

In 2022, Lifeway Research and Ligonier Ministries partnered to release a report on the “State of Theology.”¹

- 48% of evangelicals agree that “God learns and adapts to different circumstances.”
- 65% of evangelicals agree that “Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.”
- 56% of evangelicals agree that “God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”
- 43% of evangelicals agree that “Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.”
- 37% of evangelicals agree that “Gender identity is a matter of choice.”
- 28% of evangelicals agree “The Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn’t apply today.

A few weeks ago, we saw how the church has not disciplined well (how we have valued decisions but not discipleship), turns out we have not taught well either. We need to get our act together. We got work to do, and we are about that work here at SSBC.

This is the 5th and final message on the three verses we call the Great Commission. Matt 28 (784). I shared another Barna study that showed that only 17% of churchgoers know what the GC was. 83% of church attendees don’t know the primary purpose for the existence of the church!² Well, you know. You have heard about it all summer long.

Where have we been? Week one, we saw that Jesus is the true Lord of the world. All authority has been given to him as a result of the resurrection and ascension. Jesus is the Chief Executive Officer of the cosmos. Then we looked at missions. All the nations – *panta ta ethne* are to be disciplined. Then we looked at church planting. That was the model of the early church, which we see in Acts: the gospel is shared, disciples are made, leaders are raised up, and new churches are established. Then we looked at what it means to make disciples. We are to follow Jesus and help others follow Jesus. By the power of the Spirit, we are to help move people from wherever they are to where Jesus wants them: submitting all areas of their lives to him.

But this morning, we want to focus on what the Lord Jesus Christ tells about making disciples in these verses. **Diagram.** We already covered “going” a few weeks ago. Today, let’s focus on the other two participles: baptizing and teaching. Main point: Because Jesus has all authority we go we make disciples by baptizing and teaching.

-First, to make disciples, is to **baptize**. The word baptism is just a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizō*, which simply means to dip, to dunk, to immerse. When we say baptism is immersion, that is not an interpretation, that’s the simple definition of the Word. That’s why the Greek Orthodox tradition (that knows Greek the best) dunks, even though they believe in infant baptism (**Clip**). That child went on to form the church of Satan. His heart was hardened from that moment on. So, one new translation of the NT, called *The Second Testament*: “Therefore, journeying, make all the ethnic groups

¹https://thestateoftheology.com/?mkt_tok=MTg5LUpMQS0yMTYAAAGG9JxbwRslBbfor0jP80y1s9eS9cYJOePB6CqiM4OpzH6r_3GAi_2KyLw3BgBz10c6ZUDXtxKNIZ6793GjBBivPEoURuMgUtrha_Y50HrQNgOZ

² <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>. Accessed 7.24.23.

into Apprentices, dipping them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I ordered you. Look! I am with you every day – until the completion of the Era.” Dipping them.

The first step of discipleship is baptism. Baptism is faith going public. Baptism is a public pledge of allegiance. It is the means of entry into the life of discipleship. We surrender to Christ the King through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. Baptism is like the disciple’s wedding ceremony: putting a public stake in the ground. One author calls baptism the initiating oath sign of the NC.³ Communion is the renewing oath sign. / Baptism is vitally important. Sometimes I worry that we downplay baptism and only say what it doesn’t mean. **Acts 2:38 16:31-33 22:16, Rom 6:3-4, Gal 3:27:** “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” 1 Pet 3:21: “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as a pledge to God for a good conscience” (Mk 16:16, Jn 3:5, Col 2:12).

Baptism is the entry point into the local church. Acts 2:41: ““So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” 1 Cor 12:13: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” Baptism is into the local church. It is the front door into local church membership and communion is the family meal.

This is important, because as Nathan showed last time, the Great Commission is fulfilled as disciples are made, leaders are raised up, and churches are planted. Baptism kicks off that process. We should not baptize people who do not intend to join a local church, but it happens all the time. This is part of the problem I mentioned a couple weeks ago. So, for example, at Baptist meetings, it is very common for a pastor to spout off something like, we baptized 75 people last year, and 5 of them became members. What happened to the other 70?

