

Matthew 28:19b–20a | “Evangelism is Only Step #1”  
*Preached on September 8, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please open up your Bibles and turn to the book of Matthew chapter 28, verse 19. *[pause]*

For the past year and a half, we have been in a series on the theme of discipleship in the book of Matthew. *[pause]*

At times we have looked at large swaths of the book of Matthew to see what Jesus tells us about being a disciple.

Yet at other times, we have slowed down and really looked deeply at some important truths about discipleship. *[pauseeee]*

Now everything has led up to this monumental passage called, “The Great Commission”.

And since everything has been leading up to this and it’s so important, I’ve decided to take 5 weeks to look at it. *[pause]*

This is week 4 of 5. *[pause]*

We saw who Jesus uses, how He sends us with His authority, what the main command is, and now we are going to look further at what we are called to do. *[pause]*

Let’s once again read the whole Great Commission, starting in verse 18. *[READ 18–20]*

Let’s say that you were having a new house built—what an exciting thing! *[pause]*

You have taken so much time to think, plan, and design your dream home.

From the foundation to the roof.

From the wall color to the kitchen counters, you have it all laid out for the builders to build your new house. *[pauseeee]*

Work on your house finally begins, and you are so happy, but you know that it’s going to take a while, for you can’t build a house from the ground up in one day, one week, or even one month.

So you kinda settle in for the long haul, knowing that it’s going to take some time. *[pause]*

But all of a sudden one month later, the builders come to you and say, “OK, the job is done. Your house is built.” *[pause]*

And you say, “What? It is? How? It’s only been 1 month. Are you sure you’re completely done?” *[pause]*

They respond by saying, “Come and see for yourself.” *[pause]*

So you go with them to the location of your new house, get out of the car, and to your shock, you don't see much at all.

In fact, all you see is that the only thing they did was lay the foundation of the home. [pause]

They aren't done at all, not even close—they only really did step #1. [pauseeee]

How would you respond to this? [pause]

Would you congratulate them, and say, "Job well done, you completed the house!"? [pause]

Would you say, "OK, everything is done. Thanks guys, here's the money."? [pause]

No way, for they really only completed the first step, and there's tons more to do.

You would probably either think that they were joking, or that they lost their minds...

The job's NOT done, for the house is not completed. [pauseeee]

Well when it comes to making disciples, if you think that evangelism is the only thing involved in making disciples, then you are acting like those house-builders, claiming that the house is done after only the foundation is laid. [pause]

Evangelism is only the first step in making disciples! [pauseeee]

Many of us don't think that way, for we see evangelism and then someone getting saved as the whole task being completed. [pause]

Someone gets saved, and then we think that it's time to brush off our hands, and walk away in satisfaction. [pauseeee]

While we *should* rejoice over someone being saved, when talking about making disciples, Jesus doesn't stop there, for listen to what He says...

"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, *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you."  
[pause]

Now *that's* what's involved in making disciples. [pause]

It's not just to see them believe in Jesus, but it's to baptize them and then teach them afterwards, too. [pause]

Each part is included, each part is essential, and must not be neglected by us. [pauseeee]

*And so let's investigate further into what Jesus is telling us to do, and the first thing we see is that...*

## I. We are to make new disciples, who publicly identify with Christ.

For some people, they do not hold baptism as something that important, but as something almost voluntary.

Yet in the Bible, it puts a lot of emphasis on baptism, and what you find is that it's almost like salvation and baptism go hand-in-hand. *[pauseeee]*

In the book of Acts, you see this very prominently. *[pause]*

After Peter preaches a sermon, it says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

After the Philippian jailer believes and is saved, he is then baptized, along with his believing household.<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

And after Philip witnesses to the Ethiopian eunuch, they come to water, and the eunuch says, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"<sup>3</sup> *[pauseeee]*

People believe in Jesus and then get baptized, that's the testimony of Scripture, and typically it's soon after they believe. *[pauseeee]*

You see, in the Bible, baptism is closely linked with salvation. *[pause]*

It's not that baptism saves, but that baptism is linked closely to salvation, for it's the public representation of what happened at salvation. *[pauseeee]*

After people get saved, they publicly identify with Jesus in baptism, which marks them openly as followers of Jesus.

So baptism is a normative part of being a Christian.

This is why we do not take in anybody as church members who weren't baptized yet, for they never actually publicly identified with Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Baptism is really this public, outward symbol picturing a clear break from your old life and demonstrating that you have new life in Christ...

As you go down into the water, you show that your old life has died with Christ, and then when you come up out of the water, you show that you have new life because of Jesus' death and resurrection. *[pause]*

It's this beautiful picture of the Gospel, and your union and association with Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:41.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16:32–33.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 8:35–36

That's why someone is baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." *[pause]*

Their baptism demonstrates their new relationship, fellowship, and allegiance to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And when I (or someone else) baptizes a person, we are doing it under the authority of the Trinity. *[pauseeee]*

Baptism is a public testimony of your faith and commitment to Jesus.

