



The Great Suggestion

Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 4:18-22

Week of July 11, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 4:18-22
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching 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

*¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he (Jesus) saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."
²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

Matthew 4:18-22

Sermon Notes

I am only able to follow Jesus if He is the one I am looking for.

The Great Commission, the words that Jesus spoke as the final exhortation to the disciples before His ascension, tends to be interpreted with the emphasis on Go! We rally behind the Go of the command but miss that the best translation would be "As you go, make disciples..." The Great Commission is tasks to do not things to affirm. No one who is a Christian is immune from the Great Commission. Everyone has a role to play in the Great Commission and has been called to be a part of this mission of Christ in the world.

Yet, many of us take the Great Commission more like the Great Suggestion. We think that this is something we opt into rather than something we automatically do as an outpouring of our faith. But the hard truth I'd like us to wrestle with today and the problem we have seen over and over among believers is that most of us, in our everyday lives, treat these words more like The Great Suggestion than The Great Commission. We see it as an opt-in, reserved for the select few who are good enough, bold enough, smart enough, strong enough to really take it seriously in all areas of their lives.

Gospel Gaps

- In surveying 210 people from all around the country, from different denominations, races, genders, ages, and spiritual maturity levels, people gave one of seven reasons as to why they do not regularly share their faith.
 - Fear of Rejection - Remaining silent to preserve a relationship or reputation
 - Fear of Hypocrisy - Remaining silent due to personal failures, flaws, or disobedience
 - Fear of Offending Others - Remaining silent to avoid hurting, irritating, or offending someone
 - Fear of Failure - Remaining silent to avoid making someone's situation worse than it already is
 - Fear of Inadequacy - Remaining silent due to a perceived lack of ability or understanding
 - Laziness and Apathy - Remaining silent due to a fundamental misunderstanding of life as a Christ-follower
 - Anger and Entitlement - Remaining silent due to a personal grudge, opinion, or attitude

We see the purpose of Jesus' final words, we see the value, we often have the desire... but... we often find ourselves frustrated, muttering the words, "I want to! But I can't seem to get it right... It's too hard. I quit." But, as just about every evangelism book I've ever read has noted, evangelism... participating in the Great Commission is not optional and there is nothing in Scripture to even hint that it is.

Feeling Awkward At The Great Commission

- It's because the Great Commission is NOT where we should go to start talking about reaching the world with the Gospel. It's where we should end.
- Every time someone mentions the Great Commission, our minds typically go to two things; missionaries and how much we're not participating in the Great Commission.
- But there is a reason these words are in Matthew 28, the last chapter in the book.
- If you're sitting there and you wouldn't consider yourself a stellar evangelist or disciple-

maker, don't feel guilty, ashamed, or embarrassed. The disciples wouldn't have at first either.

- We need to look at just exactly what got Jesus and the disciples TO the bold command in Matthew 28, what qualified these random guys to do the thing Jesus asked them to do, and how can each and every one of us feel confident and qualified to obey the Great Commission in every area of our lives.
- So no matter how long you've been walking with Jesus, how many times you've either obeyed or ignored the Great Commission, we're all going to go back and start in the same place.
- The disciples were nothing special. Uneducated. Common fishermen. A tax collector. A political zealot. A rag-tag group of nobodies that have just been given the ultimate task; carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ. Multiply, spread, change the world.
- So let's go to the beginning. Take a look at the passage we read in Matthew 4:18-22...
- Here we get the origin story of Peter, James, John, and Andrew, three of the most influential, well-known, intimate-with-Jesus disciples... and Andrew.
- They don't even know Jesus yet. They know about a Messiah (as we see in John), but they're just minding their own business.
- They are out fishing... working their regular, everyday jobs when Jesus shows up.
- And when He shows up, Jesus says three things to these men.
 - Follow me.
 - I will make you.
 - Fishers of men.
- We become fishers of men by following Jesus and trusting that He will make us what we need to be.

Follow Me

- Jesus calls these men to "Follow me"
- This is where "making disciples" starts, by becoming a disciple.
- Disciples were called disciples because they literally followed their teacher or Rabbi around all the time. They did what he did. They said what he said. They listened to his instructions and tried to copy him to the best of their ability.
- The goal was that the teacher would replicate himself in a bunch of others.
- Perfection isn't what I'm talking about but rather our desire to be just like Him. Look like Him. Act like Him. Respond like Him. Speak like Him. Serve like Him. Love like Him.
- We may at times look back on our life and wonder whether we followed God perfectly or not but the greater question is to ask whether we tried to follow Jesus.
- The disciples had the luxury of following Jesus literally. They walked with him. Ate with him. Served with Him. We don't have that luxury, per se. But we don't get to use that as an excuse or think that because we aren't physically with Jesus, picking Jesus' brain, and watching Jesus' every move, that we are less qualified or expected to obey Jesus' commands.
- Even during those times when we don't feel like following Jesus, we still need to follow Him. If we want to follow Jesus, if we want Him to be our Rabbi, we need to incorporate three major things into our lives every single day.

Abiding with Christ

- Abiding with Christ simply means being with Him.
- John 15:1-5 Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away, and every branch that does

bear fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit.

