

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
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**January 5, 2025**  
**Make Him Known**  
**Matthew 28:16-20**

Recently, my youngest child and I went out for a drive. She gets her license in a few months, and we want to get her plenty of time behind the wheel. She's a natural and doesn't need a lot of coaching from us, which is a good thing because I'm not a great driving coach. It usually goes something like this:

"You need to get over into that lane and take a right up there."

"Dad, which lane is 'that lane' and where is 'up there'?"

"The far right line and the next light."

"This light or the next one?"

"This one is the next one." By the time I've made it clear, we've missed the turn.

It's loads of fun. As they are learning to drive, I'm learning to teach them to drive. Clearly, I've still got a lot to learn. But I do have one lesson I feel good about. I call it, "How to keep the car from going into the ditch. AKA – Going where you want to go." It's an important one.

When I first began to drive, I didn't quite know how to keep the car in the middle of the lane. I'd see mailboxes lining the road and I'd watch them closely, so I didn't hit them. But the more I looked at the mailboxes, the closer I came to hitting them. I found that my car was naturally drawn to whatever point I was focused on. So, if you want to stay in the center of the lane, you've got to focus your attention on the center of the lane. What I say to my kids is, "Look where you're going because you'll go where you're looking."

And that's true for more than just driving. It's true in life, as well. We tend to gravitate towards the things we focus on. We need to look where we are going because we will most likely go where we are looking.

So, as you look out over the coming year, where is your focus? What road do you most want to go down? Even more, what road is Jesus calling you to focus on? Where does He want your life to head this year?

Thankfully, Jesus is much better than I am at giving instructions. So, during the month of January, we are going to look at some passages of Scripture that help us understand where Jesus wants us to go in the coming year – as a church and as individuals. We'll start this morning in Matthew 28...

**Matthew 28:16–20**

***Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

This is a very well-worn passage of Scripture for us as a church. I try to preach on it every 2-3 years because it is the most explicit description in the entire New Testament of Jesus' mission for His people. It's the center of the lane on the road Jesus wants His church to travel. It's known as the Great Commission.

Verse 11 tells us that Jesus was speaking to His 11 disciples. Originally, there had been 12 disciples, but Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus which led to Christ's crucifixion. So, here Jesus is, raised from the dead and preparing to ascend back into heaven. And He has these final words for His disciples.

Disciples were commonplace in first-century Israel, but it isn't a term we use a lot outside of church circles. So, what is a disciple? In the most basic sense, a disciple is someone devoted to a teacher and His teaching.

A disciple wasn't just a casual listener who tuned in to their favorite teacher. Disciples moved into the life of their teacher. They weren't just listening to teaching; they were learning the life of the teacher.

And Jesus had disciples – people who were devoted to Him and His life. Acts 1 tells us that 120 of His followers gathered in an upper room to pray together after Christ's ascension. 1 Corinthians 15 says Jesus appeared to over 500 of His followers after His resurrection. So, the number of disciples included more than just the eleven.

And what I want to show you is that Christ's final instructions are given to more than just the 11 disciples who are on this mountain with Jesus. This mission is for all of Christ's disciples.

Look at the end of verse 20: ***And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.***

"The age" is referring to the period of time until Jesus comes again. That word "always" can be translated literally with the phrase "all the days." What Jesus is talking about here covers all the days until He comes again. Since Jesus hasn't come again, what He says here still applies today. In other words, this mission is for all of Jesus' disciples until He comes again.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then Jesus is talking to you. This is His mission for His people until He comes again.

So, if you want to know the direction Jesus is calling you to go this year and for the rest of your life, it's right here in this passage. Look at verses 19-20, again.

***19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.***

When you first read that passage, it looks like Jesus is giving you four commands:

- Go
- Make Disciples
- Baptize them
- Teach them

But, when you look at this passage in the original language of the Bible, you find there's only one command here. The other three phrases are participle phrases. They describe how you are to obey the one command.

