

The Mission Mandate: Teach

Matthew 28:16-20

1. Introduction.

- a. In light of seeing Jesus gather His first disciples, and call them to follow Him on mission (Lk. 5), we have been looking at the Great Commission.
 - i. This is a radical call, requiring intentionality and self-examination. It also involves much risk, and willingness to be wronged and suffer hardship.
 - ii. The Apostle Paul modeled this well.
 1. 2Corinthians 11:23-33. The greater you are consumed by a passion for the spread of the Gospel, the greater your hardship.
 2. Act 20:24. Following Jesus requires a complete death to self. In fact, notice Paul's prerequisite to finishing his race—He must regard His life as of zero value.
 3. We have been called to this very same task.
- b. Last time we looked at the “going” aspect of the Great Commission. Today we will look at “teaching.”

2. Teach.

- a. Two important qualifiers are attached this idea of teaching.
 - i. We are to teach the commands.
 - ii. We are to teach all the commands.
- b. On the first qualifier: we are not called to make converts, but disciples (or followers of Jesus' commands). A person professing Christ, or someone who has “made a decision” for Jesus, is not the same as a person progressively growing in holiness.
 - i. A faithful discipler will be actively engaged in the process of teaching. This implies they know (and can handle) the Word with some level of skill.

- ii. A faithful disciple will be actively engaged in the process of orienting their life and heart under the teaching of a discipler.
 - c. On the second qualifier: you can't obey that which you don't know. This is why Paul did not shrink from declaring the entire counsel of God (Acts 20:27).
 - i. A faithful discipler must know the full counsel of God, and be able to instruct in it.
 - ii. This principle of "teaching" is ongoing (present tense). So a faithful discipler must be in the consistent state of teaching the full counsel of God. In light of that, where do we fall short? What do we still lack that doesn't allow us to do this? We are called to be faithful to this principle, so in what area do we still need to be equipped in order to become a faithful discipler? If you are equipped, then what is preventing you from faithfully walking in this? Why are you not yet discipling?
 - 1. Remember, the goal is not to keep learning and consuming.
 - 2. The goal is to become equipped so that you might turn around and equip somebody else. This is all about multiplication and reproducing.
 - d. This principle of teaching is not easy. Jesus doesn't command us merely to teach truth and doctrine. He commands us to teach the commands—which is what makes it hard. It implies people are not yet doing what they ought to be doing, so there's an element of confrontation. When you call someone to faithfulness, it means they still lack. This is not easy to hear, yet we are still called to instruct them in it.
 - i. Again, we are not calling them to make a decision, but walk in progressive holiness.
 - ii. One is easy, the other is hard and radical.
3. Three aspects to the task of "teaching."
 - a. Teaching before conversion.
 - i. Much discipleship can happen before a person is even saved. Jesus spent three years with His disciples before they received the Spirit. In fact, it is why they still didn't understand many things after three years. All of a sudden, they receive the Spirit at Pentecost, and everything makes sense.

The Spirit of God illumined their hearts to understand everything He taught them.

- ii. Jesus spent a lot of time with just 12 men. He taught the crowds, but devoted intentional, personal time to His disciples. He taught them in a much more intimate way, as He ate, walked, and lived life among them. He taught it, but also lived it, right before their eyes. He invited them into His life, but more than that, He inserted Himself into theirs.
 1. Having said that, I would argue Jesus' way of discipleship isn't necessarily meant to be a model for us. He lived in a different time and culture. Furthermore, He was getting these specific men ready to be the core launch-pad for the Church.
 2. However, the underlying principle is applicable for us—the “teaching” principle of discipleship often happens before conversion takes place.
- iii. Some of our greatest instruction to unbelievers comes, not by what we say, but what we do. Your life is always going to be your best pre-evangelism. Your values and priorities are expressed by your decisions and pursuits. This is not hard for people to see. It is why hypocrisy is so easy to spot. When a life contradicts what a Christian says they believe, the unconverted grow very skeptical.
- iv. A simple way to do this is by inviting people into your home—one of the most transparent places in your life. Invite them to just watch you, as you live out your values and priorities.
 1. Let them see how you speak to your spouse.
 2. Let them see how you instruct your children.
 3. Feed them good food.
 - a. Don't underestimate the value of a good meal.
 - b. One of the great themes of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is food and table fellowship.
 - c. There is a reason we are commanded to show hospitality to “strangers.” It communicates something of God's care and hospitality toward sinners.

