**Make Disciples! (Part 1)**

**Matthew 28:16-20 (ESV)**

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Today we’re going to begin a new short series through the month of May. It’s just simply entitled *Witness!* It’s to challenge us to think about how God would use us to bring the gospel to a world that is very broken, a world that’s very dark, a world that doesn’t know God. We have the message and we have this calling, this commission by God to do that. Every one of us! And so pray for your own soul, that God would awaken you to Jesus’ call to be a witness, but also that He would do that together as a church. Wouldn’t it be fantastic if God would use us as a church to bring many to Himself just through the faithfulness of simple folks like you and me just sharing with our neighbors, our coworkers, this powerful message? So that’s what we’re going to be focusing on for this month of May. Matthew 28. Remember, Jesus has risen from the dead. He has appeared on a number of occasions, I think about ten times up to this point, already. And now verse 16.

***16*** *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.* ***17*** *And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.* ***18*** *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* ***19*** *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,* ***20*** *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

May God encourage us through His Word!

Many of us begin our day or our week by writing a list of “Things To Do.” We hope to organize our time so that we’re going to be effective in our lives. So we take a few minutes to think through tasks and projects and priorities to help us move forward in the matters we consider important for our work, important for our personal life, important for our family. So this past week, some of my “To Do’s” pertain to my personal life; things like, clean the garage, purchase plane tickets to visit my children. Other “To Do’s” pertain to my life as a pastor; things like, complete the book *Mere Calvinism*. I’m reading that book. It’s a good book. Plan the fall Sunday preaching series with Josh. We want to get ahead and think about the fall now. Schedule appointments with, and there’s a host of names that I plan to schedule appointments with.

Whether we write this on a piece of paper or on some app or just do it in our heads, most people consider some plan that they have for the day, some plan that they have for the week. Here’s a convicting question that I’ve asked myself. When you make your plan for the day or the week ahead of you, does Jesus order your steps? That’s really convicting for me to think about. I know I have conversations with God. I know I want Him to be my Guide, but am I conscious of that as I begin to write down my “Things To Do”? Do I consciously say, “Lord, I am Your servant. Please show me what You want me to put on my list.”

Even as a pastor, I am very tempted to put God on the edges of my planning instead of at the center where He belongs. I don’t think I leave Him out of my plans so much as presume that He is fine with whatever I think, whatever I put down.So in my flesh, I begin writing my “To Do” list with the thought, “What do I need to accomplish today? What is important to me? What will help me fulfill my goals?” Now many of these are good and noble things.They include things like Bible study and visiting people who are sick and writing to people who are discouraged. But the point is that these are often *my* things. I write *my* list and I ask God to bless *my* plan. So I write out a sheet and then I say, “God, would you bless this?”

That’s really not the way God intends for us to live our life. The way God intends for us to live our life is to give Him a blank sheet of paper and we’ve already written our name down at the bottom. “Whatever You put on this, I’ll do it. My name is already written. I’m making the commitment prior to even knowing what You would have for me to do. God, I want to do Your will. Put down anything that You want on my ‘To Do’ list today or this week. It doesn’t matter whether Your assignments interfere with my goals, my objectives. I’m Your servant. I’m listening. I’m here to do Your will. It’s that simple.”

I really believe that our days and weeks and life would be much different if we did set our calendars before the Lord each day and prayed, “Thy will be done. So Lord, show me. Lord, teach me.” I want to challenge you. Would you begin to purpose to live your life this way this week? Say, “Okay, I’m consciously going to do that. I’m not going to presume that my priorities are God’s, or other people’s priorities that they have for me and that they’re pressuring me to do must be what God wants me to do.” It’s really exciting to live a life of the adventure of a follower of Jesus because oftentimes, God is going to ask us to do things that we would never ever think of and they become the most important, most exciting matters of our entire life. Life becomes a divine adventure when we hand Jesus our schedule.

