

Matthew 28:19a | “Disciples Make Disciples”
Preached on September 1, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 28, verse 19. *[pause]*

We are continuing our study on the Great Commission, and this morning we will be looking at the main command that Jesus gives. *[pauseeee]*

To get the Great Commission on our minds, let’s READ it, starting back in verse 18. *[READ vss. 18–20]*

As you think about our church, what are we here for? *[pauseeee]*

What is the purpose and mission of the church? *[pause]*

Some people think that church is about being entertained and having a good time.

They spend lots of money and effort on creating an enjoyable experience, so that people will be attracted and keep coming back. *[pause]*

Others think that the church is supposed to be like a social club, where we come, socialize, and do some good for the community.

They even try to legitimize this idea by saying, “Look at all the good we are doing!” *[pauseeee]*

Is that our main purpose here? *[pauseeee]*

Still others believe that the church is meant to just meet some “felt needs” so as to make people feel a little better, and to scratch that “religious itch” that people have. *[pause]*

Are any of these purposes our true purpose? *[pause]*

What about this—are we here just because we always have done this?

Are we supposed to just do this just because that’s what good Americans do? *[pauseeee]*

Or maybe you are sitting there thinking, “You know what, I don’t actually know what the main purpose is.” *[pauseeee]*

Well what do you think? *[pause]*

Let me tell you, it doesn’t matter what you *think*, it matters what Christ has *said*.

And here in the Great Commission, Jesus tells us what our primary mission as the church is to be. *[pause]*

It’s not to entertain people or simply to socialize. *[pause]*

It’s not to meet felt needs and scratch that religious itch.

And it's definitely not to do this just because it's the thing that we have always done...

We are here ultimately for the glory of God, of course, but we glorify God *by* making disciples.
[pauseeee]

Here, right before Jesus ascends to Heaven, He gives final instructions to His disciples.
[pauseeee]

When someone gives their final instructions or commands, it's usually very important. [pause]

Think about when you are leaving on a trip, you give your family some important, final instructions while you are gone...

You say, "Don't forget to put the trash out on Monday night."

Or, "Make sure you do this or that." [pause]

They are the final things that you want them to keep in their mind to make sure to do.

Well Jesus has a final, vital command for His disciples to be doing in the world once He ascends into Heaven...

It's their "marching orders" and mission.

It is to: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." [pause]

By saying this, He's showing us that...

We are to be on a mission.

Have you ever been sent on a mission? [pause]

Maybe you served in the military, and you were sent on a mission, so you had to accomplish an important task or assignment.

But a mission isn't only reserved for the military, for really a mission is any important assignment. [pauseee]

So for you, maybe as a kid, your parents said, "We have a mission for you—go to the grocery store and buy milk." [pause]

You were sent on a mission, which was to go and buy milk—that mission was to be your focus.
[pause]

Your mind and all of you had to be laser-focused on accomplishing that task, for there would be many temptations along the way. [pauseeee]

You couldn't be distracted by your neighbors playing outside and join them. [pause]

You couldn't stop halfway and turn around because you got tired. *[pause]*

You couldn't be engrossed by a bug on the ground, so that you forgot what you were going to do...

Your mission was to go and buy milk. *[pause]*

You had to have focus, courage, and perseverance to go get that milk and bring it home safe and sound. *[pause]*

So also, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have a mission. *[pauseee]*

Our minds, hearts, and wills (and really all of us) must be laser-focused on our mission of making disciples. *[pauseeee]*

We can't be distracted by other things, even if they aren't bad in and of themselves. *[pause]*

We can't get tired and give up.

And we can't be engrossed by lesser things, so that we forget what we are called to do. *[pause]*

We must have focus, courage, and perseverance to go and make disciples—that's what Jesus has commanded us to do. *[pauseeeee]*

Now what is the first thing that Jesus says about our mission? First...

A. We must go.

Think back to that illustration of being sent to go and buy milk. *[pause]*

A vital part of buying milk was that you had to actually go, right?

The mission couldn't nor wouldn't be accomplished without *going* to buy the milk, for to buy the milk, you had to go to the store. *[pause]*

It wouldn't just come to you, but it's at the store, so you must go to it.

So also, our mission involves "going". *[pause]*

Therefore, you can't sit back and do nothing.

You can't remain idle. *[pause]*

You can't be lazy and make disciples. *[pause]*

By saying to "go", He's saying that you must be about this. *[pauseee]*

The implication is that new disciples won't just plop right into your lap left and right, but you have to be *intentional* to make disciples. *[pauseeeee]*

I've heard some Christians talk about their workplace and say, "Once someone asks me about Jesus, then I'll tell them." *[pause]*

That's not right!

