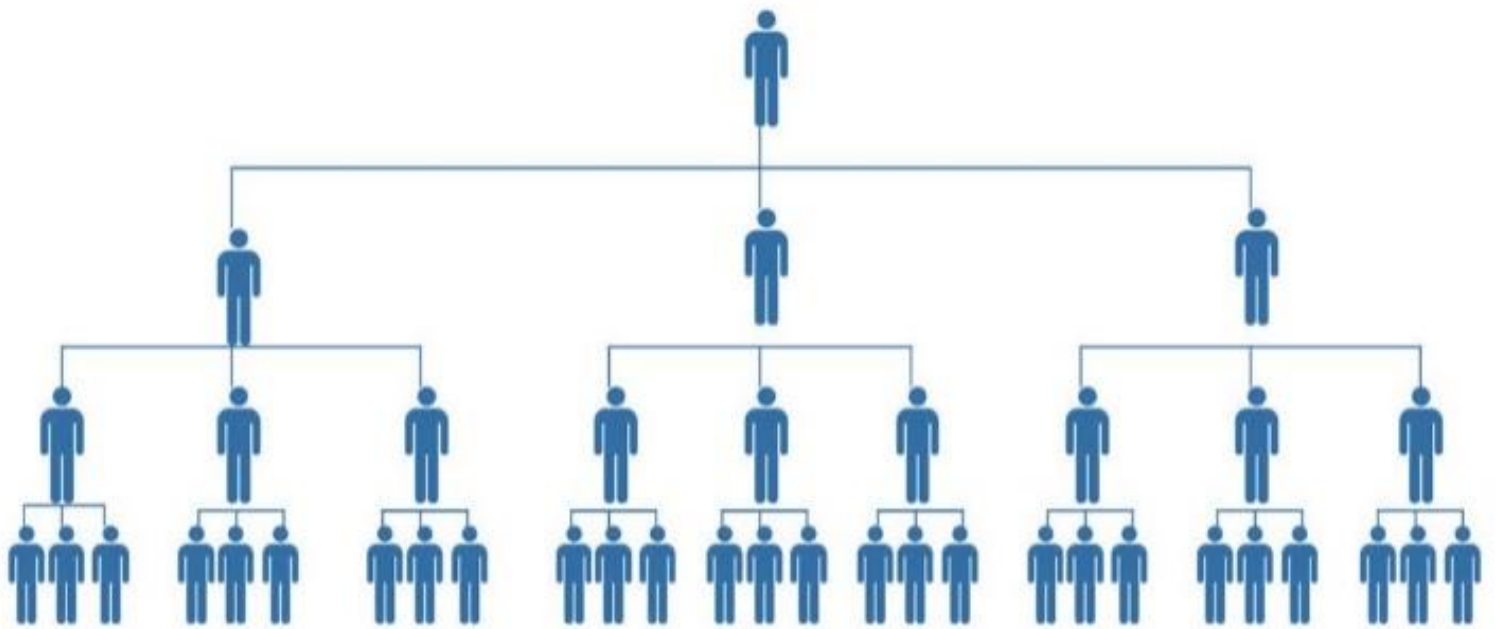


# Go Make Disciples



Discovering God's Word  
Bible Study Series

# Go Make Disciples

Learn about the work of making disciples

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

**Study Number:** DG243

Written by Eric Krieg

**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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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

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## Go Make Disciples

# Lesson 1: Disciple- Making Disciples

When Jesus was about to leave this earth and return to Heaven, He instructed His disciples to do the work of making disciples. Matthew 28:18-20 reads, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

The work of Jesus’ disciples making disciples of others was on the forefront of Jesus’ mind at this time. He was no longer going to be on this earth to continue the work Himself. It was now being entrusted to a handful of disciples to complete the greatest mission that had even been given to mankind. They were to carry the saving message of the gospel throughout the entire world so that others would become disciples of Jesus Christ and be saved from their sins.

So, these early disciples went about accomplishing this work. The result was two-fold. First, the saving message of the gospel was preached throughout the known world. About thirty years after Jesus’ commission, the apostle Paul wrote concerning the gospel and said that it “was preached to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23). Second, disciples of Jesus Christ multiplied. For instance, Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied

greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

This work of making disciples has been passed on to those who are Jesus’ disciples today. There is still a great need for every person on this earth to hear the saving message of the gospel and become disciples of Christ. So, those who claim to be Jesus’ disciples today must honestly consider if they are devoted to this work.

In this series of lessons, the goal is to help those who truly desire to be disciples of Christ learn about making disciples for Christ. This first study aims to introduce the concept of disciple-making disciples. In order to please Christ in your discipleship, you must recognize that the work of making disciples is involved. So, we will consider that disciples should work to make disciples. Then, we will consider that disciple-makers should be disciples. And, we will consider the need for spiritual mentors.

## Disciples Should Work To Make Disciples

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Disciples of Jesus Christ should be disciple-makers. To help us recognize this, understand that there are two things involved in being a disciple. First, a disciple is a pupil (student) who is committed to learning from a master. Second, a disciple imitates the master. So, those who are disciples of Christ must be diligent to learn from and imitate the Master (Jesus Christ). This will certainly have a tremendous impact on disciples working to make disciples for Jesus.

### ***Jesus worked to make disciples***

Let’s begin by learning from Jesus’ example. When He lived on this earth, He had a great mission to fulfill. Namely, He was committed to accomplishing His Father’s mission of providing Himself as the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world. Then, as He went through His earthly ministry, this work obviously included teaching and calling people to become His disciples so that they

would be saved. Luke 19:10 says, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus worked to make disciples of any who would listen to Him. Sometimes He taught great multitudes who had gathered. Sometimes He taught one-on-one. Sometimes He taught a small group of people. Regardless of the circumstance, His interest was in helping others learn how to follow Him both by giving instruction and by providing the perfect example to follow.

Matthew 4:18-22 describes Jesus calling four fishermen to be His disciples. “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

Peter, Andrew, James, and John all responded to Jesus’ invitation to be His disciples by following Him. From this time, Jesus continued working with these four men to train them for the work of making disciples of others. Notice that Jesus was going to use the abilities of these men to be “fishers of men.” They were not highly skilled or educated individuals. But, Jesus was going to work with them closely so that they would be able to carry on His work without Him.

For instance, after Jesus ascended into Heaven and had commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples, Peter and John had the opportunity to preach in Acts chapters 3 and 4 (after healing a paralyzed man). When they were brought before the highest Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) the people on the court “saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

They could see that these men had no exceptional background that would qualify them to have such a great impact on people. But, they

realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus. This was all they needed. As Jesus worked to teach those who wanted to follow Him by example and instruction, He prepared them to carry on this work without Him! You can read through the gospel records (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) to see how Jesus worked diligently to make disciples out of these and others – especially noting the frequent mentions of Peter, James, and John.

### ***Jesus’ disciples are taught to make disciples***

It only stands to reason that a work that was so important to Jesus would be carried on after He ascended into Heaven. So, there are many references in the Scriptures that indicate the necessity of Jesus’ disciples working to make disciples for Jesus. You simply cannot separate being a disciple from the work of making disciples!

The earliest disciples of Jesus recognized that they were expected to be about the work of making disciples. Consider the “Great Commission” Jesus gave directly to His disciples (particularly to His apostles).

Matthew 28:18-20 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Mark 16:15-16 says, “And He said to them, ‘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.’”

Luke 24:46-49 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.’”

Acts 1:8 says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Clearly, they were to take the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ into all the world (beginning at Jerusalem). It was not enough just for Jesus to have a handful of disciples. For, if the gospel was not spread throughout the world and disciples did not multiply, then how would people learn of their opportunity to be saved from their sins through Jesus Christ. Christianity would just die out.

After Jesus ascended into Heaven and the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (in Acts 1 and 2), these first disciples began their work of making disciples. The apostles preached the gospel in Acts 2 and about 3,000 people were added to the number of disciples (verse 41). The number came to be about 5,000 in Acts 4:4. In Acts 5, “believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (verse 14). The “number of the disciples was multiplying” in Acts 6:1. And, as the word of God spread, the “number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:7). Then, whenever persecution forced the disciples to leave Jerusalem, “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” so that the word was taken into other parts of the earth (Acts 8:4). Acts 9:31 says, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” The word continued spreading and the number of disciples multiplied.

Jesus’ plan of His disciples working to make disciples, who would work to make disciples was working (as God’s plans always do)! The number of disciples was multiplying throughout the earth. But, it is important for disciples today to stop and recognize that this work was not reserved just for the apostles or highly-skilled workers in Christ’s kingdom. As we saw in Acts 8:4, all the disciples who were scattered were about the work of preaching the word wherever they went.

Consider a couple of passages that describe the work of making disciples. First, consider Romans

10:13-15. “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Today, there continues to be those who need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved (just as all those who are now disciples once needed to do). And, just like those who are disciples needed to have someone preach the gospel to them so that they could hear, believe, and obey its message, there are many people disciples of Christ come into contact with who need the same thing. Now, those who are disciples must recognize that it is *their* work to help other people be disciples of Jesus Christ!

Second, consider 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul told Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Later in the chapter, Paul wrote, “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” (verses 24-26).

Jesus has ascended into Heaven and committed the work of making disciples to His disciples. The early disciples who accomplished this work so well have died. Now, the work of making disciples belongs to those who are disciples today. Jesus still expects that those who have had the saving message of the gospel entrusted to them commit it to others who will also be able to teach others. Notice that a servant of the Lord “must” be “able to teach” and help correct those who are in opposition to God learn the truth so as to escape Satan’s traps!

Therefore, if you are a disciple of Christ, you are charged with the work of making disciples. Just like those who are real fishermen fish, real disciples work to make disciples of others! Just ask yourself:

“Am I really a true disciple of Jesus Christ, if I do not listen to Jesus’ teaching to make disciples or follow Jesus’ example of making disciples?” Surely, if those who claim to be disciples of Jesus are not committed to the work of making disciples they need to listen to Jesus’ question in Luke 6:46: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?”

### ***The goal is to make disciples***

Now, as you think about the work that you have been given to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ so as to make disciples for Jesus, you must recognize that the goal is to make disciples. This needs to be emphasized and really understood because, I think, there are many Christians who get the focus all wrong.

Some people are only focused on giving other people information. Some people are only focused on winning religious arguments. Some people are only focused on baptizing others. Some people are only focused on getting more people into a church building. Some people are only focused on building a following for themselves.

But, the goal of the “Great Commission” is to go and “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19). Now, it is certainly true that passing on information (specifically, the gospel of Jesus Christ) is essential to this task. This work necessarily includes baptizing people. And, this work will result in more people being part of local churches.

Yet, let me explain how the goals that I previously mentioned fall short of Christ’s true goal. Some of them are obvious. For instance, we must never be interested in building a following for ourselves or in numbers for the sake of numbers. But, what about the others?

The end goal is not just to give people information because it is possible to pass along information (even the saving message of the gospel) in a way that does not help people be disciples. It may be that the message is taught with such a lack of love and concern for the one being taught that the individual is driven away from Christ. Although it is true that you can only plant and water God’s word in the hearts of others and you cannot control the result

(see 1 Corinthians 3:6), you must teach it in the right kind of way.

The end goal also is not winning arguments. Similar to the last point, you may conduct yourself in such a way that you win the intellectual argument and lose the soul. Your interest must not be to prove that you know the truth, but to help others believe and obey it!

And, the end goal is not even baptizing people. While being baptized is a necessary part of becoming a disciple, there are those who teach and baptize people – and then leave them without helping them develop into growing disciples. For, those who accept the gospel initially and become disciples by being baptized must continue to learn from Jesus and become more like Him.

The true goal is to make disciples. And, to be a true disciple, Jesus said that He must come first. Luke 14:26 says, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27 says, “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:33 says, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

So, as you work to do what Jesus desires, you must focus on helping other people be true disciples of Christ. Everything you tell them must be focused on this goal. Your example must be focused on this goal. How you interact with them must be focused on this goal. For, unless someone becomes a true disciple of Christ by committing himself/herself fully to following the Lord in all things, he/she will not be saved (as Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21-23)!

## **Disciple-Makers Should Be Disciples**

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As you think about the work of making disciples, you should clearly understand that disciples-makers should be disciples themselves. Although this point should go without saying, it

needs to be emphasized because of the great danger that is posed by those who are not truly disciples. So, before you go about the work of making disciples, you should evaluate yourself.

### ***True disciples are salt and light***

Here is how Jesus refers to those who are His disciples: “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

As we have seen, true disciples are entirely committed to learning from and imitating Jesus Christ in their own lives. This kind of life will truly stand out from the world. They will be like salt that seasons a world full of bitterness and light in a world full of darkness!

But, true disciples don’t just stand out from the world. Instead, as we have seen, true disciples multiply! So, the salt tries to season the sinful world so that they will become acceptable to Christ. The light tries to shine on those in darkness so that they can come out of sin.

Jesus says that those who are disciples of His will be spreading their influence so that others may also come to glorify the Father in Heaven. Only true disciples will be able to accomplish this. Those who truly follow the Lord themselves will be able to teach other people what they need to know to follow Christ and show them what living for Christ looks like.

So, those who are lost in sin can recognize their need to come to the Lord for salvation in part through the godly example of disciples. Maybe they will want to know more about following Christ. Maybe they will begin imitating Christ by imitating the example of one of Christ’s disciples. Or, maybe it will just give you the right opportunity to talk with others about following Christ.

Think about it this way. If you wanted help losing weight, would you want to go to a “dietician”

who was overweight? If you wanted financial help, would you go to someone who is broke? If you wanted marital help, would you go to someone who has a terrible marriage? If not, why not?

In the same way, people who are interested in following Jesus Christ will not want to be taught to be disciples by someone who is not truly a disciple. So, in order for you to have the greatest opportunity to influence others to be disciples of Christ, you also must be a disciple. Therefore, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

### ***The dangers of fake disciples***

Just think of the dangers that are posed by those who are not true disciples as they work to make disciples. First, you may be thinking, “Why would someone who is not a true disciple try to make disciples?” There may be many answers. Some have selfish motives in seeking financial gain, a following for themselves, wanting to make themselves look good, etc. Some have deceived themselves into thinking that they are true disciples while they are actually living in sin (like Jesus described in Matthew 7:21-23). Some have been deceived by others into thinking that they are disciples of Jesus while they do not actually obey what Jesus instructs.

Regardless, consider what Jesus asked in Matthew 5:13 again. “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” So, if those who are supposed to be Jesus’ disciples do not actually follow Jesus, their influence does not actually accomplish the good in the world that Jesus intended.

For example, some who claim to be disciples of Jesus are hypocrites. They act the part of being a disciple on occasion, but do not always follow Him with love and sincerity. For instance, although they did not claim to be disciples of Christ, the Jewish leaders claimed to follow God and led people into error through their hypocrisy. Concerning them, Jesus said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in



# The Need For Spiritual Mentors

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Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:2-4).

We simply will not be successful in making disciples of Christ by only playing "Christian." If people see that you are not doing the things that you are telling them they should be doing, you will be like the salt that becomes worthless! Even more, not only will you hinder people from following Christ, but you may do great damage to the cause of Christ and those who are interested in following Him.

For example, one of the top reasons people give for not joining a church is because of the hypocrisy of the members. Why should people want to listen to you and allow you the opportunity to influence them if they see you living in sinful ways? And, why should they have any interest in listening to God if you are living for sin?

Then, those who are not true disciples of Christ can also harm people and the cause of Christ by making others who are just like them (rather than like Christ). For instance, hypocrites may make other hypocrites. Lukewarm followers of Christ who are not entirely devoted to Him may make other lukewarm followers of Christ. Those who have believed a false gospel may spread their false gospel even further.

I believe that Jesus recognized this whenever He addressed some lukewarm followers and said, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

I truly believe that it would be better for people to be all the way against Jesus than for people to be lukewarm. I believe that lukewarm and pretend disciples of Christ do more damage to the cause of Christ than those who are openly and aggressively working against Christ. A big part of this damage is caused by how they influence others to follow in the same wicked ways. Therefore, if you wish to be a disciple of Christ and make disciples, you must determine to be all the way for Christ!

Discipleship is similar to our idea of mentorship. People often talk about having "mentors" in their profession. This is someone who really helped them learn a certain trade and become proficient in it. And, whenever they run into difficulties, they ask their mentors for help. Yet, while the Bible does not use the word "mentor," the concept certainly is used. Jesus wants His disciples to help others become and live as disciples.

## ***Jesus wants His disciples to multiply***

I am afraid that many disciples of Christ today have missed the Biblical concept of making disciples of others. I am afraid that it is far too uncommon for new disciples to be added to the Lord. But, while the Bible does use the language of people being added to the church (such as in Acts 2:47), it also commonly uses the language of multiplication.

Think back over what we have already considered on this. Acts 6:1 says the "number of the disciples was multiplying." Acts 6:7 says that "the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." Acts 9:31 says that the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria "were multiplied." And, Acts 12:24 says that "the word of God grew and multiplied."

Now, why is it important to see that the number of disciples was *multiplying* rather than just disciples being *added*? Multiplication increases in multiples. So,  $6 + 6 = 12$ . But,  $6 \times 6 = 36$ , because it is  $6 + 6 + 6 + 6 + 6 + 6$ . It is exponential growth. And, Jesus recognized that this was the best way for His kingdom to grow. It's like compounding interest in a retirement fund. Rather than just getting back a return on the initial amount that is invested, compounding interest gives you a return on the initial principal plus the additional interest that has been gained.

Think about how 2 Timothy 2:2 explains this process in disciple-making. Once again, it says, "And the things that you have heard from me among

many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The apostle Paul taught Timothy. So, Paul helped Timothy live as a disciple. That kind of growth in the kingdom was good. But, that is not where it was to stop.

Now, Timothy was to go out and find other people he could help be disciples. Suppose he found ten during his lifetime (I have no way of knowing how many disciples Timothy helped to make). Then, suppose those ten would go out and each help ten other people be disciples. Now, you would have 100 disciples. Then, suppose those 100 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 1,000 disciples. Then, suppose those 1,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 10,000. Then, suppose those 10,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 100,000 disciples. Then, suppose those 100,000 would each go out and help ten people be disciples. Now, you would have 1 million disciples.