I think of the story of the Good Samaritan when I think about this. I think of the Levite and the priest. Do you remember them in that story? I think they started the day with their “To Do” list and they said, “We’re going to go to Jericho. This is what we’re going to do when we get there. Boy, it’s a full day! We have to get there by this time. We have to leave at this time. This is what we’re going to pack. When we get there, this is who we’re going to meet. We have an appointment at 10:00 A.M. And then at 12:00, here’s what we’re going to do. And at 2:00, here’s what we’re going to do.” So they’re walking along. They’re completing their “To Do” list. Everything is going according to plan, and there is this Jewish man, this brother who is just lying in the road. He’s beaten and bloody. He’s half dead. They don’t even know if he’s half dead. They think he might be fully dead. But they don’t take time to even observe. You know what? They’ve got a schedule and they know that to stop for a moment would mean stopping for an hour. And it’s likely two or three hours. Who knows? It might be all day. And so they just pass by on the other side. They’re not going to get their things done. And they’re really good things. After all, this is a priest and a Levite. They probably have some good religious things to do. They probably have some meetings that are worship services that they’re planning. But they don’t have time to stop; not if they’re going to keep their schedule.

And then comes along this guy who is a pagan. He’s a Samaritan. But this Samaritan, and I know I’m reading into this, he is open to God’s leading and he sees. All of a sudden everything changes. He has his list. It’s not wrong to plan. But he sees this guy and it’s very clear what he has to do. How long does he take to help him? And then the Samaritan puts him on his animal. How long does it take to take him to an inn? It says that the Samaritan stays the night with him, because in the morning, he talks to the innkeeper. So this is a whole day out of his life. Do you think this guy’s “Things To Do” list is less important than the priest and Levite’s? Do you think he was less busy and didn’t have much to do, anyway?

No, I think they’re all the same in terms of the responsibilities of life and their job and their family and relationships. But one guy listened to God and said, “God, whatever you want me to do. I don’t care what the cost is. I don’t care how much it costs me in money. I don’t care how much it costs me in time. I don’t care what it costs me in lost opportunities because this guy us only going to meet me on this day and this time. If I don’t meet him then, it’s not going to happen. God, whatever you want me to do. It’s clear to me that you want me to stop and take as long as it needs to help this guy.” So I wonder do we live our life that way? Or do we have our plan so set that we can’t allow God to interfere?

This week we begin a month long Sunday morning series about witness. Preparing for this series made me aware of how I need to set my schedule before Jesus every morning. I think there’s a lot of opportunities that I don’t see and I don’t avail myself to witness because I have my list. I want to be ordered. I want to get things accomplished. Now again, there’s nothing wrong with making a plan. I think there is everything wise about it. But there’s something wrong with keeping to a plan that is different from God’s agenda.

If you’re a follower of Jesus Christ, here’s what we are. We’re sons. We’re in an exalted position, but we’re also slaves of God. God has left us here for one purpose. It’s to serve Him. It’s to do whatever He wants me to do in my life. I know that a key mission that Jesus has given me as one of His followers is to take the initiative to witness the Gospel, the good news, this powerful message of salvation to people who are lost.I know that! I can’t read my New Testament and come to any other conclusion. This has to be front and center in my “To Do” list. Yet I find myself so busy that I have a hard time investing much focus. And it’s because I’m presuming that God is just going to bless things that I feel like I need to do.

For instance,I have had a Bible on the back seat of my car. It’s a new Bible. I purchased it because I’ve been having a witnessing opportunity with my dermatologist and the staff there. And one of the staff indicated to me that they’re starting to read the Bible. They’re reading the King James Bible and they’re asking me questions in the King James language. I don’t know how to answer questions in the King James language. (Laughter!) I’m just teasing! I’m going to give them a Bible that is easier to read and understand. I’ve had that Bible in my backseat for four months. It’s never made it to the top of my list. Why is that? Why did I buy this four months ago after a conversation we had and it’s still back there? I think if I ask Jesus every day, “Jesus, what do You want me to do?” that Bible would have been in that nurse’s hands already. So this is convicting to me and I pray that it awakens all of us to think about this.

