**Make Disciples! (Part 2)**

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

May 5, 2019

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***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.”*

In less than two weeks, my son, Danny, is going to leave his home and not return to his pregnant wife for about 70 days. After he returns home sometime in July, he expects that he will also likely leave her again sometime before the end of the year; either before the baby is born or after. To make matters more difficult, his wife suffers terribly from allergies. She can’t take all of her medication while she is pregnant. She is also really, really nauseated most days. So she has that kind of pregnancy. I know many of you are sympathetic to that. You may ask the question: Why would a husband leave his wife for such a long duration, for over 70 days, when she needs him so badly? The answer is that my son is under orders by a higher authority. He has no option.

Danny’s leaving his wife for over two months is not his choice. Not at all! He removed himself from the capacity to make choices like this when he accepted his commission to the United States Air Force. He swore a solemn oath to defend our nation from all enemies, foreign and domestic. Part of that oath is to go where other people tell him to go and to do what other people tell him to do. It’s part of it. Danny rarely has any voice in these decisions.

As a pilot, Danny sometimes has to go places where his life is in real danger. On one occasion in his relatively short military career he attended a briefing. Things were heating up in a certain part of the world. There was great concern among the military leaders about what would happen. And there, the Commanding Officer offered the entire room of pilots a grim description of what they had perhaps in store for them. His Commanding Officer asked the pilots to look to the pilot to their left and to look to the pilot to their right. Then he told them, “It’s very likely that after this mission, one of the people or yourself will not be on this earth. One of you will die.” Why would a person go on a mission where it’s very likely, and they are told at the outset, that one out of three may perish? The answer again is that my son is under orders to a higher authority. He is duty bound to go where others send him and to do what others tell him to do.

Now before a mission, the Air Force spends much time detailing the specifics of the mission. They don’t want their people to be completely uninformed. Specifically with their pilots, they tell those pilots exactly what they are to expect. It would be foolish to send people on important missions with important responsibilities without giving them a briefing; without giving them some details in order to be informed enough to be successful in what they are going to do. We’re going to open up our Bibles to Matthew 28:16-20 today. Jesus is giving His disciples a mission and He’s detailing for us our marching orders. He details for us what He expects of us as He sends us into this very specific mission. These marching orders are intended to energize us, to get us moving to become part of this mission, to be active in this mission that Jesus gives us. Last week, we began discussing four realities that ignite our witness for Christ. That’s the mission; to go and make disciples.

**Reality #1: Jesus’ authority.**

Remember perhaps that last week we saw that Jesus began the explanation of this mission by affirming His authority to give the mission.

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

And we ask, who says anything like that? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”Only God says that, and that’s who Jesus is. He is God in the flesh. And we learned last week that Jesus’ absolute authority is the foundation for all Christian witness. It moves us. We realize if we’re following Jesus, we really don’t have a choice. This is not a personal preference, where some prefer to be witnesses and some prefer not to be. No, the authority of Christ sends us into this. And furthermore, no power on earth, no authority on earth, not nations, not the United Nations, not angelic beings, no one can rightfully stop us from being involved in this mission. It’s a right, good, noble thing. So what a great motivation we have to engage in our mission as we consider the authority of Jesus.

Well the second reality that injects fuel and energy into our engagement with the mission is

**Reality #2: Jesus’ heart.**

***19*** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,*

He’s talking about everyone everywhere. You see, Jesus’ heart moves with compassion for sinners wherever they live and whoever they are. He never turns away from broken souls as though they are garbage to be discarded. That’s remarkable because He could in His righteousness, discard sinners and just simply bring them to immediate condemnation. But Jesus’ heart moves toward these who have rejected Him, who have disobeyed Him, who have defied Him. He moves toward themwith open arms. Jesus’ heart rejoices to turn slaves of sin into sons of God. Brothers and sisters, we all began as slaves of sin. We all began as rebels against the rule of Christ. Jesus’ whole purpose was to rescue sinners. That’s His heart when He came into this world. Here’s what He says in Luke 19.

**Luke 19:10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

If you asked Jesus, “Why did You come?” His answer is that the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Who are you interested in? “I’m interested in the lost.” Who are the lost? “They’re sinners.” Who are sinners? “All of you. And I came to seek and to save the lost.”