Now, this is purely an illustration. But, it does help you to appreciate the multiplication that happens whenever disciples make disciples who make disciples. From starting with a single disciple (the apostle Paul) working with a single person (Timothy) could result in this great growth in the number of disciples. And, the more disciples who make disciples, the greater growth the kingdom will experience (potentially). Of course, this is all dependent upon people believing and obeying the message of the gospel.

### ***Stages of spiritual maturity***

Whenever you first become a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are like a newborn baby (spiritually). You are immature and weak in the faith. You need someone to serve as a “mentor” for you so that you can increase in your knowledge and learn about what it means to live as a Christian. But, as you grow and mature in the faith, you should lean on your “mentor” (or “mentors”) less and less. And, you should start becoming a “mentor” of others. Perhaps you can only help one person at first. Then, maybe you can help a few. Then, perhaps you can help an even greater number of people.

Listen to Hebrews 5:12-14. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

God knows you are not spiritually “full-grown” the moment you become a disciple. He knows that you only have a basic understanding of His word (i.e. the milk of the word). But, He does expect you to begin a process of spiritual growth and maturity (see 2 Peter 3:18). You need to be weaned off the milk and progress to an increasingly deeper understanding of God’s word. As you do this, you will become more and more equipped to help other people follow Christ.

However, there is a problem whenever disciples do not make this progression. Sometimes they become disciples and never get off the milk of the word. So, they continue to act like spiritual babies and do not increase in their abilities to help other people be disciples. But, this ought not to be so!

Listen to the stages of growth that the apostle John seems to address in 1 John 2:12-14. “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.”

It may be that John has designated three stages of growth for disciples in this text: Little children, young men, and fathers. The first stage would be one of spiritual immaturity. The second would progress into greater spiritual knowledge and strength. The third would indicate a place of great spiritual maturity. And, each step along this spiritual path should result in a greater ability to “mentor”

others to be disciples of Jesus Christ – reaching the point you are a “father” to someone else in the faith (not in the sense of having a special title or authority over another, but only in the sense that Paul called Timothy, “a true son in the faith” in 1 Timothy 1:2). Thus, you should grow in your faith to the point that your faith can multiply!

### ***Disciples should mentor others into discipleship***

Look at the stages of the “Great Commission” as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20 again. Jesus said to go and make disciples of all the nations. This involved baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then continuing to teach them all things He commanded.

So, disciples of Christ must take a “big picture” approach in helping others be disciples. It is not a short process. Just as someone (or perhaps several people) have helped and continue to help you be a disciple of Christ, you should do your part in helping people be disciples of Christ throughout their lives. This means doing the initial teaching whenever it is needed, helping people be baptized when that is needed, and continuing to teach them whenever they have reached that point.

But, every step of the way, you are striving to help people to be disciples of Jesus Christ. You are both providing the necessary instruction and the proper example to help people follow Jesus Christ – just like Paul, who said, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

## **Conclusion**

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If you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you will be working to make disciples for Christ. You will be sincerely following Jesus Christ in your own life and you will be looking for opportunities to help others do the same. Now, recognizing this truth, the remainder of this study will try and help you learn and encourage you to accomplish this work.

## **Study Questions**

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What did Jesus command in the “Great Commission”?

### **1. Disciples Should Work To Make Disciples**

Explain how Jesus worked to make disciples.

How are Jesus’ disciples taught to make disciples?

What is the goal of teaching the gospel? How do some people get the focus wrong in this area?

### **2. Disciple-Makers Should Be Disciples**

How are true disciples like salt and light?

How are some “fake disciples”? What is the danger of fake disciples?

### 3. The Need For Spiritual Mentors

How does the Bible speak of disciples *multiplying*? Why is it important to see that the disciples *multiplied*? How does this principle apply to disciple-making today?

What are some stages of spiritual maturity? How will your spiritual growth impact your ability to make disciples for Jesus Christ?

How does the “Great Commission” help you recognize the need to be a spiritual “mentor” of others?

Go Make Disciples

## Lesson 2: The Heart Of A Disciple Maker

As we saw in lesson 1, the work of making disciples was very close to Jesus' heart. So, as He prepared to leave this earth, He was focused on passing this work on to those who were His disciples. Matthew 28:18-20 records, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."

Now, as you consider how you might accomplish this work of making disciples, you need to recognize that your heart matters. You see, Jesus has always condemned the practice of going through the motions on the outside, while you are not truly interested in serving Him on the inside. For instance, listen to what Jesus said about some Jewish scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 15:7-9.

"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Later, Jesus explained the connection between the heart and actions. He said, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man" (Matthew 15:18-20).

Now, let's pause to recognize that whenever the Bible uses the word "heart" it commonly refers to the functions of the mind – such as a person's thoughts, intents, feelings, etc. So, when Jesus said that all of these sinful things come from the heart, He is saying that they begin in the mind. The same thing can be seen in the book of Proverbs. For instance, Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life." And, Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. 'Eat and drink!' he says to you, But his heart is not with you."

The work of making disciples is no different. The heart matters! In fact, to be effective and pleasing to God in your work of making disciples for Christ, your heart must be according to the will of God. Therefore, let's consider what the heart of a true disciple maker will look like. Specifically, we will see how the heart of a disciple maker is full of faith in God, love for God, and love for others.

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### Faith In God

A disciple maker will not be very effective unless he/she has a heart that is full of faith in God. Listen to Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." So, you cannot please God without faith. Therefore, consider how your faith should be evident as a disciple maker.

#### ***Faith that God is trustworthy***

I am assuming that if you are interested in studying this material about making disciples that you are pretty solid in trusting that God exists. So, I am not going to spend time in this lesson on that point. But, being fully persuaded that God exists and that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God is crucial to being a disciple maker.

Yet, there are people who are persuaded that God exists and that Jesus is His Son who do not trust God in *everything* that He says. They have doubts that some portions of the Bible are true or that God really means what He says. And, even if they would

never admit to such, it is how they conduct themselves.

Now, recognize that you can trust everything God says. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then, 1 Corinthians 10:13 makes the same claim about God when it says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Appreciate what it means for God to be “faithful.” It means that He is completely trustworthy. You can put your entire confidence in Him and in what He says without ever worrying or questioning whether the thing will happen or be true. And, you can do this because God’s holiness means that God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). Hebrews 6:18 goes so far as to say that “it is impossible for God to lie.”

For instance, as it relates to the work of making disciples, you must be fully persuaded that God’s promises for everlasting life are sure. After all, if it was not possible for people to be saved from their sins, then there would be no need to make disciples for Jesus. Everyone would be hopelessly lost.

The apostle Paul explained that he was an apostle, a preacher, and teacher of the Gentiles because of the opportunity God has given for people to be saved (read 2 Timothy 1:8-11). Then, 2 Timothy 1:12 says, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” Because Paul was absolutely convinced that God was trustworthy in His promise to save, He was willing to commit Himself entirely to God’s service (even to the point he was willing to suffer greatly for the cause of Christ) as a disciple maker!

Certainly, if you are fully convinced in your heart that God will give some people everlasting life in Heaven, you will want to help as many people as you possibly can to go there. But, if you are not fully convinced of this truth, then you will be easily distracted from the work of making disciples. So, the

amount of trust you have in God concerning His promise of salvation matters to your work of making disciples!

But, it is not just the amount of trust you have in God for salvation that matters. The amount of trust you have in God’s promise to punish also matters. You must be fully persuaded that God really means what He says whenever He promises to take vengeance on those who do not know Him and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (such as in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Again, the apostle Paul is an excellent example of this. 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 says, “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

Certainly, if you are fully convinced in your heart that everyone you come into contact with will stand before Jesus Christ and be judged and recognize that there is a great punishment in Hell waiting for those who do not live in obedience to God’s word, you will want to help as many people as you can be disciples. But, if you are not fully convinced that God will punish those who do not obey Him, then you will be easily distracted from the work of making disciples. So, the amount of trust you have in God concerning His promise to punish matters to your work of making disciples!

True disciple makers will have hearts that are fully convinced of God’s promises. Whatever He says, they will believe. And, they will not just apply God’s promises to their lives; but also to the lives of the people who are around them!

### ***Faith in the power of the gospel***

True disciple makers must not just have hearts full of trust in what God’s word has promised, but they also must have full trust in their hearts that God’s word really will save those who obey it! If you doubt in the power of God’s word at all, you will not be diligent in preaching its message. But, if you

really do trust in its saving power, you will want to help everyone you meet learn and obey what it teaches!

After the apostle Paul declared that He was ready to preach the gospel to those who were in Rome (Romans 1:15), he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:16-17).

Paul was diligent in preaching the word of God every place he went because there was no doubt in his mind that God’s word saves people from their sins! He knew that God worked through His word to make people righteous – as they would put their full trust in what He says and live in obedience to Him! James 1:21 also says, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

You must be fully convinced that the word of God is like a seed (see Luke 8:5-8, 11-15). Whenever that seed finds the right soil (that is, a heart that is willing to believe and obey what it says), it is “able” to save! It is able to produce the kind of soul-saving faith God requires. It is able to cause a person to make all the changes God desires. It is able to produce the kind of spiritual fruit God demands. Therefore, it is the seed that is able to cause a rebirth to take place (see 1 Peter 1:22-25)!

Now, as someone who desires to accomplish the work of making disciples for Jesus, you must completely trust that God’s word really is this powerful! You must have a heart that fully trusts that God will use His word to accomplish His great purposes. So, 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.”

When your heart fully trusts in the power of God’s word, here is what you will do. 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 says, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”

When your heart is filled with trust in God’s word, you will plant and water the seed whenever you have opportunity to do so. Whether you see immediate results or not, you will trust in the power of God’s word to have its intended effect. After all, you will recognize that you are not the one who is capable of saving. Instead, it is God who gives the increase! But, if you do not have this trust in the power of God’s word, you will not be diligent planting and watering it.

## Love For God

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Not only must a disciple maker have a heart that is full of faith, but he/she must also have a heart that is full of love for God. Jesus said that the greatest commandment in the law is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). 1 John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Therefore, a heart that is truly filled with love for God will work to keep God’s commandment to be a disciple maker and will not allow this commandment to become a burdensome thing. Therefore, consider how your love for God should be evident as a disciple maker.

### ***Allow God’s love to control you***

A true disciple maker will recognize how much love God has shown toward him/her. In fact, a true disciple maker should recognize that God is the one who showed love *first*. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

So, a disciple maker should have a heart that is filled with the love that God has poured out for him/her. Romans 5:5 says, “Now hope does not

disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Through the word God’s Holy Spirit has revealed, you can learn about the love of God. And, this story of how God has loved you enough to send His only begotten Son to die for you so that you could not suffer punishment for your sins but have everlasting life in Heaven ought to fill your heart!

Surely, you should recognize that no one else has ever loved you in this great way. Therefore, as you think about this great love God has shown for you, you must allow it to take control of your life. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

The idea of the word translated “compels” is that the love of God should have complete control over your life. The picture is one of being shut up in a narrow, walled road. So, there is only one direction you can possibly walk. Therefore, as you consider the great love of the one who died for you so that you could have everlasting life in Heaven, you should only be able to live your life in one way – and that is for the one who gave Himself for you!

Now, if you have a heart that is so full of love for the one who has loved you to this great extent, you should be devoted to obeying His commandment to make disciples of others. Surely, this is a small thing to do for the one who has done so much for you! And, you will want other people to know about God’s love for them!

### ***Humble yourself in sacrificial service***

Part of your love for the Lord ought to result in humbling yourself before Him. You see, you cannot really show your love for the Lord while you are living a life that is focused on your own selfish desires. James 4:7 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Then, James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

So, as a disciple maker, you cannot truly have a heart that loves God if you have not humbled yourself in the sight of the Lord. If your heart is

focused on living for your own desires and if you will not give yourself entirely in God’s service, you will not be able to accomplish the work of making disciples very effectively. After all, you should recognize that you are nothing without God’s love, grace, and mercy.

Instead of being filled with pride and selfishness, you must have the heart of a servant and selflessness. This is exactly the kind of heart Jesus had. And, this is one of the characteristics that made Him so effective as a disciple maker. Listen to Philippians 2:5-11.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Recognize that God expects you to have this same kind of humble heart that Jesus had. Even though Jesus was God and lived in Heaven, He did not allow this to prevent Him from coming to earth and offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin. Instead, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. And, this was not just any kind of servant. Instead, He willingly took upon Himself the form of a servant who even offered His own life on the cross! Now, God has highly exalted Him because of His humble service.

Similarly, true disciples have made their lives entirely about serving God – even when it is very costly to them. For instance, Romans 12:1-2 describes this kind of commitment. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you



may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Those who have hearts that truly love God and selflessly serve Him will do everything they can to make disciples of others. They will not be focused on how proclaiming the gospel of Christ impacts them personally. Instead, even if it means that they will be persecuted for speaking the word of God, they will speak it – because their focus is on sacrificial service for God!

### ***Be devoted to the Father’s will***

In all things, the love that disciple makers should have will manifest itself in devotion to the will of God. For instance, think about what motivated Jesus to come to this earth and make disciples of others. One thing that was certain was His love for the Father and His devotion to accomplish the Father’s will.

You see, God has always had a plan to save people from their sins. This eternal purpose was accomplished through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:8-13). And, even though the work Jesus had been given to do was not going to be pleasant (physically), His devotion was to fulfilling the Father’s plan for saving mankind – a plan that hinged on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

So, while Jesus was living on this earth, He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). In John 6:38, He said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” And, Jesus knew that this plan of God involved great suffering for Him. For, He even told His disciples how He would go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and be raised on the third day (Matthew 16:21). Then, whenever Jesus knew the time of His death was drawing near, He prayed, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). So, even though Jesus did not want to experience such physical torture, He was willing to go through whatever was necessary to accomplish the Father’s will!

In the same way, true disciple makers must have hearts that are so fully devoted to the Father’s

will that they will do whatever is required of them to accomplish this work. Their hearts that are filled with the love for God must be so devoted to accomplishing this work that they are willing to use any and every opportunity to make disciples for Jesus. Therefore, they must not be focused on making excuses that would hinder them in accomplishing this work.

Think about it this way. Whenever there is an opportunity to do something that would work to make a disciple for Jesus Christ, are you willing to do whatever it takes (to the best of your ability)? Or, do you make excuses and think that someone else is better suited for the task?

You see, disciple makers must have the same kind of heart and devotion that Isaiah demonstrated. In Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” That is, who would God find to take His words to the people? Then, Isaiah proclaimed, “Here am I! Send me.”

Are you so committed to accomplishing the Father’s will that you say, “Here am I! Send me!”? Do you really want God to use your life to accomplish His will? Are you willing to spend and be spent for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ? True disciple makers have that kind of devotion in their hearts for God – like the apostle Paul, who told the Corinthians, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

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## **Love For Others**

The heart of a disciple maker should be filled with faith in God and love for God. But, there is something else that must fill this heart. That is love for others. Jesus said that the second greatest commandment is: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). In fact, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 even teaches that if you do all kinds of good things for the Lord (including giving yourself as a martyr for Jesus Christ) but do not have love, it does not profit you *anything*! Now, the greatest way a person can love another person is by helping him/her

be saved by becoming and living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, consider how your love for others should be evident as a disciple maker.

### ***Humbly give yourself in sacrificial service***

The kind of love Jesus demands from you in loving others as yourself is “agape” love. This is the highest form of love. Whenever the Scriptures use this Greek word for love, it denotes a sacrificial and self-giving kind of love. In fact, this is the word that is used to describe God’s sacrificial love for the world in sending Jesus Christ to die for sin (John 3:16). Therefore, this kind of love *always* acts in the best interest of others rather than ourselves.

Humble service is essential to this kind of love. For instance, just prior to teaching about the humble service of Christ (as we considered in Philippians 2:5-11), the apostle Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

So, your life must not be focused on selfish things. Instead, you should constantly be looking for an opportunity to show this kind of selfless and sacrificial love toward others. In fact, Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Although there are many ways that you may have the opportunity to help other people *physically* (i.e. feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, etc.), the greatest way that you can do good for another person is to help them spiritually.

You see, disciple makers must recognize the great danger that their neighbors are in. Let’s consider some spiritual applications from the parable of the good Samaritan (as seen in Luke 10:25-37). The context of the parable is in response to a man asking Jesus who his neighbor is (verse 29). So, Jesus told the man a story about a man who fell among thieves on his trip from Jerusalem to Jericho. This man was stripped of his clothing, wounded, and left half dead.

By chance, Jesus said that there was a priest who traveled down that road, saw the man, and passed him by on the other side. Then, a Levite traveled on the road, saw him, but just kept going. In contrast, Jesus said that a certain Samaritan came to the same place in the road, saw the man, and helped him. In fact, he sacrificed his time, his energy, his resources, and his money to help the wounded man. So, Jesus teaches that this Samaritan was neighbor to the wounded man.

This parable teaches us a couple of lessons relevant to the heart of a disciple maker. First, it teaches you that your neighbor is anyone you meet and have the opportunity to show love toward. So, your heart must recognize the need to show love toward all the people who are around you who you can help become disciples.

Second, I want you to consider how you can be like the priest and the Levite by not working to make disciples. Whenever you see someone who is lost in sin and you have the opportunity to do something that will help him/her be a disciple of Christ and be saved, and you do *nothing*, you pass that person by on the other side while he/she is dying spiritually! Instead, Jesus wants you to be like the Samaritan and love that person enough that you will make whatever sacrifice is necessary to help him/her be saved!

So, true disciple makers should have hearts that cannot pass their neighbors by on the other side. They must have hearts that do whatever they can to help people be disciples of Jesus Christ. They must put their focus on the needs of others rather than their own selves, doing whatever is in the best interest of the others! Sometimes this may mean sacrificing your money to help preach the gospel. Sometimes this may mean sacrificing your “free” time after a long day’s work to have a Bible study. Sometimes this may mean sacrificing your day off to spread the gospel.

### ***Be compassionate***

Disciple makers cannot effectively accomplish their work without having hearts of compassion. You see, a heart that truly loves others will care about the condition others are in and have a

great desire to help alleviate their needs. This can be seen in Jesus' heart and is part of what worked to make Jesus such an effective disciple maker.