If Jesus writes our “To Do” list every week, I know that for every one of us who are followers of Jesus Christ, “Witness” will be at the top of that list. In some way, witness is going to be there because it’s really the ultimate purpose for why He has left us here. And so if you think about the “To Do” list perhaps that you’ve written, does witness appear in any of that? I know it’s convicting and I don’t ask this question to kind of make you squirm and feel uncomfortable. I ask it to myself to say let’s wake up! If we’re followers of Jesus, we are His people. I don’t think it’s arguable from the New Testament and from a passage like this, that witness isn’t right at the very top of the priorities that God has for us, everyone of us! It’s not just for pastors, but it’s for every one of us! Jesus says, “Follow me and I’ll make you fishers of men.” Paul would say, “We’re ambassadors for Christ.” That’s who we are. That’s our identity. We’re here to be people who look for people who need to hear about the Person of Jesus and then go tell them. That’s who we are. That’s the core of our life and our purpose. If we’re followers of Jesus, there is one of three options regarding our “To Do” list that we might have.

Option #1: You already have “Witness!” at the top of your list and this command drives your life. It weighs heavy on your heart. You are applying time and energy. If you are in that category, I say, “Praise God!” I want to cheer you and I want to let you know what a blessing you are to this church and to God’s kingdom. I know some folks like that, and every time I talk with them, I am challenged. I am motivated and energized by them because I hear in their voice that witness is at the top of their list and it elevates everyone around you. So praise God for that!

Option #2: You don’t have “Witness!” at the top of your list, but you’re already convinced that Jesus wants it there. I pray that God’s Spirit awakens you and then strengthens you to make changes so that this acknowledged priority of God becomes a reality. So that there are no obstacles that stand in the way from you experiencing this kind of divine adventure in life.

Option #3: You do not have “Witness!” at the top of your list and you are not convinced it needs to be there. You resist it. And what I would say to you if that’s the case is, are you sure you’re a follower of Jesus? I don’t say that to sound mean. It’s just that if you’re a follower of Jesus and you have a resistance to being a witness like, “Yes, I know it says that, but I’m just not going to do it,” then I have to ask the honest question, the caring concern question. Has your heart been changed by Jesus? Are you born again? Because Jesus says at the very beginning that when He calls disciples, He says, “This is what I’m calling you to. This is actually part of your ‘Yes.’ When you come follow Me, I’m going to make you fishers of men.”

So I want you to think about where you are in those. And again, if we’re in those latter two, and I would actually place myself often in Option #2, it’s for the purpose of helping us find our joy.

We begin this morning with Jesus’ clear words to His disciples in Matthew 28. I do believe we need encouragement. Satan is a discourager and he uses discouragement perhaps more than any other tool in his shed. Jesus’ words help us to discover four realities about Jesus that ignite our witness, that fuel us, that drive us to have this passion. I know this is a topic that is hard. It always is. It’s easy to be convicted and nod in affirmation, but not make any real life change. I pray that the Holy Spirit of God is at work in our hearts. Pray that for yourself, to bring real transformation. I believe that it would quicken you. It would ignite your passion for God, it would make you aware of His presence in a daily way. And so even as we begin this series, I would encourage you to just take a moment and whisper a prayer up to the Lord even now. “Lord, would You work in my heart? Would you awaken me? Would you transform me? I want this for my life.”

There are four realities that ignite our witness. We’re going to take today and next week to discuss these four realities.

**Reality #1: Jesus’ authority.**

***16*** *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.*

Remember when the angels spoke to the women at the tomb, they said, “Go tell them that Jesus is going to meet them in Galilee” (Matthew 28:7). So now that declaration by the angels has now come true. He met them also in Judea, but He also meets them now in Galilee. And they’re at this mountain.

