



Mission and Purpose



Lesson Question: What does God want me to do?

Main Idea: As disciples, we are called to move from simply being recipients of the gospel to active participants in Jesus' mission.

Key Terms

Discipleship: Helping others follow Jesus.

Vision: The hope of a preferable future

Corporate Discipleship: Growing in Christ with other people.

Witness: Someone who reports simply on what they have seen or heard.

Testimony: A personal story of coming to faith in Jesus.

Getting Started

Anytime we hear the word 'mission' in the church, we often assume we're talking about an evangelistic trip to some distant place.

While that's part of it, this oversimplification misses the fullness of our calling. The mission of God's people is wholly intertwined with Jesus' vision for the church. We see this vision in its clearest terms in the Great Commission.

In it, Jesus said, 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" (Matthew 28:19-20, English Standard Version)

Put simply: Jesus' vision is disciples who are equipped to make disciples. A disciple is a follower of Jesus; discipleship is simply helping others follow Him. The hope of the church is to be a Holy Spirit-led community of disciples dedicated to this cycle of multiplication. The mission—the way we actually function and operate as Christians, corporately and personally—is the daily pursuit of that vision.

Question 1:

What is Jesus' vision for the church?

A New Mission

Bible Verses

Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Ephesians 4:11

As Christians, we are sojourners in a strange land. We are citizens of the kingdom of God, commissioned by God to be His representatives on Earth. We discussed this change in status and identity in the first session. What we want to discuss now is how this change influences the way we live and operate.

Just before the presentation of the Great Commission, Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). As Christians, we recognize and submit to that authority and we have committed our lives to seeing his vision manifested on earth. This very study is written in pursuit of that goal.

Jesus' vision for the church is disciples that make disciples. That is clear in Jesus' farewell text to His disciples. A closer look might reveal a narrower framework for accomplishing this goal. Making disciples is the "what," and the verbs and promises that surround the command describe the "how."

Main Command
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.

Matthew 28:19-20

Discipleship is intentional (Go).

Discipleship hopes to bring people into the faith (Baptizing). Discipleship pursues transformation in the life of the believer. (Teaching to observe) Lastly, discipleship is empowered (I am with you always). Jesus describes a fourfold framework for making disciples.

Foreign missions fall under this framework. As Christians, we hope to see people baptized into the faith. Furthermore, Jesus commanded us to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Foreign missions are of vital importance, and God might motivate us to go to another country. In 2024, I was blessed with the opportunity to go to Amazonas, Brazil. We evangelized along the Amazon River, and over 300 people made professions of faith in Jesus. These missions are very important, but we can fulfill our new mission of making disciples wherever we are.

Matthew 28 shows us that discipleship necessarily moves beyond baptizing. It involves intentionality and teaching others to walk with God. There are so many examples of this in the Bible.

A New Mission

Bible Verses

Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Ephesians 4:11

One such example is found in the book of Acts. Apollos is described as an eloquent speaker who was competent in the Scriptures. However, Aquilla and Priscilla hear him teaching one day in Ephesus, and they realize that his knowledge of the gospel was lacking, so they took him aside and offered him guidance and correction. To his credit, he received it well and was strengthened as a teacher and follower of Christ. This is discipleship. It is encouraging and teaching one another to know Christ more deeply and live for Him. The growth cycle of a disciple involves what we know (knowledge), transforming who we are (character), and transforming what we do (conduct).

As we grow as disciples, we learn more about God through His Word, and this knowledge begins to shape and transform our character. As our character is transformed, the way we live and conduct ourselves begins to change.

The Church and Discipleship

The local church plays a vital role in discipleship. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, "And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,"

(Ephesians 4:11-12). It is the responsibility of church leaders to equip the saints for the work of ministry. God has tasked His church with pursuing discipleship. Therefore, the ministries of the church must necessarily be aimed at discipleship.

Every ministry of the church should be aimed at facilitating discipleship. This is the pulpit ministry, Sunday school, small groups, life groups, children's ministry, youth ministry, college ministry, young adults, senior adults, etc. Churches often divide demographically into "siloes" ministries in the hope of more intentional discipleship that is aware of generational differences. There is nothing inherently wrong with this as long as we remember that the Bible calls for inter-generational discipleship, too! (Titus 2). You just need to plug in!

Question 2:

Consider the fourfold framework from Matthew 28, which area do you struggle with most?

Question 3:

Like Apollos, why is it important for us to remain teachable?

A New Mission

Bible Verse

Acts 2

Small Groups

If there was one unique identifier about the early church in Acts, it was the unprecedented community. Community might be best thought of as a “common unity.” The early church of Acts was united in their faith in Jesus, and they committed themselves to many things that flowed out of their deep devotion to Jesus.

