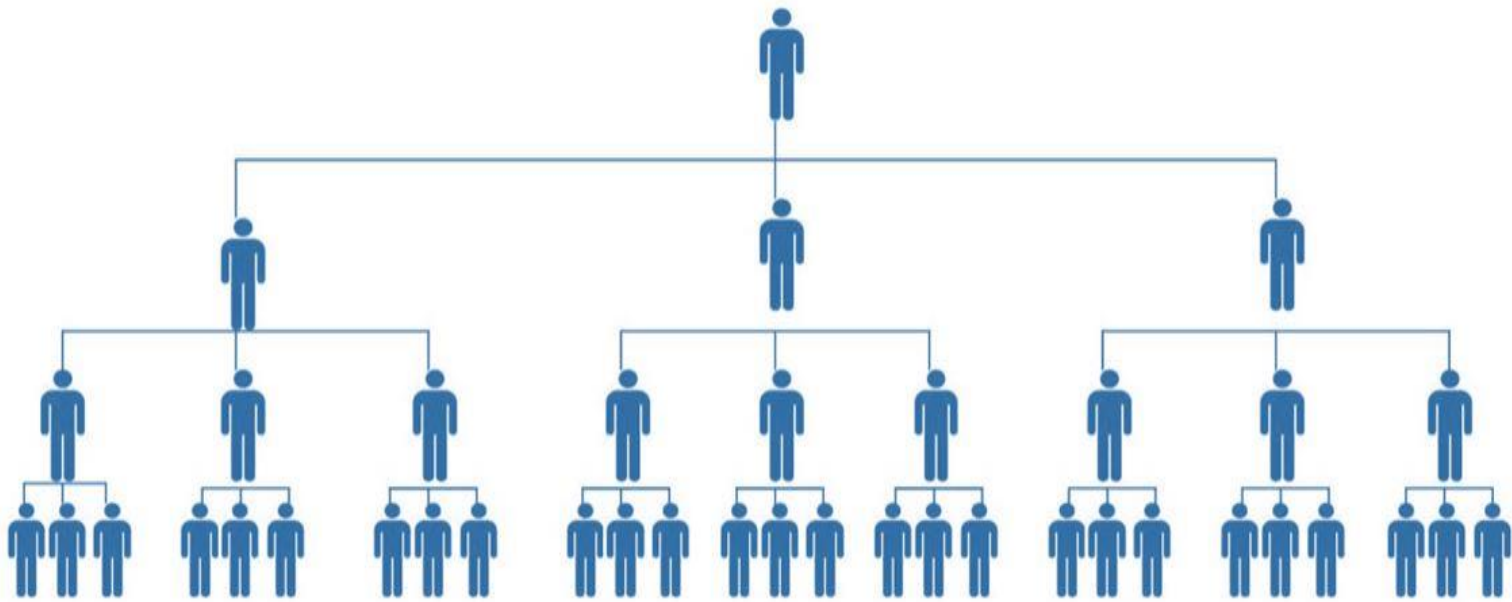


Go Make Disciples

Lesson 8: Into All The World



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

Go Make Disciples

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Learn how you can help the gospel be spread throughout this world and how to overcome discouragement in the work

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW242

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Go Make Disciples

Lesson 8: Into All The World

Mark's account of Jesus' "Great Commission" says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Through this series, we have been considering the work of disciples making disciples. We have considered the heart of a disciple-maker. We have considered some obstacles involved in this work and how we can overcome them. We have focused on the four steps involved in carrying out the work of making disciples. First, we must go. Second, we must preach. Third, we must baptize. And, fourth, we must continue teaching.

Now, I want all disciples to be encouraged to know that if Christ's disciples will go "into all the world" and accomplish the work He has given to us, that His plan does work! Isaiah 55:10-11 says, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

God's word will always accomplish His purpose when His people get the seed out of the barn and into the soil! Although this is certainly not a guarantee that anyone will obey the word of God, it is a guarantee that God will be pleased and His work will be accomplished. For, our responsibility is *not* to make anyone obey God's word – just to teach and warn them. We just plant and water the seed. God is the one who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)!

Still, the only way for this work to get accomplished in the way God desires is for God's people to take the gospel's message of salvation "into all the world"! Unfortunately, for whatever reasons, many of Christ's disciples have not committed themselves to this work. And, the more disciples who refuse to do this God-given work, the less God's word will be given the opportunity to have its intended effect. For, there is not a single disciple of Christ who is capable of carrying out the "Great Commission" by himself/herself.

