

## “Making Disciples” // John 15:8; Acts 1:4–8; Matthew 28:18–20 // *The Whole Disciple #4*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

3 places I want you to open your Bibles to this weekend: John 15; Acts 1; Matthew 28. And, if that overwhelms you, just meet me in John 15 and I’ll put the other passages up here for you.

(*Football*) I opened the first week telling you about the legendary football coach, **Vince Lombardi**, who opened each season with his Green Bay Packer football team by holding out one of these and saying, “Gentlemen, this is a football.” Great coaches never take the basics for granted.

For **four weeks now** we’ve been doing something similar. We started out with **two weeks on “Becoming a Disciple,”** one week on growing as a disciple, and for this final week, we’re going to end with “Making Disciples.”

And not just making disciples, but making disciples who make disciples. **The Great Commission is to make followers of Jesus who multiply.**

In John 15, the passage we’ve been in for the last couple of weeks, Jesus said: **“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”** Jesus’ intention is that you bear much

fruit. It’s how you prove, in fact, that you are indeed his disciple. Living organisms reproduce. If his life is in us, we will reproduce.

- One of the books that really impacted me in college was a little classic by Robert Coleman, called ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***. *You know the definition of a classic book is a book that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to actually read. Well, this is one I’d encourage you to actually read.* In it, Coleman says: **“A barren Christian is a contradiction. A tree is known by its fruit ... Fruitfulness was the thing lacking in the lives of the Sadducees and Pharisees which made them so wretched in his sight.”**
- The Pharisees and Sadducees were a group that had mastered all the doctrines—they went to Bible studies out the wazoo; they knew every word to every worship song; they were in the synagogue whenever the doors were open. But they didn’t have the life of Jesus in them, and the evidence of that was that they didn’t reproduce. In Matthew 23:15, Jesus said of them, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are!”

One of the things that proves we’re actually disciples of Jesus is that we multiply! **John 15:8, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”**

Here’s what I want to do today. I want us to look at the two other places in the Gospels where Jesus gave the Great Commission, and consider for a moment what it all means for you personally. And I know some of you say, “I just don’t have the personality for this! I’m not outgoing! I don’t like to talk to people.” I promise you there is something for you in this.

<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: Tim Keller, “The Holy One: His Holiness,” sermon on Isaiah 6, preached at Redeemer City Church; Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries*.

**First, let's go to Acts 1:** Jesus is about to ascend to heaven, and he's gathered his disciples one final time to give them some parting thoughts. [6] **And when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"** They want to use their last session with him to ask questions about the End Times. They want him to do a series on the book of Revelation; they want to know about the rapture, whether Kirk Cameron or Nicolas Cage are gonna get left behind. As a pastor, I know this feeling—people are always asking, "Pastor, when are we going to do a series on the End Times?"

Jesus doesn't answer them; he does what my wife does when my kids ask her a question she doesn't want to answer. He changes the subject and answers a different question: [7] **He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. [8] But [this is what you should be thinking about, disciples] you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

- The last identity Jesus emphasizes before he ascends back up to heaven is "witness."
  - Many people feel like this is the one identity that doesn't apply to them. They say, "Well, I'm not an extrovert. I can't talk to random people about Jesus like you do, J.D."
  - Someone was recently telling me about someone in their life and based on the stories they were telling me it was obvious that God had put that person there for them to witness to, and they said to me, "Oh, I could never see myself doing that."
- I hear you, I really do. But God made your personality, and he's got a way for you to do this, too.
- "Witness" is the last identity Jesus commissioned them with before he left. Think of all that he could have said right there: "You

will be my *Bible study-ers*." "And you will be my *worship song-singers*." "You will be my *justice advocates*." "You will be my *tithers*." He could have said any of that, but his ultimate marching orders are, "You will be *my witnesses*." It's what John said, too: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

One more place to look at this: Matthew 28: **Matthew 28:19** "Go into all the world and MAKE DISCIPLES, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- I've told you this before, but this is important: In English, there are several verbs in that sentence: *Go*, *make disciples*, *baptize*, *teach*. In Greek, however, there's only ONE verb: "*make disciples*." And all those other words are actually participles.
- You say, "Fascinating grammatical lesson, J.D. But ... so what?"
- Well, what that means in Greek is that "make disciples" is the center of everything else we do. Everything else the church does—going, baptizing, teaching people to observe all that Jesus commanded—falls under the rubric of "making disciples."
- Every ministry of the church, every passion, should have as its central, guiding purpose reproducing disciples.