Listen to Matthew 9:35-38. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"

Jesus saw beneath the surface of the multitudes. He saw deeper than their physical needs and recognized their spiritual need. He could see that they were lost spiritually and were like sheep without a shepherd. They were wearied and scattered. They had no good direction in their lives. And, they were in great spiritual danger. So, Jesus had compassion on them and wanted to do something to alleviate their need. Namely, He tried to teach as many as would listen to Him and provided Himself as a sacrifice to save them.

True disciple makers, like Jesus, see the spiritual needs of others and are moved with compassion to help them. They cannot sit idly by and do nothing to help lost sheep come to the Shepherd of their souls (Jesus Christ)! True disciple makers see the destitute spiritual conditions of others and do whatever they can to help lead them to Christ.

Consider 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 people who are lost in sin around you may look outwardly as if they are having a good time and enjoying life, you need to look deeper and see that they are like birds in a snare, with a fierce lion about to devour them! They are spiritually delusional and need someone to help them

learn the truth and come to their senses so they can escape the trap of the devil! But, will you love them enough and have enough compassion on them to help them?

True disciple makers have hearts that remember the "Golden Rule" and apply it spiritually. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." True disciple makers should remember what it was like to be lost spiritually and be enslaved to Satan. Surely, those who are disciples of Christ today are glad that someone helped them escape Satan's traps. Now, the "Golden Rule" demands that you do the same for others.

### ***Be gentle, kind, and patient***

A heart that truly loves others and wants to help them spiritually will also be a heart that is gentle, kind, and patient toward others. For instance, the apostle Paul said that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient..." (2 Timothy 2:24). So, while true disciple makers never compromise the truth of the gospel in order to make people feel good about themselves, they are very careful to consider others in how they teach.

Namely, disciple makers must have hearts that are focused on speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). True disciple makers must not have hearts that are focused on quarrelling with others and trying to win religious arguments. Instead, they must be focused on winning souls and always say and do whatever is most helpful in a given moment – in the way it needs to be said or done!

Listen to Galatians 6:1. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." This verse is specifically addressing the situation in which the one who needs to be a disciple is someone who had once been a disciple, but has fallen back into sin. But, notice that the disciple maker must "restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" and consider how he/she would want someone else to correct him/her if he/she was the one in sin.

Then, disciple makers must have such love in their hearts to help others be saved that they are patient. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” So, disciple makers must have hearts that love so much that they are willing to suffer long in order to win souls.

The fact of the matter is that making disciples is more of a process than a single event. Most times, people will not become disciples after one attempt has been made to lead them to Jesus. In fact, it may take many years for an individual to be led to Christ. And, although there is a time to shake the dust from your feet and move on whenever there is clearly no interest expressed by a person in following Christ (see Matthew 10:14-15), you never give up! Whenever there is opportunity to help lead him/her to Jesus Christ, you do whatever you can!

## Conclusion

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There is a lot going on in the heart of a true disciple maker. There is complete faith in God, in all His promises, and in His saving power of the gospel. There is a love for God that is completely selfless and sacrificial, that is devoted to accomplishing God’s will. And, there is a love for others that sacrificially serves the best interests of others in a humble and compassionate way that is also gentle, kind, and patient. Without these things in your heart, you will not be as effective as you should be as a disciple maker!

## Study Questions

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Why is the heart important in making disciples?  
What is the Bible “heart”?

### 1. Faith In God

How is faith in God’s trustworthiness important to the work of making disciples?

How is faith in the power of the gospel important to the work of making disciples?

### 2. Love For God

How is allowing God’s love to control you important to the work of making disciples?

How is humbling yourself in sacrificial service to God important to the work of making disciples?

How is being devoted to the Father’s will important to the work of making disciples?

### 3. Love For Others

How is humbly giving yourself in sacrificial service to others important to the work of making disciples?

How is being compassionate important to the work of making disciples?

How is being gentle, kind, and patient important to the work of making disciples?

Go Make Disciples

## Lesson 3:

# Overcoming Obstacles To Making Disciples

Jesus wants His followers to go about the work of making disciples for Him. Matthew 28:18-20 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Yet, despite the clear instructions given by the Lord, those who are Christians are often hindered from this work. Most of this hindrance (if not all of it) comes in the form of excuses. And, although excuses can feel like very real obstacles to the person making them, they are merely attempts to excuse oneself from a certain activity or to excuse past failures.

So, as you think about your God-given work of making disciples for Jesus, you need to begin by calling excuses what they are! And, you must determine that you will not allow yourself to fail in such an important work because of some excuse. You have to recognize that God is greater than any obstacle you face. You must remember Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

I think about Moses on this point. God wanted to use Moses to accomplish something great

(i.e. to lead His people out of Egyptian captivity and into the promised land). Yet, Moses had several excuses. First, He asked, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:11). Second, he said, “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you’” (Exodus 4:1). Third, he said, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Exodus 4:10). Fourth, he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send” (Exodus 4:13). Yet, I think we all recognize that God was able to use Moses and accomplish all that He desired to accomplish through Moses (despite any obstacles that stood in Moses’ way)!

Your work of making disciples is no different. Jesus knew what He was doing whenever He left this important work of making disciples to His disciples. He would not have entrusted such an important work to people who were not capable of accomplishing the work until the end of time! Therefore, you must have confidence that God can use you right now to do the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

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## Get Out Of The Boat!

One of the biggest obstacles people face whenever they consider the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ is their “comfort zones.” Your “comfort zone” is where you feel at ease, where there is minimal stress and discomfort. You’ve likely lived most of your life in this place and even the thought of doing something that is outside of this sphere of what is “normal” for you makes you anxious. Yet, it is outside of this box that is called your “comfort zone” that truly amazing and wonderful things can happen in your service to the Lord. Sadly, there is a high number of Christians who give little service to God because they stay inside this box of what they are comfortable with and very rarely (if ever) venture outside of it. This is certainly true whenever you consider the work of making disciples for Jesus

Christ. Everything about it requires you to get “out of the boat”!

### ***Peter walks on water***

Consider the Biblical account of Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14:22-33. “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’

“So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’”

There are many lessons we could learn from this text. But, I want you to think about the “comfort zone” Peter left. I want you to consider why he left his comfort zone, how he left it, and why his venture ended with failure. By considering these things, we can be greatly encouraged to step outside of our “comfort zones” as it relates to the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

### ***See the possibilities***

Here is the *why* of Peter’s decision to step outside of his “comfort zone.” Although there were troubling conditions for the disciples in the boat, the boat still represented Peter’s “comfort zone.” He

only knew life “in the boat.” Never before had Peter experienced life “outside the boat” (as it related to walking on water).

Yet, even though Peter could have decided to ride out this storm in the boat, he saw the possibility of walking on water. Whenever the disciples learned that the one walking on the water toward them was Jesus, Peter responded, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water” (Matthew 14:28). So, give Peter credit for seeing the possibilities of faith in Christ. None of the other disciples did this. Perhaps they were stuck in their “box” so that they could not even imagine the possibilities that existed outside of this “box.” But, Peter did.

So, if you want to step outside of your “comfort zone,” you must view the possibilities through faith in Jesus Christ. What if you had enough faith in Christ that you asked the people who are around you to study the Bible with you? What if you had enough faith in Christ to talk to others about the reasons for your faith? What if you had enough faith in Christ to make Him part of every conversation you have with others? What if you had enough faith in Christ to go up to a complete stranger and give that person something to help him/her learn the truth of the gospel?

Like Peter, you must have enough faith in the Lord to recognize that there is no failure as long as you do the things Christ wants you to do. So, despite how anyone responds to your faithful efforts, you will know that Jesus Christ is pleased because you are doing everything you can do to serve Him. Rather than limiting Christ’s influence in this world by your “comfort zone,” you are showing enough faith in Him that you imagine the possibilities of spreading His word – and allow God to give the increase!

### ***Take the first step***

Many things have been written about stepping outside of a person’s “comfort zone.” But, many people seem to get stuck at the edge of the boat. They want to step out, but it is uncomfortable. So, they either get back in the boat or live the rest of their lives on the edge of the boat – regretting and feeling guilty for failing to live up to their full potentials.

And, they try to find some “secret” to make stepping outside of their “comfort zones” less uncomfortable.

Yet, there is no secret. Put yourself in the boat with Peter. He had enough faith to see the possibilities. But, just *talking* about walking on the water is not the same as actually *walking* on the water! The “moment of truth” arrived when Jesus invited Peter to “Come.” Peter could have been like most people and gotten excited about the opportunity to walk on water, stood up, saw the stormy water, and allowed his fear to keep him inside the boat.

But, Matthew 14:29 says, “...And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.” There was no secret for making this first step on the water easier or more comfortable. He just had to have enough faith in Jesus to take the first step out of the boat. And, each step after that was just about putting one foot in front of the other – in faith that Jesus would make it work.

So, if you want to step outside of your “comfort zone,” you must take the first step. There is no secret. You just have to have enough faith in Jesus to do what He says. Although it will feel uncomfortable, you just have to put one foot in front of the other and trust that Jesus will make it work.

He wants you to work to make disciples for Him. Now, you must trust in His plan for you as a disciple-maker enough that you will do whatever you can to accomplish this work. You have to evaluate yourself currently and consider whether you just talk about making disciples – or whether you actually work to make disciples. And, if you have stayed inside your “comfort zone,” recognize that you are demonstrating a lack of faith!

### ***Keep your eyes on Jesus***

Finally, once you have stepped outside of your “comfort zone,” you must keep your eyes on Jesus. Now, I don’t know how far Peter walked on the water. It appears as though it was some distance. And, Peter eventually failed in his efforts to walk on the water. Yet, his failure was due to the fact that he took his eyes off Jesus.

Matthew 14:30-31 says that (while Peter was walking on the water) “when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid.” When he began to

sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” And, Jesus reached out His hand, caught hold of Peter, and asked him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Perhaps some are thinking, “That is why you should never get out of the boat in the first place.” Yet, this entirely misses the point. Don’t forget that *Peter was walking on water!* It was not Jesus who let Peter down, but Peter who failed because he got distracted by the storm that was going on around him. If he would have kept his eyes on Jesus, he never would have sunk!

And, so it is with you. Whenever you step outside of your “comfort zone” to do the work of making disciples for Jesus, don’t become distracted by the physical things around you (i.e. the threats, the discouragement, the mocking, the doubters, the trials and temptations of life, etc.). All of these things are working to make you sink. But, if you will keep your eyes focused on Jesus and doing what He wants you to do, you will accomplish His work and please Him!

Then, some people may be quick to criticize Peter’s lack of faith. “How could Peter be so faithless?” Yet, let us not fail to recognize that it was only Peter who got out of the boat. Yes, he should have had more faith than to become fearful of the storm and Jesus corrected him for doubting. But, he still showed more faith than all the others – and many Christians today!

Before you criticize Peter, you must get out of your boat! If you are failing to do the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ because you are afraid of getting out of your “comfort zone,” don’t criticize Peter’s lack of faith. Instead, have enough faith in Christ to see the possibilities, to take the first step, and then to accomplish the work by keeping your eyes fixed firmly on Jesus! If you do this, He will make your work for Him a success (by His measure of success).

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## **Common Excuses That Hinder**

The reality is that many Christians stay inside the boat – especially when it pertains to the work of making disciples for Jesus. They may talk about the

opportunities and the potential; but it's mostly just talk. And, remember that *talking* is not the same as *walking*! Then, many Christians make all kinds of excuses to make themselves feel better for not getting out of the boat and doing what Christ wants them to do in this area. Therefore, consider some common excuses Christians offer – and a brief response to each one. The reality is that if you truly have faith in God, love for God, and love for others (as we talked about in lesson 2), you will overcome every one of these (and other) excuses and get out of the boat!

### ***“People aren’t interested”***

It has become common for folks to say, “Nobody is interested in spiritual things, in the Bible, and in church today” whenever they talk about the work of making disciples for Jesus. And, this seems to provide “cover” for a lot of churches to dwindle in number and for a lot of Christians not to talk to others seriously about Jesus. The blame for a lack of disciples made for Jesus is put on those who are lost – and takes it off those who are Christians for failing to do the work of disciple-makers!

Yet, people have always been interested in things that are contrary to God’s word. Preachers have always had to teach people who were focused on idols, riches, immorality of all kinds, human traditions, etc. But, this does *not* mean that people do not think about death and the things that happen after death. This does *not* mean that people would not love a better way. And, just because many people are not interested does *not* mean that no one is interested. In fact, it may simply be that there are more people interested than we think – and that more people are not being converted simply because many Christians are not doing the work! There will always be a smaller amount of good soil than wayside, rocky, or thorny soil in this world – but there is still good soil (Luke 8:4-15). Then, even if it is true that *no one* is interested, this does *not* excuse you for failing to do God’s work! For instance, God told the prophet Jeremiah, “Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you” (Jeremiah 7:27).

### ***“I’m not able”***

When some people think about the work of making disciples for Jesus, they see a work that they are “unqualified” to do. They think that it takes someone who is supremely skilled – at least someone who is more skilled than they are. So, they think they would do more to hurt the work than accomplish it. Some say they are too old. Some say they are too young. Some say they have too many physical limitations.

Yet, you have to recognize that God does not give a command people cannot accomplish! If He did, He would not be a fair judge (since He will judge us for whether we keep His commandments). So, although some people can accomplish more in this work than others, everyone can accomplish something! In fact, many of Christ’s apostles were of no account from a physical perspective. Yet, they accomplished great things for Him. For instance, Peter and John were considered to be “uneducated and untrained men” and people marveled that they could accomplish so much (Acts 4:13). But, they had been with Jesus – and this equipped them for the work. The same thing is true for you. If you will go with Jesus and put your entire faith in Him, He will help you do all that you can in His service (remember Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”).

### ***“I don’t know how”***

Some people are hindered from the work of making disciples because they do not think they know how to do the work. They do not know where to start and how to approach someone. They do not know how to conduct a Bible study. They do not know how to answer objections. They do not know how to conduct themselves.

Yet, you surely do not allow a lack of knowledge to stop you from doing other things you really desire to do. For instance, you did not always know how to drive a car, cook, mow the grass, do your job, play sports, play a music instrument, or other things you may currently know how to do. But, you learned. And, so it is with the work of making disciples. Rather than always excusing your inactivity by saying, “I don’t know how,” learn how!



God says that there is a time when you ought to be a teacher (Hebrews 5:12-14). Therefore, you must put in the effort to learn how to accomplish this God-given work!

### ***“I don’t want to be too pushy”***

Some people excuse their lack of effort in making disciples by saying that they don’t want to come across “too pushy.” They don’t want people to think that’s all they talk about. They don’t want people to feel any pressure to live for Christ.

Yet, while you cannot force someone to change, trying to lovingly share the greatest message in the world is not the same as being “pushy”! And, the reality is that God wants you to stand up and boldly teach the gospel. This requires you to say the things that need to be said in the way they need to be said. Like Peter, you need to warn people to “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40)! Just speaking the gospel applies pressure for people to make a decision about what is most important in their lives – and to act on it! You cannot be too passive in presenting people with this choice – while also not being mean-spirited.

### ***“I don’t have the time”***

Some people have good intentions to do the work of making disciples, but they never seem to “have the time.” Something always seems to come up that prohibits them from accomplishing the work. Their jobs, their families, their hobbies, etc. always seem to have priority over doing the work of making disciples.

Yet, while you may be busy, you must recognize that the work of making disciples for Jesus is one of the most important things you can do in your life! So, you must honestly evaluate yourself and consider what you spend your time on shows you about your priorities in life. For instance, do you choose recreation, hobbies, and unnecessary overtime above the work of making disciples? You see, it is not that you do not have time for this work. Instead, it is a matter of choosing to make it a priority. I wonder, would Christians have the time to make disciples if they were given \$1 million for each disciple made? Colossians 4:5 says, “Walk in

wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” Surely, there is no better use of your time than working for the salvation of souls – because nothing is so valuable as the soul and no reward is as great as Heaven!

### ***“I’m afraid of what people will say or do”***

Some people are afraid of how others will respond to their disciple-making efforts. They are afraid of what others will say to them or about them. They are afraid of how others may treat them. They are afraid of being outnumbered. They are afraid of how others will make them feel.

Yet, while there are many people who will not respond kindly to the efforts you make in this work, Jesus’ command remains the same. Jesus did not just command you to do the work of making disciples for Him whenever people would respond kindly to you. Instead, when Jesus sent out His apostles on what is called the “Limited Commission,” He said, “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:27-28). Although you may fear the people around you, they cannot do anything but hurt you physically and emotionally. However, failing to obey God because you fear people will result in eternal punishment in Hell!

### ***“I don’t know enough”***

Some people hold back from the work of making disciples because they have convinced themselves that they do not know enough about the Bible to help others follow Jesus. They may be new Christians who are just learning what the Bible teaches. They may be young Christians who don’t feel they know enough to answer the objections that may be raised to what they say. Or, they may be older Christians who have not grown in Bible knowledge the way they should have.

Yet, while we can always learn more, those who are Christians know enough to do something in the work of making disciples. At the least, they can teach people the basics about why they need to

follow Jesus, the dangers of sin, the gospel's plan of salvation, and the one church Jesus built. Then, you should recognize that you do not have to know everything to help people follow Christ. You just have to know something that others do not or be able to encourage people to act on the right knowledge. And, those who are truly interested in doing the work of making disciples must recognize that the only way to gain more knowledge to be able to help more people is to diligently study the Bible every day! 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

### ***"It's someone else's job"***

Some people do not work to make disciples for Jesus because they do not believe it is their responsibility. They believe that work is for other people – like "preachers" and elders. They may even believe that they are doing their part in the work by contributing on the first day of the week to support the work of the local church. Or, they may believe that there is always someone who is better suited to teach the people in their lives.

Yet, while many other people have been given the work of making disciples, it is also *your* work! Those who are "full-time preachers" (financially supported to preach the gospel) are simply given an opportunity to spend more time doing the work. But, this does not mean that you do not also have to do the work. In fact, 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, "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." Since a servant of the Lord "must" be able to teach, what does that make those who do not teach?