So, baptism is the first act of faith, it is the announcement of our allegiance to King Jesus, it unites us to Christ, it incorporates us into the church, is a symbolic act of our dying and rising with Christ. If baptism is all these things: it can’t be applied to infants, who have not yet had faith, are not able to announce allegiance, who are not symbolizing union with the death and resurrected Christ. That’s why we are a Baptist church: we baptize believers by immersion. Your babies are safe here.

Baptism is your commission to ministry. It is your ordination. Every believer is a priest in the NC. Baptism is the starting line of your journey and your ministry, not the finish line. / We are baptized in the name (singular) of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptized in the name of the Father, making us family. Baptized in the name of the Son, who is the King, marking us out as his servants. Baptized in the name of the Spirit, marking us out as sent into mission. Baptism gives us a new identity based on the Triune God: baptism marks us off as family, servants, missionaries. A faith-family of servant-missionaries. / The first step of making disciples is baptizing, but that is just the initiatory rite.

-Second, **teaching** them to obey everything Jesus commanded. Jesus gives us two concrete ways to make disciples: evangelism (go, baptize) and education (teach). Evangelism is going and baptizing new

³ Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 56.

believers. Education is teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. We bring them in and then we build them up. We baptize then we teach.⁴ Baptism enrolls you into a process of learning. Mark Dever writes, “At its core, discipling is teaching. We teach with words. We teach all the words that Jesus taught his disciples, and all the words of the Bible.”⁵

Teaching is a crucial part of the Great Commission,⁶ an intrinsic part of the church’s mission. This is why we take the teaching of the Word so seriously. Weak and shallow teaching produces weak and shallow disciples. Sermonettes produce Christianettes. College students: find a church that teaches the Word. Lot of great churches. Our suggestion is expositional. That’s what we bank on here. E.g. Matt.

And what is it that we are to teach? Obedience. **20** Teach them to *obey* all that Jesus commanded. This is not just teaching, it is teaching towards obedience. This is not information transfer, but life transformation. I worry that we Protestants don’t emphasize obedience nearly enough. “Morrow conversation.” But as Dallas Willard put it, “Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort.”⁷

The focus of the Great Commission is more on right living than right doctrine.⁸ Don’t miss this: the goal of the Great Commission is obedience to King Jesus. That has been his emphasis all throughout this Gospel: **5:19-20, 7:21** (“do” 15x in SOTM alone), **24, 26, 12:36-37, 16:27**. Obedience matters. Jesus says, why do you call me Lord but do not do what I say (Luke 6:46). The Gospel According to John is even stronger. I need you to feel the weight of this: **John 3:36, 8:51, 14:15, 21, 15:10, 14**. It appears that Jesus’ love language is obedience. / And what are we to obey: all that Jesus commanded. His words are our authority. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (24:35).

Church, we must trust *and* obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey. Let’s not be educated beyond our obedience. Mark Twain once remarked, “Some people are troubled but h things in the Bible they can’t understand. The things that trouble me are the things I can understand.”⁹ The meaning is very clear. We must be doers of the Word, not merely hearers. Too many Christians treat his teaching like a kid who passes the written part of a driver’s exam, but never gets to driving. The written part is a means to an end: getting behind the wheel.

Sundays are huddles.¹⁰ We come together and get equipped and instructed, but you don’t stay in the huddle. You gotta get off the sidelines and onto the field to run the play. Pastor Jack Miller writes, “He is not proposing an elective course of action, an option for the evangelistically gifted. He is telling each of us what is our first duty. It is to disciple all nations. Since the King has spoken, it should be clear that He expects all of us to obey His will without reservations or delay. But it should also be clear that the majority of local American congregations are, in practice, saying no to His will. They do so by ignoring it.”¹¹

⁴ We baptize then we teach. Sometimes we teach, teach, teach, and wait to baptize. The early church started this reversal pretty early. We treat baptism as a graduation ceremony rather than an initiation rite.

⁵ Dever, *Discipling*, 38.

⁶ “If we take Jesus seriously, teaching has to be included within our obedience to the Great Commission.” Wright, *The Great Story*, 85.

⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 34.

