

Living the Vision - Part 2 – Matthew 28:19-20

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-8

Introduction

Last week we saw from Matthew 28:19 how it is the responsibility of every Christ-follower to make disciples and we saw how the first, necessary step in making a disciple is to make a convert

Therefore we saw how each follower of Christ is commanded to engage in evangelism

And that means that we have to go to those who need the Lord

We have to get out of our holy huddle and actually go about our daily lives with the intention of making disciples

We have to purposely engage and befriend those who don't yet know our Lord and share our stories with them with the aim of sharing the gospel with them

However, a convert is not the same thing as a disciple and Jesus commands his followers to "Go and make disciples"

So we have to consider the difference between a convert and a disciple and what else we must do to make that disciple

So let's remind ourselves what a disciple is:

Last week we saw that, while a disciple is a learner, what Jesus is referring to here is more than a mere learner

A Great Commission disciple is someone who adheres completely to the teachings of another, making them his rule of life and conduct

Therefore, what Jesus has commissioned us to make are people who are committed to following him, people who want to be like him, and those who want to pass along his teachings to others

We read about Matthew's call to discipleship in **Matthew 9:9** where we see Jesus encounter Matthew sitting at his station in his tax booth and say to him "Follow me."

And Matthew demonstrated the necessary commitment to being a disciple when he rose and left everything behind to follow Jesus

Jesus had many followers during his earthly ministry but not all of them could rightly be called disciples in this sense

After all, we read in **John 6:66** that many left Jesus after a time because the things he was teaching were too hard

The Bible is clear that being a disciple takes commitment

Discipleship to Jesus requires complete and total surrender - a putting to death of one's own ideas, plans, desires, and control over one's life and possessions

In **Matthew 16:24** Jesus taught that being his disciple requires **denying oneself and being willing to die** for the privilege

And in **Luke 14:33**, Jesus said that one must **count the cost** of being his disciple and that anyone who doesn't renounce all that he has cannot be his disciple

Clearly, discipleship is a matter of obedience and commitment and those require knowledge and training

So we are going to turn our attention this morning to the second part of our biblical vision for the church - **equipping**

And turning in our Bibles once again to **Matthew 28:19-20** we read:

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.

In those verses we see two additional necessities for making disciples: baptism and teaching

Let's turn our attention first to baptism and what Jesus meant when he said to baptize as a part of disciple-making

I. Baptism defined

What Jesus meant by baptism is what we call “believer’s immersion” where a person who has accepted Christ is publicly immersed in water signifying identification with the death and burial of Christ on behalf of the individual

Look with me at **Romans 6:3-5** where Paul writes the following about baptism:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Figuratively, baptism depicts the introduction of the convert into union with Christ

But it’s vital that we understand that baptism is only a symbol of what has already transpired at the moment of belief when the person was instantaneously baptized with the Holy Spirit and eternally saved

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an internal and private experience that places a person into the body of Christ whereas baptism as used in our passage is the public witness of the person’s identification with Christ

Baptism simply summarizes and illustrates all that is involved in the commencement of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord - baptism doesn’t save anyone

However, I want to be sure I don’t give you the wrong impression about baptism by my description of it

There is nothing “mere” about baptism

Baptism is extremely important in the life of the disciple because it initiates them into a life of discipleship

Baptism is the first step of obedience for the disciple

It’s a public pronouncement that one is a follower of Jesus

It’s not a requirement for salvation but it is commanded by our Lord and then treated as normative for all believers by the apostles after Jesus’ resurrection

The word “baptizing” carries the force of a command even as it tells us, in part, how to make disciples

But remember, this isn’t a commandment that Jesus lays on the new convert but on the church

It’s a responsibility and duty placed on the shoulders of those who are already disciples for the benefit of the new convert

Sadly, baptism has largely been discounted in many churches as the focus has been transferred to decisions for Christ

I’m not saying that people professing belief in Christ isn’t wonderful and worthy of celebration - not at all

But, again, we aren’t tasked with making converts

Our commission is to make disciples and we should get really excited when someone who has professed faith in Christ takes the step of obedience to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Because when they do they are publicly identifying with Christ and setting themselves on the path of discipleship

And we do no one any favor when we lead them to pray to receive Christ without also talking to them about the need for the obedience and commitment and transformation of life required for discipleship

Salvation doesn’t make one a disciple and baptism is only the first step on the road of discipleship

Because discipleship is a life-long process

And instruction in the Scriptures is an essential element in the process so let’s turn our attention to the **teaching** aspect of disciple-making

II. Teaching defined

I dare say that everyone who comes into a saving relationship with Christ starts off as a baby in need of instruction
Therefore someone must teach them what they need to know in order to mature in the faith

