

11/03/08

Reaching Out – The Great Commission

The Great Commission – perhaps it has become so familiar to you that you could quote (or at least paraphrase) those words: “Therefore, go and make disciples...” It is a commission given to the church as a whole working together to fulfill Jesus’ words. You have a place in fulfilling that commission to make disciples. You may not realize it, but your very presence in the church Family is in part to contribute toward reaching out to make disciples in your own way. As we enter this new series for the month of November, I pray that your role in the process of discipleship will become clearly evident, and that your zeal to reach out would find a place in your life. –Pastor Mike

Day 1: Reaching Out 1 – Witness and Testify

What are some truths you learned from last Sunday’s message? How can it make a difference this week?

Day 2: Fulfilling the Great Mission, Part I

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

According to this passage, the Great Commission involves “going”, “making”, “baptizing”, and “teaching”. But the main (and only) command in the original Greek is to “make disciples”. The thrust of the command is more literally, “Therefore, having gone, make disciples of all the nations...” The implication is that we must *go* before we can *make*.

This command was given to the followers of the early church to spread the gospel. And as they ventured out into the various regions of the Middle East and beyond, they were called to make disciples. Everywhere they went they were to make disciples. That same mandate applies to us today not only as a church, but as individuals doing our part.

To Consider

Where will you go today? Where will you go this week? Depending on where that is (e.g. work or church, etc.), making disciples will take on different forms. We will consider those forms in the days to come. For today, however, consider your “go to” places and what it might look like to “make disciples” there.

Day 3: Fulfilling the Great Commission, Part II

Continuing yesterday’s thoughts, if you did not do yesterday’s devotional, consider doing it now; otherwise, read Matthew 28:16-20.

Making disciples involves helping people become stronger followers of Christ. So often, the idea of making disciples is seen purely as evangelism. But according to the Great Commission, making disciples includes at least two elements: baptizing and teaching. Baptism is the initial identification with Christ and His victory over sin (death of sin) and the resurrection to new life. Teaching includes not just an understanding of Jesus’ teachings, but also obedience. Baptism occurs at the front end of our new life in Christ and teaching continues from there on out. Many people do not see themselves at the front end of

the process (i.e. evangelism), and most are not comfortable with that aspect of the Christian life. On the other hand, most people are involved in the teaching aspect of discipleship. That may sound unusual if we limit teaching to merely instruction. But teaching in Jesus' mind was more than instruction. He lived the message as well in order to give a living example of his words. Jesus wants followers who are committed not in thought only, but in deed. Jesus said a fully trained student will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). A disciple is a follower or learner who is devoted to personally reproducing the life of a mentor or teacher.¹ He wants us to reproduce ourselves in others with Christ as the model. That is a calling that each of us is involved in.

To Consider

What are you reproducing in others as a part of the Family of God? It is a dangerous thing to realize that both our weaknesses and strengths can be reproduced in others by merely getting involved in people's lives. What are you teaching others about Christ and helping others grow stronger in their relationship with Him?

Personal Thought

I think generally this is something most of you who are reading this from FBC understand these truths. In my early years of faith, I considered this passage to be about evangelism – delivering the gospel message to all the world. Certainly this is true. But later it became clear that making disciples was not only about *sending disciples*, but equipping them to be sent as well. I had come to understand that the Great Commission was not merely to “baptize”, but to “teach “. This changed the way I viewed my personal purpose in the kingdom. I realized that standing on the street corner preaching the gospel and handing out tracts was not necessary for me to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission. (Of course, there are some who do play that role.) There was great freedom in knowing the Great Commission is accomplished by a team of God's people called the local church in which I could be free to use my gifts as He intended.

Day 4: Here, There, and Everywhere

Read Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 2:14-15.

In Day 2 of this week's devotional, it was stated that the early disciples were commanded to make disciples everywhere they went. In today's Acts passage, we see the extent to which they would make disciples. Beginning in Jerusalem, discipleship would occur in their home town. Later, it would stretch into the surrounding cities of Judea. Later still, discipling would occur in areas that were beginning to get uncomfortable. The Samaritans were not well-liked. Tensions between the Jews and the Samaritans were high at the time. Making disciples in towns like this would certainly be a challenge for the early disciples from Jerusalem. And if that wasn't enough, they would venture into lands that were completely foreign to them. Clearly, Jesus wanted discipleship to be a worldwide affair.