For instance, I might say something like this to one of my kids: "As you are going to your room, take these clothes with you, keeping them neat, and being careful not to drop them." There's one, primary command – take these clothes with you. The other phrases are participles. They describe how to obey the command – by going to your room, keeping them neat, being careful. So, they are kind of

like commands because they are part of obeying the one command. If my child carelessly takes the clothes and messes them up or drops them on the floor, they haven't completely obeyed my command.

And that's the way Jesus is talking to us as His followers. He gives us one, main command, it's our mission. So, what's the main command? What's the mission Jesus is giving us? Make disciples. That's the command in this text. Our mission is to make disciples. This is the direction of Jesus for the lives of His followers. He calls us to be disciples who make disciples.

That's our big idea this morning:

### **Disciples of Jesus have a Mission from Jesus to Make Disciples of Jesus.**

That's about as basic as it gets. As we journey through this life, we are commanded by Christ to actively and intentionally live on a mission to make disciples. That's the center of the lane Jesus is telling us to head down.

- As you are looking over the year to come, is your life headed in this direction?
- Are you living on a mission to be a disciple of Jesus who makes other disciples of Jesus? To deepen your devotion to Christ and see others come to know Him and be devoted to Him, as well?
- Can you name people you are seeking to disciple in Christ?

I know many of you are living on that mission and are well-equipped to do so. But I also know that many of you may feel overwhelmed by the very idea. You might be wondering where and how to start.

Well, the best way to start is by looking at the rest of what Jesus has to say in our text.

So, in the rest of our time this morning, let's consider the three descriptions Jesus gives us about making disciples – go, baptizing, and teaching.

#### 1. Making Disciples Happens as We Go

I get that from the first participle Jesus uses in verse 19: **Go therefore and make disciples.**

That word "go" could be translated "as you are going" or "while you are going."

In other words, as you are going on this journey through life, make disciples. Disciple-making is a step-by-step journey with Jesus, a journey that includes where you live, work, learn, and play. You don't do it all at once, you just take the next step with Jesus. If you are just beginning in your relationship with Christ, you don't need to know everything today. Just take the next step Jesus has for you. As you seek to help other people in their relationship with Jesus, just take the next step.

- In some ways, you need to take the next step of adding tools to your disciple-making toolbox. In a minute, I'll talk about our Wednesday night Bible studies that have this as part of their objective.
- Some of us need to take the next step of building relationships with people God is wanting to reach through our lives.
- Some of us need to take the next step into a short-term mission trip or an area of ministry that would open doors for discipleship in ministry.

- All of us need to take the next step of deepening our relationship with Jesus in His word and prayer.

Only the Lord knows what steps He will lead you to take this year. But today's practical application is, "Are you willing to take the next step?" The first step is to follow Jesus. Are you following Jesus? The next step is to keep following Jesus.

- Are you willing to go where He calls you to go?
- Are you willing to go across the street to your neighbor?
- Are you willing to go around the world to the nations?
- Are you willing to Go on this journey with Jesus?

Disciple-making is a step-by-step Journey. That brings me to the second description Jesus gives of disciple-making.

## 2. Making Disciples includes Making Jesus Known

***Verse 19: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,***

Baptism is a person's public declaration that they are a follower of Jesus. Baptism doesn't save us, but it does display to our world that we have been saved, that's why we go down into the water and come up again. We are showing our world that we have died to our old life before Christ and have been raised up to a brand-new kind of life by the power of Jesus. The first step of obedience for every disciple of Christ is to be publicly baptized.

If you have never obeyed the command of Jesus to be baptized, I want to encourage you to start this new year out right. The call of Jesus is for His disciples to be baptized. I'll be down front at the close of our service, along with our other pastors and prayer partners...we would love to help you take the next step of being a disciple of Jesus by obeying Him in baptism.

But remember, Jesus is talking to His disciples who have already been baptized. They are going to have to baptize people who are not following Jesus yet but will in the days to come and will make their faith in Christ known through baptism.