Yet, whenever all disciples are committed to doing as much as they can to take the gospel of Christ "into all the world" (by each disciple taking it to his/her own "corner of the world" and wherever he/she has opportunity and ability to go), God will be pleased and the "Great Commission" will be accomplished in our generation! That is what the disciples of Christ in the first century *did*. Around 30 years after Jesus gave the "Great Commission," the apostle Paul wrote and said that the gospel "was preached to every creature under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). But, this was not accomplished just because of Paul's work. Instead, it was accomplished by every disciple of Christ doing whatever he/she could to do the work of disciple-making!

In this final lesson of our study, entitled, "Go Make Disciples," I simply want to offer some encouragement to do the work. I want disciples of Christ to recognize that they can do something to contribute to the work of taking God's saving message "into all the world." I want disciples to imagine what it would look like if disciples of Christ throughout this world were really dedicated to this work in their lives. I want disciples to be encouraged to overcome the discouragement they have experienced or will experience in the work. And, I want disciples of Christ to recognize how truly rewarding this work is!

You Can Be A Disciple-Maker

I hope that this point is redundant to you. For, I hope that you have already recognized that God has

given you the responsibility to work to make disciples and have now been equipped to better accomplish the work. However, I want to emphasize this point one more time in this study. You can (and you must) be involved in the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ. Although you may consider yourself to have many limitations, God knows your abilities and He wants to use your abilities to do this work. You just have to let Him!

God does not require you to do something you are unable to do

God does require His disciples to be disciple-makers. Remember 2 Timothy 2:24-26. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

Although the apostle Paul was writing to an evangelist named Timothy, his instructions in this passage clearly apply beyond just the work of a “full-time” evangelist who is financially supported to preach the gospel. Paul said that “a servant of the Lord” must be “able to teach” and work to correct those who are in opposition to God, helping them learn the truth and come to repentance. So, as a servant of the Lord, this is something God requires of you!

Also, consider 1 Peter 3:15-16. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”

The apostle Peter wrote this letter to common Christians – not just to elders, deacons, or evangelists (see 1 Peter 1:1-2). And, notice that all these Christians had the responsibility to set God apart in their hearts and “always be ready to give a defense” concerning the hope the gospel had produced in them! This is the work of disciple-making. Disciples telling other people why they have the hope of

eternal life in Heaven. Why they believe what they believe. Why they do what they do. Why they don’t do what they don’t do.

Now, since God clearly requires all of His disciples to do this work, we need to recognize that God is a fair God. He does not require people to do something they are not able to do. After demonstrating God’s fairness in judging in Romans 2:5-10, verse 11 says, “For there is no partiality with God.”

Think about the significance of this statement: There is no partiality (favoritism) with God. So, He doesn’t doom anyone to failure by stacking the deck against them. Yet, if people really could not teach others (as many disciples claim), that is exactly what God would be guilty of doing! For, those who know they should work to make disciples and do not do the work sin against God (according to James 4:17). And, the wages of sin is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). Therefore, these people would be doomed to an eternity in torment because they could not teach other people, when God requires them to do so!

But, this is not how God works. The fact that God requires all of His disciples to work to make disciples means that all His disciples are capable of doing something in this work! Therefore, every disciple can avoid sinning against God by failing to teach the gospel.

Lessons from the parable of the talents

Perhaps you are still thinking that there is not much you are capable of doing in this work. Perhaps you consider others to be much more capable of doing the work than you are. But, just because God requires every disciple of Christ to be committed to the work and do the very best they can do to make disciples for Christ does *not* mean that every disciple will be able to do as much as someone else! We learn this lesson from Jesus’ parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

In this parable, Jesus spoke about a man who traveled to a distant country. Before he left, he called his servants together and entrusted his possessions to their care. He knew each servant’s ability and entrusted them with an appropriate amount of talents

(weights of gold or silver). One servant was entrusted with five talents. One was entrusted with two. And, one was entrusted with one. And, when he returned, he settled accounts with them and evaluated what they had done with what they had been entrusted with – whether they had been good managers or bad managers of his possessions.

He was pleased with the servant who had been entrusted with five talents because he had put those five talents to work and gained five additional talents. He was also pleased with the servant who had been entrusted with two talents because he had put those two talents to work and gained an additional two talents. Both of these servants were rewarded for the diligent way they managed what was entrusted to them.

However, the servant who had been entrusted with one talent could only return the one talent to the master. Whenever he tried to explain himself to the master he said, “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours” (verses 24-25).

He didn’t lose anything. But, fear caused him not to gain anything either. He simply did nothing of value with what he was entrusted with. So, the master punished him, saying, “You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest...And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:26-27, 30).