As a review, the early church of Acts was committed to God's Word, fellowshiping together, praying together, meeting one another's needs, meeting regularly to praise God, and growing together spiritually. These groups might meet in homes for prayer or worship, as we see in Acts 1 or Chloe's house in Corinth. They might meet in the temple as Acts 2 describes. They might meet different needs, like the communal benevolence of Acts 2 or the food for the widow ministry of Acts 6, from the church at Jerusalem. What remains constant is the commitment to community.

There is an ongoing debate: “big” church or “small” church. I grew up in a small church and believed this was the only God-honoring prescription for most of my life. Later in life, God has called me to service in many larger congregations. You want the low down?

Here it is, churches can be healthy or unhealthy regardless of size. God uses both. Sometimes larger churches have more resources for ministry, which can create some great opportunities, but smaller churches almost always excel at cultivating community. Community is key in every church. We don't just attend church, we belong to a church. We are a faith family. Larger churches rely on small groups (Sunday school or life groups) to foster community. These groups exist in the spirit of the Acts 2 community. Participants in these groups commit to growing together spiritually, praying together for one another, and meeting each other's needs. If you aren't in one, you need a small group more than you know. You may be doing this study as part of a small group curriculum. If so, look around and thank God for this group, and commit yourself to showing this group the community of Acts 2.

Question 4:

Why is community essential?

A New Story

Bible Verses

2 Corinthians 5:17, Psalm 107:2

The Bible is God's story of redemption. It describes how God has worked through history to redeem for Himself a people that have rejected Him and suffered the consequences of sin and separation. It describes how He beautifully worked for centuries to set the stage for the coming of His son. In it comes the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus, our Emmanuel. The great exchange, wonderfully chronicled in the gospels detailing the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Son, provides a way for us. The genesis of the church as the Holy Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost. All of it is rich, precious history, and when you think about it, really all of history is just that, His-Story.

In one of the earlier chapters, we noted that every culture throughout all time, whether primitive or modern, all shared stories. Story transcends all. It is the universal mechanism to pass down important truths, history, or cultural identity. God used stories to produce His Word, beautifully crafted to tell His story of redemption. Now, God is writing a new story. This new story is your story. God has redeemed you. In Christ, you are a new creation, the old has passed away, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). In that transition lies the beginning of the story. There is the recognition that you were hopelessly lost and unable to save yourself, but God, who is rich in mercy, before we even knew we needed it, before we were even born, made a way for us to be made right with Him through His Son's substitutionary death on the cross in our place.

Every born-again believer has this story. It is different for everyone. Your story is your story. It is unique, but it is the story that God has given you, and just like every culture throughout time has used story to communicate important truths, God is calling you to share your story. In the church, we have come to call these transformation stories, testimonies. If you have a testimony, you have a responsibility to share it. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble" (Psalm 107:2). If you have been redeemed, you are called to say so.

What's in a Testimony

1. Past - Life before salvation
2. Pivot - Encountering the gospel
3. Present - How the gospel has impacted life
4. Purpose - Pointing others to Jesus

A New Story

Bible Verses

Acts 22, Acts 26, Galatians 1:11-24, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Acts 1:8, Isaiah 43:7

Sharing Your Story

The apostle Paul shared his personal testimony from persecutor to preacher two different times in the book of Acts (22 and 26), Galatians 1:11-24, and in his first letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:12-17). In each of these, Paul shares, in varying detail, his former life of sin and rebellion to God, his encounter with Christ, and how that has catapulted his life in new directions.

Paul is simply sharing what he has experienced. Jesus calls us to be witnesses (Acts 1:8), not theologians. This is not to say that doctrine is not important; it certainly is, but what Jesus is calling for is liberating to the believer. Witnesses don't have to have all the answers. They simply share what they have seen and heard. Thinking in this way really helps to lower that barrier of sharing faith.

You should still write down your story. You should find ways to present the details well. Just like anything else, you should prepare, but at the end of the day, you are simply sharing how God has transformed you by His grace. In doing so, you are fulfilling your purpose. Your purpose is to bring God glory (Isaiah 43:7). You were built for it. You were redeemed for it. This entire book has sought to equip you to do it. I pray God uses this

book to help make you complete, equipped for every good work in Christ Jesus.

Question 5:

Why is it sometimes easier to share a testimony than have a theological conversation?

Question 6:

What is your testimony? How did your life encounter God's grace?

What's Next

Scan the QR Code for a discipleship quiz to see where you need to grow