Now, the religious leaders hated that Jesus loved sin-sick souls. They hated that! When they looked at people who were spiritually sick, spiritually diseased, spiritually rebellious, sinners, they saw them as nothing more than people to be discarded, to be moved away from, to keep at arms length, even further than arms length. When Jesus drew near to sinners, the religious leaders grumbled. “This man receives sinners,” they said, “and He actually eats with them. Can you believe that?” You see, they would never do that. That wasn’t in their heart. They were afraid that their own reputation would suffer if they were somehow associated with people of ill-repute. They felt that many were not worthy of God’s mercy, even. They felt like they had sinned past the need for mercy, as though mercy were merited. They felt that sin-sick sinners needed to be separated from those who are “healthy” and “righteous.” They felt themselves to be healthy in their soul and righteous. “So let’s separate from them so that that disease doesn’t come into the house.” They didn’t realize that the disease was already in the house and that everyone is infected by the black death of sin. No one is righteous in God’s sight. Not even one! We’ve all sinned. We’ve all fallen short of God’s glory. And so, what did Jesus do when He heard these complaints? He says in Mark 2

**Mark 2:17** “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

If you’re healthy, you’re not going to go to the doctor. But those who are sick need a physician. And so if we put ourselves in the category of the righteous, we have no need for Jesus. But the truth is, when we put ourselves in the category of the righteous, it’s because we’re not aware of the disease in our soul. It’s not because we’re not ill, we’re not sick. It’s just because we’re not aware of it. And until we’re aware of it, we’ll never go to the doctor, the Great Physician.

Jesus also responds to this grumbling by the religious leaders by telling parables. Three of those parables in Luke 15 are particularly insightful on this matter. One of those three parables goes this way in Luke 15.

**Luke 15:4** “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?

I want you to think about the heart of Jesus as He tells this story.

**Luke 15:5** And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

He’s just singing as he walks home with this lamb on his shoulders. And when he comes home what does he do?

**Luke 15:6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’

His rejoicing is so great that it’s not enough to say, “Woo! I found my lamb. I’m happy! I can go to bed content.” But when he gets home, he’s so excited about that, he calls all of his friends together and he calls all of his neighbors together, saying, “Rejoice with me.” Joy is infectious. When we’re really rejoicing about something we don’t want to just have happiness inside of ourselves, isolated, alone. We want to share that joy. So he says, “I have to tell you this story. I lost this lamb. It’s such a precious lamb. I went out searching. It took me days, but I finally found it. Here it is. I want you to celebrate with me!”

**Luke 15:7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Who are the righteous persons? The answer is no one! But He’s speaking to people who think they’re righteous and He says, “Do you know what Heaven is rejoicing over? It’s over one person who recognizes their sin, turns from their self-rule, their own self-way direction of life and turns to God in Christ by faith. It’s one who turns humbly and says, ‘I need a Savior.’” And He says, “When that happens, Heaven explodes with joy!” Why does Heaven do that? Every creature in Heaven is created by God. Those creatures reflect God’s heart. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. It explodes with joy because Jesus’ heart, the Father’s heart, the Spirit’s heart explodes with joy. This is what gives the one true God such joy. It’s seeing sinners repent and receive life. That’s the heart of the Savior.

So what happens when one sheep wanders away; when one sheep is lost? The shepherd doesn’t hire someone to go out. “Here’s twenty bucks. I hope you can find the sheep!” He goes out himself. He goes out with great disruption to his schedule. You can imagine this is a busy shepherd. He has a big flock to take care of. Don’t you think he would rather have a bit of a rest? Of course he would. But immediately, as soon as the need is known, he goes out with great disruption to his schedule. And when the shepherd finds the sheep, he doesn’t stop and chide it. “How dare you wander off! You’re a miserable, terrible sheep.” He lays it on his shoulders and he carries it safely all the way home. And after the hot, sweaty labor…Think of that, of carrying a sheep. What do sheep wear? Wool! It’s not too comfortable carrying a sheep on your shoulders throughout that long distance. You think, “Okay, I got you home. I’m going to bed.” No, what does he do? He’s so excited, he calls his neighbors and he says, “You have to rejoice with me! Here was this lost sheep.”