Now, consider that every disciple of Christ is a steward (or, manager) of the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). So, let’s learn three powerful lessons from the parable of the talents to help you determine whether you are being a faithful steward of the gospel of Christ or not.

First, although every person is different, everyone can do something to make disciples for

Christ. Just as the master in the parable knew that all three of his servants were different and could not handle the same amount of responsibility, God knows how much every one of His disciples can do. He knows their abilities. He knows their limitations. He knows their opportunities. And, He knows their excuses! So, no matter who you are, you can do *something* in this work.

Second, God only holds you responsible for what you are able to do. The master in the parable did not condemn the one-talent man because he did not gain two talents or five talents (as the others had done). Instead, he was condemned because he did not do the best he could do with the one talent he was given. Likewise, God will only hold you responsible for what you are able to do with the opportunities you are given. If you do the very best you can with what you have been given, He will be pleased with you (just as the master was pleased with the five and two-talent men).

Third, God considers you wicked, lazy, and unprofitable if you do not do what you are capable of doing. Notice that the one-talent man did not lose the one talent he was entrusted with. He just did not do what he could have done with it. Likewise, if you do not make good use of what God gives you to work with on this earth in His service (i.e. your time, money, energy, health, resources, etc.), He will not be pleased with you. You will have wasted what He has entrusted to your care (no matter how much or how little it may be)!

And, as you consider what God has entrusted you with, you must think sensibly about yourself. For, it is common for folks to either think too highly of themselves or to think they are not capable of things they really are. In the work of making disciples, it is particularly common for folks to limit what they could do by saying, “I can’t.” “I’m not able.” “I don’t know enough.” “Someone else could do it better.” But, Romans 12:3 says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly [sensibly], as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Don’t sell God short on what you can do for Him – and don’t puff yourself up, either!

Examples of “common” first century disciple-makers

Whenever you think about disciple-makers in the first century, perhaps you think of men like Paul, Peter, John, and the other apostles. Perhaps you have considered these men to have been something special and that there is no way you could do what they did. Perhaps you think they were supremely skilled in the work and knowledgeable in a way you will never be able to match. Perhaps you think they were just so great at communicating God’s word that their success in evangelism was linked to these abilities in a way you could never achieve because you do not have the same abilities.

Now, there are plenty of misconceptions in the pedestal people often put the apostles on. But, the work of taking the gospel into all the world was not just done by the apostles in the first century and does not need apostles today (or else God would continue to provide apostles for us). And, the reality is that the apostles were men of varying backgrounds, education levels, and abilities – just like we all are. Yet, God could do great things through them because of their commitment to serving Him.

Still, even if you put the apostles on such a high pedestal regarding their abilities, there are plenty of examples of “common” first century disciple-makers. Aquila and Priscilla were a husband and wife duo who worked to further the gospel (see Acts 18:24-28 and Romans 16:3-5). Philip had four daughters who worked to teach God’s word (Acts 21:9). Lois and Eunice worked to make Timothy a disciple (2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy was a young man who had a Christian mother and (presumably) a non-Christian father (Acts 16:1-4), who did a lot to preach the gospel.

Again, the picture presented in the New Testament is that every disciple of Christ had the responsibility to do whatever he/she could do to make disciples for Jesus. For instance, whenever persecution hit the church in Acts 8, “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (verse 4). This was not the apostles, because verse 1 indicates they were not scattered. And, although this did include some evangelists (such as Philip), this involved many “ordinary” Christians! They took the

word of God with them wherever they went and the gospel of Christ was spread to people who had never heard it before as a result!

This is God’s plan. He never intended for there to be a tiered system in evangelism in which the elders and evangelists did all the teaching. Instead, listen to Ephesians 4:11-16. “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Did you catch that? The evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers are not to do all the work, though they are to do their part in it. Instead, their work includes “equipping...the saints for the work of ministry.” So, they must work to train the Christians to serve God in the way He desires – which includes going into all the world to make disciples for Jesus! Therefore, you must allow yourself to be trained so that you can be better equipped to do the work. And, it is to that end that I have organized this Bible study series.

The Pillar And Support Of The Truth

Have you ever just stopped to consider what it would look like if every disciple of Jesus Christ (including yourself) would be committed to the work of making disciples for Jesus? In 1 Timothy 3:15, the church (the collection of God’s people) is called “the pillar and ground [or, support] of the truth.”

Therefore, God's people are expected to be committed to holding up the gospel of Christ so that others can learn and obey its message. This is exactly what the church in Thessalonica was doing. In 1 Thessalonians 1:8, Paul commended them by saying, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything." Take a few moments to consider what it would look like if every disciple was committed to this work.

