

1:17). This initial comment about reaching men was reasserted as a command when the resurrected Lord stood before his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. Let's explore that now.

The Text of the Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20
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 Context of the Commission: "All Authority in Heaven and Earth"
Jesus exercised absolute authority during his earthly ministry. He raised the dead, judged men and forgave sins. He performed miracles and spoke fresh and binding revelation (24:35). His authority, however, now extends to both heaven and earth, the entire universe (Heb 1:3). He not only rules the earth, but also heaven. He is in control of all things. It is in light of the unlimited exercise of his absolute authority over every person, tribe, nation, and tongue that he commands the disciples to "go and make disciples" (Eph 1:20-23).

The Command of the Commission: "Therefore, go and make disciples..."
The term "go" does not mean "as you go" but go and "make." The idea of making a disciple is fleshed out more in the idea of teaching them to obey all things Jesus commanded. We are to encourage people to submit to the Lordship of Christ as expressed in his teachings to the disciples and we are to show them what that looks like with our own lives.

The Content of the Commission: Baptizing and Teaching
There are two important words "baptizing" and "teaching,". Two elements that should characterize the process of making disciples are baptizing and teaching. Disciples are to be baptized into a understanding of God and relationship with him, and they are to be taught to obey whatever Jesus has taught us. Let us understand though that teaching in the eastern context was done primarily through mentoring/apprenticing relationships between master and student.

The Continuity of the Commission: "I will be with you..."
In the overwhelming task of making disciples of the nations, the disciples needed to know that their risen Lord would be with them. He is in control of the nations and has sent us to them with the message of eternal life. Now, through the strength provided by His indwelling Spirit (Col 1:28-29) we are to encourage them to welcome the kingdom and to live out Jesus' life, values, and commitments.

WORDS TO HELP YOU LIVE INSTEP WITH THE SPIRIT

These writings are on topics that Darryl Henson believes are important and helpful to the Body of Christ. They are one way Instep Ministries resources the church today. If you would like more information on this or other topics please contact us.

All scripture references are from the NKJV.



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SUPPORTING, TRAINING, ENCOURAGING
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The Nature of Discipleship



Here is a brief history of my spiritual beginnings and journey. I was 15 years old when I committed my life to Christ and began as a disciple of Christ. At the time of my confession of faith in Christ I understood only the elementary fact that I was a sinner and needed Christ to save me from my sins. I understood that I was accepting his loving payment for my sins and I was committing my life to him and his church. There was much more to learn as a disciple of Christ.

1. Discipleship is a Call to Personal Commitment to Jesus

The Call of Discipleship: To Be With Him and To Know Him (Mark 3:14)

Early in his earthly ministry Jesus called certain men to be with him and to follow him; he summoned twelve disciples to his side. Though we cannot literally walk with him today, through his Spirit, we nonetheless have been summoned by Him as well. We have been summoned to his side in order that we might be with him, that we might really come to know him, and that we might follow him along the path of discipleship. But the heart of the call of Christ is to be with him and to know him intimately.

Mark 3:14,15

Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

The Goal of the Call: To Enjoy Him and Become Like Him (Luke 6:40)

Jesus has summoned us to his side, but not simply to put us to work. His summoning—and make no mistake about it, it is a summoning—is first a call to know him (cf. Matt 4:19), to have intimate fellowship with him (1 Cor 1:9) and to enjoy Him. This is primary and necessary. If the disciples were to have lost interest in him as a person and friend, they would never have continued to walk with him. We are no

different. It is in the context of deepening intimacy that he commands us to be like him. In short, it is primarily through fellowship with the Master that we begin to look, feel, and act like the Master (2 Cor 3:18).

1 Corinthians 11:1

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

2. Discipleship is a Call to Follow Jesus

Discipleship is a call to be with, know and enjoy the Master. In this sense, the call to Biblical discipleship presupposes salvation, i.e., that a person has believed in Christ as Lord and Savior and continues to believe in Him. But discipleship is also a summons to follow Jesus and this is, at times, no easy matter. He demands exclusive, complete, and unflinching obedience to Himself. This is where his summons to discipleship is so radically different from Plato who stressed the freedom of the student from the teacher or even the Jewish religious leaders who focused more on the Torah and steered their disciples away from themselves. Jesus, on the other hand, pointed people to himself (and still does) and calls them to radical commitment to him. Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to Christlikeness which includes at least three related facts: (1) the demand; (2) the added promise; and (3) the grace.

The Demand to follow

Jesus' call to discipleship is an all-or-nothing summons, reaching into every area of our lives. It involves giving him preeminence over the closest of our human relationships and over the desires we have for our lives. In short, it involves becoming his servant in the world and giving your life to that end. Paradoxically we give up that which we cannot keep to gain that which we cannot lose. If we don't, we lose all in the end (cf. Matt 16:25).

The cross was an instrument of death and well known to the Jews. The suffering was intolerable. But Jesus says we are to take it up and follow him. This will, in the nature of the case, involve self-denial. The one who picked up the cross-beam of his cross was headed down a one-way street, never to

return.

Luke 9:23-24

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

The Grace for following

The demand of Jesus' call to discipleship is impossible for a human being, unaided, to fulfill. We must have resources to accomplish this kind of life. Those resources come directly from Christ and are promised to us if we abide in him. This is the point of Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-11ff. He told his disciples that even though he was departing the world, he would nonetheless carry on his life and ministry through them, his chosen ones (15:16). From John 14:26, 15:26 and 16:13-14 we know that his life would be lived in and through the disciples via the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16). We will discuss this a little more when we talk about the relationship of discipleship to the kingdom of God.

The Promise given if we follow

The call to discipleship is not without its struggles, suffering, and sometimes intense difficulties. But it is not without its promises either. In Mark 10:28 Jesus was quick to remind the inquiring disciples that there was a reward for following him.

Mark 10:28-31

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time ...

3. Discipleship is a Call to "Make Disciples"

The idea that Jesus was calling the disciples to himself for a special purpose is evident in his initial call. He summoned his disciples saying, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19; Mark