### ***"I'm letting my light shine"***

Some believe that they do this work whenever they let their "lights" shine for Jesus Christ. They have convinced themselves that because they live godly lives and faithfully attend the assemblies of the church that they have

accomplished their part in making disciples. In doing so, they excuse themselves from the work of actually speaking the gospel so as to teach others. Instead, they may be heard to say, "If people are interested, they will ask me why I am living for the Lord."

Yet, while Jesus wants you to let your light shine and there is power in a godly example (see Matthew 5:13-16 and 1 Peter 3:1-2), you must do the work of teaching. Just think about the fact that Jesus was the brightest light ever to live on earth (never dimming once). Yet, He still taught when He had the opportunity. And, when He gave the "Great Commission," Jesus did not just tell people to go let their lights shine so that people would come and ask them, "Why?" Instead, His disciples are expected to go into all the world "and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)! Therefore, you must complement your godly example with the preaching of the gospel.

### ***"I'm involved in other good works"***

Some people believe that they are doing enough good works in other areas that they are excused from the work of making disciples. They tend to think that there are "evangelism people," "hospitality people," "edification people," "visiting people," etc. So, they believe they do not have to teach because they are involved in serving God other ways.

Yet, while some may be more effective (i.e. have more abilities and opportunities) in other areas of service (compare with Romans 12:3-8), this does not excuse someone from the command to make disciples. You see, God's commands are not a buffet where you can take the things you want and are comfortable doing and leave the things you do not want or are less comfortable doing. Instead, you must use every opportunity and ability you have to accomplish all of God's commands. This includes the work of making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)!

### ***"You have to barbeque first"***

Some people hesitate to do the work of making disciples until they have a good relationship with the people they would like to teach. So, they will not take the step to preach to others until they can

arrange a time to have them over for a barbeque or some other social function (which may or may not ever happen). Then, they hope to use those relationships as vehicles for making disciples (which may or may not ever happen).

Yet, while relationships that have trust established can be a great way for you to influence others for Christ, they are not necessary prerequisites to the work of making disciples. If they were, how was Jesus successful with the Samaritan woman at the well who had not met Him before that day (read John 4)? How were the Christians who were scattered from Jerusalem throughout the world successful teaching the gospel in places they were strangers (Acts 8:4)? How were Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, etc. successful whenever they went into all the cities they visited and talked with strangers? You see, you must simply take advantage of whatever opportunity you have to make a disciple for Christ in a given moment!

### ***“I’ll get to it someday”***

Some people procrastinate with the work of making disciples. When they are in school, they may wait till they are older and graduate. When they get out of school, they may wait till they can get things settled. When they get some things settled, they may wait till after they start a family. When they start a family, they may wait till their children are out of the house and they retire. When they retire, they may wait till they get some projects caught up and travel. You get the picture. By time some people wait for a better time, they find that their time is gone!

Yet, while you may have many things going on in your life right now, you must never procrastinate in the Lord’s work. Jesus said, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4). Instead of making God wait for you to do everything else, make everything else wait for you to serve God! Truly put Him first in your life by serving Him before you do other things (Matthew 6:33). Recognize that “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). There may never be another day to do the things God wants you to do in His service!

## **The Reality Of Jesus’ Instruction**

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People put up many barriers when it comes to the work of making disciples for Jesus. Perhaps this all connects back to the point that this work requires people to step outside of their “comfort zones.” Yet, consider three powerful realities of Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:18-20. Again, He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

### ***Jesus has all authority***

The first reality about Jesus’ command is that Jesus has all authority. So, He has both the power and the right to command you to accomplish this work of making disciples. And, whenever He commands you to do anything, you must obey – or suffer the consequences.

Therefore, all the excuses you make (as real as they may feel to you) do not amount to anything. Even if they are real obstacles that you must overcome, you still must obey Christ. So, the fact that Jesus Christ has all authority and has commanded you to do the work of making disciples means that you must give your best effort to learning and accomplishing the work – no matter how difficult the work may be!

### ***The process is easy***

The second reality about Jesus’ command is that the process of making disciples is easy. No, that does not mean there are not difficulties and struggles in the work. I am only saying that there is nothing so difficult in the work that only a very few people are qualified to do it. Instead, the process of making disciples is easy enough that any disciple of Christ with a willing spirit can do it – no matter what his/her circumstances or abilities are!

There are four steps to the work of making disciples (as identified in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16). Step number one is “Go.” Step number two is “Preach.” Step number three is “Baptize.” And, step number four is “Continued Teaching.” We will be evaluating each one of these steps in the coming lessons. For now, just recognize that there is nothing inherently difficult physically that would prohibit people from taking these steps to help others be disciples of Jesus Christ!

### ***Jesus will be with you***

The third reality about Jesus’ command is that you will not be alone in the work. Jesus promises that He will be with you. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). So, even though the work of making disciples can be challenging (because of how other people respond), the work is easy whenever we view ourselves as coworkers with God (see 1 Corinthians 3:5-11)!

Just like when Peter was walking on the water, he was okay as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But, whenever Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the storm around him, he began to sink. So, when you have enough faith to obey Jesus regardless of the consequences, He will help you through and will always make you victorious (see Romans 8:28-39)!

## **Conclusion**

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Being a true disciple-maker will require you to get outside of your “comfort zone.” But, will you have enough faith to step out of the boat and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus? Or, will you allow excuses to keep you from becoming what Jesus wants you to be in His service? He can truly use you to accomplish great things if you will not try to keep Him in the “box” of what you are comfortable doing! Therefore, you should devote your life to doing all that you can do to make disciples for Jesus Christ!

## **Study Questions**

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What hinders you from doing the work of making disciples for Jesus?

### **1. Get Out Of The Boat!**

How did Peter have to step outside his “comfort zone” to walk on the water?

Why did Peter step outside his “comfort zone”? What will cause you to step outside your “comfort zone”?

How did Peter get out of his “comfort zone”? How will you get out of your “comfort zone”?

Why did Peter begin to sink? What will make you successful outside of your “comfort zone”?

### **2. Common Excuses That Hinder**

For each excuse, explain the excuse and provide an answer for it.

*“People aren’t interested” –*

*“I’m not able” –*

*“I don’t know how” –*

*“I don’t want to be too pushy” –*

*“I don’t have the time” –*

*“I’m afraid of what people will say or do” –*

*“I don’t know enough” –*

*“It’s someone else’s job” –*

*“I’m letting my light shine” –*

*“I’m involved in other good works” –*

*“You have to barbeque first” –*

*“I’ll get to it someday” –*

### **3. The Reality Of Jesus’ Instruction**

Why is it important to realize that Jesus has all authority?

How difficult is the process of making disciples – in reality?

Will Jesus help you do the work?

# Go Make Disciples

## Lesson 4: Step 1 Go

Up to this point, we have been trying to understand the work of making disciples, make sure our hearts are right in order to accomplish the work, and push beyond our comfort zones so that we actually do accomplish the work. Now, I really want us to focus on *how* we go about doing the work. Actually, when you look at the “Great Commission” (particularly in Matthew 28 and Mark 16), I believe there are four steps to the work God wants us to be doing. Look at these two passages again.

Matthew 28:18-20 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Mark 16:15-16 says, “And He said to them, ‘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.’”

As I introduced at the end of the previous lesson, the four steps I see in these two passages are as follows. Step number one is “Go.” Step number two is “Preach.” Step number three is “Baptize.” And, step number four is “Continued Teaching.” When these four steps are completed and the individual is receptive every step of the way, the result is a disciple-making disciple of Jesus Christ!

Now, this lesson will begin to explore the first of these four steps. So, we want to consider how it is that we can find opportunities to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Recognize that Jesus clearly indicates all the work of making disciples begins

with going. This is a determined effort with a specific goal in mind. Namely, the goal of your going must be to make a disciple for Jesus.

Yet, we can have all kinds of questions about how we can best accomplish this work. For instance, who should we try to go to? What methods should I use? When is the best time to go? The Scriptures help you to find the answers to these questions – and we want to explore them during this lesson.

## Where To Go

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A basic study on Bible authority reveals that there are two types of authority: Generic and specific. Specific authority specifies how something is to be done, whereas generic authority does not. And, notice that the authority given in the “Great Commission” regarding where to go is generic in nature. All the disciples were to take the gospel throughout the whole world. But, in this passage, Jesus did not specify where each disciple was to go. And, so it is with you today. You have been given generic authority regarding where you go with the gospel. Therefore, you must carefully evaluate your opportunities so that you can make the best use of them.

### ***Prospects are everywhere***

As you consider where you should go with the gospel, you must recognize that there are “prospects” everywhere. Now, whenever I speak of a “prospect” for the gospel, I am speaking of someone who is a potential disciple of Christ. For, the fact of the matter is that the overwhelming majority of people in this world are *not* true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Remember what Jesus taught in Matthew 7. In verses 13 and 14, Jesus told us to seek to enter the narrow gate that leads to eternal life in Heaven. He said that this way is difficult and few will enter it. In contrast, He said that there is a broad path that leads through a wide gate into destruction and there are many who will walk on this path. In addition, in verses 21-23, Jesus even said that there will be many people on the Day of Judgment who will have

claimed to follow Him, yet be eternally condemned because they did not keep God's commandments.

So, there are prospects everywhere there are people. Consider some Biblical examples of where New Testament disciple-makers found prospects. Some were with people they had relationships with already. Some were with complete strangers. Some were in public places. Some were in private settings. But, regardless of where they were, these disciple-making disciples were diligent to do what they could to bring others to Jesus.

Think about Philip. After he had found Jesus, "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' And Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see'" (John 1:45-46). So, for Philip, the first step in his going was to find Nathanael and bring him to Jesus!

Think about Jesus (the Master disciple-Maker). In John chapter 4, Jesus stopped by a well to rest from His travels. Then, while He was resting there, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from that well. Jesus saw this woman who crossed paths with Him at this moment as a potential disciple and took advantage of the opportunity (see verses 7-26).

Think about this Samaritan woman. After she heard and believed the truth Jesus had taught her, she left her waterpot, went into the city, and said to the people, "'Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' Then they went out of the city and came to Him" (John 4:29-30). Later, the text says that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman" (verses 39-42).

Think about the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Although aided by miraculous events, the apostles took advantage of an opportunity to go to the people who had gathered in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). There, each of the twelve apostles preached to the thousands of people (probably hundreds of thousands) who had gathered on that occasion.

Think about the persecuted Christians in Acts chapter 8. When Saul had brought severe persecution on the church in Jerusalem, many of the Christians there fled into other areas. But, they used this as an opportunity to go. Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." They went even as far as "Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch" (Acts 11:19).

Think about Paul, Silas, and Luke on a Sabbath day. In Acts 16:11-15, Luke writes that while they were in Philippi, "on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there" (verse 13). Of these women, there was a woman named Lydia who was particularly interested in what they had to say and wanted to hear more.

Think about Paul and Silas in prison. Later in Acts 16, Paul and Silas were put into prison. After a great earthquake opened the prison doors and released the prisoners from their chains, the guard woke up and supposed all the prisoners had escaped. So, he drew his sword to kill himself. But, rather than being focused on escaping, Paul saw the opportunity to make a disciple in this guard (as verses 28-34 reveal).

Think about Paul in Athens. While he was waiting for his travel companions there, his spirit was provoked whenever he "saw that the city was given over to idols" (verse 16). Then, verse 17 says, "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there." Later, he also preached the gospel on Mar's Hill.

Think about Paul when he was testifying before Governor Felix and King Agrippa. In Acts 24-26, Paul was called before these two individual as it related to his imprisonment. But, rather than spend his time merely defending himself, he used it to tell his story of conversion and preach the gospel.

Think about Paul while he was under house arrest. In Acts 28, Paul arrived in Rome to make an appeal to Caesar. Verses 30 and 31 say, "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the

kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

While these are certainly not the only examples of disciples of Christ going in New Testament times, I do want you to step back from these and consider what we have seen. Through these examples, we have seen disciples going to many different places, in many different circumstances, to many different people, in many different ways.

So, as you consider where you ought to go, you need to begin by recognizing that prospects are everywhere. There are prospects right now who you have relationships with (start with your spouse, children, and other immediate family members and friends). There are prospects right now who are complete strangers to you. There are prospects right now in your city. There are prospects right now outside your city. There are prospects you cross paths with regularly. There are prospects you may only cross paths with once. So, you must open your eyes and see the opportunities that are all around you every day to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

### ***Pray for doors of opportunity***

Consider what is recorded in Matthew 9:35-38. “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’”

Jesus could see that there were opportunities and prospects all around Him. Having compassion on those who were lost, Jesus told His disciples to pray. Specifically, Jesus recognized that although the harvest (the potential) was great, there were not many laborers. So, they needed to pray that God would send out laborers into His harvest.

This is one of the things we should be praying for. Pray that God will send more disciples into these fields (that are still plentiful today)! Pray that more

disciples of Jesus Christ will recognize that God *has* sent them into these fields (through the instructions given in the New Testament). Pray that more will have the heart of a disciple-maker and devote themselves to the work of making disciples. Then, pray that these individuals will have plenty of opportunities to preach the word of God and do the work of making disciples.

Then, consider another area of prayer in this work, as identified in Colossians 4:2-6. “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

You should be asking God for help in your work of going to make disciples. Every day, pray for God to open a door for the word to be shared. Pray this prayer for both yourself and for others. Pray that you will have opportunity to do and say something today to help make a disciple for Jesus – and that others will have opportunities as well!

Then, you should pray that you will recognize the opportunity and take advantage of it whenever it is presented. Notice that Paul also sought prayers from the Colossians that he would speak as he should speak. Pray for wisdom in dealing with those who are outside of Jesus Christ as you try to lead them to Christ (compare with James 1:5). Pray that you will respond to people in the ways that you should.

Therefore, you should not view yourself as going alone. Instead, be prayerful in your daily life that God will help you in this work. He can providentially work to open up doors of opportunity for the word of God to be spread. He can help you know what you should say in those moments. He can help you have wisdom to know how you ought to respond to the various situations you encounter.



## **Know what to look for**

As you go out to make disciples for Jesus Christ, you should consider what it is you are looking for. For, I think that there are many doors of opportunity opened for disciples of Christ every day that are not used appropriately. In fact, many of them go unnoticed. Others are avoided. So, what is it you should be going out in search of as you try to make disciples for Jesus Christ?

To answer this question, let's consider 1 Corinthians 3:5-8. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor."

First, you must *not* go looking for an opportunity to make a name for yourself. The fact is that the work of making disciples is not about the disciple-maker. Instead, it is all about the one we should all follow – Jesus Christ! Paul recognized this when he said that neither the one who plants or waters the seed of God's word is anything. Unfortunately, there are many people who make disciple-making about a particular preacher.

This has been the motivation some have had for preaching the gospel in the past (and continues today). Paul spoke of some who preached Christ "from envy and strife...from selfish ambition, not sincerely" (Philippians 1:15-18). Now, although Paul was glad that Christ was preached (regardless of the motive), this did *not* mean God approved of the ones preaching from bad motives. Therefore, you must not go looking for an opportunity to make a name for yourself or to fulfill any kind of selfish purpose!

Instead, you must go looking for an opportunity to plant and water the seed of God's word. God's word is like seed (see Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) that needs to be planted in all the soil (hearts) that is around you. For, whenever God's word is planted and cultivated in the right kind of soil, the result is spiritual fruit that is pleasing to God. And, the more

spiritual fruit that is produced, the more God is glorified!

Now, I want you to think about a few significant points relative to the work of planting and watering the seed. First, consider that you should be looking for opportunities to plant and water the seed across every type of soil. That is what Jesus taught in the parable in Luke 8. It was not the sower's job to determine what kind of soil would be receptive to the seed and which ones would not. Instead, it was just his job to scatter as much seed as he possibly could. And, so it is with you and me. It is not our job to pre-judge who will and will not be receptive to the gospel. It is just our job to go to everyone we have the opportunity to go to.

Think of this work another way. Whenever God told Ezekiel to take His words to the people, God said Ezekiel was like a watchman on a wall. Listen to Ezekiel 3:17-21. "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."

In the same way, not only do you have the opportunity to preach the gospel, but you have the *responsibility* to take God's word with you everywhere you go! God will hold you responsible for whether you go to others and work to make them disciples. For instance, the apostle Paul said that he was "innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26) because he had done his part to preach the whole

counsel of God to the people around him. But, what about you? You must go to everyone you can to plant and water the seed.

Second, consider the need to both plant and water the seed. Some people you go to have never heard the truths you will tell them. So, you are planting these gospel truths in their hearts. However, there are other people who have heard some (or all) of the gospel truths you are presenting. In this case, you are watering seed that has already been planted by reminding them of these truths and encouraging action to be taken on them. Sometimes your watering follows your own work of planting. But, sometimes your watering follows the work others have done to plant the seed. Regardless, you must simply do whatever you can in a given moment to plant and/or water the seed.

Although there are opportunities to plant and water the seed throughout the regular activities of life (i.e. through daily conversations), you should especially be looking for opportunities to have a Bible study with another person. Although your conversations can present an opportunity for gauging peoples' interest in spiritual matters, the best opportunities to make disciples usually come from personal Bible studies in which you can sit down with another person for the purpose of planting and watering the seed of God's word in their hearts. And, the best way to get these Bible studies is just to ask for them!

So, whenever someone expresses some interest in spiritual things, asks a spiritual question, etc., take advantage of their interest by asking if they would like to study the Bible with you. Or, even when someone has not expressed interest, you could simply be bold enough to ask for a Bible study. When you try this, you may be surprised how many people are actually willing to study the Bible with you! But, you will never know if you do not ask!

## How To Go

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Now, I want to spend some time making application of the Scriptures we have discussed.

Again, there is a lot of generic authority given in the Scriptures regarding the work of individual Christians in disciple-making. So, consider some authorized ways disciples should go in the work of making disciples.

### ***Individual "going"***

First, consider some individual "going." That is, consider the work you can accomplish going by yourself. We have already seen some examples of people who have worked to make disciples while they were working alone (as far as working with any other man/woman). For instance, remember Jesus and His one-on-one work with the Samaritan woman at the well. And, remember Paul in Athens. Even though he was all alone, he was determined to do what he could with the opportunity that was given to him.