In other words, making disciples includes sharing the good news of Jesus with the people in your life who are far from God but near to you so they can trust in Him and make it known through baptism. Living on mission to make disciples means living on a mission to make Jesus known to others even as we are getting to know Him better ourselves.

To that end, I want to invite you to be part of our Wednesday night Bible studies that start on the 15<sup>th</sup>. These studies will follow a very similar format as the studies we did last year on the book of Acts – daily bible study guides and small group discussion in men's and women's groups on Wednesday nights. If you were part of last year, you'll be familiar with the format. The emphasis this year is on being equipped to make Jesus known and learning to know Jesus better ourselves. We want you to have practical tools to help you share Jesus with the people and make disciples of those who come to trust Him. These groups are also great disciple-making opportunities. You get to help others in their journey of being disciples.

If you want to align your life to the mission of Jesus, please be a part of these Wednesday night classes. You can sign up in the foyer this morning at the information station or the discipleship table.

Alongside those studies, we have a strategy called “Who’s your one?”

- Who is one person (at least) that you are praying to see come to faith in Jesus this year?
- Will you commit to pray for them?

If we are going to be a church that makes disciples, then we have to be a church that actively reaches out to the people in our community who are far from God but near to us.

The third description Jesus gives us of disciple-making is...

### 3. Making Disciples includes Teaching Obedience to Jesus

#### ***20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.***

For those who come to trust in Jesus, we are called to teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded.

Don’t overcomplicate this. Jesus said that all the commands of Scripture can be boiled down to 2 great commandments. What are they? Love God and Love others.

To obey the commands of Jesus, we must learn to know God in a way that deepens our love for Him and our intimacy with Him. And, we have to learn to live in authentic, loving relationships with others.

*John 15:9-12*

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

That’s where we will pick up next week, we keep His commandments as we know Him and abide in Him and His love.

Let’s recap...

Our mission is to be a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples of Jesus.

- Disciple-making happens as we go.
- Disciple-making includes making Jesus Known.
- Disciple-making includes teaching obedience to Jesus.

One final thought. I want you to notice that Jesus puts two powerful bookends on this great commission. The first bookend is in verse 18.

***18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***

When Jesus became a man, He never ceased to be God. However, He did lay aside certain rights and attributes that were His as the Son of God. But now He reigns with all authority in heaven and on earth.

Just think about that for a second. Jesus has ALL authority. Jesus has the authority and power to do anything He wants to do.

He has authority over cancer and disease...over natural disasters...over governments and politicians...over the sun, moon and stars. Since Jesus is God, He has all power and authority over everything in heaven and earth.

That's amazing to think about in and of itself but look at the second bookend to the great commission at the end of verse 20: ***And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.***"

As you go on a mission to make disciples, you aren't being sent off to do it by yourself. Jesus promises to go with you.

*2 Corinthians 3:4-6*

*Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

The reality is that you and I can't make disciples, not by our own power. That's why we need Jesus. Jesus has to do it. And that's exactly why Jesus promises to be with us in all His power and authority as we follow Him into this mission.

He promises to use His power and authority to do in and through you something you can't do for yourself or others.

- He is able to open doors to tell others about Jesus.
- He is able to soften and prepare the hearts of people in your life.
- He is able to give you boldness and ability through His Spirit in you.
- He is able to work miracles in your life that transform you and transform the people He desires to impact through you.

In 2025...

Would you like to get a front row seat to seeing just how much power and authority Jesus has?

Would you like for Jesus to pour out His power on your life and for your life to be filled with eternal significance? Then, join Him on the journey of making disciples.

- Will you follow Jesus?
- Are you a disciple?
- Will you say yes to living on mission this year to make a disciple?
- Will you take a next step together with us and be part of the Wednesday night classes?
- Will pray "your one", asking for the power of Jesus on your life and theirs?