

Matthew 28.16-20 | Greater Command/Mission/Purpose

### What were Jesus last words? | TEACH

According to the book of Acts, after Jesus appeared to His disciples, he spent 40 days with them speaking about the kingdom of God. Essentially, Jesus opened their minds and taught them how all of the Scriptures pointed to His death and resurrection. It was on the Mount of Olives, the same place that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, that Jesus **spoke his final instructions** before ascending to heaven.

As I have said before, **Matthew wrote primarily defend**. He wanted to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. He wrote as a Jew to reach Jews by arguing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish King Israel expected. **Matthew also wrote as a Christian to teach Christians**. Matthew's gospel is not only an account of everything Jesus did to fulfill prophecy—it is the most complete record of **everything Jesus said**. The book of Matthew is unique, in that, it is the most comprehensive record of Jesus direct teaching. He was responsible for producing the first collection of the teachings of Jesus—often called the “book of sayings”. More than any other gospel, 60% of this book is Jesus direct teaching including his longest sermon. This is why the book of Matthew served as the first theological textbook for the church, to instruct the people of God concerning the work and words Jesus. At to conclude His gospel, **Matthew reveals himself to be a teacher, teaching us that Jesus is a teacher, who wants us all to be teachers.**

Matthew's final words in his gospel are, presumably, Jesus final words on earth. And Jesus last words are his most important. Known as the “Great Commission”, this final command helps us understand why the disciples lived the radical lives and died the fantastic deaths that they did. **The Great Commission was not just for Jesus 11ish group of disciples. The Great Commission was for all who would become disciples of Jesus Christ.** And it is my conviction that, even though it is one of the most talked about commands of Jesus corporately, it is the most disobeyed command personally.

Jesus last are his hardest words, forcing all of us to examine ourselves and ask: **What does it mean to be obedient to this command, and at what point does my disobedience evidence unbelief?**

### WHO does Jesus give the command given to? | 11ish DISCIPLES

**If you haven't noticed, salvation does not result in instantaneous glorification.** Apparently, Jesus leaves us here because we have something to do for Him. **If you asked the average Christian to identify the primary purpose of their lives, few would speak about this command** (Perhaps a better question in their life is to ask a Christian to identify their priorities, or better yet, God's priorities for their life). There are many good things, even biblical things that God has commanded us to pursue. We have more to do than just live to build a happy family, raise well-adjusted children, achieve successful careers, establish nice homes, and secure a prosperous retirement. Our lives include many responsibilities but few of them are commanded as directly as this one. Many Christians are simply **wasting their lives** through the neglect of Jesus' final command.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples a job to do. **His instruction here is not a suggestion about what we ought to do, nor is it some activity we should randomly participate in, rather, it is an attitude that Jesus expects will characterize and direct our lives.** All Disciples are commanded to be involved in making disciples—a restoration of God's original mission given in the Garden of Eden to be fruitful and multiply. This is not merely physical, but spiritual. The end of the gospel connects with the beginning of the Bible in that **the gospel produces reproducing people.**

This is not merely a command for pastors and professional Christians, but for all who call upon the name of the Lord. 40 days ago, every one of these disciples abandoned Jesus. They are an incomplete group of 11-ish friends, who were once fisherman, tax collectors, and laborers. **In other word, Jesus did not give His command to the Gospel Green Berets.** He spoke to a group of imperfect men who, even when in the

presence of resurrected Jesus, some doubted. **And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.** Even though they doubted, they believed enough to GO TO THE MOUNTAIN WHERE JESUS HAD DIRECTED THEM. The men and women that God sends on mission are not the capable or even the fully convinced 100% of the time; they were simply obedient.

