

Small Group Guide: The Great Mission

Based on Matthew 28:16-20

Opening Prayer

Begin with prayer, asking God to help your group understand His mission and how to participate in it with both faith and honesty about doubts.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Question: When you think about your weekly calendar or spending habits, what do they reveal about your actual priorities versus what you say your priorities are?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Jesus' Clear Priority:** Make disciples of all nations - this is the Great Commission
2. **The Reality of Doubt:** Worship and doubt can exist simultaneously in disciples
3. **The Process is Slow:** Discipleship is like education - inefficient, messy, and non-linear
4. **Jesus Comes Near:** He approaches doubting disciples gently, not demanding perfection
5. **We're All Qualified:** Jesus doesn't wait for our certainty or confidence to use us

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Mission (15 minutes)

1. **What stood out to you most from this sermon?**
2. **Jesus says "make disciples" rather than "make converts" or "win souls." What's the difference? How does thinking about discipleship as education change your perspective?**
3. **The sermon mentioned that 64% of adults in the Seattle area haven't been to church in over a year. How does this statistic make you feel? Does it motivate, overwhelm, or something else?**

Wrestling with Doubt (15 minutes)

4. The sermon described two types of doubt: one that investigates and seeks answers, and another that never leaves the "cancer ward." Have you experienced either type? What was that like?
5. Read Matthew 28:17 together. Why do you think Matthew includes the detail that "some doubted" even as they worshiped? What does this teach us about honest faith?
6. How does knowing that Jesus "came near" to doubting disciples change how you approach your own doubts or questions?

Practicing Discipleship (15 minutes)

7. Jesus commands two specific actions: baptizing and teaching people to observe (practice/conform to) His commands. Which feels more comfortable to you? Which feels harder? Why?
8. The sermon emphasized that discipleship is about practice, not just trying. What's the difference between "trying" to follow Jesus and "practicing" following Jesus?
9. Think about a skill you've developed (playing an instrument, a sport, cooking, etc.). How did slow, inefficient practice eventually lead to growth? How might this apply to your spiritual life?

Living the Mission (15 minutes)

10. The sermon said, "Nobody in this room is considered inadequate for Jesus' mission." What typically makes you feel inadequate or unqualified to share your faith or disciple others?
11. Jesus promises, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." How would remembering this promise change the way you approach making disciples this week?
12. Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus? Who needs to be discipled? What's one small, practical step you could take this week toward that person?

Practical Applications

Individual Commitments

Choose one or two to focus on this week:

- **Identify Your Real Priorities:** Review your calendar and spending from last week. What do they reveal? What needs to change to align with Jesus' mission?
- **Practice Honest Doubt:** If you're wrestling with doubts or questions, write them down. Share them with a trusted Christian friend or mentor. Seek answers rather than avoiding the questions.

- **Take One Step:** Identify one person who doesn't know Jesus or needs discipling. Pray for them daily and take one practical step toward them (invite to coffee, send an encouraging text, invite to church, etc.).
- **Embrace the Process:** Choose one of Jesus' commands to practice this week (love your neighbor, pray for enemies, give generously, etc.). Don't aim for perfection—aim for practice.
- **Consider Baptism:** If you haven't been baptized, talk to a pastor or elder about what that means and why it matters.

Group Commitment

Discipleship Partners: Pair up with someone in the group to check in with throughout the week. Share one area where you want to practice following Jesus and ask them to pray for you and check in mid-week.

Closing Reflection

Read Matthew 28:18-20 aloud together one more time.

Reflection Question: How does Jesus' presence with you "always, to the end of the age" give you courage for His mission?

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- Thank Jesus for coming near to us in our doubts and weaknesses
- Ask for courage to participate in His mission despite feeling unqualified
- Pray for the specific people group members identified who need to know Jesus
- Ask for patience with the slow, inefficient process of discipleship

For Next Week

Challenge: Come prepared to share one way you practiced following Jesus this week—including both successes and failures. Remember: faithfulness looks like getting back up, not never falling down.

Scripture Reading: Begin reading through the Gospel of Matthew, focusing on Jesus' teachings. Notice what He commands His disciples to do and practice.

How does the reality that Jesus gave the Great Commission to doubting, imperfect disciples change your understanding of who is qualified to participate in God's mission?

In what ways do your calendar, spending habits, and stress levels reveal priorities that differ from what you claim to value most?

How does understanding discipleship as a slow, inefficient educational process rather than a single conversion moment reshape your expectations of spiritual growth?