So, with these three passages, I'm going to give you four things that apply to all of us as it relates to you becoming a disciple-maker—regardless of your personality or gift make-up. *And, by the way, I hope by using all three passages (John 15, Acts 1, and Matthew 28) you'll see that each Bible writer emphasizes the same things when it comes to the Great Commission.* These four things are...

## How YOU Can Become a Disciple-Making Disciple

### 1. Join Jesus in what he is doing

John, Luke, and Matthew all emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the Great Commission. We're not the ones doing it, Jesus wants us to know, the Holy Spirit is; we just join him in it.

**John 15 first.** In John 15, Jesus said: *15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

- Earlier in John, Jesus explained his own ministry philosophy: Jesus said, John 5, *"I do nothing of my own initiative. What I see the Father doing, I do."* Even though Jesus was the Son of God, he didn't just go around doing things by his own power. He perceived where the Father was at work, and joined him in it.
- If that was true for Jesus, it's even more so for us. Ministry in Christ's name is not doing great things for God. Ministry is figuring out where the FATHER is working in the lives of people around you and joining him in it.
- **I have good news for you:** *God doesn't need you to change people's lives for him.* He doesn't need you to convict them or persuade them or change their hearts. He does that. He wants you to join him where he is already at work around you doing that. What if, instead of you feeling like there were all these people around you that you needed to win for Jesus, you believed God was doing that, and at various points he'd invite you into what HE was doing?
- Small group leaders, this applies to how you lead your small groups. *God is doing something in their lives*, not you. Join him in it.
- Parents, that applies to your kids. As a dad, I'm not responsible for producing spiritual life in my kids. Only God can do that. I'm called to join God in what he is doing in their lives.
- This applies to me when I sit next to strangers on airplanes. I can't persuade this person to be interested in Jesus. I can only join God in what he is doing in their lives. Which is why I've told you my main philosophy of evangelism is **running a metal detector** over people's lives to see if the Spirit is at work. If he's not, I can't manufacture it. But if he is, I can join him in it.
- I've told you this before, but one of the most effective personal evangelists I'VE ever met told me that an effective evangelist, he says, must believe two things deep in his or her soul: 1. That salvation belongs to God. That means the pressure is not on me. God does the work, salvation belongs to him—I just join him in it. # 2. Faith comes only by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. This shows my part in it. The Word of God has to be sown in someone's heart in order for it to do its work. So, when God opens a door for me to speak the Word of God to someone, I should do it, but then he's the one who has to make the Word bear fruit, and that may happen later when I'm not with the person anymore.
- **I've heard that the average person** needs to hear the gospel 20x before they believe it. A lot of the times I'm one of the first 19, and I don't get to see the response. I'm paving the way for someone else.

**Being a disciple-making disciple first means joining Jesus in what he's doing.** Luke's account of the Great Commission in **Acts** makes this even clearer, so let's go back there for a minute.

- In **vs 4**, before Jesus ascends to heaven, he tells them that before they do anything with the Great Commission, they need to wait for the coming of his Holy Spirit.
- **Think about that for a moment, will you?** The whole world needs to hear the gospel, and these disciples are the only people in the world who know it. People are dying all around them, and they have the only message that can save them. And he's telling them to WAIT. Do nothing until the Holy Spirit comes. You know some of them had to have been type-A, and they were like, "WAIT???" But we've got books to write and money to raise and conferences to organize." And yet, even with all that great need in front of them, he told them to do nothing until the Holy Spirit came—because until he came, nothing they tried to do for him would make any difference anyway. It's like John records in John 15, "*Apart from him, they could do nothing.*"
- Now, for us, of course, we have the Holy Spirit, we receive him now the moment we trust Christ, so we're not waiting like they were—BUT, there is a sense in which we are still to be in a posture of *waiting* on the Holy Spirit. We wait on him to direct us individually into ministry—to invite us into what he is already doing. He shows us the part of the ministry he's calling us to.

**I have a friend named Tony who adopted five kids: four from Ukraine and one from Kenya.** He says you have no trouble telling which ones are which!

The **four from Ukraine he adopted all at once.** When I asked how he came to that decision, he said, "*My wife and I were studying the book of Ephesians—how God had adopted us in Christ, and there's no better **pic of the gospel**, and God put it into our hearts to adopt.*"

Well, the **next summer he went on a mission trip** to Ukraine, and while there, he visited an orphanage. The **orphanage director** told him that **someone had just brought in a set of four siblings.**

The kids, **ages 2–8, were about to be split up** and placed in orphanages around the country unless someone came forward to take all four—but that was such a huge thing, nobody would do it.

A worker brought the kids out to him, and what he saw were four scared little children, all holding hands. They thought they were being called in for some kind of discipline.