### **Where do we begin to obey this command? | AUTHORITY**

**But what helped these men overcome their doubts to the point of martyrdom?** Even if they were unsure if the future mission would be successful or “worth it”, they were convinced of Jesus authority. This is where Jesus begins. **Our obedience to this command is not founded on our ability, but on Jesus authority. Jesus birth, life, death, and resurrection demonstrated His authority over everything.** Jesus has authority over nature. Jesus has authority over nations. Jesus has authority over demons. Jesus had authority over disease. Jesus has authority over work. Jesus has authority over sin. Jesus has authority over Jesus had authority over sin. Jesus has authority over death. The disciples were convinced that Jesus had authority over every life in the world including my life. Paul writes in His letter to the Ephesians that God revealed his great power in Christ: **when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1.20-23**

**The problem with our obedience to this command is not understanding; it is belief in the authority of Christ in TWO WAYS.** First, I must believe Jesus is authoritative over my life. Jesus is the authority in our lives means that Jesus is supremely central to our lives. That means Jesus is how I find my personal value, Jesus is how I face trial, Jesus is how I make decisions, Jesus is how I set my priorities. When Jesus is not authoritative in our lives, we dismiss what He commands as optional and unhelpful.

Second, I must believe Jesus is authoritative over the world. **Sometimes, we never see Jesus authority extending beyond our lives to the lives of others; we hide away from the world as if some other names given through which men may be saved. There is only one.** John 4 records that after meeting Jesus at a well, a Samaritan women at the well ran into town told them about Jesus. She said, you must go see Him. They did. And: **<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”**

When Jesus is not authoritative, then you do not believe He is the power to save, that it can be thwarted by some other authority or our lack of ability. Fulfillment of Jesus mission is not based on our ability, but on his authority. We have no power or authority, but trust the one who does. When we believe that, not only **will obey Jesus commands without delay, excuse, or complaint**, rather, a deep belief in the Jesus’ authority will also fill us with confidence to believe that He will accomplish his mission through my faithfulness regardless of my fruitfulness and even through my failure.

### **WHAT exactly is Jesus commanding us to do? | MAKE DISCIPLES**

**The question remains, what exactly is Jesus commanding us to do?** We tend to overcomplicate very simple commands. One thing we know, Christians are not called to get fed and spiritually sedentary. **We are a people on the move, a sent people that is active in the world by Jesus, with Jesus, and for Jesus.** Obedience is never accidental. Jesus commands his disciples to go on mission with intentionally.

The disciples are called to do this to ALL NATIONS, or all families and people groups of the world. Many disciples would die taking this command literally—Matthew was arrested for teaching in Ethiopia only to be nailed to the ground with short spears and beheaded. The gospel spread to the world through the faithfulness of men. **Not everyone is going to go on mission to a foreign country, though some will and should (6,000 people groups need to hear the gospel). But MOST of us stop at our own doorsteps and confuse discipleship with the shepherding of our children or grandchildren.** Our families are certain our FIRST places to disciple, but they are not the ONLY.

The disciples are given a VISION for the world beyond the comfort of their own families, neighborhoods, and lives. It is a command to see beyond what is right in front of you assuming you are shepherding rightly what is in front of you. The mission is clear: We are to disciple, baptize, and teach. As one commentator noted, these are all “SLOW” words, describing things that take time and require long-term investment.

### Disciple

Discipleship is much more than sitting in a class studying. Biblical study can happen in 7 weeks, but discipleship takes much longer. Discipleship is walking, mentoring, or educating someone else in an effort to connecting them to Jesus Christ. If Jesus is our example, then we see it is a personal investment over a long period of time in specific people for the purpose of helping people learn what it means to follow Jesus. This is not always a convenient or systematic process. It is often a costly and messy endeavor. But this is how Jesus has chosen to build His Kingdom—every disciple is called to be a disciple-maker.