***17*** *And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.*

Remember, these men are Jewish men who are very, very focused on God’s commandments throughout the Old Testament. And central to these commandments are the Ten Commandments. And foundational to the Ten Commandments is this one commandment that begins the whole set.

**Exodus 20:3** “You shall have no other gods before me.”

In other words, “Don’t worship anyone or anything else other than Me. I’m a jealous God. So you will have no other gods that you’re going to worship.” And yet these are guys now who Matthew tells us that they fell down before Jesus and they worshiped Him. That’s significant! In worshiping Jesus, these 11 are testifying that Jesus is God of very God. Jesus receives their worship. He doesn’t stop them. He doesn’t say, “Hey guys! I’m really just a great teacher. I’m a really great guy, but I’m just a guy.” He doesn’t do that. He receives their worship. Jesus’ response to the disciple’s worship is in stark contrast to an angel’s response when John falls at this angel’s feet in worship in Revelation 22. Let me read that text to you.

**Revelation 22:8-9** I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

An angel is speaking this vision to him. Such was the glory of the angel and such was the glory of the vision, that John fell down to worship him. But immediately, the angel told him not to do that. He was saying, “Get up! Get up, now! I know that it might appear like I have so much more glory because I’m an angel and you’re still an unglorified human being. But God is the only person who should ever be worshiped.” So it’s really significant here where Matthew describes the eleven falling down before Jesus and worshiping Him, and Jesus receiving that worship. What Jesus is saying is, “Yes, worship Me. I am God of very God.”

When you think of Jesus, what words or pictures come to your mind? Perhaps you imagine Jesus teaching on a hillside to thousands of people with a gentle smile upon His face. Perhaps you envision Him rescuing the woman caught in adultery from being stoned. Perhaps you envision Him touching the dead little girl and saying, “Talitha cumi,” which means “Little girl, wake up.” All these are very gentle, humble acts. Perhaps you envision Him suffering in weakness upon the cross for sins. All these images are true, so don’t lose those images. They’re all great images. And with those images, we think of words like gentle and merciful, kind, sacrificial, loving. And thank God that He is. Aren’t you glad that He is those things? Yet, if this is where our thoughts about Jesus stop, we’re missing a huge part of His Person. The glorified Jesus is majestic. He is holy. He is righteous. He is awesome. He is overwhelming. It’s right for us to pursue thoughts about Jesus that inspire us to fall on our faces before Him in worship, trembling. We need that kind of clear picture of Jesus. I love how Paul speaks about Jesus in Colossians 1, and of Jesus’ authority in particular. He says

**Colossians 1:15-20 (NLT-SE)** Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself.

Before anything was created, there was Jesus in His glory. He said, “Let there be…” and there was. He did those things. All that angelic world and all the demonic world, Jesus created it. The whole purpose for creation is for His glory. Isn’t that an amazing vision of Christ? Let’s grab hold of that. I also love the description of Jesus in John’s vision in Revelation 1.

**Revelation 1:12-18 (NLT-SE)** When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.”

Do you have that picture of Jesus? His head and His hair were blazingly white, blindingly white, gloryingly white, white as snow! You can’t even look upon Him because of fear that you’ll be consumed by looking into His eyes. When Jesus spoke, his voice thundered like ocean waves, this amazing storm that rumbled the ground at your feet. I don’t even know what that vision must look like, but it’s fearsome, I tell you. If you see a Being with a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth, you would kind of stay back, stay clear. His face was like the sun. It was not like the sun on a cloudy day. It was like the sun blasting its brilliance. Isn’t that amazing?!

So here is the risen Lord, and the disciples are in awe of what they see. They fall down in worship before Him. And as they worship Him, Jesus begins to speak to them, which gives us a principle. Jesus loves to talk personally to worshipping hearts. Jesus is not interested in talking with stony hearts. So if you say, “I don’t know if Jesus has ever spoken personally to me through His Word.” I would say, do you have a worshiping heart? If you have a worshiping heart, when you open up the Word of God, Jesus is going to speak. And so He speaks personally to these folks.