God's army fighting for His cause

The Bible pictures all people as fighting in a spiritual war. Therefore, those who are disciples of Christ are pictured as being part of Christ's army. And, like a physical army, God's army has a purpose in the war.

Part of this purpose is to convince those who have been deceived by Satan and are fighting in his army to switch sides. For, we know that God's army will be the victors in this war and Satan's army will be crushed. Therefore, those who are fighting in God's army should be committed to this work. 2 Timothy 2:3-4 says, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."

Just imagine if every soldier in Christ's army would not become distracted by the things of this world and would be focused on making disciples for Christ. Rather than just a few of Jesus' disciples trying to advance the cause of Christ throughout this world, there would be an entire army of disciples holding up God's word in this world. As a result, more souls could be won to Christ's cause and experience salvation through Him!

God's body standing for what is right

The Bible pictures the church as the body of Jesus Christ, with Christ as the Head (Colossians 1:18). And, like a physical body, there are many different parts to Christ's body, with many different functions. Listen to 1 Corinthians 12:15-19.

"If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?"

Just imagine if every member of Christ's body determined to do the very best he/she could in making disciples for Christ. Even if he/she could not do as much as another member, he/she would contribute whatever he/she could. Rather than handicapping the body by refusing to do the best he/she could do, he/she would help the body grow. And, the body of Christ would become stronger and stronger in standing for what is right rather than becoming weak and decrepit because of lazy members!

God's temple glorifying God

God's people are also called the temple of God because the Holy Spirit dwells in them through the word He has revealed. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 uses this language concerning the local church. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

And, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 uses this language concerning individual Christians. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Just imagine if every disciple of Jesus Christ took the responsibility of glorifying God as His temple seriously. His people would be focused on anything they could do that would make others aware of how great God is and the salvation He has provided! They would not cower and be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, they would commit their entire

lives to being a monument to God's greatness so that others would choose to glorify Him in their lives!

Putting it all together

Unfortunately, this is not how many disciples of Christ are committed to living. Many Christians have neglected this work. As a result, they hold God's army back from accomplishing as much as it could accomplish. They handicap the body of Christ. And, they work to destroy God's temple from within.

But, you can (and should) be part of the solution rather than the problem! Although you do not control how other people respond to their responsibilities, you can determine to do the very best you can do. For, if every disciple would simply make that one determination, the church of Christ could accomplish all that Christ desires it to accomplish in holding up His truth throughout this sin-filled world!

Dealing With Discouragement

In order to accomplish all that you possibly can in the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ, you will have to learn how to properly respond to discouragement. For, even when you are diligent in the work of making disciples, there will be plenty of discouragement. And, even if you start out on fire for serving Christ, Satan will put your fire out if you do not equip yourself to properly deal with discouragement in the work.

Recognize there are different types of soil

There is only so much the disciple-maker can control and he/she must be careful not to try to control anything else. For example, in Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8 (as we have discussed in previous lessons), the sower had one job – and one job only. He sowed the seed (verse 5). He sowed the seed across all the different types of soil and did not alter the seed in any way.

That is your job and all that God will hold you responsible for. The sower could not do anything to

make the soil accept the seed or produce fruit. He could just scatter as much seed as possible!

But, you have to recognize that the seed will not always find "good ground" that will receive it and produce fruit in the Lord's service! Sometimes it will find hard-packed soil and people will not be interested or obedient to the word. Sometimes it will find rocky soil and it won't penetrate deep enough to take root and produce fruit. Sometimes it will find thorny soil and it will be choked out by all the worldly things around it so as not to produce any mature fruit. Yet, sometimes it will find good soil that will provide the word of God with the right nourishment it needs to produce fruit in the Lord's service!

Yes, as a disciple-maker, you always hope for the person you talk with to be good soil. But, you have no control over it. All you can do is to plant and water the seed any time you have the opportunity to do so and pray that it will take root in their hearts and produce spiritual fruit for Christ. But, you must go into your disciple-making efforts fully recognizing that not all seed you scatter will find such good ground and prepare yourself for the other possible outcomes. Yet, if you give up and become discouraged, you will never experience finding good soil!

Have the proper understanding of "success"

"Success" in disciple-making is all-too-often measured by the number of baptisms and restorations. Although both of these are opportunities to rejoice, the reality is that we should celebrate much more than this. True "success" for a disciple-maker is any time the word of God is planted or watered in someone's heart.

There are many New Testament examples to demonstrate this. For instance, would you consider Jesus to be a successful disciple-maker? Of course! We would call Him the Master disciple-maker. Yet, more people rejected Jesus than accepted Him – by far. And, the same is true for many other people who worked to make disciples for Jesus in the first century (including the apostles).

