

Go Farther – the Mission of the G.C.

8/3/25

Matthew 28:19-20 | Colossians 1:28

Sunday AM

DYK what the difference is b/w *farther* and *further*?

Further is more abstract/figurative and means to advance something like time, an idea, or a discussion. FE – *let's discuss this idea further or he wants to advance further in his career.*

Farther – on the other hand – is more literal, spatial, and geographical – think distance! FE – *the store is farther down the road or she ran farther than he did.*

As we enter into yr-5 of our 6-yr Aim Higher/Dream Bigger missional plan – we're focusing on how we can go *farther* to *further* the Gospel.

Recap – coming out of Covid and yrs of church indebtedness – in 2021, our church leadership mapped out a 6-yr missional plan to further engage our church in G.C. ministry at home and around the world.

YR1 – our focus was to **Shine Brighter**. Based on the idea that *the light that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home* – we set out on a 6-yr plan to refresh/reinvigorate our church ministries/facilities.

While we're off to a great start in these improvements – we still have a few items on our punch list to finish including the FH, the WC, and a few more items.

YR2 – our focus was to **Think Smaller** – placing our focus on relationships over programs and introducing our GROW Group min. which continues to thrive and have an impact on making disciples.

YR3 – our focus was to **Live Bolder** by living on mission where we *live, work, and play* by being Jesus to the people our lives intersect w/ on a daily basis.

YR4 – we've sought to **Build Stronger** our homes, our church, our community, and God's Kingdom realizing that *to whom much is given much is required*.

Which brings us to this new church year and the calling to **Go Farther** to further the Gospel. Whether it's *down the aisle, across the street, across our nation* – or *around the world...* we're taking a bold step of faith to engage in ministry to love others to Jesus.

This is the mission of the G.C.! To go into all the world – into our **Jerusalem**, our **Judea**, our **Samaria** – and unto the uttermost – to make disciples of every **person, tribe, and tongue** by loving people as God loves them.

I wonder... Have you considered the depth of this calling on your life? Have you ever thought about what God is inviting you to be a part of for His name? It's to be Jesus to everyone you meet in word/deed!

WTM – I want to take a few min. to remind us and encourage us in our calling to be G.C. Christians.

I **CLARIFY** the Mission

Based on Acts 1:8 | Matthew 28:19-20 – the mission is clear. **EVERY** Jesus follower is called to be a **witness** who **makes disciples** of everyone their life intersects w/ each/every day wherever they are.

IOW – the **Jesus in you** should be so shining thru you that if you took 5 min. to speak w/ a perfect stranger about nothing but the weather, their life would be impacted by the Jesus in living thru you.

A Be a **WITNESS**

You will receive power when the H.S. comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth.

witness (*martyr*) refers to a person who gives truthful testimony of what they have seen/experienced.

Over time – b/c so many 1st century believers were being persecuted for boldly giving witness to the truth of Jesus, the word took on an even greater meaning referring to a person who was willing to suffer/die for the sake of this truth that Jesus is our Savior/Lord.

Meaning – to be a witness for Christ is more than just speaking of Jesus – it's ***embodying the message*** of the Gospel by intentionally living/proclaiming the truth of Jesus to others – even in the face of opposition.

This is just part of the mission. The other ½ involves the purpose of being a witness – to ***make disciples***.

B Make **DISCIPLES**

Over the yrs, we've spoken of this calling ad nauseum – and there's a simple reason why – b/c ***this is the missional call of every believer/church***. This is one of the reasons God saved us – to live on mission for Him.

Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the H.S., teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am w/ you always...

disciple (*mathetes*) means learner, student, follower. It refers to a person who is a believing, growing follower who serves at the pleasure of Jesus and the G.C.

IOW – a disciple is one who ¹trusts/obeys Jesus, ²learns from His teachings, and ³follows His example – to be like Him and to do as He did.

In Scripture – there are several pictures of what it means to be a disciple. **FE** – 2 Timothy 2:1-6 – we find a picture of a *teacher* who mentors, an *athlete* who competes according to the rules, a *soldier* who follows orders, and a *farmer* who sows looking for a harvest.

For me – I prefer the picture Jesus paints in Matthew 28:16-20 – that contains the 5 marks of a disciple –

The disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the H.S., and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Surely, I am w/ you always, to the very end of the age." 28:16-20

- **AVAILABLE** to God
- Has **AFFECTION** for God
- Submits to the **AUTHORITY** of God
- Lives for the **AGENDA** of God
- Waits on the **ASSURANCE** of God

J.M. Comer in *Practicing the Way* – defines a disciple as an **apprentice** who wants to ¹be w/ Jesus, ²become like Jesus and ³do as Jesus did. (I like this)

An **apprentice** refers to a person who *learns by doing* – by willingly placing themselves under the tutelage of a skilled master to gain hands-on experience.

1 Be **WITH** Jesus

Simply put – a disciple prioritizes spending time w/ Jesus in *Scripture, prayer, worship, and service* to cultivate intimacy thru fellowship – never settling for a religious experience but seeking a close relationship.

2 Become **LIKE** Jesus

A disciple doesn't just admire Jesus – they're actively being transformed from the inside out to reflect His *character, values, and heart*.