⁸ Dean Fleming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 96.

⁹ In Gallaty, *Replicate*, 64.

¹⁰ *Gaining by Losing*, 85.

¹¹ C. John Miller, *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 15-16.

We are commissioned and commanded to go and tell people to obey the King, to submit to his rule. That is how the Kingdom spreads. All authority is his, and that authority extends as we go and press and promote the crown rights of the King into every nook and cranny of society. Remember what we pray in the Lord's Prayer? Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Not in heaven as in heaven. On earth. So we get to be a part of how this prayer is answered.

Our purpose is to make disciples and bring God's kingdom to every sector of society and every part of our world. We show the world what it means and looks like to live under the rule of King Jesus. Chris Wright says, "Wherever, whenever, however - every believer is called to live and work as a disciple of Jesus Christ, bearing witness in word and deed to the truth of the gospel, embodying as salt and light the presence, demands, and values of the kingdom of God."¹²

Then Jesus concludes his commission with a promise of his ongoing presence. Be sure of this: I am with you. To the end of the age. Mission is to the ends of the earth to the end of the age.¹³ All people's everywhere for all time. This commission goes beyond us. It is by definition, multi-generational.

He is with us as we go out on mission. All the days, not most of the days, not on the good days only. Hard days too. Especially hard days. As we sing, "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed, for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand." Jesus is with you constantly and consistently.

One time a reporter approached G.K. Chesterton: "Sir, I understand that you recently became a Christian. May I ask you one question?" "Certainly," replied Chesterton. "If the risen Christ suddenly appeared at this very moment and stood behind you, what would you do?" Chesterton looked the reporter squarely in the eye and said, "He is." Jesus is with us. The risen Christ. Remember those four universals, those our "alls.:"

Notice how the Great Commission is sandwiched by indicatives, statements of gospel facts: he has all power and his presence is always with us. "All authority" goes with you as you go make disciples. What do you have to fear? His authority and his presence go with us. Ultimately, Jesus is chief disciple-maker. As one commentator puts it, "All through Matthew's Gospel, first-person-pronoun assurances enable second-person-pronoun commands."¹⁴ All authority is with us to protect, to defend, to empower.

This whole Gospel is framed by the presence of God with us. Matt 1:23: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)." He is with us in the beginning. Then last verse of the book: I am with you always.

He is with us as we are on mission for him. And I think in a special way. There is a special intimacy as we are obeying the Great Commission. Want more of Jesus? Get on mission. Obey him. Listen to the

¹² *Great Story* 148.

¹³ Wright *Great Story*, 30.

¹⁴ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 830.

way Eugene Peterson paraphrases the Great Commission: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in the way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”¹⁵

Church, take heart. Be encouraged. Christ is with us. Grab on to this promise. In his first of the Gospel, he is Immanuel – God with us. At the end of this gospel – Christ is with us. He is with us daily, to strengthen and to forgive. He is with us every day – to save and to sanctify. He is with us every day, keeping us till the end. He is with us daily – to guide our steps. He is with us – on the good days and the bad. He is with us – in our joys and in our sorrows. He is with us – in sickness and in health. Christ is with us – in life and in death. Believer, what greater comfort can there be? You are never alone. Christ is with you. Come what may, Christ is with you. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you should fear no evil, for he is with you. And beyond the grave, we shall ever be with the Lord. Jesus says I am with you always, to the end of the age. How wonderful it is to be a Christian. None others have such a Savior, such a King, a constant companion, an unfailing friend.¹⁶

Friends, that’s Matthew. Here is how one commentator concludes his 1100 page book: “For the reader who has carefully followed the journey this far the only appropriate response is to join the eleven disciples in worship and obedience to the Lord of heaven and earth, to play one’s own part in the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God to all the nations, and to revel in the assurance that despite the worst that a hostile world can offer, ‘I am with you all the time until the end of the age’.”¹⁷ / Because Jesus has all authority we go we make disciples by going baptizing and teaching. **18-20.**

¹⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 1474.

¹⁶ Ryle, *Matthew*, 331.

¹⁷ R.T. France, *Matthew*, 1109.