

## Making Christ's Last Command Our First Concern

The last command of our Lord Jesus Christ is known by many, but understood and obeyed by very few. Matthew records Christ's last command at the end of his Gospel when Jesus commissioned His disciples with these words: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:19-20). The Great Commission was a command for all disciples of Jesus Christ to become disciple-makers. Members of the early church produced many disciples by faithfully proclaiming the Lord's Gospel (Acts 14:21). Members of the twenty-first century church can make Christ's last command their first concern when they understand and apply four key characteristics of a true disciple that are given in Matthew 28:16-20.

### Devotion to Christ

At the end of His earthly ministry, Christ asked His disciples to meet Him on an appointed mountain near Galilee. When the disciples arrived there to be commissioned by the Son of God, the very first thing they did was worship Him (Mat. 28:17). This is the reverent attitude of every true disciple. When the Son of God is not truly worshipped He cannot be truly served. Our worship is most meaningful and our devotion is most reverent when we are continuously seeking ways to glorify our Savior. One of the most consistent ways we can do this is by making His glorious Gospel known throughout our circle of influence. As God's grace is spread to more and more people, it will cause thanksgiving "to abound to the glory of God." (2 Cor. 4:15). The great evangelist of the first century was so devoted to Christ that he could say with absolute sincerity "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). Since Christ has redeemed every Christian from the slave market of sin, they should be completely devoted to their merciful Redeemer. "You have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:20).

### Submission to Christ

The second characteristic of a true disciple is an attitude of unconditional submission to our Master. Before Jesus gave His last command, He established His divine right to give it: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28:18). Submission to the absolute sovereign authority of the King of kings is not a disciple's option, but a solemn obligation and a royal privilege.

### Obedience to Christ

A heartfelt desire to obey the One who gave His life as a substitute for sinners is another mark of a true disciple. Obedience to Christ will be motivated by our passionate love for Him. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The deeper our love is for the Savior, the greater will be our desire to please Him in obedience. Our "love of Christ controls us... they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). A disciple of Christ will follow Him in obedience while abiding in His word (John 8:31-32). The proof of a true disciple lies in what he does for his Lord and Master.

Obeying the Great Commission is very similar to obeying the command God gave to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). In a similar way, all Christians are called to be fruitful and multiply. Those who really understand the Gospel will sow the seeds of God's imperishable Word and bear fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Mat. 13:23). In doing so, disciples will reproduce new disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded. By God's grace, these new disciples will become obedient from the heart to the Lord's teaching (Rom. 6:17).

Christians must be warned that those who do not bear fruit are not true disciples of Christ. Jesus said, "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8). Our Lord, who is the True Vine, chose us for the purpose of bearing fruit (John 15:16). According to a parable Jesus gave, trees that do not bear fruit are useless and should be cut down (Luke 13:7). May this sober warning cause us all to make Christ's last command our first concern. Let us all live for what will last for all eternity rather than what is temporal and will be burnt up in the end.

### Presence of Christ

The Lord of the Harvest does not send us out alone to labor in the fields white for harvest. He promises to be with us always, even to the end of the age. Without Him we would be powerless to produce fruit on our own (John 15:4). However, the Lord Jesus offers His power to save souls through His continuing presence. He will always be with those who belong to Him, empowering them to be faithful to His last command.

### Practical Applications

There are many creative ways we can be faithful to the great commission. Just as the moon always reflects the brilliant light of the sun, every Christian should always reflect the glorious light of the Son. Since we know that people are born again by the imperishable seed, which is the living and abiding word of God, we must sow these seeds wherever we go (1 Pet. 1:23). As we sow seeds, we pray that they will find fertile soil, take root and begin to grow into new disciples for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Distribute Gospel tracts. This is an excellent way to sow the objective truth of God's word. Wherever we go, whether it be to a restaurant, grocery store, department store, post office, etc., we ask people if they believe in heaven and how they hope to get there. Four out of five people never mention the name of Jesus in their response. When they give the wrong answer, we simply ask, "If that were not true according to the Bible, would you want to know?" A great majority of the people say "yes" which gives us the opportunity to share the Gospel and/or give them several of our Gospel tracts.

We also give Gospel tracts to Catholics as they are leaving their churches or bookstores. Once, when a Catholic priest found out we were handing out Gospel tracts, he confronted us and asked, "How would you like it if we did this at your church?" I said, "Please do, we need the Gospel at our church as well." One time a Catholic nun looked at our flyer which contained only Scripture, then ripped it up. My wife said, "That was the Word of God." The nun replied, "We don't need that here." We have also found that placing tracts on car windshields at churches is another way to make the Gospel known to those who are lost in religion.

Invite people to watch a Gospel video. This is how this ministry began 17 years ago. Every Tuesday night, for 3 months, we invited Catholics to our home to watch the video Catholicism: Crisis of Faith. During that time 17 Catholics exchanged their religion for a relationship with Jesus as their all-sufficient Savior. I can honestly say that there is no greater joy than seeing those who were dead in their sins come alive in Christ Jesus!

Invite people to your church or Bible study. Be like the apostle Andrew who was always bringing people to meet Jesus (John 1:40-42). Don't be like the Christian who was invited by his friend to play golf every Sunday morning. After 6 weeks, the friend said, "I always invite you to play golf. Why don't you ever invite me to your church?"

Host an evangelistic dinner. Not too long ago we invited a couple for dinner with whom we had developed a growing friendship while playing tennis. After dinner we told them that we loved them so much that we could not let another day go by without sharing what we believe to be the greatest news you will ever hear about the greatest Man who ever lived, who offers the greatest gift you could ever receive. We told them that if our roles were reversed, we would want them to do the same for us. After going through the glorious Gospel of grace for about an hour, we told them we would never bring it up again unless they initiated it. As they left our home, they thanked us for caring so much about them. To this day they have not converted to Christ, but we do remain the closest of friends.

Go on short-term mission trips. These opportunities give Christians a concentrated period of time to focus on evangelism without any day-to-day distractions.

Engage solicitors with the Gospel. One of two things will happen and both of them are good. They will either be interested in learning how to be reconciled to God, or they will think you're weird and hang up on you. We have had a few solicitors accept our invitation to join us at church. Others have asked us to send them Gospel tracts to consider the promises of Christ.

Develop a life-style of evangelism. A disciple of Christ is one who disciplines himself in all areas of spiritual life, including evangelism. We can develop a zeal for evangelism by asking God to give us a growing compassion for the lost, coupled with an intense passion to do the Lord's work. When this happens we will want to know the spiritual condition of everyone we meet. I believe the primary reason why Christians do not faithfully share the Gospel is that they do not grasp the stark reality of hell. If we could catch a momentary glimpse of hell and see the terrifying pain and never-ending punishment that awaits those who die without Christ, we would do everything possible to lead them to the Savior.

Our great God and Savior will be most glorified when we understand all that He is, all that He has done and all that He is doing. May our love and devotion to Christ be manifested by bringing glory to His holy name through the proclamation of His awe-inspiring Gospel. The fruit of our labor will result in memorials to His grace throughout all eternity. The majesty of grace in salvation brings honor to the Father who initiates it, glory to the Son who accomplishes it and esteem to the Holy Spirit who effects it. Let us all magnify the Lord Jesus Christ by making His last command our very first concern!