One of the great benefits of going as an individual is that you are not constrained by other peoples' schedules. You can do what you can to go whenever you have the opportunity and ability to do so. Even if you just have ten minutes of free time, you can do something in the work of making disciples.

Another of the benefits of individual going is that you will not always be with someone when an opportunity is presented. Like Jesus and Paul, you may find yourself alone whenever you have an opportunity to plant and water the seed. If every disciple waited till they could work with other disciples to do the work of making disciples, these opportunities would be missed!

So, no matter where you are or who you are around, you should be committed to going as an individual disciple of Christ. As an individual member of the body of Christ, you have unique skills, abilities, and opportunities to use in the disciple-making process. In addition, you have relationships and interactions with others throughout the day that present wonderful opportunities for you to do the work of making disciples. Don't wait for others to do this work!

## ***Team “going”***

Second, consider some team “going.” That is, consider the work that you can accomplish by working together with other disciple-makers. We have already seen some examples of people who have worked to make disciples alongside other disciples. For instance, consider the apostles in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. And, consider Paul and his travel companions (whether Barnabas, Silas, Luke, etc.).

One of the great benefits of going with other disciples is that those who go provide strength and encouragement for each other along the way. For example, consider the principles in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 about the value of companions. “Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Another example of team “going” that should not be overlooked is when disciples work together in their earthly families. Aquila and Priscilla are an excellent example of this. This husband and wife duo were truly a team for the Lord. For instance, in Acts 18:24-28, when they heard Apollos preaching and recognized that he only knew about John’s baptism, they took him aside privately and explained the way of the Lord more accurately to him. This “small” thing had a big impact – as Apollos continued preaching to others (now with an accurate understanding).

Another example of these two working together can be seen in Romans 16:3-5. Paul said that they risked their own lives for him. This not only impacted his ability to live for the Lord, but their impact extended to others when Paul was able to continue to teach others. Furthermore, Paul sent greetings in this passage to the church that met in their home.

So, you should work together with other brothers and sisters in Christ to go and make

disciples for Jesus (remember that Jesus sent people out two-by-two in Luke 10). Work with like-minded brothers and sisters who have the heart of a disciple-maker in your family, in the local church, or others you can connect with. Perhaps their strengths can compensate for your weaknesses (and vice versa). Find ways to encourage one another and motivate each other to do even more in the Lord’s service!

## ***Evaluating some methods***

When you boil all the methods of “going” down, you end up with only four basic methods. Consider them with me for a moment – along with some examples of each. Before we consider these, listen to Paul in Acts 20:20. He said that he taught “publicly and from house to house.” We should do the same.

**(1) Private one-on-one “going.”** This would include inviting a friend, family member, or neighbor for a Bible study. This would include teaching through private conversations as you have opportunity (as you meet individuals). This would include handing out invitations to study, tracts, etc. to those you meet (and then following up with them). This would also include inviting someone to come and worship with the local church you worship with.

**(2) Semi-private “going.”** This would include having a family Bible study, neighborhood Bible study, etc. (Note: If you do not want to teach, you can find someone else to teach or utilize technology to view Bible study DVDs or online videos). This would include internet Bible studies for your friends, family members, neighbors, etc. This would include teaching through social media posts, group emails, etc.

**(3) House-to-house “going.”** This would include door-to-door canvassing. This would also include mailings. This could even include making phone calls to residents in an area.

**(4) Public “going.”** This would include the regular assemblies of the local church and Gospel Meetings. This would include teaching at fairs, festivals, and other public events. This would include preaching done through a website, blog, social media, etc. This would even include having a

billboard or yard signs that advertise Bible studies, etc.

## Always Be Going

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You should try to utilize as many opportunities you can when you “go.” Take advantage of whatever opportunity you have available at any given moment! Make an attempt to utilize as many avenues as you can to spread the saving message of the gospel! If each local church will be devoted to this and if each Christian will be devoted to this, the gospel of Jesus Christ can once again be spread to everyone! In fact, your focus should be that you are always going. Never take a moment “off.” Always have a “going” spirit that looks for the opportunity to make disciples for Jesus.

### ***Always be watching for open doors***

When you pray for God to open doors of opportunity and you have determined to do the work of making disciples, you should train your eye to see the doors that are opened. And, you should recognize that they do not always look like you might expect. In fact, some don’t even look like good opportunities at first glance. But, the fact is that opportunities are not always scripted events you can anticipate in advance. Instead, you just must train yourself to always be watching and ready when they happen. Consider two examples.

Think a little more about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. When Jesus arrived at this place, he was tired from his journey. He was thirsty. And, He was (evidently) hungry. Then, a Samaritan woman came along to draw water, minding her own business. This already does not feel like a great opportunity for disciple-making. Then, the text reveals that there was a social barrier because Jews did not have any dealings with Samaritans (verse 9). However, because Jesus had the heart of a disciple-maker, Jesus saw this opportunity for what it was and did what He could with it!

Then, think a little more about Paul and Silas in prison in Acts 16. When the earthquake caused the doors of the prison to open and the chains to fall off

the prisoners, the jailor woke up and went to kill himself (supposing all the prisoners had escaped). Now, prison may not seem like the best opportunity. Yet, these opened prison doors were an open door of opportunity for the word of God – and Paul was determined to make the best use of it!

So, you should never consider yourself to be “off-duty” as a disciple-maker. Instead, you should always be going. Even when you are just going about your daily routine, you should maintain a “going” spirit and look for the doors of opportunity for the word to be opened!

### ***Make intentional efforts***

Now, while it is certainly true that you should always be going and looking for doors for the word during your daily life, it is also true that you should make intentional efforts to go. This is also supported by the Scriptures. For instance, consider the work of Paul and his companions on their “missionary” journeys. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, Timothy, Luke, and others intentionally went about the work of making disciples. They intentionally went into different cities and villages to make disciples. They intentionally went into marketplaces, synagogues, from house-to-house, and other places they knew they could find potential disciples for Christ.

Unfortunately, I think this work has been forgotten by many disciples today. Although full-time gospel preachers ought to be doing this work, why shouldn’t every Christian show some intentionality in going to make disciples for Jesus? Every Christian could intentionally take some time every week (i.e. on the weekend) to do something to make a disciple! Remember, Acts 8:4 gives the approved example of the Christians who were scattered going everywhere preaching the word!

### ***Do whatever you can with your opportunities***

Now, God does not hold you responsible for what people do with the gospel. He only holds you responsible for whether you plant and water the seed whenever you are given the opportunity to do so! So,

you need to think of yourself as a steward of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 says, “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.” Notice that Paul considered himself as a servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God (which are revealed in the gospel, see Ephesians 3:3-5).

Now, Paul had the added stewardship of being an apostle. However, we should still consider ourselves with this passage. We have been entrusted with the message of the gospel into our hands. And, if we do not utilize the opportunities God gives us to go and make disciples, He will hold us accountable. The “blood” of others (spiritually-speaking) will be required of us. We will have failed to do the work God has given us to do. Therefore, we will help others spend eternity in Hell.

So, you should simply determine to do whatever you can do with your opportunities. Some opportunities present greater possibilities than others. But, no matter what the opportunity is, you must take full advantage of it!

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## Conclusion

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Pray to God for opportunities and do everything you can to take advantage of them! The fields are white and ready for harvest all around you. But, the laborers are few. Don't let God's harvest be lacking because you will not go like you should! Develop the mindset that you will always be going – in your daily life and intentionally going at specified times!

## Study Questions

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What are four steps in the process of making disciples for Jesus?

### 1. Where To Go

How many “prospects” are around you? Identify some New Testament examples of where others found opportunities to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

How should you be praying in your work of “going”?

What should you be looking for while you are going?

### 2. How To Go

Why is it important to go as an individual?

Why is it important to go as a team?

List some examples of going with the following four methods:

(1) Private one-on-one “going” –

(2) Semi-private “going” –

(3) House-to-house “going” –

(4) Public “going” –

### **3. Always Be Going**

Why should you always be watching for open doors?

Why should you make intentional efforts?

Why should you do whatever you can with your opportunities?

## Go Make Disciples

# Lesson 5: Step 2

## Preach

When Jesus gave the “Great Commission” (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16), He outlined four steps to accomplish the work of making disciples for Him. The first step is “Go.” The second step is “Preach.” The third step is “Baptize.” And, the fourth step is “Continued Teaching.”

In the last lesson, we saw the responsibility disciples of Christ have to *go* and search for others to help be disciples of Christ. Now, let me emphasize that while it is common for Christians today to invite other people to “come” (i.e. to worship services), Jesus said to “go.” And, while there is a time and place for people to say “come” (see John 1:39), you will usually have to “go” to people and teach them before they will ever “come”!

Just think about it. Imagine that you are someone who is not a believer in God or Christ. Getting an invitation to “come” inside a building to worship God may not mean very much to you. Or, imagine that you do believe in God and Christ, but you are happy with your worldly lifestyle. Getting an invitation to “come” inside a building to worship God may get crowded out by all the things you would rather be doing. Or, imagine that you believe you are a devout Christian who faithfully attends another kind of church. Getting an invitation to “come” to another building may conflict with your already busy schedule and the assemblies of your own church.

Therefore, while we need to invite people to “come,” that is not all Jesus wants His disciples to be doing in their disciple-making efforts. Yet, as I have observed what many Christians and churches do to try and make disciples, their efforts are primarily (and sometimes solely) about inviting people to

“come.” But, if you put yourself in the situations we have just imagined, you can see that most people are not ready to respond to an invitation to “come.” Instead, these people need to be taught the gospel and understand why it is even important for them to “come” to the assemblies of a faithful church.

So, the focus of your going should be to preach the gospel to others. You might be given the opportunity to preach in a casual conversation or to give them Bible study material (i.e. a book, a correspondence course, a tract, a DVD, etc.). But, as we will see, one of the best ways to preach is to have a one-on-one or small group Bible study. And, the best way to get these Bible studies is just to ask people if they would be interested to study the Bible with you. Then, once you have someone who is willing to listen to some things you have to say about the gospel, you need to consider that your responsibility is simply to preach the word, planting and watering the seed of the gospel in their hearts – and allow God to give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

As you consider your responsibility in preaching, many people (even many who have been Christians for many years) have very little experience actually preaching to people (though they may have some experience inviting people). So, the thought of having an opportunity to preach to people leaves them with many questions. What do I do? What do I say? Where do I start? What should we study? How should we study? Therefore, I hope that this lesson provides you some guidance as you consider the second step in this disciple-making process.

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## Preparing Yourself To Preach

Whenever you have the opportunity to preach the gospel, there are probably many emotions you will experience. Perhaps it is fear. Perhaps it is nervousness. Perhaps it is excitement. Perhaps it is a mixture of these and others. Yet, whenever you prepare to do anything, remember these five P’s: Proper preparation prevents poor performance. In order to do the best job in preaching, you must

properly prepare yourself. Therefore, consider some ways you should prepare yourself to preach the gospel.

### ***Study regularly***

Good Bible teachers are first good Bible students. The simple fact is that you cannot teach what you do not know. And, while that does *not* mean that you have to have a great wealth of Bible knowledge before you begin preaching, it does mean that you should have a regular Bible study routine that is focused on helping you grow in that area.

2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” You should present yourself before God as a diligent student of the Bible who is focused on accurately understanding and interpreting the word of God so that you can teach it to others. You should be studying the Bible with such regularity that you are making significant steps to go from the “milk” of the word to the “meat” of the word (see Hebrews 5:12-14). You should be studying the Bible for yourself and to help answer some common objections and errors that are held by others.

### ***Pray***

In the last lesson, we considered the importance of prayer in the disciple-making process. But, I want to emphasize it again here. For, as you prepare yourself to preach the gospel to someone, you should be very prayerful about the opportunity you have been given. For instance, whenever the Holy Spirit instructed the church in Antioch to send Paul (Saul) and Barnabas on their “first missionary journey,” Acts 13:3 says, “Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

Previously, we considered Colossians 4:2-6 from the perspective of praying for open doors for the word. But, there is more for you to pray for as you prepare to preach. You should pray for the one you are preparing to study with to have an open heart that is ready to receive and obey the truths of the gospel. Then, pray that you will preach the gospel as you “ought to speak.” Pray for wisdom in preaching

the gospel to those who are not Christians. Pray that God would help you speak with grace. Pray that God will help you “know how you ought to answer each one.”

### ***Be patient, kind, and gentle***

In lesson 2, we considered the love for others that true disciple-makers will have. Included in that point was the need for those who preach the gospel to be patient, kind, and gentle. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, “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.” And, 2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

The simple fact of the matter is that preaching the gospel can actually harm people if these things are not in place as you teach. People do not always respond to the truths of the gospel at first. And, sometimes you will have to help them overcome numerous objections to becoming disciples. They may even get a little bit irritable with you whenever you are helping them come to conclusions they do not like at first. Therefore, if you are not patient, kind, and gentle, you may respond to them in ways that push them further away. Or, you may cut them off too quickly. Always remember to conduct yourself in the same way you would want others to conduct themselves in teaching you. So, before you preach, make sure you have clothed yourself with patience, kindness, and gentleness to help lead people to Christ!

### ***Be bold and courageous***

Although you should be patient, kind, and gentle, you must never compromise the truth of the gospel. You must be bold (unreserved) and courageous enough to say the things that need said. But, you also must be careful to say these things in the way they need to be said. Wisdom will certainly be needed to determine how things need to be said in a given moment.



Look at 2 Timothy 4:2 again: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Whether the word of God is accepted or rejected, you must not bend in standing for and preaching the truth. Sometimes, you will find people who are really seeking the truth and will accept the things you teach them. But, sometimes you will find people who are *not* really seeking the truth and will not accept the things you teach them. But, your responsibility does not change. You must simply be devoted to boldly and courageously preaching the word, remembering that God is the only one you should really fear (see Matthew 10:28)!

### ***Be humble***

People don’t like to be exclusively preached at – and for good reason. That is, people do not want someone who has committed sin making themselves seem like they never needed the gospel of Christ. So, whenever you preach the gospel, you should clothe yourself with humility, recognizing that “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). You should preach to others in a way that recognizes that you have also needed to learn and obey the gospel – and that you are not done being in need of God’s grace and mercy!

Nobody wants to be taught by someone who acts like the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable in Luke 18:9-14. The Pharisee stood and prayed, saying, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess” (verses 11-12). Even Jesus (who actually lived a perfect life) did not boast about Himself and belittle other people when He taught. You should never make people feel inferior to you or think they are a worse sinner than you because of what they have done (because all sin is equal to God)! Instead, you should have the humility demonstrated by the tax collector in Jesus’ parable, who said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (verse 13). You will simply be a much more effective teacher when you have a humble estimation of yourself!

### ***Be a truth-seeker***

Finally, I want to encourage you never to lose the quality in your life of being someone who is constantly searching for the truth. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). And, Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). You must never consider yourself to have acquired a complete knowledge of the truth and stop seeking the truth. Included in the heart of a truth-seeker is also the recognition that you could be wrong in the conclusions you have drawn and the things you believe. So, you must always have a heart that is willing to examine the evidence and reach any conclusion and take any action that agrees with the truth.

Now, consider how having the heart of a truth-seeker will impact the opportunities you have to preach the gospel. Certainly, you cannot expect others to open their hearts to the truth if you have not. When this is the case, you will come across as just preaching at another person. However, when you have the heart of a truth-seeker who is on your own journey of discovering the truths in God’s word, you will encourage others to have the same heart. And, rather than getting into arguments over personal opinions, your studies will be conducted as a search for truth. So, admit that you can be wrong and make it clear that your only agenda in the study is to know and follow the truth – and help the other person do the same!

## **Knowing Where To Start**

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After you have prepared yourself, you need to consider where you should begin in your preaching efforts. But, I believe that we need to carefully evaluate the proper starting point. Although any subject can be used to get people talking and thinking about spiritual things, you should be careful about where you start in your preaching efforts.

## ***Everyone is at a different place spiritually***

One of the biggest dangers I would warn you against in preaching the gospel is taking a “one size fits all” approach. Although it is true that everyone needs to know the same things and obey the same message, it is *not* true that everyone starts at the same point. So, you need to acknowledge that people have been on a journey for however long they have lived on this earth. And, along that journey, they have come to believe certain things to be true and false. Therefore, every person you have the opportunity to teach will be unique.

The Bible is full of examples of this truth. If we just limit ourselves to the teaching done in the book of Acts, we can see this several times. For instance, those who were taught on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were of a Jewish background and had come to Jerusalem at that time in obedience to the Law of Moses. Acts 8 records Philip preaching to a man who practiced sorcery and had convinced many people that he was something great. Acts 8 also records Philip preaching to an Ethiopian man who was returning from worshiping in Jerusalem. Acts 9 records Ananias preaching to Saul who was a devout Jew and had murdered Christians. Acts 10-11 records Peter preaching to a Gentile who was a good man and believed in God. Acts 16 records Paul and Silas preaching to some women who were at a riverside to pray on the Sabbath day. Acts 16 also records Paul and Silas preaching to a jailor who nearly committed suicide. Acts 17 records Paul preaching to religious people who worshiped a great many idols. Acts 18 records Paul preaching to fornicators, homosexuals, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, etc. (compare with 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Acts 24 records Paul preaching to a Romans governor. Acts 26 records Paul preaching to a king.

Now, you could consider even more about each one of these situations. But, let me simply ask you: Do you really think that each one of these people had the same starting point in learning the gospel? Absolutely not. While they all needed to learn the gospel and hear Jesus preached to them, they were all at different spiritual places. And, the preachers needed to begin at the right place.

## ***Take time to learn where you should start***

All of this means that disciple-makers need to take the time to learn where they should start. In fact, I want to suggest that not only is it beneficial to take the time to learn where you should start in your preaching, but you can actually do some damage if you do not start in the right place. At least, you may help to *shut* a door before you teach them what they need to know.

