



Week 8: Jesus & Our Mission

Matthew 28:16-20

GOAL:

To consider the impact our lives can have in our divided culture as we fulfill the Great Commission.

CHECKLIST

- If your group's prayer night is done, thank them for investing in their own spiritual life and in one another by being part of it. If it is upcoming, finalize any details as needed.
- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Remind your group and finalize details for the trip to Viola's House on November 23 from 8am-12pm. We will tour the ministry and divide into three groups to serve together. Your group can plan lunch together after, if you'd like.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Gracious Father, loving Savior and indwelling Spirit, thank you for revealing yourself to me and teaching me more and more what it means to live as your disciple in a broken and divided culture. Amid the uncertainty of this week, thank you for assuring me that you are in control and fear deserves no place in my heart or mind. Help me to fully embrace the commission you have given of making disciples and use me as an instrument of your grace because you are constantly with me. May you be glorified in all things, Amen.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

CONNECT, COORDINATE, & PRAY

To catch up with your group members and to identify where they might need prayer or support, ask your group, “What are you celebrating from this past week, and how can we pray for you in the week ahead?” Go around the room and give each person a chance to respond. Then spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today.

Take time to coordinate details and plans for:

- Grow Group Prayer Night - send date to Amy, use “Prayer Experience #3” on GG Leader Tools page
- Viola’s House Serve Day - Saturday, November 23, 8am-12pm (details in Oct 23 leader email)

DISCUSS

Leaders: *This week completes the sermon series on Jesus First in a Divided Culture. Remind your Grow Group that . . .*

- *Our identity is found in Christ and our allegiance is to him first.*
- *We give back to “Caesar” what is “Caesar’s” and, as people made in the image of God, give back to God what rightly belongs to him.*
- *The way of God’s Kingdom is found in loving all people unconditionally and praying for those who are our enemies.*

Today’s lesson brings the series to culmination as we look at the Great Commission Jesus gave to his disciples before he ascended to heaven. Pastor John makes the point in his sermon that this may be the most opportune time to tell God’s story and make disciples.

- Who has helped you grow as a disciple of Jesus and how did they do it?

Read Matthew 28:16-17.

- How did the eleven disciples respond when they saw Jesus?

Leaders: *Jesus sent eleven disciples to a designated location where they would be with him for the last time on this earth. He had chosen each one and trained them specifically for the mission he was about to lay out for them.*

For three years they had followed him, heard him preach, watched him perform miracles, heal the sick, and cast out demons. They listened to his teaching and learned a way of life that matched his own. Now he was about to commission them to further the mission God had sent him to do.

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Verse 17 says the response was mixed when they saw Jesus. The Message says it this way, “The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally.”

As we encounter Jesus in this text today, we may experience a mixture of worship and hesitancy about risking ourselves totally to make disciples of all nations. That’s why two important things bookend the message Jesus delivers.

Read Matthew 28:18.

- Why do you think Jesus began with this statement about his authority?

Leaders: Jesus states clearly and without any reservation that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him alone. He is the LORD God Almighty, the creator of the universe, the one who holds all things together. He has the power to forgive sin and conquer death. He can take the broken pieces of our lives and make us into new creations. Nothing is too hard for him. With him all things are possible because he a king like no earthly king.

As people who follow King Jesus, we do not have to live in fear or without hope. No matter what happens this week, Hebrews 13:6 reminds us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Read Matthew 28:19-20a.

- What is the commission Jesus gave his disciples? How do you see this happening today at VRBC?

Leaders: Pastor John reminded us that we don’t have to be afraid because Jesus is in control. He also said we are to do what Jesus said. Amid the brokenness and chaos of our world, we have a great opportunity to proclaim good news. The last thing Jesus said to do is what is often called the Great Commission.

Verses 19-20a in The Message reads, “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the three-fold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you.”

By definition, a commission is an authorization or command to act in a clear and specific way. The person being commissioned is entrusted with the task as an agent for another. We act, not of our own accord or in our own authority, but rather as people authorized to act on behalf of King Jesus. Martin Robinson says, “It is not the people of God who have a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a people in the world.” As followers of Jesus, we are those people!” God is the one laying out the mission. We follow his lead.

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Jesus authorizes us to “go and make disciples.” The Greek word for “go” is *poreuomai* (pronounced *por-yoo'-om-ah-ee*). There are slightly different meanings to this word which include traveling, departing, walking, or taking a journey. This seems to indicate that no matter where life takes us, we can intentionally and strategically share the good news of Jesus with others and invite people in our sphere of influence to follow him. We aren’t responsible for the results. We simply extend the invitation.