We find the teaching aspect of making disciples in verse 20 where Jesus said part of making disciples is:

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you

Of course teaching means to provide instruction and in this case is referring specifically to passing along the faith of the saints by conveying the truth contained in the Word of God and showing people the God of the Word

Every believer is to teach others about Jesus and how to follow him

And this teaching can be done in a formal or informal setting

By and large, the corporate teaching activity of the church falls on the formal end of the spectrum through classes, Bible study groups, and Sunday sermons

But the teaching Jesus commands is both corporate and individual so teaching is the responsibility of every Christ-follower

And, while a formal, structured course of study can be quite beneficial, some of the best teaching comes through the teacher and the student spending time together teaching through both observation and instruction

Before I entered full-time vocational ministry I was a journeyman toolmaker and to become a toolmaker I spent four years in an apprenticeship where I had a good deal of formal instruction but even more hours spent with journeyman toolmakers learning from watching what they did and receiving their advice and guidance

It's quite common for people entering a career to spend time learning from those who have already mastered the skills they are trying to learn

And when we see discipleship practiced in the New Testament that is the way it is most commonly done

Jesus' disciples lived and traveled with him during the three years of his earthly ministry observing what he did and how he did it and listening to the things he said

Teaching was a major part of Jesus' earthly ministry and he is referred to as "teacher" 70 times in the New Testament
Jesus taught in the synagogues, in the temple courts, in houses, in towns and villages, on a mountainside, in a boat by a lakeshore, and in the streets

But it could be argued that the most important teaching he did was as he spent time with his disciples just sharing life with them

We see this model also in the case of Paul and his young protégé, Timothy

Look with me at **2Timothy 3:10-11** where we read:

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra...

We know that Timothy was often Paul's traveling companion as he went on his missionary journeys and that permitted them to spend a great deal of time together in close quarters as they traveled and ministered

And that word "followed" in verse 10 means that Timothy paid attention and scrutinized Paul

He observed to see if Paul's teaching matched his conduct and with an eye toward reproducing it

And Paul was unafraid of having anyone model themselves after him because of who he modeled his life after

In **1Corinthians 11:1** Paul commands *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”*

Jesus said in Luke 6:40 that when fully taught, the student would become like his teacher

And we read in **1Corinthians 4:15-17** –

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

Timothy became so much like Paul that Paul could send him to Corinth and tell the people there to watch Timothy to be reminded of how I do things

To teach is to cause to know and the purpose of teaching is to shape the thinking and the will of the one who is taught

And the content of the teaching is far more important than the process

In teaching disciples instruction from Scripture is essential

Therefore, teaching of the kind Jesus has commanded will be expository in nature where the Bible is explained and applied to life

In his command, Jesus said, to teach them *“to observe all that I have commanded you”*

So we must look to God’s Word as we walk through life with a disciple pointing out how the Bible has the answers for the questions and difficulties of life

The world is filled with opinions, theories, and personal points of view and those we are discipling have plenty of their own of each of those things

What they need is the pure milk and meat of the Word of God and how it should apply to their everyday life

So what does all this mean to you as a Christ follower?

III. What this means to you

Author Thomas Carlyle is quoted as saying: *“Every man is my superior in that I may learn from him.”*

As Christ-followers we could likewise say: *“Every Christ-follower is my superior in that I may learn from them”*

It’s the essence of **Proverbs 27:17** which says: *“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another”*

And Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans [**Romans 15:14**] that he was confident of their knowledge and ability to instruct one another

Then in **Colossians 3:16** we see the command:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, **teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom**, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

So the first thing this means is:

As a Christ-follower, you must be teaching others

With apologies to William Shakespeare, the question before us is *“to teach or not to teach”*

Is it the responsibility of every Christ follower to teach the truths of the Bible to others?

It would seem that the wording of the Great Commission as we have examined it and the verses we have just considered point toward the conclusion that it’s the responsibility of every Christ-follower to teach others

But then we come to passages like **Ephesians 4:11** that speaks of the Lord giving the church shepherds and teachers or what we would consider to be the office of pastor/teacher

And there is no doubt that teaching is one of the spiritual gifts given to some but not others as we see in **Romans 12:6-8**, **1Corinthians 12:4-11**, and **1Corinthians 12:28**

And in **James 3:1** we see the warning that not many should become teachers because of the increased strictness with which teachers will be judged

Those passages seem to indicate that teaching is a more specialized activity

But let's look at some additional passages from Scripture to check that conclusion

1Peter 3:15 we see the command for all Christ-followers to: *"always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"*

Then in **Deuteronomy 6:6-7** we see the command for parents to teach their children in the context of daily life and **Ephesians 6:4** commands fathers to bring their children up in the instruction of the Lord