***18*** *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Now notice that Jesus’ words were a declaration of His authority. Jesus’ words to the disciples were not an affirmation of them. He didn’t say, “You guys are going to be great! You can win this world! You’re talented and you’re equipped now, so go.” No, He says, “Here is the foundation of witness. It’s not in your talent. It’s not in your faithfulness. It’s not in you.” But He says, “I’m going to give you a commission and the fundamental foundation of my commission is My authority.” It’s not you guys are great. Jesus says it’s, “I’m great and I’m in charge of everything. All authority has been given to Me.” So before Jesus commissions His disciples to live their lives to bring witness to a world that doesn’t know Him, He reminds them of His authority. Why would Jesus remind them of His authority prior to giving them this commission? Well it’s because Jesus’ authority is the foundation of our witness in this world.

Our foundation to go and bring the gospel to this world is not primarily the lostness of people and that we need to go because people are lost. No, that’s not primarily the foundation. It’s a great motivation. It’s a right heart and we’ll see that in the heart of Jesus. But the foundation is not the need of people. The foundation of our witness is furthermore not the need of a nation for revival. It’s not, “We better witness because our country is going down the tubes and we need a revival.” That’s not the foundation. That’s great and it can happen, but that’s not why we do it. The foundation is not so that our church will grow. “We want a growing church. We want to fill this place up with people who are worshipers and then we feel like we’re a great church.” That’s great! Again, Jesus is involved with building His church, but that’s not the foundation.

At the root, I don’t think we’ll ever, ever connect to the witness of God until we first come to grips with the authority of Jesus. The first thought I should have about being a witness at my job, in my neighborhood, in my family, the first thought, the fundamental thought is Jesus’ authority. It’s this huge image of who Jesus is and the authority that He bears. That’s where Jesus begins. He says, “Before I say this, I want you guys to know that all authority has been given to Me.” Why is Jesus’ authority so essential to our witness? There are three reasons.

1. Jesus’ authority makes our mission clear.

If I were to look at your “Things To Do” list and start telling you items that you need to change, you’d probably get a little bothered at me. So tomorrow morning, if I come over to your house and have you show me your things to do, and I say, “You need to axe those five and put these five on.” You’d say, “Who are you? What do you know about my life? Who gave you the right to do that?” Well, you’re right. I’m interfering where I shouldn’t interfere. But here’s Jesus. He says “All authority has been given to Me.” So when you start making your “Things To Do” list, please know that you don’t have the authority to put the things down on your list that you want to put down. Only Jesus has that authority. And so He says, “Here’s the clear mission that I’m giving you. You need to go out and make disciples. You need to be My witnesses.” Jesus says this in Matthew 16:

**Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

In other words, let’s forget about any of our objectives. Deny myself and say, “Jesus, what do you have for me to be and to do? That’s what I want.” That’s what it means to be a Christian. Jesus’ authority is so clear. There’s no argument. But also,

2. Jesus’ authority makes our mission noble.

Many leaders throughout world history have used their authority to command people to do wrong and evil things. The quintessential example is Adolf Hitler. Many German soldiers were following Hitler’s authority when they brutalized and killed 6 million Jews. Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me, and you know who I am. I am the visible expression of the invisible God. I’m holy, righteous, noble and good.” Jesus is the only Being who is infinitely noble. He’s the only man, because He is the God-Man, who is infinitely noble. So everything that this noble being, this noble king commands, is by definition, noble. Jesus is the ultimate good, and everything He calls us to do is the ultimate good.