And here’s the issue. Are you a follower of Jesus? Are you? If you are, and you honestly say that, “Yes, I want to live a life like Jesus. That’s what I’m all about,” I’m going to ask you, where is your heart? Do you share this heart with Jesus? Do you say, “When I see a person who is lost, I have to do something! I have to change my schedule.” When I see a person who is lost become found, there is nothing like it. That’s the greatest joy on earth! That’s the meaning of life. And again, we ask that question, “Is my heart like Jesus’ heart?” because this is clearly Jesus’ heart. When Jesus says, “Go and make disciples of all nations,” He’s showing us His heart. He’s calling us into this loving work. What a great motivation to be involved in witnessing toour neighbors, our family, our co-workers with the Gospel, presenting Christ to them.

Jesus’ call for us to witness to His Gospel is the best expression of compassion for broken people that we can ever find. It’s a call for us to witness. It’s a call for us to make disciples. This is a better expression of compassion than feeding the hungry. It’s a much better expression of compassion thangiving fresh water to thirsty people who are getting sick because they need fresh water and they don’t have it. It’s a much better expression of compassion than healing the sick and providing medicine. It’s a much better expression of compassion than clothing the destitute and giving shelter to the homeless.

Now, to be sure, all these are loving, worthy expressions of compassion, and they ought to be part of the Christian church. But what Jesus calls us to is the best expression of love and compassion. And what He calls us to right here in Matthew 28 is so clear. It’s so clear that every one of the Gospels and the beginning of the book of Acts talk about witness. It is “Make disciples.” That’s it! His commission to us flows from His heart for the world, for the nations. Let’s not miss our opportunity to join in this joyful work!

So the reality of Jesus’ authority ignites a fire in us. The reality of Jesus’ heart ignites a fire in us.

**Reality #3: Jesus’ word.**

Jesus offers some really specific, really clear instructions about our witness in this world.Jesus sets His missional command most powerfully and pointedly, I believe, right here in Matthew 28. He does so elsewhere. It’s not the only place, but it’s powerful. It’s so clear. Many have called these verses “The Great Commission” because the command here is foundational to being a follower, to what a church is, what a church is to be about. Let’s read it again. Let’s look at each piece of it.

***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.*

If you’re doing your Bible Study, you might just underline the words “make disciples.” That’s the main command. But then there are three other descriptive commands that are part of making disciples. There’s go, there is baptizing, and there is teaching. We’re going to look at these details. But first, the word “therefore.” Jesus says, “I’ve just told you that all authority has been given to Me. I’ve just presented Myself as the risen Lord, the one who overcame death and the grave. Therefore, because I’m the risen Lord, I’m sending you out now on a mission.” So Jesus presents Himself as the King of kings. And he says, “Now I’m sending you out as a Commanding Officer would his soldiers.” There are five key details about our mission that all surround about making disciples. I want to introduce the first detail here with just a simple word.

Mission Detail #1: Go.

Nothing about this mission is relegated to vocational Christian ministers. Everything about this mission is relegated to every person who is a follower of Jesus. So in some way, there’s an application, there’s a point of impact for every one of us. And the first word is Go. We are to move in order to accomplish our mission. We can’t make disciples without moving, without some motion. One commentator writes:

“There must be some movement to our mission. And the movement in our text is not the movement from sitting in our pews to standing to sing.” (Laughter!) I love that! We might think, ‘I stood up. I’m moving.’ No! He goes on to say, “Neither is the movement from the sanctuary to the fellowship hall.” It’s not removing from here to have coffee with each other, or to have Sunday School class. “Rather, it is the movement out the front door to take the gospel to lost people.” That’s the movement! When you get in your cars in the parking lot and move out of this place, you are going. You’re doing the first. Now, are you going to make disciples? That’s the question. But that’s what it means to be moving. You’re going to a place with a purpose.

Jesus sends us on a mission that requires us to move in the direction of the people who need Christ. Again, when my son, Danny is deployed, he has to go where the Air Force sends him. For him, going is inconvenient. It’s costly relationally and emotionally. Going seldom, if ever, fits his own plans. Going requires him to leave comforts of home. Going demands that he sacrifice certainly time, perhaps sacrifice his very life. Going interrupts hundreds and hundreds of desires that he’d rather do. Every time he goes, going requires all those things.

If we are obedient to Jesus, we will “go” someplace too.I can’t tell you specifically where Jesus will send you. The church can help together; brothers and sisters talking and praying. But I know He has someplace for every one of you to go specifically, to go to bring Jesus to that place. For some of you, going means going across the street to your neighbor and saying, “Hey, I’ve been thinking of you. I’ve been praying for you. Is there any specific way I can pray for you?” It might be going over there and saying, “I’ve been wanting to give you this book. I want to give you a New Testament. Do you have one of these? Here’s a book I’ve been reading. It’s interesting! It shares the Gospel.”