Older women are to teach younger women as we see in **Titus 2:3-5**

Those passages all seem to support the idea that everyone is to be a teacher at some level

Beginning with the spiritual gifts, while some are indeed specially gifted with the ability to communicate biblical truth to others there is no indication that those without the gift are excused from teaching

Just like when we consider the spiritual gift of evangelism we acknowledge that the fact that some are specifically gifted doesn't excuse the rest from sharing the gospel

Likewise just because there are those teach in a formal setting or those that teach vocationally that doesn't excuse all other forms of teaching

We actually have the example of lay-people teaching a gifted teacher

In **Acts 18:24-26** we read about Priscilla and Aquila, a godly couple from Ephesus, who taught Apollos who was said to be competent in the Scriptures and knowledgeable of the way of the Lord but was lacking in some areas

Now, let's look at the warning in James 3

We need to understand this warning within the context it was given

James is partly warning against anyone to desiring to be seen as a teacher of God's Word for the prestige that such a title brings with it

After all, to be considered a Rabbi was a really big deal in those days and Jesus spoke to the tendency to wrongly desire the accolades that came with being a teacher in **Matthew 23:5-12**

He criticized the scribes and Pharisees for wanting their deeds to be seen by others and loving the places of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue and for people to greet them in the marketplace and being called rabbi by others

James saw the reality of that temptation and warned that it was unwise to take on the role of being a formal teacher for the wrong reasons

But he also was warning everyone to be sure of what they were teaching

A teacher must be very careful to teach the truth from God's Word rather than their own thoughts and opinions

Hebrews 5:11-14 speaks to this issue - let's look at what it says:

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Notice first the implication in verse 12 that the recipients of the letter should all be teachers - that's very important to our discussion

Then the author of Hebrews goes on to talk about the limiting factor of the ability to teach being their own lack of maturity

That tells us that what we teach is governed by what we know and an immature believer will be more limited in what he can rightly teach

But that doesn't excuse anyone from teaching what they do know no matter how limited it might be - remember the implication that all should be teaching - and that everyone should be working to know more so that they can teach more

And that brings us to the second thing our passage means to us:

As a Christ-follower, you must be a learner

When I was a toolmaker experience was grounds for bragging among the toolmakers and the guys wanted to tout their years of experience when engaged in any dispute

I remember one discussion when one of the toolmakers brought forth his 12 years of experience only to be told by another that he didn't have 12 years of experience he had one year of experience 12 times over

In other words, he was still a first-year apprentice in his knowledge and abilities regardless of his 12 years in the trade

Likewise, it's possible to be a Christian for many years without maturing in the faith and length of time as a Christian is no guarantee of spiritual maturity - we see that in the passage from Hebrews 5 we just looked at

There are plenty of gray-haired novices in our churches and often, spinning one's wheels for a long time in one place can lead to being in a rut

The truth is that God designed his church to be a community of lifelong learners

We see this in our passage from **Ephesians 4:11-13**

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, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

Notice that the purpose of teaching is "building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the fullness of Christ"

I doubt that any of us would claim to have experienced the Son to an ultimate degree or that we have reached full spiritual maturity according to the standard that Jesus himself provides

We may well be more mature today than we were at this time last year, but until we can say we have arrived, we still have learning to do

Looking back to our Scripture reading from Romans 12, we see the command in verse 2 [**Romans 12:2**] that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and that renewal comes through learning

Remember, at the most basic level; a disciple is a learner and discipleship means a lifetime of learning

And in **Matthew 11:29**, Jesus commands his followers to "*take my yoke upon you and learn from me...*"

And Jesus himself was a lifelong learner; as we read in **Luke 2:46** that he was sitting among the teachers in the temple "*listening to them and asking questions.*"

Then in **Hebrews 5:8**, we see that when Jesus hung on the cross, "*he learned obedience through what he suffered*"

As followers of Jesus Christ, we must make every effort to be learning as long as we live and then living according to what we have learned in complete obedience to all that the Lord has commanded

Closing

The Great Commission tells us to go and “make disciples” to make learners who, once they have learned, become adherents to what they have learned and are teaching what they have learned

Being a disciple of Christ means equipping converts with the Word of God through Spirit-empowered relationships of learning and obedience to reproduce faithful followers of Jesus Christ

The teaching and learning are for the purpose of continuing the obedience that began with baptism

Equipping is the work of a disciple and, to that end, disciples are lifelong learners and teachers of others

You will know you are a disciple when you are living in obedience to all that the Lord has commanded, busy working toward your own spiritual maturity, and making disciples

Let's pray

Romans 12:1-8 (page 947)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.