For the most part, people won't approach you, but you must go to them and talk about Jesus! *[pauseeee]*

By telling us to "go", Jesus is teaching us that there are people out there, but we must go to them with the message of Jesus. *[pause]*

There are potential, future disciples, but we have to play our part in reaching them, and a vital piece of making disciples is *going*. *[pauseeee]*

They may be at your workplace, the grocery store, down the street, at the barber, or walking downtown...

There are people out there, so you must "go". *[pauseeee]*

We have to be active, intentional, and mission-minded.

We must go with purpose. *[pauseeee]*

Listen up—we are not going to be active in making disciples, if we are only about maintaining the "status-quo" here at First Baptist. *[pause]*

We must be on mission!

We can't be about keeping things the way they are, we must be about keeping at Christ's commission. *[pauseeee]*

We are to "go", and guess what?...

'Going' opens up possible risk, discomfort, and pain. *[pause]*

Anytime that you step outside of your door and go somewhere, there is risk. *[pause]*

That means that 'going' means that we may meet uncomfortable situations. *[pause]*

'Going' means that we will be stretched and go through some hardships. *[pauseeee]*

There's the risk of rejection, the risk of being mocked, the risk of being misunderstood, and so many more things.

And I'll be honest with you, if we as a church become more intentional and mission-minded, we will be opening ourselves up to more discomfort, pain, and stretching moments. *[pause]*

But know this—‘going’ also opens you up to new possibilities, new and exciting things, and potential for great rejoicing. *[pauseee]*

Going means that we get to see God use us in a new person’s life. *[pause]*

Going means that we play a part in God’s great work in the world among people that we haven’t even met yet! *[pause]*

Going means that we get to be a part of God’s rescue mission in the world, reaching people where they are, and pointing them to the One who can rescue them out of death and darkness. *[pauseeee]*

There’s nothing more important and lasting.

There’s nothing more amazing than being used by God in the world to reach people for Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

‘Going’ means that we will be *obeying* our Lord Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

If we just want to maintain the status-quo, if we just want to sit back in safety, comfort, and ease, we will be sitting back in disobedience to our Savior. *[pauseeee]*

I think about Paul and he’s an example of someone who was mission-minded...

He was always thinking about where he would go next with the gospel, or who he could encourage and grow.

If there’s someone who was definitely not about the “status-quo” of just getting by it was Paul.

Everything was about making disciples, both making new ones and maturing current ones. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus *commanded* us to “go”, and so we do not take this lightly, but we must (with renewed motivation) intentionally be about making disciples. *[pauseeee]*

I do not want to personally nor corporately as a church disobey our Lord.

And if we are truly Bible-people, that is, Bible-believers, who sit under the authority of God’s Word, then we need to be *serious* about this command. *[pause]*

Are we serious about it?

If so, what needs to change? *[pauseeee]*

The next thing that we see about our mission is that...

B. We must make disciples.

Now, what does it actually mean to make disciples? *[pause]*

We are commanded to go, and I've talked about that, but what about the command to make disciples, what exactly does that look like? *[pause]*

Well a disciple of Jesus is a follower of Jesus.

They adhere to and follow Him, His teachings, and His way of life. *[pause]*

They are essentially a learner or student of Christ, shaping their lives after what He says. *[pause]*

They seek to listen and obey Him, and therefore, it entails allegiance to Jesus as Master and Lord. *[pauseeee]*

So when we make disciples, we are calling others to do what we did...

To see Jesus for who He is, respond in faith to Him, and then strive to obey Him in love. *[pauseeee]*

Consider when Jesus called and made His original disciples, what did He do?...

He called them to Himself, they responded in faith, and so followed Him, listened to Him, and obeyed Him. *[pause]*

They now lived for Him, and their lives were never the same. *[pause]*

Well for us: we call disciples to Jesus, and they respond in following the same One we are following. *[pauseeeee]*

Picture Jesus walking, and we are following behind Him, for He is the leader and we shape our lives in accordance with whatever He says and does.

And as we are walking, we are joyously calling out to others, "Come and follow Jesus, too!"

Be a disciple! It's worth it! *He's* worth it! He will change your life!" *[pause]*

That's the picture. *[pause]*

When we follow Jesus, we receive a new identity—we are disciples of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

We can say, "I'm a follower of Jesus."