Although we would all love to see a 100% conversion rate in which everyone we talked to about the gospel of Christ would believe and obey it so as to become fruitful disciples of Christ, we must accept the reality that it will not happen! It didn't happen for the Master Teacher and it won't happen for us. Yet, we can be 100% successful by taking every opportunity we have to preach the word of God to those who need to hear it – and be patient, waiting for God to give the increase!

Listen to 2 Timothy 4:2-4. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

Learn to shake the dust from your feet

Jesus taught His apostles the need to shake the dust from their feet and move on whenever they encountered people who would not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:14 says, “And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.”

So, again, you must recognize that some simply will not accept the gospel's message – for whatever reason. But, as a disciple-maker, you have to recognize that your work is far too important to allow those who do not obey to discourage you so much that you give up doing the work for God. For, there are many other souls who need to be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ – and giving up will not help them hear and give them the chance to obey and be saved!

Although you must exercise patience in your teaching, you must not continue to put the focus of your efforts on one person who has plainly demonstrated that he/she has no interest in obeying the truth. Yes, you should take opportunities with that person when you get them (because that individual can change). However, there does reach a point when you need to move on from that person

and use your resources to help someone else learn the truth.

Although shaking the dust from your feet and moving on to someone else may cause you a great deal of pain (i.e. when it is a family member, close friend, or anyone you know is lost), you must not grow weary – even when you are encountering a lot of people who reject the truth. Galatians 6:9-10 simply says, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

The Most Rewarding Work Of All

As you consider everything we have been discussing in this lesson and in this series, I want you to recognize that disciple-making is the most rewarding work there is! So, if you are not giving your all in doing this work, you really are missing out on a lot! Consider three basic points.

The reward for helping others

The disciple-maker never saves anyone. It is always Jesus who saves. Still, the disciple-maker plays a small and important role in helping someone escape the fires of Hell and have everlasting life in Heaven. Won't it be wonderful to stand before Jesus Christ in Judgment, knowing that you have helped others be able to stand before Him and hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21)!

And, even while you live on this earth, isn't it wonderful to watch those you have helped to be disciples of Christ grow in the faith and help others be disciples! Of all the ways you could serve and help people during their lives, there is nothing so fulfilling, rewarding, and important as helping people live as disciples of Christ. For, in addition to the things you can see, this is one way for you to

continue to have an impact on people for the Lord long after you are dead (by the people you have taught continuing to teach others, who teach others, etc.)! No other legacy will last like this one!

The reward for being a good steward of the gospel

As we saw from 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, stewards of the gospel are required to be faithful. If you are not doing what you can in making disciples for Jesus Christ, you should learn from the parable of the talents and be warned against such laziness! Then, you should also learn that there is a great reward waiting for those who do everything they can in serving Christ (which includes helping others be disciples).

For instance, the apostle Paul knew that he had done what he could in serving Christ. So, as he was anticipating his death, he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). You can have this overwhelming peace of knowing there is a crown waiting for you if you will do your best in serving Christ now! There is no better prize waiting for anyone else than this one!

Spend and be spent in this work

If you recognize that the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ is the most rewarding work of all, then you should share in Paul’s sentiments expressed in 2 Corinthians 12:15. “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls...” Like Paul, you must determine to sacrifice yourself to help others be saved! This will necessarily involve sacrificing your time, your energy, your money, your resources, your hobbies, and your entire life to help others follow Christ. If you will do this, it will be a very rewarding investment!

Conclusion

How are you doing with your part of the “Great Commission”? Are you doing the best you can in helping people around you follow Jesus Christ? If not, you need to seriously consider James 4:17: “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” You must have enough faith and love to fully serve Jesus Christ by doing this work for Him. Fully commit yourself to the rewarding work of being a disciple-making-disciple today!

Study Questions

How can God’s word be taken into all the world today?

1. You Can Be A Disciple-Maker

Does God ever require you to do something you are unable to do? Why is that important in the work of making disciples?

What should you learn about making disciples from the parable of the talents?

List some examples of “common” first century disciple-makers. What should you learn from these and from Ephesians 4:11-16?

2. The Pillar And Support Of The Truth

How should you help God's army fight for His cause?

How should you help God's body stand for what is right?

How you should help God's temple glorify God?

What does all of this mean?

3. Dealing With Discouragement

Why is it important to recognize there are different types of soil?

What does it mean to be successful in making disciples for Jesus?

Why is it important to shake the dust from your feet?

4. The Most Rewarding Work Of All

What is the reward for helping others?

What is the reward for being a good steward of the gospel?

Why should you sacrifice yourself for this work?