In that moment, Tony said, "The Spirit of God said to me, 'Those are your kids.'"

**His wife wasn't even** with him. **He had not come** on this trip intending to adopt. **He called his wife and said, "Hey, I've got some big news."** (Some of you ladies just looked at your husband and said, "You are never going on a mission trip!")

**"Those are your kids."** If you're listening to the Spirit, he will say that to you about something.

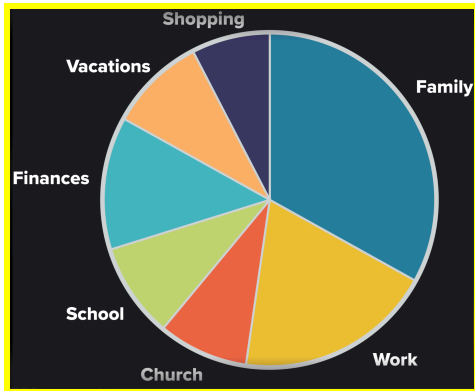
- **We always say: Not everything that comes from heaven** has your name on it, but something does, and it is your job to discern that from the Holy Spirit and then get after it. That's how Jesus calls you to join him in what he's doing.

## 2. Pursue normal life with gospel intentionality

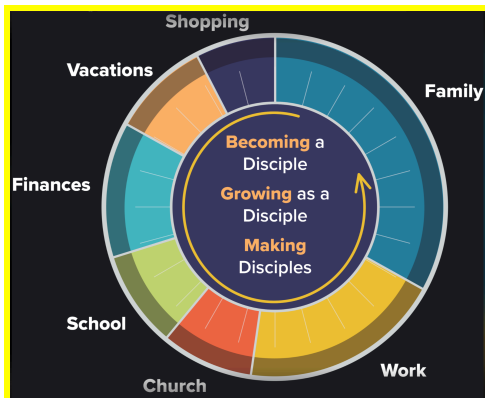
- Many of us think of evangelism or disciple-making as some special activity that we do. But when Jesus gave the **Great Commission** in Matthew, what he said was, "As you are going, make disciples." In English we translate it as, "Go..." like it's a command—like,

“*START going*”, but the Greek can also mean, “As you are (already) going.”

- The implication is that life already has us going to lots of different places—and as we go, we should make disciples.
- Disciple-making means pursuing normal life with gospel intentionality.
- I ran across this diagram and found it really helpful. This is how most of us see our lives:



And in a series like this one, you hear me saying, “Increase your church pie!” And you think, “But I can’t! There’s none of the pie left! I can’t make more time in the day!”



But what if instead of thinking of it that way, you saw the various dimensions of your life as places God already has you *GOING* in which you can be engaged in disciple-making?

Our college ministry, who probably does the best job in this church of disciple-making, says, “70 percent of discipleship is informal.” That means you’re doing it as you go. Sure, there are classes and books and things like *Groundworks* involved in disciple-making, but a lot of discipleship is just doing normal life with gospel intentionality. That’s how it was with Jesus. Jesus taught some things formally (the Sermon on the Mount)—but a lot of what he taught was in the moment: helping one of the disciples process their fears or walking them through errors in their thinking.

In 1976 my mom and dad settled into Winston-Salem, NC. 1976. America had just turned 200, and I had just turned 2. My mom and dad were brand new Christians and they had just moved from West Virginia so my dad could start a new job. Someone invited them to this exciting, growing church. For most of their lives, they had only been cultural Christians, but in this church, they preached real discipleship. And more importantly, the pastor took a special interest in my dad and made him part of his life. He turned my dad into a spiritual giant. A few years ago, that pastor went home to be with Jesus and my dad and I drove down to Georgia to go to his funeral. And as we were driving down, my dad was recounting for me all the ways God had worked in his life through that pastor during those early years, and he said, “But you know, J.D., I couldn’t tell you the outline of a single sermon he preached in those early years. What I can never forget, however, is hearing him pray; or hearing him comfort someone in their grief; or watching him share Christ with the lady at the grocery store. Observing his life impacted me far more than any sermon he ever preached.” Because of that man’s life-on-life investment, my family forever changed.

That's your role: Living out the five identities—**worshiper, family member, servant, steward, and witness**—in front of others, in the normal course of life.

**Maybe you can't teach like me, but you CAN invite** someone into your life to observe how you follow Jesus as a worshiper, family member, servant, steward, and witness.