Be imitators of God as dear children – and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:1-2

Yet to become **LIKE** Him requires making some hard decisions to be more like the Word than the World.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you might prove what is the will of God – His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2

IOW – if I am to become like Jesus it'll require that I seek to be more like Jesus and less like the world. It's a daily *volitional decision* to seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness – and to trust God *always* and *in all ways* – even when it doesn't make earthly sense.

3 **DO** as Jesus Did

This is the ***missional aspect*** of Christianity – living the way Jesus lived by *teaching, serving, caring, resisting evil, practicing justice, and making disciples* by being His *hands, feet, and voice* to the world around us.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

All this to say, ***casually*** going to church and calling Jesus your Savior is far cry from seeing yourself as an **apprentice** in desperate pursuit of ¹being w/ Jesus, ²becoming like Jesus, and ³doing as Jesus did.

Anyone can call themselves a Christian, but it's a much different thing to actually live an apprentice life.

Meaning – being/making disciples is far more than just learning doctrines/catechism – it's about a whole-life apprenticeship to Jesus, ¹where we abide w/ Him, ²are transformed by Him, and ³live like Him daily.

II **ACCEPT** God's Plan

Listen – the Christian life is more than just going to church – it's living on mission according to the plan Jesus set forth for all of His disciples.

A We are to **GO**

Go into the world (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost) and make disciples of all nations...

The G.C. begins w/ **going** – *as you are going...* we **go** w/ the intent of serving others to Jesus to earn the right to speak w/ them about the hope that's w/in us.

go – is a *participle of assumption* – as in, b/c you've trusted Jesus as Savior and had your life changed by His grace... **as you're going** into the highways and byways of your everyday life – live intentionally on mission to make disciples of everyone you meet.

The idea is to **live aware in the moment** – in the normal traffic patterns of your life – to be a living testimony of the love/grace of God w/ everyone you meet.

Yet to **serve others to make disciples** requires living consciously compelled by God's love every day in every way – at *work*, at *school*, at *home*, at *church* – wherever you are to help others see/experience Jesus.

For Christ's love compels us, b/c we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

It means God's love/grace are so overwhelming in us that they've taken hold of us and won't let us go – moving us to actions and driving our sense of purpose.

B We are to **MAKE** Disciples

We're to help others **be** w/ Jesus, **become** like Jesus, and **do** as Jesus did by being **available**, having **affection**, abiding in His **authority**, living for His **agenda**, while waiting on the H.S. **assurance**.

...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the H.S., and teaching them to observe all I have commanded you...

Implied in the Greek is the idea that believers are to live w/ **mission intentionality** – that is, w/ the goal to be a disciple who makes disciples – who **trust/obey**.

This means we're not just to *evangelize* them and then *orphan* them – but rather. Like Jesus w/ the (12) we're to invest in them and walk w/ them until they believe and follow – until genuine faith is born and lived.

Let me explain...

baptizing – refers to the act of being fully immersed or submerged in water as a symbolic gesture used by the church to identify someone whose life has been transformed by the grace of God in salvation.

In this instance – it's referring not just to the act of water baptism but to the entire transaction of salvation. From the moment a person hears the good news, until they believe and follow in baptism.

This is a big deal. LWF – in the early church, a person didn't get baptized if they didn't believe, b/c to get baptized was to identify w/ Christ – and this was to sign your death certificate. **If you didn't mean it, then you wouldn't have done it b/c of what was at stake.**

teaching them to obey – refers to our charge to assist people in walking in obedience to God's will/Word by living in alignment w/ the H.S. so He can guide/direct their lives and direct their steps.

It refers to a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they know the music by heart and can perform it flawlessly from memory. **Meaning – the music has become a part of them.**

And this is our commission – to go into our small part of the world, ready to be used of God, to share w/ others the hope that is w/in us so that others might also come to know/follow Him. It's a call to participate in helping the world to hear/receive the news that God loves them and gave His life to rescue/redeem them.

We are the Bibles the world is reading; we are the creeds the world is needing; we are the sermons the world is heeding. *Billy Graham*

For this to occur – as Jesus followers, we have to be willing to – *go farther to further the Gospel*.

This brings me to a conviction that I've been wrestling w/ for quite some time that God began moving in my heart while I was recovering from surgery.

DYK what this area below me is called? It's an altar! It's a place God has carved out in Scripture where His people meet and do business w/ Him.

The altar is supposed to be a *safe* place – a *sacred* space for us to commune/respond to God's leading in our lives. It's also a place of intercession/petition where we intercede and cast our cares upon the Lord.

And yet – long before I became pastor – there seems to have been a wall built b/w the pews and the altar that we have fought against for years. And btw – we're not the only church that faces this spiritual dilemma.

Tell story of watching Temple Baptist in Hattiesburg.

I want to invite you to fight for the altar w/ me. To ask God to tear down the wall b/w us and Him – and to make this space a safe/sacred space once again for people to commune and respond to His moving in their lives and in our church.

I believe we'll never go *farther to further the Gospel* until we can move freely in our church in response to the call of God – and this altar is a starting point.