What is the difference between healthy doubt that leads to investigation and unhealthy doubt that keeps you stuck, and which kind are you currently experiencing?

How does the image of Jesus coming near to doubting disciples like a humble petition challenge your view of how God responds to your uncertainty?

If 64% of adults in the Seattle area never or rarely attend church, what specific barriers might be keeping your neighbors from hearing about Jesus, and how might you address them?

How does the claim that everyone makes exclusive truth claims about reality, including those who say all religions are equally valid, affect your confidence in sharing the gospel?

What would it look like practically to teach someone not just what Jesus commanded, but how to conform their daily life and practices around his teachings?

In what areas of your spiritual life are you waiting for more certainty or confidence before obeying, and how does Jesus' nearness to doubting disciples speak to that hesitation?

How does baptism as both a pledge of allegiance to Jesus and an initiation into his people challenge individualistic approaches to faith?

5-Day Devotional: The Mission of Imperfect Disciples

Day 1: The King Who Comes Near

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Devotional: Jesus approaches doubting disciples not with condemnation but with nearness. The same word used to describe petitioning God describes how Jesus approaches us—gently, humbly. This is revolutionary. The King of the universe doesn't demand we have everything figured out before He uses us. He comes near to our uncertainty, our questions, our faltering faith. Today, recognize that Jesus isn't waiting for your certainty to engage with you. He's already near, ready to work with you exactly as you are. Your doubts don't disqualify you; they're part of the journey. What area of doubt can you bring to Jesus today, trusting He'll come near rather than pull away?

Day 2: Worship and Doubt Coexist

Reading: Mark 9:14-29 (especially verse 24)

Devotional: "I believe; help my unbelief!" This father's cry mirrors the disciples who worshiped and doubted simultaneously. Christian faith is genuinely bipolar—we live between adoration and questioning, trust and uncertainty. This isn't failure; it's honesty. Denying doubt doesn't eliminate it any more than denying cancer cures it. Healthy doubt asks questions and seeks answers, moving you forward in understanding. Unhealthy doubt circles endlessly without resolution. Which kind are you experiencing? Remember, your doubts should change as you grow, indicating you're leaving the "cancer ward" and living life. Jesus honors honest questions. What question have you been afraid to ask God? Bring it to Him today with confidence that He can handle it.

Day 3: Slow, Inefficient Discipleship

Reading: 2 Peter 1:3-11

Devotional: Discipleship is educational, not instantaneous. Like learning multiplication or mastering an instrument, following Jesus requires patient practice. Progress isn't linear—you'll advance, stumble, and wonder if you've learned anything at all. This is normal. Peter lists qualities to add to faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance. Notice he doesn't say these appear overnight. Growth requires "making every effort," consistent practice until Christ's ways become instinct. Don't measure your spiritual life by perfection but by persistence. Are you getting back up when you fall? That's faithfulness. Today, identify one command of Jesus you want to practice this week. Not master—practice. Give yourself grace for the inefficiency of learning to follow the Master Teacher.

Day 4: Authority for the Unqualified

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Devotional: Jesus gives His mission to ordinary, flawed, doubting people—not despite their inadequacy but through it. God chooses the foolish, weak, and lowly to accomplish His purposes so no one can boast. You're not too young, uninformed, uncertain, or broken for Jesus to use. The Great Commission isn't given to those with perfect faith but to worshiping doubters willing to obey. Your qualifications come from Christ's presence, not your competence. The mission doesn't require fearless people, just faithful ones who keep getting up. Where have you disqualified yourself from serving Jesus? What insecurity has silenced your witness? Today, recognize that Jesus has already qualified you by calling you and promising His presence. Step forward in faithfulness, not fearlessness.

Day 5: The Promise of Presence

Reading: Joshua 1:1-9; Hebrews 13:5-6

Devotional: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." This is Jesus' final promise in Matthew—perpetual presence. Like God told Joshua, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," Jesus anchors His mission in His abiding companionship. You don't disciple in your own strength or wisdom. The same Jesus who has all authority in heaven and earth walks with you through every conversation, every doubt, every failure, every victory. His presence transforms impossible commands into possible obedience. The mission isn't about your adequacy but His availability. As you go—to work, school, neighborhoods, relationships—Jesus goes with you. What would change if you truly believed Jesus is present in every moment today? Practice awareness of His nearness, and let that reality embolden you to live His mission.