For instance, imagine that you are trying to teach someone the gospel of Christ. And, suppose that one of the biggest questions this person has is about the use of instrumental music. Now, you could go right into a study of that subject – or you could spend some time laying the proper foundation. For instance, this person may not believe that God is a severe God who will punish the disobedient in Hell. What good would it do, in that case, to convince someone about the instrument? Or, perhaps this person knows nothing about how to establish Bible authority. How are you going to be able to discuss the authority we have been given for our music in worship, the silence of the Scriptures concerning the mechanical instrument, and the difference between aids and additions? And, perhaps this individual is not even a Christian because he/she has never done what the Bible actually requires to be saved (perhaps having only been taught traditional “faith only” doctrine). What real good is accomplished by going back and forth about the instrument? Then, maybe this person knows very little about the church that Jesus established and about local churches, having only a denominational understanding of the church. What is the benefit of talking about the worship of a local church if the person does not have an accurate understanding of what the church is?

So, I think we may jump into some issues at times that puts the “cart before the horse.” While I am certainly not suggesting that you ignore their questions, I am suggesting that you delay your full response until you have laid the appropriate foundation. For instance, if someone asks you a question about why you do not believe it is right to use the mechanical instrument in worship, you could give a simple answer that would lead into a Bible study such as: “That’s an excellent question. I

believe that it is important to have Bible authority for everything I do in my life and I haven't found any authority for the mechanical instrument yet. Would you be interested in having a Bible study so that I can explain things in greater detail?" Or, you could say, "That's a great question – and one that we will consider whenever we study about the church Christ established. Don't let me forget to answer your question."

In the same way, think about how the New Testament disciple-makers started in different places depending on who their audience was. For the sake of illustration, let's just compare two examples in Acts 17. First, Paul was preaching to some Jews over the course of three Sabbaths in the synagogue in Thessalonica. The text says that he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ'" (verses 2-3). This audience would have already believed in God and accepted the Law of Moses as being from God. So, Paul spent his time with them trying to convince them that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) who was foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures so that they would follow Him rather than continue looking for the Messiah and follow the Law of Moses.

Later, Paul traveled to Athens. When he was there, his "spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there" (verses 16-17). Many of them did not know anything about Jesus and the resurrection. And, when he was given the opportunity to preach to those who were idol worshipers (read verses 22-31), he began by teaching them about the God who made all things.

So, these two examples demonstrate that people start in different places. Therefore, it is important to take the time to learn where you should start with someone in preaching. You can do this in a couple of ways. For one, your observations may tell you a lot about someone – just like Paul observed the idols in Athens, specifically noticing an idol to the "unknown" God. Then, you can simply ask others to tell you a little about themselves before you begin

your study. Take time to listen and learn about them – about both their physical and spiritual backgrounds. As James says, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

### ***Learning the Bible is like climbing a ladder***

Someone can become a disciple of Christ whenever he/she has all the information needed to make an informed decision. And, as a preacher, you have to recognize that the foundation of knowledge a person has is very important. So, rather than hurrying someone along too quickly to be baptized, make sure you are patient and help them learn what they need to know to take the appropriate actions (while also not being too slow about things).

I like to think of a person's Bible knowledge as a ladder. Think about someone who knows nothing about God and the Bible as standing on the ground. Think about someone who is at the top of the ladder as someone who has all the necessary knowledge to please God and take the appropriate actions so as to go to Heaven (although it is true that we should always be growing and adding to our understanding). And, specifically, I picture a ladder with eight rungs – with each rung representing another piece of knowledge a person needs to have. Let me briefly walk you through some basics about each one of these points. I have found this particularly helpful in knowing where it is best to start with someone I am studying with (considering which rung of the ladder they are on). For a more detailed discussion on each one of these points, I would refer you to a study I have written entitled, *"Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions."* In fact, I often use that study (or at least its framework) whenever I am teaching others. I'll refer to the lesson that covers each rung below.

Rung #1: God. People need to know who God is. For instance, they need to know that God is real. They need to know that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all possess the nature of being God. They need to know that God is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present. They need to know that God is a holy God. And, they need to know that God is both good and severe (that is, He will punish those who disobey Him). These and other points are covered in lesson 1, titled, "Who Is God?"

Rung #2: The soul and afterlife. People need to know where they are going and why they are here. For instance, they need to know that mankind possesses a soul that survives physical death. They need to know that everyone will experience physical death. They need to know what happens after death (Hades, the coming of Christ, the Judgment, and eternity). And, they need to know their true purpose of life on this earth. These and other points are covered in lesson 2, titled, “Where Are We Going And Why Are We Here?”

Rung #3: The Bible. People need to know what the Bible is. For instance, they need to know some basic facts about the Bible. They need to know that the Bible contains the words of God. They need to know that the Bible tells us everything we need to know to please God. They need to know that the Bible is the criteria we will all be judged by. And, they need to know how to establish Bible authority. These and other points are covered in lesson 3, titled, “What Is The Bible?”

Rung #4: Sin. People need to know what sin is. For instance, they need to know how sin entered the world. They need to know what it means to “sin.” They need to know some examples of sin. They need to know sin’s devastating effects. And, they need to know that no one can save himself/herself from sin. These and other points are covered in lesson 4, titled, “What Is Sin?”

Rung #5: Jesus. People need to know who Jesus is. For instance, they need to know that Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament. They need to know that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. They need to know that Jesus left Heaven to live on earth and accomplish a specific mission. They need to know about Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. And, they need to know what Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection means for them. These and other points are covered in lesson 5, titled, “Who Is Jesus?”

Rung #6: Salvation. People need to know what they must do to be saved. For instance, they need to know that they cannot earn salvation. They need to know that God has required them to do something in order to be saved. They need to know what it means to be obedient. They need to know that they are not saved by faith only. And, they need to

know that God requires them to hear His word, believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of their sins, confess Christ, be baptized (immersed) in water, and remain faithful to be saved. These and other points are covered in lesson 6, titled, “What Must I Do To Be Saved?”

Rung #7: The church. People need to know what the church is. For instance, they need to know that Christ only established one church. They need to know that there are many false views of the church. They need to know that the church is not an earthly organization, a social club, a political machine, a building, Christ, or a group of denominations. They need to know that the church is the collection of God’s people. And, they need to know about the universal and local church. These and other points are covered in lesson 7, titled, “What Is The Church?”

Rung #8: Christian living. People need to know what God expects of them after they become Christians. For instance, they need to know that a Christian is a disciple of Christ. They need to count the cost of discipleship. They need to know that it is possible to fall from grace. They need to learn to fully trust in God, completely devote themselves to God, walk in newness of life, be diligent, and persevere. These and other points are covered in lesson 8, titled, “What Does God Expect Of Me?”

Whenever you have these “rungs” in your mind and are preparing to teach someone, I have found that you can often identify where you need to start by observing and listening to the one you want to teach. And, since these truths build on each other, you should go to the most basic point they need to understand first – and start there. Some need to start at the very beginning. But, others are further along and may only need some brief review of some points. Then, you should remember that we all still have room to grow in all these areas of our knowledge – even you and I!

# Conducting A Bible Study

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Again, let me emphasize that there are many ways you can preach to someone. However, I believe that it is important to try for one-on-one or small group Bible studies. So, I want to help you consider how you can conduct such a Bible study.

## ***The benefits of personal Bible studies***

Before we consider how to actually conduct a Bible study of that nature, let me share some of the benefits of these kinds of studies. And, let me also say that there is a need for both public and private teaching. The problem comes whenever people leave one of these out of the equation. For instance, Christians and congregations that are only ever involved in public preaching during the assemblies of the church are going to miss a great many people who will not come to these assemblies! Both approaches were used in the New Testament – and should continue to be used today. For instance, Paul told the Ephesians elders that he taught “publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

While public preaching is useful in teaching many people at once, personal Bible studies are useful on a number of levels. For one, personal Bible studies are a way to reach people who do not attend the public preaching. Next, personal Bible studies allow the preacher to start at the right place for the prospect, whereas public preaching is much more general. Similarly, personal Bible studies also allow you to help the prospect make personal applications of the truth, answer specific questions, rephrase what you’ve said so that the student understands, give useful illustrations, etc. Then, personal Bible studies also provide an environment that helps the prospect not be hindered by the objections and responses of others. And, personal Bible studies can be arranged according to the prospect’s schedule, whereas he/she may not be able to make the designated time for the public preaching.

## ***What you need to conduct a Bible study***

Now, when you have arranged a Bible study, there are some basic things that you need to have in

order to conduct it. Consider a few basic points (in addition to the preparations we discussed earlier in this lesson and in this series).

(1) A Bible. You should not ask someone for a Bible study and then spend all/most of your time talking about politics, family, hobbies, etc. Instead, you are there to study the Bible and preach Jesus (see 2 Timothy 4:2). Make sure that you look up the Bible references together and take turns reading. Remember that God is the authority – not you! You may also need to take an extra Bible in case the one you are studying with does not have one (and you may need to help them find the passages).

(2) Someone to study with. In order to conduct a Bible study, you need someone to study with. I believe there are many people who are willing to study the Bible and discuss spiritual things. You just need to ask.

(3) A teacher. The focus of this lesson (and this series) has been to help *you* teach a Bible study and work to make disciples. But, if (for some reason) you do not feel that you should teach it, make sure you have someone who is qualified to teach. You can probably find someone in the congregation you assemble with. Or, you can utilize DVDs, written Bible studies, internet studies, etc. (note that if you use any of these, make sure you have made the necessary preparations – such as a DVD player, internet connection, etc.).

(4) A date and place. You need to arrange a place for this study and a time. Find a place and time where there will be the least amount of distractions (i.e. a time children are in school). I also suggest that the setting for the study is important in that it is good to sit across a table from each other. This allows you to look at the Bible together, take notes, etc. And, do be careful as to *who* you are meeting *where*. Don’t put yourself in a compromising situation – such as a man and woman meeting in a house by themselves. To avoid this, take someone along on the study with you or meet in a public place.

(5) A plan. Don’t go into the study with no idea about what you want to study. Although you may spend a good portion of the first study getting to know one another and learning where your starting point is, you should still have a plan mapped out and

be ready to get started. Don't allow the study to bounce from topic to topic without making any real progress. I have found the ladder I shared a few moments ago to be helpful in this. Then, if you have prepared some material in advance (i.e. a workbook), make sure you have brought an extra copy to share. Also, don't allow yourself to talk above the student's head. Use terms that will be familiar to the student. And, give the student time and opportunity to grow.

### ***Practice, practice, practice***

The work of preaching the gospel in personal Bible studies is a great and often neglected work. But, like anything you do in life, it does take practice. Yet, don't quit having Bible studies just because you didn't like how one Bible study went! Instead, as Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

Just as you improve at other things the more that you do them, you will get better as a preacher of God's word the more you do it – if you are looking for ways to improve. For instance, you will learn how to overcome objections, how to present difficult truths, how to begin a study, how to tell if the student has understood what you have taught, etc. But, if you quit, you will leave a great work undone in the kingdom of the Lord – and God will hold you accountable for this error!

## **Conclusion**

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Being a disciple-maker for Jesus Christ is about more than just inviting people to "come" to a church building. It is also about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ whenever there is opportunity to do so. But, preachers must be wise in how they present God's word and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Do not neglect this great work. For, as Romans 10:14 asks, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

## **Study Questions**

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What is the difference between inviting people to "come" and preaching the gospel?

### **1. Preparing Yourself To Preach**

Why is studying the Bible regularly important in preparing yourself to preach?

Why is prayer important in preparing yourself to preach?

Why is being patient, kind, and gentle important in preparing yourself to preach?

Why is being bold and courageous important in preparing yourself to preach?

Why is being humble important in preparing yourself to preach?

Why is being a truth-seeker important in preparing yourself to preach?

8.

## 2. Knowing Where To Start

Is everyone at the same or different places spiritually?

Why is this important to recognize where a person is before you start preaching? How can you learn where someone is spiritually?

How is learning the Bible like climbing a ladder? List the eight rungs suggested in this lesson and how they can help you learn where someone is spiritually.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

## 3. Conducting A Bible Study

What are some benefits of personal Bible studies?

What do you need to conduct a Bible study?

Why is practice important in conducting Bible studies?

## Go Make Disciples

# Lesson 6: Step 3

## Baptize

When Jesus gave the “Great Commission” (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16), He outlined four steps to accomplish the work of making disciples for Him. The first step is “Go.” The second step is “Preach.” The third step is “Baptize.” And, the fourth step is “Continued Teaching.”

In the last two lessons, we have been focused on the work of “going” to find prospects and then preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. Now, as we prepare to discuss the third step of the “Great Commission” (baptizing), we need to recognize how getting to this point is contingent on the first two. For, if you do not “go” and “preach,” there will not be anyone you will help be baptized into Christ!

To consider this, I want you to think about Jesus’ parable of the soils (read Luke 8:5-8, 11-15). As you do, you will want everyone you meet to be the good ground that receives the word and produces fruit. However, Jesus clearly teaches that there will be other kinds of soil that will not receive the word and/or produce fruit that pleases Him.

First, the majority of soil in this world will be the wayside soil that will never accept the word of God so as to be baptized. Then, of those who are obedient to the word and baptized, many of them will be unfruitful either because they will not endure the difficulties involved in living for Christ (like the rocky soil) or because they get distracted by the cares, riches, and pleasures of life (like the thorny soil).

Now, I want you to think about this parable as we prepare to talk about baptism because it should help you understand that if you want to increase the

number of people who are baptized and become fruitful followers of Jesus Christ, you will have to increase the amount that you do steps one and two! If you are only going and preaching sparingly, you will likely only baptize sparingly.

However, there are good chances that the number of baptisms will increase the more that you increase your efforts in going and preaching to the lost. Although there is certainly no guarantee that people will ever be obedient to the word of God, the likelihood of finding good soil will only increase when you are scattering as much seed as you possibly can. For, it is certain that there will be no harvest when the seed stays in the barn (Haggai 2:19)!

So, if you are being diligent to implement the things God’s word teaches about going and preaching, you will likely have opportunities to present the gospel’s plan of salvation to people during your lifetime and ask for their obedience. Although this is certainly one part of preaching, I want to focus on it more as we discuss baptizing someone in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As you consider the responsibility to baptize, perhaps you do not have much experience presenting someone with the gospel’s plan of salvation and asking for their obedience. Perhaps the seriousness of this task makes you very nervous. So, the thought of reaching this point leaves you with several questions – such as: How do I present the gospel’s plan of salvation? How do I help people make the right applications of that plan of salvation? How do I ask for their obedience? How do I overcome the objections people have? Therefore, I hope this lesson provides you some guidance as you consider the third step in this disciple-making process.

## Teaching The Plan Of Salvation

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Although baptism is a crucial element to salvation, it is certainly not the only thing God has required for salvation. And, even with baptism, there are many who do not properly understand the



subject. Therefore, you will need to learn how to teach the gospel's plan of salvation. As you think about these points from the perspective of the teaching ladder discussed in the previous lesson, these are primarily rungs four through six. We have to make sure that the prospect understands these points in order for their baptisms to please God.

### ***Teaching the need for salvation***

The one you are studying the Bible with must come to the realization that he/she has sinned and of what his/her sin has done to his/her relationship with God. So, as you preach the gospel, you must make sure that sin is seen as mankind's greatest enemy – and is the common enemy of all mankind. For, you should not make the prospect feel as if he/she is the only sinner in the world – or even in the room. Instead, you can make it clear in your teaching that you had also sinned against God (without needing to get specific about the sins you had committed).

Reading from Romans 3 may suffice to make the point. Verse 10 says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (continue reading through verse 18 if necessary). Then, verse 23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Emphasize that the fact we have all sinned (who have reached the age of accountability)!

To "sin" means that we have all violated God's law. Actually, the Greek word for "sin" is an archery term. So, you might draw a circle with some smaller circles inside (representing a target). Then, help them visualize an arrow that misses its target could accurately be said to "sin" (miss the mark). In the same way, we "sin" whenever we miss the mark God has set for our lives in the pages of the New Testament. For, He has told us some things He wants us to do and some things He does *not* want us to do. Therefore, we "sin" whenever our lives go beyond His mark by doing things He does not want us to do (often called sins of "commission") and whenever our lives come up short of His mark by not doing the things He wants us to do (often called sins of "omission").

However, the prospect must understand that sinning against God is far more serious than just missing a target with an arrow. You must help

him/her recognize the great spiritual consequences for sinning against God. Romans 6:23 is an excellent passage to use. It says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This "death" is spiritual separation from God. And, if a person's life ends in this condition of spiritual death, he/she will experience the "second death" in the lake of fire the Scriptures call Hell (see Revelation 21:8). And, this is not just the consequences of "really bad" sins – but of every sin a person commits!

To illustrate this, I like to draw a simple picture. Draw two straight horizontal lines, each with jagged edges that break downward on the page – representing land that has broken. Above one side, draw a stick person representing the one who is in sin. Write "God" on the other side. The point is that sin has separated a person from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). And, this is serious because there is nothing that the sinner can do to earn his/her salvation. There is no way that any person could bridge the gap between himself/herself and God that has been created by sin.

Spiritual death is what every sinner has earned/deserved (it is called the "wages of sin"). Therefore, it is important to emphasize that no amount of good works (including baptism) could restore a sinner to a right relationship with God. As Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, we simply cannot earn salvation after we have sinned against God. And, if this is where the Bible story ended, we would all be hopelessly lost in sin and headed for eternity in Hell's fire!

### ***Teaching God's part in salvation***

Thanks be to God that this is *not* where the story ends! In fact, Romans 6:23 goes on to explain that "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." So, God has provided the gift of eternal salvation in Heaven that no sinner deserves to experience! And, this gift has been provided through Jesus Christ. This is the first half of God's plan of salvation. In this part, you will demonstrate that God has done for the sinner what he/she could not do for himself/herself.

Take some time to walk the student through the things Jesus Christ has done for him/her in order

that he/she might be saved from his/her sins. John 3:16 provides an excellent summary of His sacrifice (and is a verse the prospect has probably heard before). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” So, through Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus gave those who were lost in sin two wonderful gifts.

First, He gave them the opportunity to “not perish” in their sins that they do deserve to experience (i.e. avoid eternal punishment in Hell). God *not* giving people what they *do* deserve is often called God’s mercy. Second, He gave them the opportunity to “have everlasting life” they do not deserve to experience (i.e. in Heaven). God *giving* people what they do *not* deserve is often called God’s grace. And, God’s love has been demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to provide grace and mercy for all sinners (see Ephesians 2:1-10).