This is really important for us because the world is going to tell you when you begin to witness, that you’re actually wrong and it’s out of place. They will tell you that you’re actually on the side of evil because you’re telling people that they need to switch their religion. They need to stop worshiping, fill in the blank with whoever it is. And they say when you do that, you make yourself better than them, and so therefore, you’re evil for suggesting that. Where do we go with that if the authority is in us or if the authority is in their need? We don’t have any place to go with that. But when we rest in the authority of Jesus, we can say, “No, I know who Jesus is. He is the ultimate good. He is God of very God. This is who He claims about Himself and I believe it. It’s on the basis of His authority, not my authority. I don’t have any authority to say anything. But it’s on the basis of Jesus’ authority that I know this is a really good message. And if the whole world stands up and condemns me and imprisons me and puts me to death as a result of following Jesus’ command, His mission, it’s okay because it’s a noble thing. I’ll live for all eternity with the conscience and the confidence that I’m about the most noble work on earth. It doesn’t matter what other people say.” But the moment I begin to not root myself in His authority and I say, “Maybe it is pretty arrogant of me to suggest that this Buddhist, this Muslim, this Jehovah Witness…Maybe it’s really arrogant of me to suggest that they need to follow Jesus; that they need to repent of their worship and turn to worship the true and living God.” It would be arrogant if the authority rested in me, but it doesn’t. It rests in Jesus. That’s what Jesus says to do. That’s the gospel.

All authority has not been given to professors of religion at universities. All authority has not been given to the World Council of Churches. All authority has not been given to the editors of the New York Times. All authority has been given to Jesus. When we do what He commands, it is noble and we never need to fear being ashamed. Jesus authority is clear, it’s noble and

3. Jesus’ authority makes our mission effective.

Jesus uses His authority not merely to call His followers to a specific work, but Jesus uses His authority to guarantee that the work which He calls His followers to will succeed. That’s the issue. I’ve heardbasketball coaches guarantee that their team is going to win the championship. Does Vegas listen to that guarantee? No. There are still odds. Vegas will allow people to put money down on the hope that the coach is wrong. The coach doesn’t have the authority. He doesn’t have the power. That’s what authority is. It’s the power to follow up on his guarantees. He might be wanting to boost the morale of his team by saying such, but there is no way that he has authority to guarantee it. There are too many variables. All of his team could get sick. They all could get in some bad, terrible accident. There’s a myriad of things that can happen that would keep that coach from fulfilling his guarantee. Yet Jesus speaks with absolute confidence. He says to Peter

**Matthew 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“I guarantee that this church is going to be built, and it’s going to be fruitful, and it’s going to succeed. It’s going to excel in bringing glory to God.” Paul’s tenacity in his witness was based on the power of Christ, on the authority of Christ. He says in 1 Corinthians 15, which is all about the resurrection of Jesus, the authority of Jesus over sin and over death, he says

**1 Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

What is that work? It’s witness! It’s making disciples. Why? Knowing that in the Lord you labor is not in vain. How can we know that? It’s only because of the verse previous. He says

**1 Corinthians 15:57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ authority guarantees it. If you invest your life in this mission, you will never invest your life in that which is fruitless. I know you’ll experience opposition. Satan is going to oppose you. This world is going to oppose you. But Jesus says, “Regardless of how strong the opposition is to your witness, I guarantee it will have the effect to which I have ordained it to have.”

I want to close with some applications. Again, I just want to read this. We’re going to get to the last three realities next week. But I want to just start here to get us thinking about this subject for this month of, is my life submitted to Jesus Christ? What does the authority of Jesus have to do with this mission that He has given to me? It makes this mission so really clear. I can’t deny it. I can’t sort of argue my way out of whether this should be at the top. Jesus’ authority is absolutely clear about this. I know it’s noble. I know it’s the best thing I could ever possibly be a part of. There are a lot of other noble works in this world, but this is the most noble that we’ll ever be a part of. And I know it’s going to be fruitful. I’ll never get involved in this work with a humble heart and not have it accomplish fruitfulness. There are no weeds that are going to choke this work out, in other words, because Jesus has authority to make it succeed. I want to read again the full verses because I want to capture this as we make application.