- Get together with someone once a week to do your quiet time together.
- Ride to church together.
- Serve with refugees or in our prison ministry or in the student ministry together.
- Go on a mission trip together.
- Invite them to pray with you before work one day or in the Boiler Room on the weekend.
- ***Just do normal life, as you go, with gospel intentionality.***

### 3. WWJD? HWLF

A few weeks ago I referenced the WWJD bracelet that came out when I was in college but has recently made a comeback: WWJD stands for "What Would Jesus Do?" Well, there's a new companion bracelet to go along with it: HWLF. That one wasn't out when I was in college—it stands for "He Would Love First."

**That may not express the totality of what it means to follow Jesus,** but it's a good starting place. In Jesus' final teaching session in John 13–16, Jesus reiterates this command to love one another 34 different times! John 13: **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.** And then he even says this: **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (34–35)**

How will they know we are his disciples? By our long worship services? By our Christian coalition voting guides? By our social activism? No, by our love—for each other, for our neighbors, even for our enemies. If there's one truly distinctive thing about Jesus' disciples, it is supposed to be *this*. **What would Jesus do? He would love first.**

For those of you who can't talk to strangers on planes, one of the places you can apply this is with your home. One of my favorite books on this subject is Rosaria Butterfield's ***The Gospel Comes with a House Key***.

If you don't know, Rosaria was a practicing lesbian and outspoken feminist who taught women's studies at Syracuse University. In fact, she wrote one of the seminal works on critical theory and intersectionality that still gets referenced today.

Well, in the late 90s, a Christian movement called "Promise Keepers" came to her town, a movement that emphasized the need for Christian men to step forward in their leadership roles as husbands and fathers. Well, she wrote a blistering piece in her city newspaper about the movement—calling it backwards and bigoted and yada yada. And, as you could imagine, she got all kinds of responses. She said there were no neutral ones—they were either filled with fawning praise, or had an angry "how dare you" tone. She filed the responses in two categories—all the "love you" ones in this pile, and all the "hate you" ones in that one. Well, she said one afternoon she opened up a letter from a local pastor, and she genuinely couldn't figure out which pile to put it in. It was clear he strongly disagreed with her, but it was so full of love and respect that she didn't know what pile to put it in. So, she said, "I just left it on my desk and stared at it for a few



weeks.” Eventually she called up the pastor and asked if she could ask him questions, and he invited her to his house for dinner. She said, “My lesbian partner didn’t understand why I was going, but I told her I was just ‘doing research’ for the next critical thing I’d write about evangelical Christians.” She said, “I showed up ready for debate, but what overwhelmed me about this pastor and his wife was their hospitality! *There were so many people coming to their house it was as if the front door didn’t actually exist,*” she said.

She became a regular houseguest there, and to make a long story short—through their love, she eventually came to faith in Christ. And in the book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, she makes the point that in **today’s climate**, hospitality is probably the main way people outside the church, especially if they are hostile to the church, will be reached. She also shows that hospitality is **the primary way Scripture** commends reaching out to people! It was how Jesus did it—just read the Gospel of Luke. Jesus eats his way through the Gospel of Luke. The whole narrative of Luke is organized around meals—which is my kind of Savior!

This is one of the lost arts of Christianity. Often, today, when we think about hospitality today, we mainly think about entertaining church friends. But **biblically, hospitality means welcoming in “the stranger.”** Literally, the word “hospitality” in Greek means “love of *the stranger*.”

- **When you welcome other Christians around your table, the Bible calls that fellowship**, and that’s important, too—but it’s different from hospitality.
- For disciples of Jesus, we shouldn’t limit our **guest list to family/friends/relatives/rich neighbors**. Open up your love to the outsider.
- Y’all, this is so **central to Christian ministry that it’s one of the requirements for an elder. Paul says all leaders of the church should be** “given to hospitality.”

- I love what Rosaria says here: **“Stop thinking of witnessing to your neighbors as sneaky evangelistic raids into their sinful lives.”** Open up your lives to them and share with them from the warmth of your family.

#### 4. Serve locally and abroad

- In **Acts 1:8** Jesus gave us the outline for our mission: Jerusalem / Judea (local) / Samaria (cross-cultural in our midst) / end of the earth (overseas).
  - In some ways, we can see **Jerusalem** as representing our local city; **Judea** would be our country; **Samaria** would represent those places local to us where people are ethnically or culturally separated from us, because that’s what Samaria was, and **ends of the earth** would be unreached people groups around the world.
- **God calls us to make disciples in all those places simultaneously.** We should never feel the need to choose between the local and global. Faithful Christians do both.
  - I’ve heard it said: The light that shines the farthest will also shine the brightest at home (and vice versa).
  - Our mission *there* should be an extension of what we’re doing *here*.
- **In the same way**, we shouldn’t pit pursuing justice or meeting physical needs against **reaching people** for Christ.
  - Reaching someone for Christ often starts with meeting their physical needs. That’s how Jesus did it. But, at the same time, the greatest need people have is to hear about Jesus. John Piper said that Christians should care about all kinds of suffering—when people in the world are suffering in any way, it should move us to action—whether that’s a lack of clean water or because they live under oppression. But the worst kind of suffering, he says, is eternal suffering, and Christians should care most about that.
  - **Listen: I’ll just say it plainly:** It’s unkind for us, as Christians, to give our money and time to meet people’s physical needs and

not accompany that with news about the only Savior who can save them from their sins.