- Our reaction is to go out and strive to do the work but this cannot be our first step, it is the goal.
- But then He continues by saying, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
- The very first question we have to ask when we start thinking Great Commission is, "Am I abiding with Jesus? Is my desire to abide with Jesus? This is step one. It's really hard to follow someone you're not with. We need to be with Him in order to follow Him.

Seeking Christ

- The second piece here after abiding with Christ, staying close to Him ALWAYS is seeking Christ.
- *Psalm 63:1 "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."*
- There is an earnestness in seeking God that is rooted in a profound and deep need for that person. We seek with intentionality and passion knowing that we need to seek the presence of God.
- The second question we have to ask ourselves when it comes to the Great Commission is, "Am I seeking God?" Seeking God DAILY
- I am only able to follow Jesus if He is the one I am looking for.

Imitating Christ

- *1 John 2:5b-6 By this we may know that we are in Him: whoever abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked*
- The disciples had a physical example. We have the Word of God.
- Jesus gave them plenty of examples. He washed their feet. He touched a leper. He spoke to a Samaritan woman. He loved those trying to kill Him. He stood for truth
- Our daily task as followers of Jesus is to imitate our Rabbi.
- I'm confronted so often with situations where I have a chance to imitate Christ, but because I'm not close to Him and not seeking Him, I choose my own way.
- Jesus says, "If you want to reach others... make sure you're following me. Because only a thriving relationship with me will qualify you to be fishers of men."
- *Matthew 22:37-40 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
- EVERYTHING you do, should come from this place of abiding, seeking, and imitating God with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

"And I Will Make You..."

- He didn't just give them an example of a new way to live. He gave each one of them a new life through faith in Him. He didn't say, "Follow me, and you'll make yourselves fishers of men" He said, "I will be the one to make you fishers of men."
- I will. My Spirit that I will give you. My strength. My goodness. My perfection. Each and every day in each and every decision. And the second you take your eyes off me and start doing it your own way, you will stop being fishers of men. When that happens, you

should stop trying to be fishers of men.

- Because you can't do it on your own... in your own strength and smarts...

The Gospel's Presentation

- *Ephesians 2* You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. But God, being rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ!
- The old you is dead. It's gone.
- When you followed Christ, He made it possible for you to accomplish His mission in the world because you were finally alive!
- But so often we fall into, "I followed Jesus, so now I've become a fisher of men." Better go out and show Jesus that I can accomplish the Great Commission. We think we're helping by grabbing the reins. But His work is never done.
- Christ continues to mold, shape, and prune us when we follow Him. And sometimes it hurts. Realizing you're trying to work for God instead of walking with God is a hard fact. Realizing you need to take a step back and get your heart right before trying to reach others seems awkward.
- When we start in the wrong place and mix up the order... it only ends in pain and damage because it's not Him... it's us thinking we can handle it.
- And we end up walking around defeated because we know God wants us to make disciples, but we feel like we just keep screwing it up.
- NEVER start a conversation about evangelism without starting here, because we have seen the damage done when that happens.
- Friends, the Great Commission didn't change in the last 30 minutes.
- We have been commanded to go and make disciples.
 - Of our kids. Today. our spouses. our siblings. our parents.
 - Of our co-workers tomorrow morning.
 - Of the random people at Walmart.
 - Of the tribesmen in the jungle.
 - Baptize them. Teach them everything we know about Jesus and His way of doing things.
- But before you take one step toward that command... ask yourself.
 - Am I following Jesus?
 - Am I abiding with Him daily?
 - Am I seeking Him daily?
 - Am I imitating Him daily?
 - Am I looking to Him to make me a fisher of men?
 - Or am I trying to do it on my own?
- If the genuine, honest answer to those questions is not what you want it to be, you know exactly where to start.
- Evangelism is not scary when we remember and live with these simple words. **"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."**
- Christ's mission is carried out by regular, everyday people. And as we sit here in church, we can thank them, not for being perfect, because they weren't, but for getting the order right.

Teenagers and adults all around Jacksonville are making the decision to follow Jesus and make fishers of men through Him. They have committed to abiding in Christ, seeking Christ, and imitating Christ daily. They have committed to obeying the Great Commission by going to friends, teachers, parents, step-siblings, and even enemies and sharing the Gospel. My question for you this morning as I close is this... What are you waiting for?

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- When you hear the word “Evangelism” or “Great Commission” what is your immediate reaction?
- Everyone has reasons they are apprehensive about sharing the Gospel with those in their mission field which could be their home or another country. What are some reasons you give for your gospel gap?
- What does it mean to follow Jesus? What aspects of following Jesus are exciting to you? What aspects of following Jesus are difficult to you?
- How does the responsibility of transformation being on the shoulders of God effect our approach to becoming a fisher of men?
- In what ways does our following of Jesus Christ result in the natural outpouring of our faith? Why is this relationship working in this way?

Challenge For The Week

Everyone finds themselves in a specific context. We all have neighborhoods, communities, places of work, and other places that define our context of where we live out our faith.

- Where do you need to grow in your discipleship and relationship with Jesus Christ? What are some of the places where you are not seeking or abiding in Jesus Christ?
- Who do you know who needs to hear the Gospel that you may be the person God is sending to share the Gospel with them? What people are in your mission field?