Let me make an observation here. In today's passage, Jesus says that his disciples will be His witnesses essentially throughout the world. It is interesting that Jesus doesn't command them to go to these uttermost places. He says “*you will be my witnesses...*” Some commentators have noted that Jesus was telling them *what would happen*, not telling *what to do*. Taken this way, everywhere they went, a testimony of Christ would be left behind. And to that the question must be raised: What kind of testimony would they leave?

¹ David J. Garda, Sonlife Ministries

To Consider

We are all witnesses of Christ everywhere we go. Our challenge is to leave the fragrance of Christ, and be a positive witness for Him. Consider what fragrance you are imparting wherever you go – your work, home, when you go out to dinner, when you meet strangers, etc.

If Jerusalem represented your home, what kind of witness are you there? If Judea represented your place of work, what kind of witness are you there? What represents your Samaria and ends of earth in your life?

Day 5: Our Ministry

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

A ministry of reconciliation. Note how many times in the passage the word reconciliation or reconcile are used. It is the reason for Christ's ministry to us and the reason for our ministry to others. In these few short verses, look over the passage more closely:

Who we were/are:

What God did for us:

Our ministry/message:

As Christ's new ambassadors, our ministry here is to reconcile others to God on His behalf. That is a high calling, but a privilege considering what He did for us.

To Consider

God took the initiative to redeem us from sin. As His ambassadors, are there those in your "Jerusalem", "Judea", etc. that you could initiate an appeal for reconciliation to God? Pray for boldness and wisdom to carry out that task as the Spirit leads.

Day 6: Review

Look over your notes from the past week. What one or two things did God impress upon you this week?

Home Group Questions

Week of November 3, 2008

Reaching Out: The Great Commission

Perhaps it has become so familiar to you that you could quote (or at least paraphrase) those words: "Therefore, go and make disciples..." It is a commission given to the church as a whole working together to fulfill Jesus' words. You have a place in fulfilling that commission to make disciples. You may not realize it, but your very presence in the church Family is in part to contribute toward reaching out to make disciples in your own way. As we enter this new series for the month of November, I pray that your role in the process of discipleship will become clearly evident, and that your zeal to reach out would find its place in your life.

Opening: How have you seen God work this week?

1. Read Matthew 28:16-20.
2. According to this passage, the Great Commission involves "going", "making", "baptizing", and "teaching". But the main (and only) command in the original Greek is to "make disciples". The thrust of the command is more literally, "Therefore, having gone, make disciples of all the nations..." The implication is that we must *go* before we can *make*. Where are the "go to" places in your life? Depending on those places, helping make followers of Christ will look different. Discuss what discipleship looks like in various places of one another's lives (e.g. in the home, at work, at the gym, at church, etc.).
3. When it comes to making disciples, there are two aspects of discipleship: conversion and growth or evangelism and maturity. Evangelism is a process of interacting with an unbelieving world such that people are drawn to Christ and desire to place their faith in Him. Growth involves helping those people go beyond initial salvation and into a growing relationship with God (i.e. a growing love and dependence on Him). In the process of making disciples, where do you feel your strengths lie (evangelism>>>growing)? In what ways are you using those strengths currently?
4. Read 2 Cor. 2:14-15. What is God doing through us according to this passage? When you think of a fragrance or aroma, what positive things come to mind? What are ways the aroma of Christ is spread in people's lives? What do you observe about our aroma to those who are "being saved" and those who are "perishing"? What does this say about how the gospel is viewed by those who are in the process of being saved and those who are perishing?
5. Read 2 Cor. 5:16-21. How would you summarize this passage in your own words?
6. As ambassadors of Christ, are there those in your life that you could make an appeal for reconciliation to God? As you go into prayer, be sure to pray for courage and wisdom to be Christ's ambassador for those people.

In addition, consider the following questions:

- How have you struggled this week?
- How can the others in the group help you?