

How Do We Fulfill Jesus' Great Commission?

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We have been on a journey of understanding who Jesus is and why He gives us the Holy Spirit. Last week we found that the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to be “Witnesses” and “Make Disciples”. So, how do we “witness” and “make disciples”? The charge that Jesus gave all of His followers is often called “The Great Commission” Though this phrase is not in the Bible, it is a good description of our primary job as Believers: We are called to expand God’s Kingdom by telling of Jesus—witness—and inviting as many people as possible into the Family of God—making disciples.

To be sure, there are as many different ways to do make disciples as there are different people in God’s Family—the “Church”. Fortunately, Jesus has never left us to figure things out for ourselves. Our Lord, in the Gospels, gave us His own Words and example of what making disciples looks like. Jesus also commissioned the Apostles to teach us. The Apostles had followed Jesus from the beginning of His ministry through His Resurrection and Ascension back to Heaven. They knew Jesus’ words and deeds very well. Plus, Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would remind them of *everything* that Jesus said:

25“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. **26**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

(John 14:25-26)

In addition, so that the Gentiles (non-Jews) would hear the Gospel, Jesus chose the Apostle Paul. Paul was given the task of reaching both Jews *and* Gentiles so Gentiles would not be left out of God’s Kingdom. Jesus’ revelations to Paul make up most of what we understand about Jesus’ teachings and purposes in the New Testament. Jesus’ words and deeds are written down in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the Book of Acts.

Then, Paul also explains and gives us the proper understanding of Jesus’ teachings. For example, Paul shows us connections between the Old Covenant with Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus. Paul explains things that are hard to understand about the ways of God. Even so, God uses Paul, and the others (John, Peter, etc.) to explain difficult ideas about the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the difference between the Old and New Covenants, the way of Faith and not works, and many more ideas.

Paul explains that the old way of obtaining righteousness was through following laws and ceremonies. The problem was that no one could reach God’s holy standard in the Old Covenant. As we have discussed previously from Paul’s letter to the Romans,

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) And, “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) Remember, we have *all* earned death, not life.

Paul further explains that Jesus came to fulfill the Old Covenant of the Law so that we could have life. Jesus alone was, and is, the Righteous One. Only Jesus satisfied God’s demand for Holiness. Paul takes much of the New Testament to explain that the *new way of righteousness* is through faith alone in Jesus Christ only. There is no “work” that we can do to earn God’s love and grace. It is only by faith and believing in Jesus that we receive the free gift of salvation.

By the way, I have spent my life studying God’s Word. God always faithfully answers my questions along the way. The deeper I go into God, the more God shows me about who He is. I am so grateful for a patient and loving God who teaches me and guides me in His ways. So, with God’s Word, the Holy Spirit, pastors, teachers, and parents, we have more than enough to learn about and understand God and His plans for us to become disciples of Jesus!

And, did you know that in the Early Church, the Apostle Paul and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem disagreed about what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus? In Acts 15, the “Jewish” Christians, James (who is the half-brother of Jesus), the Apostle Peter, and the other disciples of Jesus actually had very strong disagreements with Paul about what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus. The Jerusalem Council thought it was necessary to become Jewish first then, a person could be a disciple of Jesus. The leaders in Jerusalem wanted new believers to follow many of the old laws and rules of the Old Covenant.

Eventually, after much difficulty and discussion, it was clear that Paul’s revelations from Jesus were right. It was only through faith, and not through any works, that we could become Christians. Therefore, the message of the Gospel was clear: Faith in Jesus is all we need to be true disciples of Jesus.

Of course, with faith come many Godly desires to learn and grow and understand God. So, it does not mean that a person stops growing after receiving the Good News of Jesus. It simply means that no one must “*earn*” salvation. Salvation is a free gift which has been paid for by Jesus for us, on our behalf.

It is through teaching and preaching about faith in Jesus that God’s power comes to people in salvation. Our “witness” is to tell about Jesus. We share about God’s gift of salvation in Jesus by meeting people everywhere and anywhere. We find ways to tell about Jesus. We can tell people at work or at school. We can talk about Jesus in the grocery store or at “e-mart”. We can talk to each other about Jesus, so that people around can listen. People around *are* listening. We witness to others sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. We can invite people to a Sunday meeting or Bible Study. There are so many ways to tell about Jesus.

So, we *must* tell others about Jesus or, they may end up in Hell... forever. Of course, if we do not tell about Jesus, we must really wonder if we are truly followers of Jesus. But, if we simply have trouble with sharing Jesus, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us. We can even practice telling each other about Jesus so we are more prepared “Out there” to share. Of course, the more we read God’s Word, the more we will

understand God's ways and how important it is to share Jesus. In the end, Jesus did not *ask* us to witness and make disciples. Jesus *commanded* us to witness and make disciples!

At the end of Matthew, Jesus told His Disciples:

“19Go therefore [as you go] 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.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

We ***make disciples***, by the Holy Spirit, so that people *hear* about Jesus and make the decision to give their lives to follow Jesus.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Rome, explains this process:

14How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15**And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” **[Isaiah 52:7]** **16**But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” **[Isaiah 53:1]** **17**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
(Romans 10:14-17)

We do not need to worry or be concerned with how people will respond. That is not our job. God has told us to be witnesses and make disciples. He will take care of the rest. We are not responsible for what people think of us or if they receive the message of Jesus. Our responsibility is simply to tell people about Jesus and leave everything to God.

Romans 1:16-17

16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for [or to] faith, as it is written, **“The righteous shall live by faith.”** [from Habakkuk 2:4]

We have learned a little more about what it means to be witnesses and make disciples: Witnessing is telling others about who Jesus is and what He has done. We tell about the marvelous words and deeds Jesus did while on the Earth. We tell about how Jesus conquered death and resurrected from the dead. We tell of our faith today in Jesus. We tell people how to live eternally in Heaven by believing in Jesus. And, we invite others to join God's family and become followers of Jesus—“disciples”. May God help us to witness and make disciples, in Jesus' name.

Let us pray...