***18*** *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* ***19*** *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,* ***20*** *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Next week, we’re going to draw out more implications of Jesus’ instructions about going and making disciples. As we close, though, I want to get really practical. Again, my desire is to have us awakened to this great, noble mission. It’s the greatest, most noble mission that anyone can be a part of in all the history of the world. There’s been a lot of really noble things that people have done. This is the most noble.

I speak to myself as much as I speak to you as I write these applications. Pray for me that they would be true in my life. The risen Lord Jesus has called us into His service on His mission. And here are four applications. They’re very simple and I think they’re very doable. They’re also very measureable.

1. Identify your excuses.

We all have them, so identify what they are. Write your excuses down. Write what goes to the top of your head when you start thinking about putting action steps to witness, about why you let yourself off the hook. If you’re a follower of Jesus, why do you let yourself off the hook? So what are those excuses? Identify them.

I would encourage you to do all these applications in community; with your spouse, with your family, with a Christian friend. Talk about these and identify your excuses. Then lay those excuses before Jesus and listen to what He has to say about them. It might be, “My work, my job is so demanding. I have no time.” That might be one of them. It might be, “I have ten kids and I’m a mom who is just going crazy just trying to survive. I have ten kids. How can I be a witness?” Just lay those excuses before the Lord Jesus and see what He says about them. Identify them and lay them before Him.

2. Ask Jesus to direct you.

In other words, God knows that we’re like dust. He knows our frailties. He knows every detail. Say to Him, “Lord, now that you’ve spoken into my excuses, my reasons, before I write anything down, I want you to have preeminence and I want you to have priority. Set down what should be first of order for me. And would You lead me specifically to some action step, one place, one person that you’d have me to go to talk to?” If you’re a follower of Jesus, I would assume that there is a place and that there is a person. I would assume that because that’s what Jesus says is our mission. Assume that He has someone. So say, “Lord, who is that this week?”

3. Take one action step.

Again, the action steps for our witness can be varied. It could be to give a New Testament to someone. “I just wanted to bring you a Bible. The Lord laid you on my heart. I don’t know if you have this, but here is a New Testament.” It could be to write a letter of some sort giving your testimony or sharing spiritual concern. It could be just knocking on a neighbor’s door and saying, “We’ve been praying for you. Is there any specific way that we can pray for you? We believe in a God who is very personal and who answers prayers. We pray in Jesus Name. Can we pray for you?” Every action step holds the potential for ridicule and mockery. You’re not going to get away from that. Every action step also holds the potential of the Spirit of God doing a supernatural miracle. So take some action step. Jesus is with you. “Lo, I am with you always.”

4. Identify the obvious.

What I mean by that, someone’s phrase has been used in our leadership groups…Make a list of three people who are near to you but far from God. So in other words, you don’t have to think of the person in the next state or country to go to. That would be great if Jesus leads you there. But start with the obvious. Just think of some obvious people that you have that are near to you but far from God. Begin there and ask the Lord what He would do. First of all, if nothing else, pray. And then consider action steps that the Lord would lead you to do.

So those are the applications. I want to close with an encouragement because I don’t know if everyone here…it’s likely that not everyone here is a follower of Jesus. If you haven’t followed the Lord Jesus in faith and you would say, “I commit my life to Him. He’s my Lord. He’s my Savior. I need Him,” all that we’ve talked about are really only applicable to people who have committed their life to Jesus. The first step for you is not to say, “Well, I have to be involved in witnessing.” The first step for you is to say, “I have to be involved in experiencing the power of Christ inside my heart.” And God makes that available to every person who is needy. You can’t even create faith. You can’t! You can’t say, “I’m going to try to get faith up. I’m going to believe, believe, believe.” You can’t do that. But here’s what you can do. You can go to the God who does create faith and say, “God, I’m helpless. I can’t even repent and believe. So I need You. Would you save me? Through Jesus, would You rescue me from myself?” God is a God who loves you and He will listen to that prayer every single time.