- d. How can you begin to make this a regular practice in your life?
- b. Teaching to convert.
 - i. This is the second aspect of “teaching.” It is that act in which we actually begin to utter the words of the Gospel.
 - ii. Hospitality is a wonderful tool to build relationships and communicate intentional care, but hospitality never saved a person. The only thing that saves is when the words of the Gospel are spoken and believed.
 - 1. This is where it becomes challenging. The Gospel (i.e., the Good News) implies that we must first give the bad news. We must speak of sin.
 - 2. We cannot just speak of God’s love. We have to speak of why God’s love is so great—it comes in the midst of our sin.
 - iii. This is why it is so important we gain Gospel-fluency. Many Christians truly love the Gospel, but they are poor at communicating it.
 - 1. Can you give the Gospel in 30 seconds? Can you give a 5-minute version? Can you skillfully (and naturally) weave it throughout the course of a conversation?
 - 2. If not, why? Likely it is because we rarely do it. It is a skill that takes time and practice. It is a skill that is acquired, but as you are first willing to look foolish learning to do it well.
- c. Teaching to mature.
 - i. This is the point in which we begin to systematically teach the full counsel of God. The goal is to see Christ formed in them (Gal. 4:19). It is a continual practice of instructing from a right understanding of Scripture.
 - ii. This is not a teaching to convert, but a teaching to sanctify. The person’s life should be progressively moving toward Christlikeness, where their food for growth is consistent intake of the Word of God.
 - 1. At first, a person will be learning the big doctrines, and foundational aspects, of the faith. They will be learning the nature, character, and purposes of God.

2. As they continue to grow, it will become more refined. They should begin to develop skill with their knowledge. They should become progressively skilled at putting it into practice in both their life and others. It is not mere knowledge, but wise, self-application of that knowledge.
3. This is the distinction between baby disciples and mature disciples. Baby disciples spend a lot of time consuming God's Word. Mature disciples spend a lot of time skillfully applying that Word. As a person grows, they think about everything they learn through the lens of thoughtful application. That takes time and skill.

4. Conclusion.

- a. All of us are uniquely gifted by God. When it comes to these three aspects of teaching, all of us will be more gifted in various areas. Some model well. Some evangelize well. Others can do that ongoing-teaching well.
- b. Yet this is the beauty of the Body of Christ. There is a design. God has brought all of us together, where we fill out each other's strengths and weaknesses. "*Paul plants, Apollos waters, God gives the growth* (1Cor. 3:6)."
 - i. It is a very rare person who can skillfully execute all three.
 - ii. We need each other, and must be on mission together. Mission is done best in community, so we must link arms.
 - iii. We all should be making efforts in each of these categories (e.g., Timothy was a pastor, but still commanded to do the work of an evangelist – 2Tim. 4:5), but don't lose heart. Likely, you are simply more gifted in one of these areas. Find which one that is, and start exercising it.
- c. As a final word; what does it mean for you to be a mature disciple, Christian, and follower of Jesus Christ? It means you are in the consistent state of making disciple-making disciples. Until that is happening, it is a mark you are walking in disobedience, or at best, still immature.
- d. Never forget that Christ has not left you as an orphan. He has given you His Spirit to accomplish this task (v.20). We have everything we need for faithful mission. It is the passion of Jesus, so may it be ours as well.

Small Group Questions:

1. I talked about three different aspects of the “teaching” principle. What are they, and which ones do you think you exercise best?
2. How can your group come together to fill out each other’s strengths and weaknesses? In other words, since mission is done best in community, how can you partner together to make disciples?
3. How fluent is each group member with the Gospel? Can you give a 60-second, as well as 3-minute version? If some people are bold enough to try; have them give a 30-60 second version of the Gospel. Seriously—do it. Time them. If they go over 60 seconds, they are not yet fluent. If you are weak in this, in what ways can you start practicing?
4. Pray for the names of the various people you are seeking to reach and make disciples. If there is no one in your life, pray for opportunities and a willingness to take a risk, or look foolish, for the sake of the Gospel.