

# THE GREAT (C)OMMISSION

Matthew 28:18-20



## SYNOPSIS

We likely have heard the Great Commission before: "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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." Of the 4 verbs in this command (go, make disciples, baptize, teach), the primary imperative is "make disciples". The other 3 verbs (go, baptize, teach) are participles, modifiers describing *how* we should make disciples.

Somehow, being a disciple and making disciples seem to have been neglected, making a lack of discipleship "The Great Omission" of the modern church.

Discipleship is difficult for most Christians to define, which means most Christians don't know if they've been disciplined. The modern Christian sees a distinction between being a Christian and being a disciple. The first Christians did not.

Simply put, discipleship involves a progression:

- **Be with Jesus.** = Practice God's presence. Abide in God.
- **Become like Jesus.** = Take on the inner life of Jesus so that his teachings become second nature.
- **Do what Jesus did.** = What would Jesus do if he were you? Play your part. Fulfill your call. Contribute to your church and world.

The early disciples of Jesus were known by others and self-proclaimed as "followers of the Way". (Non-believers later called them "Christians".) Are you a follower/practitioner of the Way of Jesus?



## OUTLINE

1

### OMISSION #1: DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus disciplined everyone he encountered everywhere he went. Evangelism and teaching/discipleship should be integrated, not dichotomized. Knowledge is insufficient for transformation. Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. (D. Bonhoeffer) How many of us exhort others to imitate us as we imitate Christ? (1 Cor 11:1)

2

### OMISSION #2: PRACTICES

We believe that teaching + inspiration + willpower leads to transformation, but that model yields poor results. We overemphasize knowledge at the expense of practice. Living out the Sermon on the Mount - e.g. do not lust, do not hate, love your enemies - has little to do with knowledge, and everything to do with practice, much like practicing a golf swing. With practice, the unnatural becomes second nature.

3

### TRANSACTION + TRANSFORMATION

Salvation is both transaction and transformation. Transaction involves information and personal salvation. Transformation involves intentional spiritual formation and is practiced in community. We need both. Without one, we are like a caged eagle that survives but never soars as it was designed to.



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

What is the result of teaching without practice? What is the result of practice without teaching?

2

What is your understanding of discipleship? What is your experience with discipleship?

3

What is your experience with the general concept of practice?

4

What are some practices you've adopted into your life (spiritual or not, beneficial or not)? How did you develop them?

5

Which of your current practices yield good fruit? How could you increase your yield?



## BIG IDEA

Spiritual formation requires intention. Practice translates intention into reality. Being with Jesus, becoming like him, and doing what he did requires a lot of practice.

To practice being with Jesus, we invite you to spend 2 minutes a day meditating upon a short scripture that helps you focus on "practicing God's presence" (or, as Jesus would say, "abiding/remaining" in God.

(P. Peter provided Ps 16:11, but you can choose your own.)