

The Great Commission: He Modeled It Before He Mandated It

Theme: Learn. Live. Lead.

Primary Text: Matthew 28:18–20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Introduction

Many believers think the Great Commission begins in Matthew 28. It doesn't.

The command to “go and make disciples” was the culmination of everything Jesus had already demonstrated. Before He ever told His followers what to do, He showed them how to do it.

Jesus didn't simply preach to crowds—He invested in people.

He didn't just teach truth—He lived truth.

He didn't just save sinners—He befriended them.

Before Jesus gave the mission, He modeled the method.

I. Jesus Was Called the Friend of Sinners

Scripture:

- Matthew 11:19

- Luke 7:34

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”

Notice this was intended as an insult.

Yet Jesus never denied it.

He wasn't participating in sin; He was pursuing sinners.

He was close enough to influence them without being influenced by them.

Key Truth:

People cannot become disciples if they never experience Christ through His followers.

The church is called to be separate from sin, not isolated from sinners.

Supporting Scriptures

- Luke 19:1–10 (Zacchaeus)

- John 4:1–42 (Woman at the well)

- Luke 5:27–32 (Levi's banquet)

Jesus consistently entered people's world before inviting them into His Kingdom.

II. Jesus Modeled Discipleship Before He Commanded It

Scripture

Mark 3:13–14

“He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.”

Notice the order.

First...

Be with Him.

Then...

Be sent by Him.

Discipleship is relationship before responsibility.

Jesus spent approximately three years:

- Walking with them
 - Eating with them
 - Teaching them
 - Correcting them
 - Encouraging them
 - Letting them watch Him minister
- Only after modeling the life did He commission them to reproduce it.

Principle

You cannot reproduce what you have never personally lived.

Paul later echoed this model.

1 Corinthians 11:1

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

III. Jesus Didn't Make Converts—He Made Disciples

Many churches celebrate decisions.

Jesus celebrated transformation.

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:19 does not say:

“Go and get decisions.”

It says:

“Go and make disciples.”

A disciple is:

- A learner
- A follower
- An imitator
- Someone whose life is continually transformed

Supporting Scriptures

- Luke 9:23

- John 8:31

- Acts 11:26

Christians were first called Christians because they had first lived as disciples.

IV. The Great Commission Is Built on Relationship

Jesus never mass-produced disciples.

He developed them personally.

Examples

Peter

He restored him after failure.

(John 21)

Thomas

He addressed his doubts personally.

(John 20)

Matthew

He simply said,

“Follow Me.”

(Matthew 9:9)

Discipleship happens best where life is shared.

People are changed through truth wrapped in relationship.

V. We Cannot Fulfill the Great Commission Without Living Like Jesus

Jesus entered homes.

He shared meals.

He asked questions.

He listened.

He loved.

He served.

He sacrificed.

Only then did He call people to follow Him.

If Jesus had waited for sinners to become clean before approaching them, no one would have been saved.

Likewise, we are called to move toward people.

Not to approve sin.

But to demonstrate grace that leads to repentance.

Romans 2:4

God's kindness leads us to repentance.

VI. Our Mission Today

We are not merely called to attend church.

We are called to make disciples.

That means:

- Intentionally investing in people.
- Sharing life, not just information.
- Living the Gospel before speaking the Gospel.
- Reproducing followers of Jesus who make more followers of Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:2

Paul tells Timothy:

"What you have heard from me... entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also."

Notice four generations:

Paul → Timothy → Faithful people → Others.

That is biblical discipleship.

Practical Application: Learn • Live • Lead

Learn

Spend time with Jesus before trying to represent Him.

(John 15:4–5)

Live

Demonstrate Christ in everyday relationships.

People should experience Jesus before they hear your sermon.

Lead

Invite someone to walk with you as you follow Christ.

Every believer should be discipling someone.

Conclusion

The Great Commission is not merely a command to go.

It is an invitation to continue what Jesus began.

He walked with ordinary people.

He loved broken people.

He befriended sinners.

He modeled discipleship.

Then He looked at His followers and said,

“Now you go.”

The church does not need more spectators.

It needs disciple-makers.

Before Jesus commanded, He demonstrated.

Now the world is waiting for believers who will do the same.

Closing Challenge

- Who is one person God has placed in your life to intentionally disciple?
- Are you spending enough time with Jesus to faithfully model His life?
- Will you simply invite people to church—or will you invite them to follow Christ by walking alongside them?

Closing Scripture: John 20:21

“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

The same Jesus who was called the Friend of Sinners now sends His Church into the world—not merely to gather crowds, but to make disciples who make disciples.