To others, going means that you travel. You take a special trip to see your cousin or your college friend with a purpose of saying, “I have to go and just spend a couple days with this person. They’ve had significant relationship with me in the past. I need to go just for the purpose of sharing the Gospel. I need to sit down with them and see if God would open up a door.” To others, going means driving down to the local mission to share the Gospel. It means going to Good News Club at a school. It means going to places where there are people you know are broken by sin and where there is an open door.

The point Jesus is making is that He first has the authority to send us wherever He wants and He does send us. In other words, He sends us some place. So the question is not, “Lord, would You have me to go?” We already know that. The command is already there. Yes, go! The question for us who are followers of Christ is, “Where would You have me to go?” That’s the issue. The assumption is yes because the command is so clear. Where, Lord, would you have me to go this week, this day, this month, this year?

I have to tell you that going is rarely convenient. It’s rarely easy. It’s almost always costly. It costs us something that’s really pleasant to our life. It costs us something that actually is really good. “You mean I have to give up something that is good, like staying with my wife during these difficult months of pregnancy, in order to go?” Yes. That’s what it means for Danny with the United States Air Force. And sometimes, that’s exactly what it means. I would say always, in some way, there is some big cost. Here’s what Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2. He says

**2 Timothy 2:3** Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Now look at this. He calls us all soldiers of Jesus Christ. In other words, we’re on a mission. We’re sent. Go! It’s a spiritual mission. It’s going to be making disciples. We’ll talk about that in a minute. But then he says

**2 Timothy 2:4** No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

It doesn’t mean we don’t have civilian pursuits. It means we don’t get entangled. Entanglement is, “I can’t now fulfill my responsibilities as a soldier because I’m so tied up with civilian pursuits.” Why is that for the Christian? Because for the follower of Jesus, his aim is simply to please the one who enlisted him. That’s what my life is about. The only reason why I’m left here is to please Him who enlisted me. I think this is where we get stuck. We’re so entangled with civilian affairs that we feel like we can’t really obey Jesus.

Imagine if Danny sent a letter to his Commanding Officer: “Dear, Sir. Sorry, I cannot go on this deployment. I volunteered at my church to greet people at the door each Sunday. My wife needs me home each night to encourage her since she is pregnant. She’s suffering from morning sickness and bad allergies. Also, I have a trip planned with my mom and dad to go to the beach in Alabama.” (Laughter!) We actually did, until… “Also, my cousin is getting married during this time and I am planning to attend. For these reasons and several more, please excuse me from this deployment.” Can you imagine what Danny would receive back? It would be a big, “So what?! That doesn’t matter at all to us. You’re going! This is what you signed up for.”

Now, I believe commitment to our nation’s military is an amazingly noble commitment. I’m thankful we are in a safe sanctuary because of men and women who have gone before us and men and women who are now engaging in that commitment. But if this commitment is noble, and I believe it is, how much more noble is a commitment to the eternal God for an everlasting kingdom! This kingdom is temporary. There’s going to be an end to this kingdom. But it’s noble. How much more noble to the advancement of an eternal kingdom that has no end, for the purpose of an eternal God?

I don’t look at Facebook very often. But occasionally I look to see, and one of my friends posted a note and it encouraged me so. He said: “So recently while out doing evangelism, I met a Man named A. He is from Baghdad, Iraq. I told him I had another friend from there and we began to talk. I went to give him a New Testament and he told me someone had already given him one and he also received the Jesus film in 20 plus languages. That film plays in 24 languages in the version we give out. That's how I knew he was telling me the truth. He started telling me about things in the film and he said he was reading the New Testament. I tell this story as an encouragement to all my fellow workers and Believers that your efforts, even if you don't see the results make a difference. Praise God!”

First, I loved this note because this friend is intentionally going out to witness. He says, “I went out to witness. I’m going.” That’s a purpose. Second, he wants to encourage others to go. He tells this story that someone had already given this person a New Testament, had already given him the Jesus Film. And that’s kind of shocking because that often doesn’t happen. How many Christians there are, and yet when we start witnessing to someone, how seldom do they say, “Oh yeah! I’ve had three or four other people tell me the same thing.” Oftentimes, we hear, “I’ve never heard this before!” If we all were active in going and being faithful to the mission, I think it would be more common for us when we started giving a New Testament, giving the Jesus Film, sharing the Gospel, to hear, “Yes, my next door neighbor, my family member, my friend across the street has already told me this.” Beloved, this is the greatest mission! It’s the greatest purpose in all of life. Go therefore! Again, I don’t know where God has you to go, but if we’re not going anywhere with the Gospel, we simply aren’t following Jesus. We’re not being obedient.