One point I especially like to emphasize is the one made in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Jesus Christ was as rich as rich could be when He lived in Heaven. However, He *chose* to leave Heaven and come to this earth (becoming poor). The reason He did this is so that those who were spiritually destitute in sin (the prospect, yourself, and all sinners) could become spiritually rich so as to live in Heaven one day. Therefore, everything Jesus Christ endured on this earth was the product of this choice. He left the place where there was no pain, sorrow, suffering, evil, and death in order to come here and experience those things so that sinners could be saved through Him!

As you consider all of these things, you should make sure the prospect is familiar with some of the specifics of Christ’s life, death, burial, and resurrection. If they are not, walk them through a summary of the Biblical account. Make sure they realize why Jesus lived, how He lived, the sufferings He endured, the death He died, and that He was raised from the dead. If they are familiar with the account, perhaps you can just offer some brief

reminders and make sure they understand the Scriptures accurately.

As you make this point, come back to the picture you drew representing the separation sin has caused between the sinner and God. Now, draw a cross that bridges the gap between the two. On the vertical post of the cross, I like to write, “Jesus Christ.” For, He is the one who provides the bridge between the sinner and God. It is through Him that the sinner can be reconciled to God and have everlasting life in Heaven.

### ***Teaching man’s part in salvation***

Now, the sinner must recognize that although God has done for him/her what he/she could not do for himself/herself, there is still something that God has required for salvation. Look at Romans 6:23 again. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Notice that the gift of eternal life God has provided is located “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So, we must search the Scriptures and do whatever God requires to come into Jesus Christ!

You should emphasize that God did for the sinner what the sinner could not do for himself/herself. But, He has left the sinner with personal responsibility in his/her salvation. As you come back to your illustration now depicting Christ’s cross as the bridge between the sinner and God, you should emphasize that God has left it up to the sinner to cross the bridge! Just because there is a bridge doesn’t mean a person will be saved. Just believing the bridge exists doesn’t mean a person will be saved. Instead, every sinner must take the necessary steps to cross the bridge! So, on the horizontal piece of the cross, I like to write, “Steps of Salvation.” Then, above the horizontal piece, I like to write out each step as we walk through this part of the study.

Now, before you identify what these steps are, take a moment (if you have not already done so) to ask the prospect if he/she believes himself/herself to already be a Christian and in a saved condition. If the answer is “yes,” ask what he/she was taught to do in order to be saved. Write that on another sheet of paper. Clearly distinguish where salvation came relative to him/her being baptized (if he/she has been

baptized). I usually list out what the individual tells me and draw a thick line representing the point he/she thought he/she was saved. For instance, many who have been associated with “protestant” (or, “evangelical”) churches will tell you that they were told to do the following: Hear God’s word, Believe in Jesus, Repent, Confess that they are sinners, and Ask Jesus into their hearts through prayer (i.e. the “Sinner’s Prayer). This is the point many believe they were saved. Then, they may or may not have been baptized after this.

The importance of getting this on paper *before* you present the gospel’s plan of salvation is because many people will convince themselves that they have done what you are about to present to them (when they really haven’t). So, after writing down what you have been told, express your appreciation for their answer and move on to considering what the Bible has to say. Make sure he/she understands that you are only interested in believing, teaching, and practicing what God’s word teaches.

The first step of salvation is hearing God’s word. You can consider passages like Romans 10:17 and Acts 18:8. This point usually doesn’t pose too much difficulty. People understand that someone cannot be obedient to a message he/she has never heard. So, just emphasize that he/she has been hearing you preach God’s word and now is hearing the plan of salvation.

The second step of salvation is believing Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Involved in this is believing who He is (which necessitates a belief in God) and what Jesus has done to save people from sin. You can consider passages like John 8:24, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9-10, and Hebrews 11:6. On this point, it is often necessary to demonstrate that although mentally accepting the Bible truths about Jesus Christ is essential to salvation, a person is *not* saved by “faith only.” James 2:14-26 is helpful in making the point (particularly noting verse 24). Also, Matthew 7:21-23 can be used to help people see that many who profess Jesus as Lord and do some good things in His name will be lost in Hell because they do not obey all that God says.

The third step of salvation is repenting of past sin. You can consider passages like Luke 13:3, Acts

2:38, Acts 3:19, and Acts 17:30. Then, you may ask the one you are studying with what it means to “repent”? Make sure that he/she recognizes repentance as looking on his/her past sins with abhorrence (regretting that he/she had ever committed those sins) and determining to live differently in the future by living for God. Emphasize that repentance is not the actual change in a person’s life. Instead, repentance is the change in a person’s mind that will lead to a change in life. So, he/she does not have to make all the necessary changes to his/her life before he/she can be baptized. Instead, he/she must make the determination to make the necessary changes! If necessary, help the individual identify sins he/she needs to repent of (remembering what every sin does to his/her relationship with God).

The fourth step of salvation is confessing Christ. You can consider passages like Matthew 10:32-33, Acts 8:37, and Romans 10:9-10. Of these, Matthew 10:32-33 is not just applicable to a confession prior to a person being forgiven of sin – but also to the ongoing need to confess Jesus Christ throughout life. Then, Acts 8:37 is a good example of a man who made a confession before being baptized, saying, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” However, recognize that this verse is not found in some of the Greek manuscripts. Therefore, it is only given as a footnote in many Bible translations. Regardless, it is in perfect harmony with what is taught in Romans 10:9-10. This passage clearly teaches the need to confess Jesus as Lord with the mouth as a condition for salvation. Then, emphasize that the nature of the required confession is *not* a confession that he/she is a sinner (though this is acknowledged in repentance). Instead, it is a confession of the Lord Jesus. The Ethiopian’s confession in Acts 8:37 is a good way to make this confession (though it does not have to be made in that way).

The fifth step of salvation is baptism. You can consider passages like Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:26-27, and 1 Peter 3:20-21. In addition to demonstrating that baptism is only properly accomplished by an immersion in water (see Romans 6:3-4, Acts 8:38-39, and Matthew 3:16-17), you will need to demonstrate that God has given baptism as a

requirement for salvation. This is why baptizing is such an important step in the disciple-making process!

As you consider this with the individual, I like to illustrate the point this way. Draw a vertical line on a page. Below the line, write the words “Salvation,” “Forgiveness,” and “In Christ.” This line represents the point at which an individual is saved, forgiven of sins, and in Christ. Then, walk through each of the passages on baptism and make the student decide which side of the line baptism falls on. For instance, Mark 16:16 says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” So, does Jesus teach that baptism comes before the point of salvation – or after it? Be prepared for the wrong answers at first. Therefore, be prepared to gently challenge their thinking and have them look at the verse again. If the individual is honest with the passages, you will have a whole list of passages about baptism on the left side of the line – demonstrating that baptism is essential to each one of those things.

In addition, consider Galatians 3:26-27. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Not only does this verse go on the left side of the line, but its truth can also be illustrated another way. Draw a circle and a stick figure outside the circle. In the circle, write “Christ.” Underneath that word, write “All spiritual blessings” (Ephesians 1:3), “Forgiveness” (Ephesians 1:7), and “Salvation” (2 Timothy 2:10; Romans 6:23). Emphasize that these are the things that are only found “in Christ.” Now, ask, “How does someone come into Christ – where all spiritual blessings, forgiveness, and salvation are?” Galatians 3:27 clearly indicates that a person is “baptized into Christ.” Therefore, he/she cannot be in Christ without being “baptized into Christ.” So, draw a line from the person into the circle and write “baptized into” above the line.

As you illustrate these things, you may have to help the one you are studying with recognize that being baptized after he/she believed he/she was saved and a Christian did not actually obey God’s command to be baptized. For, a person cannot be taught wrong and baptized right! Then, if there are any doubts that the individual has been baptized

according to the teachings of Scripture, emphasize that there is no harm in doing it again to be sure.

At the point of baptism, an individual is saved. However, the sixth step of salvation is then to remain faithful to Jesus Christ for the duration of a person’s life. You can use passages like Revelation 2:10 and Galatians 5:4 to emphasize the need to remain faithful and the fact that it is possible to fall from God’s grace.

On this point, you need to help the individual understand some basics about committing himself/herself to Christ. Remember that Jesus taught a person to count the cost of discipleship (see Luke 14:25-33). So, help him/her recognize some of the things that are involved in living for Christ. And, also help the individual recognize that becoming a Christian does *not* mean he/she will never sin again. However, help him/her recognize that if he/she does sin after becoming a Christian, God has provided a way to be forgiven again (by repenting, confessing the sin to God, and asking God for forgiveness, see Acts 8:22 and 1 John 1:9).

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## Asking For A Decision

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As you preach the gospel to people, you must put them in a position to make a decision about what they hear. Every step in God’s plan of salvation requires a “yes” or “no” answer. For, God’s plan of salvation is not just some story that should make people feel good. Instead, God has required people to actually obey His plan of salvation (which requires decisions to be made). Therefore, let’s consider some things that should help you ask for a decision when you have presented the gospel’s plan of salvation.

### ***The need for patience***

I have emphasized the need for patience a couple of times in this study already. Now, I want to do it again. Remember that 2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

The fact is that many people will never be obedient to the plan of salvation – no matter how clearly it is presented. They may simply be like the wayside soil. Others may not be receptive to it as first, but also may continue to give you opportunities to plant and water seeds of truth in their hearts (as 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 teaches).

Rather than becoming quickly discouraged and moving on to another person, make sure you exercise the necessary patience. The fact of the matter is that the gospel's plan of salvation requires everyone to make changes to the ways they think, believe, and act. Some simply embrace these changes faster than others. So, some people may respond immediately to the plan of salvation, while you may need to continue to water those seeds for many weeks, months, or years before they will fully take root in the hearts of others.

For instance, not only does the gospel's plan of salvation make people decide about priorities and sinful things, but even deeply held beliefs can be impacted. For instance, suppose someone has thought he/she has been a Christian for many years as part of a denomination. Now, you are presenting him/her with information suggesting he/she has never been a Christian and is part of a church God does not approve. This can be a difficult truth to accept without giving a lot of thought to it. And, some people never get past these things.

Therefore, no matter what the situation is, make sure you are showing patience. Yet, you also must press for a decision and boldly demonstrate why it is so important to obey God's word. For, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 clearly demonstrates that those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will experience God's vengeance and suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, being separated from God forever.

### ***Draw necessary conclusions***

Typically, I like to help an individual reach a point where he/she is firmly convicted of his/her need to be Scripturally baptized before I help him/her make some difficult conclusions (if there are any others that need to be made). I do this because if he/she will not accept the truths about baptism, then

he/she will probably not accept any more difficult truths. Then, I also do this so that I am not cut off from the study before I have an opportunity to present the entire plan of salvation to him/her.

There are times you will need to address some difficult truth before you baptize a person. For, it is often easier to address these things before the person is baptized than afterward – and this is part of that person counting the cost of discipleship. For example, a person who is in an unscriptural marriage or relationship needs to repent of it. It is common for people today to either be in an unscriptural marriage or living with a boyfriend/girlfriend outside of marriage. If either is the case, that individual will need to be taught why the relationship is sinful and must be changed in order to please God. This individual will also need to be taught that he/she must not allow anything or anyone to come before Christ (see Matthew 10:34-39 and Luke 14:26).

Or, there are many times whenever teaching someone the gospel requires an individual to change the church he/she attends. Perhaps this individual attends a denominational church that is not part of the true church he/she can read about in the Bible. Surely, this kind of change may be difficult to accept at first. Yet, you will have to help this person understand the difference(s) between the church he/she attends and the church Christ has established (along with the blueprint of local churches).

Then, another example of a difficult conclusion that the prospect may reach is that those who have not and/or will not obey the truth you are teaching will spend eternity in Hell. This may include a loved one who has died. Or, this may include all a person's friends and relatives in the church he/she has been attending. Yet, you should emphasize what God says and the need for that person to obey the gospel in order to help others be saved. And, even if a loved one has died, Luke 16:19-31 shows that our loved ones who are lost in sin would want us to do what is right so that we can be saved.

Regardless of what the difficult truth is, you should have the heart of a shepherd and lead the one you are studying with to the truths contained in God's word. As 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, don't

quarrel. Instead, be gentle, patient, and humble. Your only goal is to help the sinner come to his/her senses and lead him/her out of Satan's trap to the salvation that is found in Christ Jesus!

To do this, you will also need to be bold and fear God more than men. While it may be uncomfortable and even fearful to teach the truth and help people arrive at the proper conclusions, you must not allow these things to stand in your way of teaching what needs taught! Like the apostles, you must speak God's word with boldness (see Acts 4:31). This means that you must not hold back from saying what needs to be said in the way it needs to be said.

Furthermore, you must not fear how someone will react more than you fear God. When Jesus sent His apostles out to teach, He told them, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Whether you think a person will accept the difficult truth or reject it, you must preach it all the same! This is preaching God's word "in season" and "out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)! And, you never really know how someone will respond until you teach him/her.

### ***Three possible responses***

As you teach the gospel in hopes of baptizing the individual into Christ, you will reach a point at which it is time to ask for a decision. And, you need to recognize that sometimes the decision will be "yes," sometimes it will be "no," and sometimes it will be, "I want to hear some more/I need time to think about it." But, these are the same responses to the gospel you can read about throughout the pages of the Bible.

For instance, consider when the apostle Paul was teaching in Athens (see Acts 17:16-34). Acts 17:32-34 says, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter.' So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

Even Jesus and the apostles had these same responses to the gospel's message. And, you should expect the same thing. So, always remember that the sower is not responsible for how the soil responds to the seed. The sower's job is just to sow the seed – and expect that the different results will be determined by factors outside of his/her control. Therefore, if the person you are studying with is never baptized, do not take this as failure on your part!

### ***Overcoming objections***

Whenever you present the gospel to the individual you are studying with and ask for a decision, you should expect some people to offer some kind of objection to what you have taught. These objections should not be ignored. When these objections are raised in an honest and sincere way, the prospect is telling you what hinders him/her from being baptized. So, listen to the objection and do your best to lead the individual past the objection.

Some objections may concern the necessity of baptism for salvation. For instance, some may object, "Jesus never said, 'he who does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned' in Mark 16:16." "Peter commanded people to be baptized because they had already been forgiven in Acts 2:38 as an outward sign of an inward grace." "The thief on the cross was saved without being baptized." "Baptism is a work and we cannot earn salvation." "God only requires belief for salvation."

Or, some may raise objections as to why they are not obedient to the gospel on a larger level. For instance, some may object, "I'm already living a morally good life." "I'll get around to it some day." "I don't want to go to church with a bunch of hypocrites." "I know that I'll just mess up and sin again." "I don't want to change." "I don't want to condemn my loved ones to Hell."

The fact is that there are many objections people may raise to the truth you present them with and the actions they should take. However, rather than growing frustrated with them, stay patient and help them work through their objections. Use their objections as opportunities to study the Bible with them more. Learn what it is they are objecting to and

search the Scriptures together for the answer. Encourage them to accept the Bible's teaching as the final answer. And, if you do not know how to answer the objection at a particular moment, don't be afraid to say that you will have to study the matter further and get back with them about it.

### ***When you should baptize***

Now, the final question I want to consider in this lesson that (I hope) has prepared you to baptize people so that they can be disciples of Christ is: How do I know when someone is ready to be baptized? To answer this question, simply consider all that we have been discussing in the plan of salvation.

Here are the "prerequisites" to Bible baptism. First, an individual must have committed sin. Second, an individual must be able to hear God's word and have it taught to him/her. Third, an individual must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Fourth, an individual must repent of his/her sin. Fifth, an individual must confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Sixth, an individual must accept the Bible's teachings about baptism. Seventh, an individual must be committed to living for Christ in the future. If all these things are in place, then that person should be baptized into Christ immediately!

## **Conclusion**

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Baptism is an essential step in the disciple-making process. So, you should exercise patience in teaching and do everything you can to help someone be obedient to the gospel's plan of salvation and be baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Although few will make this commitment to Christ, there is no greater feeling than knowing that you have played a small (but important) role in helping someone be forgiven of his/her sins! Therefore, stay committed to the work of planting and watering the seed, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)!

## **Study Questions**

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How can you (potentially) increase the number of people you will help be baptized?

### **1. Teaching The Plan Of Salvation**

How should you teach people the need for salvation?

How should you teach people God's part in salvation?

How should you teach people man's part in salvation?

Discuss each of the following steps:

1. Hear –

2. Believe –

3. Repent –

4. Confess Christ –

5. Be baptized –

6. Remain faithful –

## **2. Asking For A Decision**

Why is patience important in asking for a decision?

How should you help people draw the necessary conclusions?

What are some possible responses to the gospel?

How can you help people overcome objections? Give some sample objections you should prepare for.

When should you baptize someone?



Go Make Disciples

# Lesson 7: Step 4

## Continued Teaching

When people consider the “Great Commission” (as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16), they tend to think about the three steps we have been considering over the previous three lessons. The first step is “Go.” The second step is “Preach.” The third step is “Baptize.”

Since baptism is the point at which the Scriptures demonstrate someone becomes a disciple of Christ, the focus of the disciple-maker often shifts at this point to someone else who is not yet a disciple. However, this is a great error. For, Jesus’ “Great Commission” that was focused on making disciples for Him did *not* stop at baptism. Instead, there was a fourth step involved.

Listen to Matthew 28:18-20 again. “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Continued teaching is this fourth step. Jesus knew that people still had a lot of learning and growing left to do whenever they became disciples of His. Therefore, the disciple-maker’s work is never done with an individual. True disciple-makers will not just be focused on helping people become disciples of Christ. Instead, they will also be focused on helping those who have become disciples really live as disciples should!

You can see this in Jesus’ parable of the soils (as I referenced in the previous lesson, from Luke

8:5-8, 11-15). While most people in the world will never believe and obey the gospel so as to become disciples of Christ, consider that there are three types of soil (hearts) in this parable that do become disciples – albeit with different results. So, the disciple-maker’s work will be to help those who have become disciples become fruitful in Christ’s service.

