

March 26th, 2023
Masterclass: Week 4

When I was growing up, my parents were hard workers. They weren't Christians, as they both had little interest in faith due to their upbringings in the church. When I was in 5th grade, someone told me about Jesus on the school bus. If it weren't for that one friend stepping out of his comfort zone and telling my sister and I about Jesus, we probably wouldn't have met Jesus at one of the most pivotal ages in our lives.

Evangelism, discipleship, missions, these words describe the very heart of God.

We are in our series titled "Masterclass." A master class is an opportunity given to students of a particular discipline by an expert of that discipline. While I can agree about not being a master in any certain area, there are many things I am passionate about. The deepest one is that I am very passionate about the Lord, and this is a passion that started since I was a young teen.

Missions are something that is God's heart. Today, I am going to be talking about God's mission and discipleship and how every single one of us has a role to play when it comes to those two topics.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

All of us here today are Christ's ambassadors. When you hear the word "ambassador," you might automatically think politician, someone who represents our nation in a far-off land, or some stately diplomat whose job it is to be the go-between for two foreign countries. Now when the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians that we are an ambassador for Christ, what does that mean?

For early Christian readers, an "ambassador" was someone who represented one state or land to another. They were official representatives of the one who sent them and were therefore to be treated with the utmost respect. By "ambassadors of Christ," Paul meant that Christians should see themselves as representatives of God—and were to behave accordingly. They had an important job to do: showcase Christ, and deliver His message so others could know Him, too.

As an ambassador of Christ, we are also to take on the role of a disciple. Discipleship is a word that is thrown around a lot in the church and I believe that you cannot have true

missions without discipleship and vice versa. In basic terms, discipleship is teaching people how to know and be like Jesus - to obey God and see His best for their lives.

We have two points that we are going to go over today in regards to missions and discipleship:

1.) Being a disciple of Jesus

2.) Making disciples of Jesus

Being a Disciple of Jesus:

1.) A disciple of Jesus learns from Him.

In the first century, a disciple would attach himself to another person in order to gain practical or theoretical knowledge by instruction or experience. It was a word used by apprentices learning a trade as well as students learning a teacher's philosophy.

Jesus called people to value Him more than their own life, with fishermen and tax collectors leaving their businesses to follow Him. Jesus' disciples were leaving their careers, possessions, and families to follow Him.

Luke 14:33 (ESV)

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus was telling a great crowd of people the cost of following Him, that if we really want to be His disciples, then we must realize that everything we have belongs to Him.

And did the disciples get 100% on all of their discipleship homework? NO! But here is the beauty of it.

The disciples failed, and Jesus knew that they would. When Jesus was arrested, did His disciples take up their own crosses too to follow Jesus? NO, they all ran away and abandoned Jesus. Yet, Jesus still went to the cross for all who would be his followers.

The disciples LEARNED from Jesus. They did that by spending time with Him. But not only did they listen to Jesus' teachings, THEY DID WHAT HE SAID!

As followers of Jesus today, we have the Holy Spirit living on the inside of us. We have the same power that rose Jesus from the grave living on the inside of us. What we have as modern day believers is the blessings that come from Christ's sacrifice.

We have God's Word with us and how many of us know that God's Word is ALIVE and ACTIVE. We don't just read the Bible to check off our "good deeds" list for the day.

A disciple learns from Jesus and stays close to Him. It is proximity to Jesus through daily Bible reading, prayer, community with other believers, that helps us be a disciple. It involves a commitment to choose Jesus.

What does it mean to be a disciple? A disciple stays close to Jesus, chooses Jesus, and learns from Him.

In light of being a disciple, let's take a look at what it means to MAKE disciples?

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

If you were to ask me what the purpose and plan for us as Christians and for the church is, it's this. This is the mission statement.

In some of your Bibles, this section may be titled the 'Great Commission'. A commission is "an authoritative command, a directive", meaning what Jesus said here in Matthew 28 is not a suggestion. Jesus is saying this with all the authority He has and has been given to Him. Many of us have taken the Great Commission and have swapped it for the Great Suggestion.

We are satisfied to be saved, but we are not motivated to see others come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Somehow we have come to believe that the end of our responsibility is to come to church a couple of times a week, pray when we can, read the Bible every now and then, and live a life that is slightly cleaner than the world around us.

If you are not discipling and being near to Him, you are living like He is dead. Real Christianity is a belief in a real and living God. We are not serving a dead God.

What would it look like if we truly believed in the Gospel?

The Gospel is powerful, and we are seeing God move in all parts of the world, but how many of us know that there is a GREAT move of God happening in our own backyard?

There is an analogy I heard at the world's missions summit years ago. William Carey, who was considered the "father of the modern missionary movement" challenged those who would listen to obey their responsibility to take the Gospel to unreached lands.

During his farewell service, Cary met with some leaders who promised Carey that "as he went forth in God's name, they should never cease till death to stand by him."

It's as if Carey saying, "Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope." and his brothers saying, "While we live, we should never let go of the rope."

There are two sides to the rope. One side for those who will go down into the pits of hell and preach the Gospel. There is a promise in Scripture in *Psalm 40:2* that when God lifts us out of the mud and the mire and He sets our feet on a rock, He will give us a firm place to stand.

But there is still another side to this rope. There is the side that goes into the pit and then there is a side at the top of the pit. This is the side for those that will hold the rope.

Those that hold the rope are those that support and stand with those in the pit. They are those that get on their faces to God and PRAY for those who are out in the mission field. We cannot underestimate the power of prayer. Jesus said to his disciples in *Luke 10:2 (ESV)*, He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Those that hold the rope pray that God will bring boldness to new Christians who face persecution in their new faith all around the world.

Being the ones holding the rope also means that we GIVE. That we GIVE GENEROUSLY to the cause of missions.

If we aren't going to be the ones in the pit, we must be the ones holding the rope praying, supporting, and financially giving to missionaries who are.

There's no other option today. It's either going down into the pit or it's holding the rope.

What is the next step for you today? We all have a part to play and the question is, what is yours?