And that is not a side thing, or a little aspect of my life.

It's not like someone saying that they are a basketball player or woodworker. *[pause]*

Rather, being a follower of Jesus means that my whole way of life is to be morphed, shaped, and governed by my leader, Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

So many modern-day “Christians” are simply cultural Christians.

They do not see themselves as followers of Jesus, whose whole lives are shaped by Him.

Instead, they see themselves as something else with a little bit of Jesus sprinkled in. *[pauseeee]*

There may even be some in this room that think that way. *[pause]*

Church to you is a nice, little side thing, or a nice thing to get involved in a community, or to meet people.

Or maybe it’s a cultural thing, where it’s just the thing to do on a Sunday is to go to church.

That is not being a disciple of Jesus, and we must throw that mindset into the garbage bin of wrong thoughts. *[pauseeee]*

When you trust in Jesus, it changes your whole identity.

He is now your Master, who governs your actions, thinking, priorities, and values.

He changes your whole worldview and way of life. *[pause]*

And so when Jesus tells us to make disciples, He’s not saying to make mere church attenders, make religious-looking people, or make people who are Christians in name only.

He says to make disciples in all of what that word ‘disciple’ means. *[pauseeeee]*

Now *where* are we called to make disciples?

Jesus says to “make disciples *of all nations*”. *[pauseeee]*

You see, being a disciple of Jesus isn’t just for Jews. *[pause]*

It’s not just for white Americans or some other ethnic group or country, and that’s it.

It’s for all nations, and therefore all peoples. *[pause]*

The mission field is the whole world! *[pause]*

Christianity isn’t just a little regional thing, it’s a global thing. *[pauseeee]*

Even now we are witnesses of how followers of Jesus started as a small little group in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended to now reach every region of the world. *[pause]*

It’s said that there are now over 2 billion Christians across the globe.¹ *[pauseeeee]*

¹<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>.

Jesus desires people from all nations to follow Him, so that means that we are not to exclude anyone as we think about making disciples. *[pause]*

We don't say, "Oh, I don't think that person will turn to Christ." *[pause]*

We don't think, "Uh, I don't think I'll share the Gospel with that guy, just look at him." *[pause]*

Instead, we witness to people from all walks of life, and people from all ethnicities, countries, or circumstances. *[pauseeee]*

You will meet people with different beliefs and backgrounds as you go through life. *[pause]*

Think of the melting pot that is America, and how you could meet so many various people with various beliefs...

You could meet a Muslim, an atheist or agnostic, a Buddhist, a Mormon, or a Jehovah's witness.

You could meet a homeless person, a person who just got out of jail, a person who has been divorced 4 times, a person who used to be on drugs or is currently on drugs.

The list could go on and on, but no matter who they are, they need Jesus.

We are to make disciples of all peoples! *[pauseeeee]*

Now I know that most of us aren't called to go to far away countries, though some of us will! *[pause]*

There may be someone sitting here today, who may become a missionary in some far away land.

And you know what, it would be sad to lose that person in our church family, but what's better than being able to send out missionaries from our church to reach the world for Christ?

[pauseeee]

I remember when I was helping out in a youth group while in college, there was a couple that helped in the youth group as well. *[pause]*

All of sudden they shared that God had called them to be missionaries in Ireland and a few years down the road, that's where they were, church planting for Christ, thousands of miles away across the ocean. *[pauseeee]*

Could *you* be one of the ones to go to another nation?

That's something that we each should be willing to pray about and be open to for ourselves. *[pause]*

Now, of course, I know that some of you won't be called to be missionaries to far away lands, but we can help reach those far away countries by supporting and partnering with missionaries who do go. *[pause]*

We support missionaries in Africa, Spain, Van-u-a-tu, Papua New Guinea, and more.

We even support missions organizations that reach hard to reach places with the Gospel. *[pause]*

What a blessing to partner with those who are faithfully reaching the far away places that we can't reach.

And we do our part here by “going” out into Clearfield, reaching *our* community for Christ, intentionally reaching the people here. *[pauseeee]*

You never know, maybe someone we reach here in Clearfield will then end up as a missionary in some distant nation.

And what a glorious, marvelous thing that would be! *[pauseeee]*

Christians think globally, not just locally. *[pause]*

We remember that Christ called us to make disciples of all nations, so we don't ignore other nations...

...But we care for them, partner with others who can reach them, and have ready feet, prepared and willing to go if called upon to go there. *[pauseeee]*

As you think about what Jesus calls His disciples to do here, He's really showing us that...