I’ll tell you another story. When I was a Moody student, they sent me out to go to an inner city mission. And so I get on the train. I get on with a couple other gals and one guy. I’m supposed to be the leader. I don’t even know where I’m going, but I have to act like I do. So we get on a train and then we get on a bus and then we walk several blocks to this mission. It’s a really poor neighborhood. It’s in the winter, so we’re all cold. The sun has already gone down. They’re all terrified and I’m trying to act like I’m okay. We get there and a whole bunch of folks are outside of the mission, but the mission leader is not there yet. And so we get warned about, “Be careful talking to that woman because she will scratch your eyes out.” That was really a comfort for a 20 year old kid.

So we’re waiting and waiting. Finally, this old beat up car arrives and a big guy gets out of it. He gruffly says, “You guys come on in with me.” He sets us all down and he says, “Who is to preach the Gospel, here?” I said, “I am, sir.” He says, “Okay. No health and wealth gospel. If I hear you start preaching the health and wealth gospel, I’ll rip you down from the pulpit and I’ll finish your sermon.” (Laughter!) And then he says, “And another thing…if you see a fight break out while you’re preaching, just keep preaching. I’ll take care of it.” I said, okay. This is my first introduction. We’re about ten minutes to go out there and start this worship service.

He said a number of other gruff things. He was kind of a big, burly guy. And then he says, “Let me tell you something. Every Wednesday night I come out here. I leave my family in my warm home. I leave early from the supper table. I kiss my children goodbye as I know they’ll be asleep by the time I get home. And every time, as I go out of my house to come here, I think, ‘I don’t want to go. I don’t like leaving my home.’” And then he paused and he said, “But then I get here.” And his voice breaks. Here is this big guy, a burly guy. His voice breaks. A tear trickles down out of his eyes and he says, “I love these guys.” Then he gets up and leaves. Here is a guy who gets it. He understands going. Again, I don’t know where God has us to go. I just know He has some place for us to go with the gospel.

**Mission Detail #2: Make disciples.**

***19*** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,*

What a clear, forceful mission Jesus gives. Here is a definition. Making disciples includes proclaiming Jesus Christ to others so that through the working of the Holy Spirit… because only the Holy Spirit can do this. We can’t. We simply proclaim Jesus. That’s our job. That’s our mission. We’re depending upon the working of the Holy Spirit. Through that they turn from their own way of self-rule to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. But it doesn’t stop there. Making disciples includes then continuing to follow Him in faith and obedience every day for the rest of their lives. So when is our mission accomplished for an individual? When they repent and believe in Jesus? No. Our mission continues. Making disciples says, “Great! We’ve presented Christ. The Holy Spirit did a supernatural work, but now making disciples continues with that person.”

In some ways, again, in real ways, all of us are having the mission continue to be laid upon us as recipients of that mission. In other words, I’m still being made a disciple, and I’ll continue to be made a disciple. I’ll need to learn more about God and learn more about obedience until the day I die, and then I’m perfected. So I’m having others continue to work as a mission in my life to make me a disciple. And then also all of us, every one of us; regardless of whether you just came to know Christ or whether you’ve been in Christ for a long time. You have something to do with that part of making disciples of other individuals, other people. It’s a huge calling!

You might say, “But I do not feel adequate! I have so much to learn before I can make disciples.”Yes! I don’t know of anyone who has said to me, “You know, Ritch, I finally got it. I feel adequate to make disciples.” I don’t know of anybody like that. I certainly am not in that category. It’s an impossible task! No one can make disciples apart from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. That’s why these means of grace—prayer, dependence, humility—are essential parts of any effectiveness.

I know that Jesus calls you, if you’re a follower of Jesus, to commit the primary goal of your life to making disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some plant and some water. So in the church, and I think it’s always in the context of the church, we all have different gifts being used in people’s lives for this. We’re working together. But there is a serious mission that has been given to every one to engage in. This work of making disciples, again, is not simply for full-time Christian ministers or missionaries.