We fulfill God’s greater purpose for our lives by spending time with people in personal ministry. As we spend time with them, we speak the gospel to their ears and live the gospel before their eyes so they can see what it means to live as a man or woman of “THE WAY”. This is not merely the job of pastors or “professional Christians”, but all who would call upon the name of the Lord. Personal discipleship should be a planned part of every Christian’s life rhythms and given as much time and energy as our recreation, our vacations, or projects. **If you are not ready to disciple, then you should be disciplined until you are.**

### Baptize

The command also includes baptism. Baptism is much more than getting wet for Jesus. Baptism is not only the identification with Christ, it is the initiation into God’s people. When the gospel is proclaimed, Jesus awakens and saves people. And he commands those who confess to be baptized and, through that, to identify as a follower of Jesus but also a brother and sister in Christ. The New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized Christians. It’s not that one has to be baptized to become a Christian, but that your public declaration of faith in Christ necessarily involves baptism. **And baptism involves accountability to family and responsibility to our shared mission. We want to grow old on mission together.**

The book of Acts reveals how the disciples understood the Great Commission was fulfilled. The heart of Peter’s first sermon in Acts 2 was a call to repent and be baptized. From there those who came to believe which was anyone beyond the 120 people that had gathered, enjoy community gather. **Acts 2.41-47** <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. **BAPTISM leads to community.**

## Teach

As a community, initiated by baptism, disciples begin to love one another. But that is not all they do, in addition to fellowship they commit themselves to learning? Why? Because this is what Jesus commanded in his final command. The second part of the Great Commission is the most often ignored. As I said this is the “Book of Sayings.” As such, **Matthew reveals himself to be a teacher, teaching us that Jesus is a teacher, who wants us all to be teachers.** If we are truly His disciples committed to making disciples, we will ALL teach others to observe ALL that Jesus commanded—including the Great Commission. Jesus does not say WHAT HE WILL COMMAND but what he has “COMMANDED”. In other words, he points them backwards to what he has already taught.

Do you know ALL that Jesus taught? What does he even mean? Perhaps he means all that he taught over the last 40 days, or perhaps he wants his disciples to go further back. We must not forget, that Jesus is teaching on the same mountain of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus longest recorded teaching in the largest book of teaching begins with eight different statements of blessing called Beatitudes. **The Beatitudes (happy) intended as a prescription of what someone must do to be a Christian; rather, it is a description of what God’s grace produces in a Christian.** Jesus changes us. His Spirit births in us new desires with new attitudes, actions, and even perceptions. Essentially, Jesus explains that the Christian lives like this because **the Christian has a right view of himself.** This comes from belief in the gospel—Jesus in my place in life and death. A right view of WHO WE ARE in Christ, leads to a right view of WHO WE ARE in the world. Jesus says that **we are different, with a different identity, loyalty, and eternal trajectory. We are loved. We are blessed. We are protected. We are secure. Therefore, we are not anxious, hypocritical, or self-righteous.** There is perhaps no better thing we could spend our time teaching one another the Sermon on the Mount—it teaches how Christians are MEANT to live.

## CONCLUSION | HOW does Jesus expect us to fulfill the command?

In conclusion, just before Jesus ascends, he reveals the most important part of His command—how to fulfill it. I don’t mean what strategy or program, but what power makes it possible. The mission of God is only successful if we are dependent upon Jesus’s presence with us. Jesus says, **“And Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”.** When Jesus says “Behold”, it is like saying, “LOOK”—**this is the reason I can command you to do something that you feel completely unqualified and unable to do.**

Consider all of the excuses that we can have for not taking this command literally and not obeying it completely. If you are saying I don’t have capacity, I don’t have ability, I don’t have opportunity, you are thinking wrongly. This is not about what you think you need or who think you are; this is about what God says you have, and who God says you are. Depend on Him. Depend on Jesus for desire. Depend on Jesus for margin. Depend on Jesus for courage. Depend on Jesus for opportunity. Depend on Jesus for wisdom. **Jesus never commands anything that He doesn’t promise to fulfill in you.**

At the beginning of Acts chapter 1, there were 120 disciples in Jerusalem. By the end of Acts 2, there were over 3,000 disciples from all over the world, by the end of Acts 28, there were thousands more. This all happened without radio, tv, or internet. It happened because disciples took the command seriously to introduce others to Jesus and teach them what He said. The story continues with us (960/10 years). What will the chapter of our generation, our church, and our personal life declare about Jesus?