Disciples are to make disciples!

We are not to become a disciple, and then it just ends with us.

Rather, we become a disciple, who then goes and makes other disciples. *[pause]*

So really, we are multipliers and reproducers. *[pauseeee]*

The number of disciples of Jesus is only supposed to expand and grow and multiply. *[pauseeee]*

Starting with just a low number, let's just say that we each made just one disciple this coming year. *[pause]*

Great! That's now double the amount of us!

But let's say that we keep doing that year upon year upon year—that ends up being a lot of disciples!

But it doesn't just stop there, for those disciples we made then go and make more disciples, and it just grows and grows.

That's the way it's supposed to work! *[pauseeee]*

It's supposed to be a beautiful thing that just grows and grows, and more and more people follow Jesus, and they impact others, which then impacts the whole world, as it is influenced by our presence. *[pauseeee]*

Every disciple is to be a *discipler*. *[pause]*

None of you who are disciples of Jesus here are exempt from this, do you realize that? *[pause]*

If you are a disciple of Jesus, you are to make disciples, for disciples make disciples.

So are *you* making disciples? *[pause]*

Sadly, I fear that we have lost this idea in much of present-day American Christianity. *[pause]*

It's been about just cruising along.

It's been about just going through the motions.

It's been about so many other things, programs, entertainment, feel-good messages, and events.

But we must get back to this foundational, basic mission of making disciples. *[pauseee]*

As an individual, as well as a church, we must continually be asking ourselves, "Am I making disciples?"

Or, "Are we making disciples as a church?" *[pauseeee]*

Imagine the difference it would make in your life, if you were intentional about this mission personally, and you lived your life with this mission in mind. *[pause]*

Imagine the difference it would make in the life of our church, if we were intentionally on mission all the time.

For that mission-mindedness and intentionality would lead to action...

We would truly "go", and not sit back. *[pauseeee]*

I just want you to imagine what our church could become, if we all together were "all-in" when it came to this mission of making disciples. *[pause]*

Imagine each of us, as we go through our week at our jobs, or during our errands, or whatever we are doing, we are intentionally trying to reach people for Jesus...

Not just one or two of us, but *each of us*. *[pause]*

Think of the difference that would make over time! *[pause]*

Think of the lives reached for Christ! *[pause]*

Think of the new faces we could see here. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine each of us comes together, and we are so passionate about this mission that we say, “Hey, can you pray for me to boldly talk to my co-worker about Christ?” *[pause]*

Or, “I got to share the Gospel the other day with my family member, and the seed was planted, but please pray that God would do a miracle in their heart.” *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s, “I have this great backyard, how do you guys think I could use it to make disciples?” *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s, “This is my situation with this grocery worker who I see all the time, but I can’t think of a way to kind of break the ice, any ideas?” *[pauseeee]*

If each of us were intentional about this, some would even be saying, “I don’t feel equipped to make disciples, can you help me in some way?...”

I’d love to have a class on this, or meet one-on-one with somebody, or even just get some resources.” *[pauseeee]*

When it comes to us corporately as the church, we’d be evaluating our budget asking, “How much of our money is being used for making disciples?”

Or, “What could we do with some of these extra funds?” *[pause]*

We’d be evaluating each of our services, ministries, and efforts in light of Christ’s Great Commission...

“Are we doing this? How could we direct our energy, time, and effort towards this mission?” *[pause]*

That’s what it looks like to be mission-minded and to go and be intentional. *[pause]*

It shapes how you think and what you do.

It shapes your priorities and values, and leads you to evaluate things with the mission in mind. *[pauseeee]*

As disciples of Jesus, we have a mission and purpose from Christ—we are called to “go and make disciples of all nations”. *[pause]*

In obedience to Christ, we *must* do this. *[pause]*

Jesus commanded us to do it, and therefore it’s not optional. *[pause]*

But what a privilege!

To think that Jesus could have chosen a different way to get this done, yet He chose us as disciples to make more disciples — what a joy to know! *[pause]*

What an honor to play a part in leading others to Jesus and getting to see Jesus change their lives...

There's nothing like that feeling of knowing that you simply pointed someone to Christ, and now their life is never the same. *[pause]*

They have been impacted for eternity.

And when we shy away from joining in this mission, we are not only disobeying Christ, but we are missing out on a tremendous blessing. *[pauseeee]*

We are to “go and make disciples”. *[pause]*

May we be about that mission and purpose, and may it shape how we live and think.