- I mean, imagine that someone had discovered the cure for colon cancer or Alzheimer's and just never shared it with the world. How cruel would that be?

**The Joshua Project reports that today there are 7,398 “unreached” people groups.** An “unreached people group” means a group of people in the world **who**, as it stands now, likely will die without ever hearing a presentation of the gospel. **For many of these unreached groups, there’s not even a copy of the Bible in their language.**

- **The vast majority (about 85 percent) of these least-reached groups live** in the **10/40 window**—Asia, N Africa, the Middle East—and, get this, **less than 4 percent of Christian missionary work is done among these people.** 96 percent of our mission efforts are focused on places where there are churches on every corner.
- What about **Yemen**? Yemen has a **population of 8 million (about the size of NC).** **There are 20 known believers there. 20!** The size of one of our small groups.

**Listen:** I’m grateful for every single one of you who feels called to serve here in America.

- But I will never stop asking: Why are there so few willing to go where Christ is not named and preach him there?
- Why would God leave so many of us HERE in a place of so much access when there’s so many over there with no access at all?
- **Is God that bad at math?**
- Why would he keep so many in a place where there is so much and send so few to places where there’s so little?
- It can’t be that he’s not calling. It has to be we’re not listening.
- **Why is it that so many people here feel called to reach the easier communities**—other middle-class or rich people—and why are so few called to those most in need of Christ’s salvation?
- And maybe as I say that, something stirs in your heart. **We’re praying for 100 new overseas missionaries over the next three**

**years out of this church.** Currently we have around 270 of our members living overseas. We want to increase that number by about ⅓. Maybe that’s you. Start that convo with your campus pastor today.

- **Or how about the Muslim community here?** You don’t even have to go overseas to engage with them. Maybe God will put it in your heart to carry the gospel to those Samaria-like regions.

We should be different, Summit. He has called us to be his witnesses—to make disciples of—all people.

I’ve shared this before, but historian Rodney Stark says that it is impossible to know exactly, but **the best estimates** point to a **grand total of 7,530 believers** worldwide at the end of the first century.<sup>2</sup> When the last apostle died, he said, there were 7,530 believers, which is an oddly specific number. But even if it’s off by 1,000 that’s not a lot. We have almost twice that here at The Summit Church this morning. By the time you get to the end of the second century, it’s still not that big. **Origen, who was born in 184 A.D.,** described the Christian movement in his day as a few scattered communities, geographically broad but numerically insignificant.<sup>3</sup> The number Rodney Stark gives is 217,795 Christians—which, compared to the population of the world, is still tiny. **Yet, by 312 A.D., Christians had become so numerous—almost 7 million**—that the emperor, Constantine, decided to convert to Christianity *for political reasons.* Over half of the Roman Empire now identifies as Christian! **What happened? How do you go from 7,500 to over half the Roman Empire?** And they didn’t have any of the things we now have and think of as so essential for gospel multiplication—big auditoriums, printing presses, the internet, air travel, TV, radio, none of that! But

<sup>2</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 161.

<sup>3</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.10



**Rodney Stark**<sup>4</sup> says one thing they did have, that we lack, was an **ingrained understanding** that each Christian was called to multiply. Every disciple was expected to make disciples. **Every new church** was planted with the expectation that it would reproduce. That's the vision of this church, and it involves you. You have a part.

**\*\*And by the way, I want to encourage you, especially if you are a middle or high school or college student, to consider doing this full time.** We need more young men and women—our best and brightest, to step forward to lead the church as pastors or missionaries or teachers. I'm praying that God will call many of you—some of our best and brightest future leaders—to invest your skill here, into doing full-time gospel ministry work. ***Maybe you sense he's calling you.***

**Check out this incredible story of some former Summit members** who years ago stepped forward and put this into practice in one of the literal “ends of the earth,” and then our campus pastors will close the message with one final application.

HOLIDAY VIDEO (10 mins)

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<sup>4</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 5-8.