

**PART TWO: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH // MATTHEW 28:18-20**

*From the sermon series, "The Big Picture"*

While the purpose of the church focuses on being, the mission of the church focuses on doing. There are two extreme directions that churches might take when thinking through what the church should do. They might focus only on meeting material needs and feeding people. Although James 1:27 clearly indicates that we are to care for the vulnerable, that is not the complete mission of the church. On the other side, a church may claim that "fixing" the culture through political activism is their mission. While we are called to be salt and light in the world (Matt 5:12-14), this is also not the full mission of the church.

The Great Commission is the answer to the question "what is the mission of the church?" Articulated in all four gospels as well as Acts (Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:14-16, Luke 24:47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8), Jesus' last words are lasting words. Our mission is distinctly Christian—no other organization can do it. We are called to do one thing: to make disciples. A disciple is a follower of Jesus, a learner, a student, a pupil. A disciple is not a super Christian who has finally gotten his or her act together. A disciple is a regular Christian because to be a Christian is to be a disciple. Discipleship is characterized by three terms: word (John 8:31), love (John 13:35), and fruit (John 15:8). A disciple is one who is obedient to the word, a lover of other disciples, and one who is bearing fruit.

How is the church going to accomplish the Great Commission? Short answer: obedience. Jesus indicates that he has all authority (the Greek *exousia*)—that is, he has permission or the right to command, and he uses three verbs in his commissioning.

**1. We must go to the nations.**

If the church is going to be faithful, they must go—they must be "a going church for a coming king." The language in the verse speaks of "as you are going," indicating that the mission is a matter of lifestyle—not merely taking "mission trips."

**2. We must baptize believers.**

As we go, we proclaim the gospel and mark people who have put faith in Jesus. We assimilate them into the local church. There is an inside as well as an outside aspect to missions—it is not just "go and tell," but also, "come and see." We want to equip people for a life on mission.

**3. We must teach the Bible.**

Southern Baptist churches are filled with people who "made a decision" for Christ, but who have never been discipled, who have never really been taught the Bible. To make disciples is to teach people how to teach the Bible. This means that we must make the Bible our lives. If you can read or tell a story, you can teach people about Jesus. When most people walk through the doors of the church, what they want is to hear the Bible explained. And we teach not only so people will know, but so they will observe—so that they will keep the words of Jesus.

The gospel of Matthew contains an encouraging set of bookends. In 1:23, we find that Jesus is to be called Emmanuel, which means "God with us." At the end of the book in the Great Commission, Jesus says, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age." We are a sent-out people, but our Savior comes with us.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why might churches tend toward one extreme or the other when thinking about their mission? How can we faithfully follow God's word in pursuing his mission for the church?
2. How can the mission of the church become a lifestyle?
3. In what sense is Jesus "with us"? What encouragement is offered in his final words?