

ONLINE 5

EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW THIS: THE GREAT COMMISSION

What is most important to God? What are his purposes for the world?

When you get to the end of your life, what do you want to see when you look back at how you lived?

The central purpose of human life is to know and love God: to share in his life, his heart and his purposes. In JOHN 15v15-16, Jesus speaks of the connection between friendship with God and sharing in his purposes: *“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

Knowing God cannot be separated from being involved with his work: as we share in his heart we become more deeply concerned with his purposes. As we become more involved with his purposes we enter more deeply into his heart. We don’t share in God’s business because he needs our help, as Paul says in ACTS 17v25: *“[God] is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”* We share in his purposes to share in his heart. The call to be involved in God’s purposes in the world is recorded throughout the Bible. One place it’s particularly clear is at the end of Matthew’s gospel where Jesus’ last words before his ascension, often known as the Great Commission, are recorded:

MATTHEW 28v16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. 20 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Why are people’s last words significant?

We’re told that the disciples worshipped but also that they doubted. - **How is this an encouragement to us?**

The word “nation” means “ethnic group”, so not just political state but every tribe.

What difference does it make to know that Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth?

What is a disciple? What does it mean to “make disciples”?

What is the scope of this commission? Does this apply to us? Why or why not?

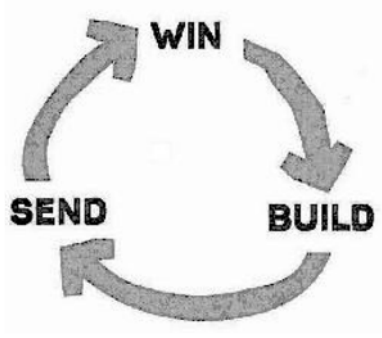
What’s the significance of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

What’s the difference between “teaching” and “teaching to obey”?

What is Jesus’ promise?



The plot of the Bible between the creation of the world and final judgment is that God is rescuing a people who will be with him forever, restoring them to the purposes for which he created them and through them blessing the world. In calling us to make disciples from every people group on earth, he is calling us to share in what he is doing in the world. There are three stages in making disciples:



WIN (introduce people to Jesus)

BUILD (help them learn to follow him as a way of life)

SEND (help them to pass on to others everything they've received)

Making disciples is integral to being a disciple.

The process of winning people to Christ, building them in their faith and sending them to do the same with others is how spiritual movements get started. This is illustrated by the apostle Paul in 2 TIMOTHY 2v2: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." We can see 4 generations of a growing movement:



If we spent a year focussing on winning, building and sending three people and equipping them to do the same with three others, then by the following year there would be four of us multiplying our faith. If we replicated this pattern of winning, building and sending every year, we would reach and disciple the world in 17 years. If the world's population doubled in that time it would only take an extra year. This is how the early church spread so quickly, as we see from the example of the church in Thessalonica:

1 THESSALONIANS 1v5-9
 5 You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...

What did Paul do to pass on his faith?

Pick out every word in the passage about passing on the Christian life. What was the effect?

Why is modelling and imitation so important in making disciples?

How many generations of the movement are recorded?

What was so clear to everyone about the Thessalonian disciples?





God is saving a people to be with him for eternity to share in his heart and his purposes. He is doing this through successive generations of his disciples who are introduced to him, taught to follow him moment by moment and equipped to pass on what they've received to others. For two millennia, this is how the church has reached around the whole world.

Jesus is rescuing people as he empowers the humble obedience of successive generations of his followers. Being a disciple and making disciples belong together. You cannot have one without the other. As Jesus says in JOHN 15v5, 16: *"If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit;... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last."*

How were you introduced to Christ and how have you been helped to follow him?

At the moment, who has God placed in your life that you could introduce to Jesus, help to follow him and equip to multiply others?

How could you get started?