Mission Detail #3: Baptizing.

***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,*

I want you to notice how high the rite of baptism stands in our Lord’s process of discipleship. It’s the first act of discipleship. It is right at the root of what it means to follow Jesus. And a lot of times, baptism gets relegated like, “Well, because baptism is not necessary for salvation, it’s sort of really kind of like the frosting on a cake. I can eat the cake without the frosting. It tastes better with the frosting, but it’s still nice without the frosting.” No, when you listen to Jesus’ words, just take a step back from your own emotions and your own past thoughts about discipleship and just listen to His words. What does Jesus say? Right out of the gate He says, “Make disciples, baptizing.” It’s right there, right at the beginning. In other words, He says the first thing you do if you’re a follower of Jesus is you get baptized. And you get baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Why is that? Why is baptism so important to Jesus? There are two reasons.

Reason #1: Being a disciple is not private but public.

It’s a public declaration. That’s what baptism is. It’s a public declaration of this invisible change that God has made in the disciple’s heart. It’s a public affirmation of a believer’s union with Jesus. This union with Jesus is invisible. Our salvation is invisible. Being born again is invisible. Baptism is a physical testimony, a physical affirmation that God has done that in our life. Jesus doesn’t want Secret Service Christians. He wants us to declare that.

Reason #2: Being a disciple is not isolated, but corporate.

In other words, discipleshiphappens in community. We’re born again into a family. We’re adopted into a family, into the local church.Baptism in the first century was the way people became members of their local church. So when you are baptized you are saying, “I am committing to this group of people, to this family, to certain responsibilities in this family and then certain accountability to this family. I want that.” That was the assumption.

So churches weren’t so much concerned with “What are we delivering to the consumer? We have to keep the consumer happy.” In the New Testament, baptism is front and center to say, “You are now part of a group. And in that group, here’s the primary things. It’s the Word, the Gospel. It’s prayer. It’s worship. It’s missions. It’s true fellowship. That’s what is front and center in this church. And your role in that church, what you should look for is, “are there responsibilities that God has given me to help this place become a bright light?” And then, “where can I have accountability, because I’m still a sheep that is learning how to follow the Savior and I’m going to wander. I need some accountability to keep me on the path that I have committed to by faith.” So that’s why Jesus says, “baptizing them.” It’s front and center. It’s right out of the gate as such an important part of following Jesus, of discipleship.

Mission Detail #4: Teaching to obey.

***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.*

So, baptism is central. It’s fundamental. It’s foundational. But then teaching is central to Christian discipleship. Without sound teaching, no disciple will obey Jesus. Now, this is somewhat explosive too, as well, culturally, because only a few in the 1st century were allowed to be taught. So you had to be chosen by a rabbi, and that was the really smart people. First of all, it was only men. So women weren’t allowed to be taught by a rabbi. But then within that category of men, you had to be kind of a special man in order to be really taught to observe all that that rabbi is saying how to live. And what Jesus says is, He explodes the gates open. Men, women, little ones, old ones, people who are super bright, people who are not super bright. Here’s what it means. Make disciples of all nations. What do you do? Teaching! Everybody has access to teaching. Teaching is so vital to our ability to follow Jesus. And you don’t just teach for information. You teach with a view of life change. If information transference is the only thing happening, that’s not discipleship.

You need information. In other words, it’s not just “Tell me what to do and I’ll do it.” It’s “Tell me who God is and what He’s like and what He’s about, what He has provided for me, and how He would strengthen me, and what are His values? What are His commands?” I want to learn all those things with a view to a humble heart, receiving and having life transformation take place. That’s discipleship! That’s why teaching is so important in every local church that is focused on making disciples.

So we think of Jesus’ authority. We think of Jesus’ heart. We think of Jesus’ word. And finally,

**Reality #4: Jesus’ presence.**

*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

He fuels our witness first with His authority. “All authority has been given to me.” Then He book ends it with this really soft thing. That’s kind of the hard bookend and the soft bookend. “I want you to know that I am with you.” Once you start engaging in this, you’re going to find that it’s overwhelming. You’re going to find that it’s discouraging. You’re going to find that you feel depleted. You’re going to find that you get wounded in this process. Don’t give up! Don’t quit! Persevere!