Acts 1:8 tells us that we are to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. You and I may not be in all those locations but wherever a disciple of Jesus resides they are to be a witness of the saving work of Christ in their lives and make disciples of others they encounter.

We are to make disciples of “all nations”. The word “nation” or “*ethne*” in Greek is not a geo-political area on a map but rather groups of people who share a common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural background. It is from this Greek word that we get the English word, “ethnic”.

The day of “going” to all nations (*ethne*) was, in years past, often relegated to sending a select few as missionaries from our neighborhoods to the nations. In today’s world, God has commissioned us to tell his story to the nations in our neighborhoods. That includes people who share our culture and those who are different. This is something every person can do.

VRBC lives out the Great Commission every time we experience baptism. Baptism is one way we testify with our lives that we belong to Christ. When someone is baptized in our church, they are asked this simple question: “What is your profession of faith?” The response is also simple yet profound, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” Think of the people who have been baptized in our church who come from different nations, tribes, and tongues. How does their testimony help you understand more clearly what Jesus has commissioned us to do?

Another way VRBC carries out the Great Commission is by teaching disciples to live out all that Jesus commanded. One becomes a disciple by putting their faith in Jesus Christ. But there is more. A disciple needs nurturing and teaching to grow in their relationship with Christ which results in them becoming more and more like him. Colossians 1:9-14 and Philippians 1:9-11 are prayers that speak about becoming mature and fruitful disciples.

- As followers of Christ, how does Jesus’ Great Commission give perspective to life in today’s culture?

Leaders: This text causes us to lift our eyes to the whole ark of God’s story and mission. It is a reminder that God’s kingdom prevails when earthly kingdoms pass away. He is Lord overall. We are to be involved in the more important things of God’s kingdom.

It is also a reminder that we live our lives in close proximity to people who need to know Jesus. In Matthew 9:36 we read that when Jesus saw the crowds of people coming to him, “he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” He gave his life that we might have a new life.

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The apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:1-3 that Jesus' followers wanted to proclaim the story of Jesus based on what their ears had heard, their eyes had seen, and their hands had touched. They did this because they wanted others to experience the same relationship with the Father that they had found through Jesus Christ.

God is working in our lives here at VRBC. We do not have to be trained theologians to tell someone who Jesus is. We simply share what we have seen, heard, and experienced in our relationship with him. Let's be attentive to people's words and lives and be in places where God is inviting us to say the most simple, truthful things into people's lives. They are ready. They are hungry. Are we ready to live out the Great Commission?

Read Matthew 28:20b.

- Why do you think Jesus assured his disciples of his presence always? How does this give you confidence that you can do as Jesus commands?

Leaders: *Jesus began his message with the statement of his authority. He ends his message with the assurance of his constant presence. We carry out God's mission because Jesus is with us! It is common for us to think we do not have the knowledge of skills to make disciples. We may think, "Only pastors can do that!" But you may be making disciples in ways you are not aware of:*

- *Studying God's word together in Grow Groups*
 - *Inviting someone to worship with you at VRBC*
 - *Praying with someone*
 - *Sharing scripture when someone needs a word from God*
 - *Listening to another who is struggling with life issues and being the presence of Christ*
 - *Serving in Jesus' name with other Christ followers*
- Who is in your sphere of influence that you can encourage to follow and grow in Jesus? How can you use your influence for kingdom purposes?

Leaders: *Making disciples is something every follower of Jesus can do. We are authorized by Jesus to do this and have the promise of his presence with us. Use these examples to stimulate discussion:*

Parents/grandparents

- *Reading scripture with kids and praying with them*
- *Including children in serve projects or as part of the VRBC Welcome Team*

Friends, co-workers, or neighbors

- *Offering words of encouragement from scripture and praying with them*
- *Sharing your own story of knowing God and the difference Jesus makes in your life*
- *Listening without judgment and loving unconditionally as people share their stories*
- *Explore an opportunity to meet regularly with someone who wants to know how to live as a follower of Jesus.*

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- What would the world look like with more disciples of Jesus? How would this impact the wellbeing of our families, communities, nation, and the world?

Leaders: *If we truly believe that Jesus makes the difference in our lives, think about the ways he can use us to change the world.*

- *Words of kindness spoken in love can counteract words of hate and division.*
- *Serving others with humility can demonstrate a different way of living and leading.*
- *Caring for those who are hungry, homeless, hopeless, and despised by the world demonstrates how to live in God's kingdom.*

PRAY

As you close in prayer...

- Thank God for the privilege of being his disciple.
- Ask him to help you grow as his disciple and to use you to assist others.
- Ask God to show you how you might disciple others in the way of Jesus.
- Pray that our church will continue to be focused on our mission of making disciples of all nations.

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