Jesus speaks of the rocky soil as those who “when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away” (verse 13). Next, Jesus speaks of the thorny soil as those who “when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity” (verse 14). Finally, Jesus speaks of the good soil as those who “having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience” (verse 15).

As you consider these three groups of people who all receive the gospel’s initial teachings to become disciples of Christ, you can surely see that they are *not* all equally pleasing to God. Although it is up to the individual to decide what kind of soil he/she chooses to be, those who are disciple-makers should do their best to help every disciple be the good ground that produces fruit for Jesus Christ. But, this will not happen just by baptizing someone and then leaving that person in order to go help someone else become a disciple! Instead, the seed must be both planted and watered, continually being cultivated, in order for it to produce fruit (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

As you consider this fourth, ongoing step involved in making disciples for Jesus, perhaps you do not know how to help those who are disciples become fruitful. Perhaps the seriousness of this work makes you nervous and you have some questions about how to do the work. Questions like: Where do I begin? How do I get started? How do I actually accomplish this work? How do I get someone to let me work with him/her in this way? Therefore, I hope this lesson provides you some guidance as you consider the fourth step in the disciple-making process.

# Viewing Baptism As The Beginning, Not The End

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In order to get started accomplishing this work, you need to experience a shift in your mindset. You must go from thinking baptism is the *end* of the disciple-making process, to seeing it as just the beginning. But, this is not just true for the one who has recently become a disciple. Instead, it is also true about you – and about everyone who is a disciple. So, there is no lack of prospects in this phase of the disciple-making work either. Therefore, you should accept help from other disciples of Christ (who want to help you be a better disciple) as well as look for opportunities to help others. As you do this, consider a few things baptism is just the beginning of.

## ***The beginning of a new life***

Whenever someone becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, it really is an opportunity to rejoice! In fact, Jesus taught that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10)! This is because an individual who was dead and lost in sin has just been given new life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

So, this individual has experienced a new birth. This individual has a new relationship with God. This individual has a new Master. This individual has new priorities. This individual is working to develop a new character. This individual is working to develop new habits. This individual is working to learn new religious practices. This individual is trying to produce new fruit. And, this individual has new hope.

Now, while this new life is a great cause of rejoicing, disciple-makers also must recognize that “new” things are not always easy. And, without the proper guidance, the old can creep back in – either quickly or slowly. For, Satan does not give up and admit defeat whenever someone is baptized. Instead, he just has to work that much harder at them.

## ***The beginning of new opportunities***

Whenever someone becomes a disciple of Christ, there are wonderful new opportunities. For, the Bible is full of examples of how God used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things for Him. Think about Moses, Gideon, David, Esther, Peter, Paul, and Timothy.

Jesus wants to use every disciple to produce spiritual fruit in His service that will work to glorify God. Matthew’s account of the parable of the soils says, “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23). So, every disciple of Christ is capable of producing fruit in Christ’s service (though every disciple will produce a different amount of fruit than the others – because each one has different abilities and opportunities).

Just imagine the possibilities if every disciple of Jesus Christ worked to produce all the fruit he/she can produce. Imagine the people who could be taught the gospel! Imagine the disciples who could be strengthened! Imagine the erring who could be corrected! Imagine the good works that could be done in the Lord’s name! But, it is very easy for disciples of Christ to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life so as to either fall away from Christ, fail to produce any mature fruit, or fail to produce the kind of fruit they are capable of producing. So, every disciple of Christ can use the help, encouragement, and strength provided by other disciples to do better in Christ’s service!

## ***The beginning of new challenges***

Whenever someone becomes a disciple of Christ, there are new challenges. A disciple’s life is not always easy. In fact, there are times it is downright difficult. Jesus even said that “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).

First, those who are Christians will continue to experience the same kind of challenges that all people face while living on this earth. They will get sick. They will get hurt. Their loved ones will get sick and die. There will be accidents. There will be

surgeries. There will be pain. And, there will be suffering associated with living in a fallen world. So, disciples will need support and encouragement through these times.

Second, there will be new challenges that are directly associated with a disciple living for the Lord. There will be new temptations that must be resisted. There will be changes that must be made to the disciple's character. There will be old habits that must be broken and new habits that must be created. There will be old relationships that will work to pull the disciple back into the old ways. There will be some old relationships that will be broken. There will be persecution. So, disciples will need support and encouragement through these times.

### ***The beginning of a growing process***

Whenever someone becomes a disciple of Christ, there is a growing process that has only just begun. For example, whenever a baby is born, it is immature and dependent on others. Parents must carefully and diligently nurture the child and train the child so that it can become more and more independent. And, this growth and development continues for as long as an individual lives.

It is the same way spiritually. Whenever an individual is baptized, the Scriptures call this being "born again" (see John 3:3-6). And, 1 Peter 2:2 records an instruction to Christians, saying, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." Hebrews 5:12-14 teaches that there is a time whenever disciples should have matured beyond the "milk" of the word (the "first principles" of God's teachings) and are able to handle "solid food" (the more difficult teachings of God's word). But, not every Christian has grown and matured in the proper way.

So, those who are disciple-makers should be concerned about helping other disciples grow and mature. For, whenever someone is first baptized, he/she may have no idea how to live as a disciple. He/she may only know the basic truths of God's word. He/she may not know all the things God expects from him/her. He/she may not know how to make certain changes. He/she may not know some changes that need to be made. He/she may need

guidance, leadership, and encouragement to reach the next level in his/her spiritual maturity.

### ***Every disciple can use help along the way!***

You see, baptism is clearly just the beginning of the disciple-making process – not the end! Every disciple of Christ (including yourself) can use help in becoming the disciple Jesus wants him/her to become. Every disciple can use teaching. Every disciple can use encouragement. Every disciple can use some loving correction.

Listen to Ephesians 4:11-16 to see how God wants all His disciples to be working together to help the whole body of believers be built up and strengthened in the faith. "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."

Take a few moments to consider the disciples who are around you. You are not solely responsible for the spiritual growth and development of each one. Instead, each individual is ultimately responsible for himself/herself. And, your other brothers and sisters are also responsible for helping them. But, you certainly do have a role to fulfill in helping them. You will simply need to consider how you can help each disciple around you to the best of your ability.

# Disciples Helping Disciples Be Disciples

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Fortunately, God has not left disciples of Christ alone in trying to live for Him. Instead, disciples have been given the responsibility to help one another live like disciples should. So, there are many “one another” responsibilities given in the Scriptures. And, I contend that it will be by fulfilling these “one another” responsibilities that disciples will accomplish the work of helping disciples be disciples. Consider some of the responsibilities disciples of Christ have been given toward “one another” (though this is not an exhaustive list).

## ***Live as members of one another***

Disciple-makers have to have a second major shift in their thinking. Not only do disciple-makers have to shift their minds to recognize that baptism is just the beginning, but they also have to shift their minds to recognize how interconnected God wants them to be with their brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. For, the Scriptures picture such a close relationship between those who are Christians that it says they are members of one another.

Listen to Romans 12:4-5: “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” And, Ephesians 4:25 says, “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.”

The relationship you ought to have with your brothers and sisters should be so close that you are members of each other. Your life is interwoven with their lives. So, you rejoice when they rejoice and weep when they weep (Romans 12:15). You care deeply about their struggles. You have a personal interest in their spiritual development. You aren’t strangers to one another. Instead, you really know them and want to help them any way possible.

Now, this point really prepares us to consider the “one another” responsibilities we have toward

other disciples. But, consider who these responsibilities apply to. The fact is that every disciple has every one of these responsibilities toward every other disciple he/she has the opportunity to fulfill them toward. So, like with everything the disciple-maker does, you must be watching for doors of opportunity to be opened in these areas.

## ***Love one another***

God has commanded those who are Christians to love others. In fact, the Christian is expected to even love his/her enemies (see Matthew 5:43-48). So, it should come as no great surprise that Christians have the responsibility to love their brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 Peter 2:17 commands Christians to “Love the brotherhood.” 1 Peter 4:8 says, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’” The kind of love God requires of those who are Christians is a self-giving and sacrificial kind of love that always seeks to do whatever is in the other person’s best interest. It is not just a love that is expressed in “word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18)!

So, disciple-makers should be focused on their brothers and sisters. Your daily life should not just consider yourself and your physical family. Instead, you should consider what you might be able to do to help the members of your spiritual family (i.e. your brothers and sisters in Christ) live as disciples of Christ. And, even though doing something to help your brother or sister may cost you time, energy, money, etc. that you could use on something else, sacrificing these things to help your brethren is what loving your brothers and sisters in Christ really looks like! After all, is it really love if you are not sacrificing anything of yourself in order to help them live for Christ? Therefore, you need to develop a daily focus on helping your brothers and sisters in Christ in any way possible, utilizing the opportunities of the day.

## ***Receive one another***

As you can already see, God wants His disciples to be part of a larger community of

disciples. He recognizes that it is even more difficult for His disciples to live faithfully for Him if they are all alone in this world full of temptations, trials, and persecutions. Unfortunately, some disciples actually make this harder on other disciples by failing to receive one another.

Romans 15:7 commands, “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” Although some disciples allow past personal or family squabbles, economic or social barriers, personal opinions and traditions, and such things prevent them from receiving one another, God’s expectation is actually quite simple. He says that disciples are to receive one another, just as Christ has received us all.

So, disciples of Christ are not permitted to put barriers between themselves and *any* of their brothers or sisters who are living according to the will of Christ. As a result, no disciple who is trying to serve God should ever be shunned by his/her brethren. Instead, every disciple should be trying to help, encourage, and strengthen every other disciple. There must be no artificial barriers placed between any disciples of Christ. For, these barriers will only work to help Satan accomplish his goal of leading disciples of Christ away from Christ. And, these barriers will not just be social barriers. But, they will also prevent disciples from accomplishing their other “one another” responsibilities that will help their brothers and sisters serve the Lord.

### ***Encourage one another***

Fulfilling your “one another” responsibilities goes beyond what should be common-sense conduct between disciples (such as loving and receiving one another). Instead, there are also spiritual responsibilities involved. For instance, the disciple-maker will be looking for any possible opportunity to encourage other disciples to follow Christ.

Listen to Hebrews 3:12-13. “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” And, Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

So, both inside the assemblies of the local church and outside the assemblies, you should be looking for opportunities to encourage brothers and sisters in Christ. Notice carefully that disciple-makers should be interested in offering some kind of encouragement to other disciples every day! For, the disciple-maker recognizes that Satan is working to tear their brothers and sisters down every day. Every day presents its own set of challenges and struggles. Every day presents another opportunity to become complacent in Christ’s service. Every day has its own temptations. Every day has good works that could be done. Every day presents an opportunity to grow and mature in Christ. Therefore, disciple-makers should find some way to encourage a fellow disciple every day (since disciples should be so connected with each other that they interact with other disciples every day)! And, the way to encourage others to serve God is through the teachings of His word, which is able to build people up in the faith (Acts 20:32).

### ***Bear one another’s burdens***

As we saw earlier in this study, disciples of Christ face many burdens as they live. These burdens include the typical burdens all people face as they live in a fallen world that is subject to pain, suffering, and death. And, disciples of Christ face added burdens that are directly associated with living for Christ.

Listen to Galatians 6:2. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” No disciple should be left alone in holding up the burdens of life. Although every disciple has his/her own burdens, the community of disciples should be so interconnected that you could picture disciples with inter-locked arms, trying to hold up the burdens of the others!

Disciple-makers need to recognize that every disciple of Christ is burdened in some way. Although not all burdens are equal in the weight and pressure they put on someone, no burden should be taken lightly. For, Satan wants to use these burdens to press so hard on disciples of Christ that they either seek an

easier way to live, become distracted in their service, or feel as if they are all alone in trying to withstand the pressures. So, you should let your brethren know that you are there to listen and help in any way you can – and actively watch for opportunities to do something that will help lift the loads others are carrying.

### ***Teach one another***

Although there is more involved in disciples helping other disciples be disciples than just teaching, certainly teaching is involved. For instance, Jesus commissioned His apostles to go, preach, baptize, and then continue “teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). All disciples should view themselves as being part of a life-long continuing education program in which all disciples are working to help all other disciples. Again, there should be an interconnectedness about this work wherein each Christian learns from the others.

Colossians 3:16 explains how disciples can accomplish this work through spiritual songs. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” And, listen again to 2 Timothy 2:2 (as we have considered earlier in this series). “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Perhaps Titus 2:1-8 is the best picture of this point. “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be

condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”

Every disciple-maker should be looking for opportunities to teach God’s word to other disciples, remind each other of spiritual truths, and warn each other of the need to follow God’s word. Particularly, those who are more mature in the faith ought to be looking for opportunities to take less mature disciples “under their wing” and bring them along in the faith – just like Paul was like a father to Timothy in the faith. For, if disciple-makers fail to teach other disciples, how will they ever grow and mature in the faith so as to produce spiritual fruit and help others be disciples? Disciples should determine to be like iron that sharpens iron, teaching and warning one another so as to become more knowledgeable, mature, and capable in the faith of the gospel (see Proverbs 27:17).

### ***Correct one another***

All disciples of Christ must recognize that they can (and will) still sin against God. And, whenever other disciples are aware of the sin their brothers and sisters have committed, God has given them responsibility to correct the erring. For, there is no difference (in terms of eternal destination) between those who have never become Christians and those who have turned back to sin after becoming Christians. Therefore, the disciple-maker is always looking for an opportunity to say or do something that can help turn someone who is lost in sin to Jesus Christ.

Consider Galatians 6:1. “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” James 5:19-20 says, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” And, 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

Disciple-makers have a definite work to do in this area when they see their brothers and sisters who

fall back into sin. But, they also need to be careful and use wisdom in each situation. For, disciple-makers must make sure they get the whole story before accusing someone of living in sin and do not rush to judgments, even giving the benefit of the doubt where doubt exists (see John 7:24 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). And, some situations will require a softer approach than others (see Jude 1:22-23). Everything must be done with love and in the best interest of the soul that is lost. The disciple-maker must also try to correct a fallen brother or sister as he/she would want to be corrected if in the same situation (according to Jesus' "Golden Rule" in Matthew 7:12).

### ***Forgive one another***

In all the work of making disciples, forgiveness may not be the first thing on your mind. However, it certainly should not be forgotten. For, failing to forgive those who come or return to the Lord on His terms can be a great discouragement for those disciples of Christ.

Ephesians 4:32 commands, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." And, Jesus said, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4).

Every disciple-maker should put himself/herself in the position of the one who comes to God for forgiveness. That individual realizes he/she has sinned. He/she wishes he/she would have acted differently and never committed the sin. But, it is too late to change what has been done. So, he/she is now in need of forgiveness from God and anyone else he/she has sinned against. Satan wants that individual to feel as if he/she is always shackled to the past life of sin he/she has lived and has no hope of changing. Certainly, disciples of Christ should be actively working to help their brethren overcome that obstacle – not adding to it!

### ***Serve one another***

Disciples should have such care for their brothers and sisters in Christ that they will look for every opportunity available to serve each other. The kind of service that is provided for others could be physical in nature – or it could be spiritual. Regardless, it should be clear that your service is done out of love for the other and for Christ and not in search of any kind of reward for yourself. For, it has often been said that folks don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!

Consider Galatians 5:13. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Galatians 6:10 says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

The power of serving others is not just in helping someone with something. Instead, it really shows people you care about them and are thinking about their needs. People need to feel as if they really do matter to others. They need to feel that whether or not they serve the Lord matters to others. They need to know they are not alone. So, by serving people, you show them that they are so important to you that you sacrifice your own time, money, resources, energy, etc. in order to help them live for Christ!

### ***Be hospitable to one another***

I have intentionally saved this point for last. For, I want you to consider how you (as a disciple-maker looking to help your brothers and sisters in Christ live as disciples) will actually accomplish your work. Do you suppose that just attending the assemblies of the local church will be sufficient? Or, do you suppose that just saying "Hello" to someone and making small talk with him/her will accomplish the work? I believe the Scriptures teach the need to go further than this.

Consider 1 Peter 4:9. "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." And, consider the picture that is given in Acts 2:46-47. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and

having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Disciple-makers need to recognize the value of spending actual time with their brethren – even outside of the assemblies of the local church. They need to have their brothers and sisters into their homes and share physical meals together (and, no, nothing has to be “fancy”). For, disciples will not be very knowledgeable about each other’s needs, struggles, and opportunities unless they really do know one another. In fact, truly knowing your brothers and sisters in Christ will help you accomplish every one of the important works we have been discussing. And, the best way to really get to know your brethren and be in the position to help them live for the Lord is to spend time in each other’s homes (both inviting others to your home and accepting invitations to other homes)! When this is done with a focus that is not on the food, shared earthly hobbies and interests, etc.; but with a shared focus on helping each other serve God and having spiritual conversations, these opportunities for hospitality are truly wonderful blessings for everyone involved!

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## Conclusion

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Disciple-makers have to recognize that living for Jesus Christ is a life-long process. Life on this earth is full of ups and downs, twists and turns. Thankfully, God has not made any disciple go through these things alone. So, disciple-makers should be focused on helping those who have become disciples navigate through life in a way that will result in growing and fruitful service for the Lord. Therefore, you should search for opportunities around you to help those who are disciples of Christ live closer to Him today than they did yesterday!

## Study Questions

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How does Jesus’ parable of the soils (Luke 8:5-8, 11-15) demonstrate different results from those who believe and obey the gospel initially?

### 1. Viewing Baptism As The Beginning, Not The End

How is baptism the beginning of a new life?

How is baptism the beginning of new opportunities?

How is baptism the beginning of new challenges?

How is baptism the beginning of a growing process?

How can every disciple use help?

### 2. Disciples Helping Disciples Be Disciples

Why is it important for disciples to live as members of one another?



Why is it important for disciples to love one another?

Why is it important for disciples to serve one another?

Why is it important for disciples to receive one another?

Why is it important for disciples to be hospitable to one another?

Why is it important for disciples to encourage one another?

Why is it important for disciples to bear one another's burdens?

Why is it important for disciples to teach one another?

Why is it important for disciples to correct one another?

Why is it important for disciples to forgive one another?

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!

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## 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**

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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**

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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**

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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**

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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**

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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?