I know many lay people and many vocational people who said, “It’s just too hard. I get wounded. I get hurt when I enter into that sphere of making disciples. I think I’ll back away from it.” And maybe that’s where you are. You’re just thinking, “I’ve tried this before and I just got hurt. It was difficult. I felt depleted.” Jesus says, “I want you to know that I am with you always even to the end of the age; all the way to the end of this mission that I have given my church.” Because Jesus is with us, we will always have the strength we need. We will always have the comfort we need. We will always have the direction we need. And we’ll always have the victories we need in order to stay engaged. Paul says this.

**2 Timothy 2:1** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

This is what we need. It’s Jesus’ presence. He gives grace.

**2 Timothy 2:2** and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,

That little phrase there is the same as “make disciples.”

**2 Timothy 2:2-4** who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

So I ask first, are you a disciple of Jesus? Are you a Jesus follower? It’s the most important matter in all of life because if we’re not a follower of Jesus, we’re a follower of someone. It’s usually ourselves. I can tell you that if you follow anyone but Jesus, you will be led into a pit of darkness and death and despair and nothingness. Jesus alone is the path that says, “This is life. This is joy.” I want to encourage you to consider that claim. That’s what Jesus claimed. Is it true? If it’s true, then commit your life to Jesus even today. But secondly, if you are a follower of Jesus, if you are a disciple, are you active then in making disciples? Are you obedient in this mission? I gave you four applications last week. I’m just going to repeat them and then tell you a simple story to encourage you.

1. Identify your excuses.

Lay those excuses before the Lord. Why are you not presently active in going, in making disciples, in baptizing and teaching, somewhere along this process, somewhere in that? Why are you not? What excuses have you been giving yourself for why you’re disengaged from that mission?

2. Ask Jesus to direct you.

Again, put that blank “To Do” list before Him and say, “God, You have my schedule. Write what You want down as the priorities of my day, the priorities of my week.”

3. Take one action step.

Just to update you, and I kind of gave myself accountability last week when I told you about the Bible’s in the back of my car. I don’t know if you remember that. I’ve had these Bibles in the back of my car that I’ve been waiting to give my dermatologist and the nurse. I went there frankly because I knew that I was going to have to talk to people today. (Laughter!) So I went to my dermatologist and brought some Starbucks first. That kind of softened everything, too. But this doctor is retiring. He’s been sweet to me and very relational. He’s Hindu. He received this New Testament. I believe he got a little choked up by it. I saw that. And he reached out on his own and gave me a hug. And he said, “I’m going to get to see you again before June, right? I’m leaving in June.” He’s retiring. I don’t know what the Lord is doing. I pray that I can have more conversations. I’ve been looking for ways. Pray for that. But I’m just saying that I think God is at work. God loves to use people. And that’s not to say that sometimes we’re going to get the stiff arm. “Get away from me! Don’t ever do this again!” We’ll get that, too. But I’m just saying it was one of the sweetest things of my week to have that kind of interaction with him and also the nurse. Take one action step.

4. Identify the obvious.

Make a list of three people who are near to you but far from God.

I want to close with a story. This week, I learned of a man who was a pastor who passed away. He was a friend of our family, of my mom’s family. He’s been a pastor for almost all of his life and been used by God. I was reminded of his story. My grandma and grandpa were farmers. My grandpa started American Pest Control out in Trivoli. So they just lived in this area as farmers and people have relationships. They had family. And there was a couple that they had gotten to be friends with, Herman and Martha Lucht, who weren’t Christians. And my grandparents were concerned about them. They would often invite them to church, and every time they invited them to church, the answer would be, “No. I’m not interested.” They did that many, many, many, many times, to the point where finally, my grandparents were talking and they said, “Should we ask Herman and Martha Lucht to church again?” That was part of their witness. And they said, “Okay. You know what? They have told us so strongly and so often, ‘no,’ that this is the last time. We’ll do it one more time. And we feel like the Lord is saying, ‘Don’t ask them anymore.’” And so they asked, and this time, the Lucht’s said, “Okay.” And they went. It wasn’t long after that, they gave their lives to Jesus Christ. And then they raised their little son and their little son gave his life to Jesus Christ. He became a pastor and he helped many, many, many, many people to understand the Gospel. And he is in heaven today.

I don’t know what is simpler than just simply asking somebody to church, asking somebody to a Bible Study. What’s more simple than that? God has a way of using amazingly simple things to do amazing supernatural changes. We’ll only know what those are if we’re faithful. Let’s pray that God would make us faithful.