked, “The Great Commission is not an option to be considered, but a command to be obeyed.” In a similar vein, preacher and theologian Charles Spurgeon commented, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.”

When Jesus commissioned the eleven disciples almost 2,000 years ago, they could not possibly have imagined the impact of their obedience in preaching the good news and making disciples. Yet from that small band of believers, the church began to grow:

- Acts 1:1–14      The first believers were few (15–20).
- Acts 1:15        Then 120 gathered.
- Acts 2:41–42    Then 3,000 more.
- Acts 4:4         Then 5,000 more.
- Acts 5:14        Then multitudes.
- Acts 6:1, 7      Then the multitudes began to multiply.
- Acts 9:31        Then the churches began to multiply.
- Acts 16:5        Then the church expanded into Galilee, Judea and Samaria.
- Acts 21:20      And then there were tens of thousands (literally “myriads”).

Disciplemaking is, according to Matthew 28:18–20, the calling of God for every believer. Something is terribly wrong when we imply that soul winning and discipleship are optional activities for those who have the time or inclination. Disciplemaking is a command, not an option.

Imagine what could happen in your workplace, school, your hometown and beyond if only a handful of disciples were to embrace God’s high calling passionately and unashamedly? What if they begin to share Christ with workmates, teachers, neighbors, strangers and friends? You have no reason to be alive on this earth if not to fulfill Christ’s mandate to make disciples. As Christ’s disciple, regardless of your vocation in life, making disciples is your high calling from God!

### Follow up Question

*Based on your calling as Christ’s disciple, and given your unique gifts as a member of a local church, how will you be more engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.