It's showing the world that, "Yes, I have trusted in Jesus!" *[pause]*

That's why right before I baptize someone, I ask them in front of everyone in the room, "Do you trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?"

And that way, they get to respond in a public profession of faith in Jesus, and then wonderfully show it in their immersion. *[pauseeee]*

For Jesus to command us to baptize new disciples, He's showing us that your faith is not to be some secret, private thing. *[pause]*

Some people say, "My faith is a personal, private matter between me and the Lord."

Or others say, "Don't talk about your faith in public."

But that understanding is foreign to the Bible. *[pause]*

While, yes, you have to respond personally to Jesus Christ, it is not to remain a private matter, but it's to be publicly displayed in baptism. *[pauseeee]*

So if you have trusted in Jesus, yet you aren't baptized yet, what's holding you back? *[pause]*

Don't let fear hold you back from publicly identifying with your Savior and Lord. *[pauseeee]*

At the church I went to in Lancaster, there was this lady, who was absolutely terrified of water, and yet she willingly went ahead and got baptized. *[pause]*

Of course, it was hard for her in the moment, but she did it because she knew that it was worth it.

It was a wonderful example of someone who didn't let fear hinder her from loving obedience and a willingness to identify with Jesus, no matter what.

And there's a reason why I have never forgotten it. *[pauseeee]*

Realize that it's important, and that Jesus has called disciples to be baptized, so it's not just something that people do, just if they feel like it. *[pause]*

It certainly doesn't save you, or add to your salvation, but Jesus does command it here.

So it's not something that only just *some* Christians do, but it's something that *all* Christians are called to do.

It's a step of obedience after faith to say, "I. Follow. Jesus!" *[pauseeee]*

Therefore, we do not take it lightly, but we see its significance and call people to publicly identify with Jesus.

And it's a wonderful thing! *[pause]*

I love seeing Christians take that step, and publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ for all present to see. *[pauseeee]*

So based on God's Word here, I call upon any Christian here today who has never been baptized to be baptized.

Let me know of your desire to be baptized, for Jesus has called us to "make disciples...baptizing them" so I must follow God's Word and call you to do that. *[pauseeee]*

No matter how old you are or how long you have been in church, let me tell you that there will be joy among us that you are doing it. *[pauseeee]*

We are called to make new disciples.

So we witness and evangelize the lost, proclaiming the Gospel to them, and then we call them to be baptized once they turn in faith to Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

This is what we are called to do.

Are you doing that? *[pause]*

Are you leading people to Jesus, and then calling them to be baptized? *[pause]*

Jesus commands people to be baptized, for He wants committed, set-apart followers. *[pause]*

He doesn't want people to follow Him in name only.

He doesn't want people to be secret, hidden Christians, and who never identify with Him publicly.

He wants people, who stand up before others and by their baptism, say, "Because of Jesus, my old life is gone and I have new life in Him!" *[pauseeee]*

So we are called to make new disciples, who publicly identify with Christ in baptism, but is that it? *[pause]*

Like once they are saved and baptized, can we walk away with a “mission accomplished” badge?  
[pause]

No, for Jesus doesn’t *just* say to “make disciples...baptizing them”, but there’s more, for He says, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” [pause]

*And so the next point is that...*

## **II. We are to make mature disciples, who faithfully follow Christ.**

Let’s say that a person shared the Gospel with someone else, and that person believed in Jesus, but then the person who just shared the Gospel walked away, thinking, “OK, job done!” [pause]

What are some of your thoughts about that? [pause]

Many people would think that there’s nothing wrong with that.

They think, “The person believed in Jesus! Isn’t that the end goal?”

But let me tell you, based on God’s Word here, that is the wrong mindset. [pauseeee]

It’s great that the person believed in Jesus!

We *should* rejoice exceedingly for that person becoming a follower of Jesus—yes, yes yes!

Heaven rejoices when one sinner repents.<sup>4</sup>

But initial belief in Jesus is not the *final* goal—disciples led to maturity is. [pauseeee]

Many churches proclaim from the mountaintops that this many people trusted in Christ the past year.

And that’s a good thing that people are believing, but we should also be asking, “Where are those people now? Are they being discipled? Are they being taught, and brought along to maturity?”  
[pause]

Jesus doesn’t want a bunch of new believers floundering on their own after they get saved.

He wants them led along to actually know fully what it means to be a follower. [pauseeeee]

You see, thinking that initial belief is the end goal is like someone walking away rejoicing in a job that’s half complete.

It’s like those builders claiming that the house was done after only the foundation was laid.  
[pauseee]

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<sup>4</sup> A reference to Luke 15:7 (see also verse 10).

Initial belief in Jesus is an amazing thing that we should celebrate, but the task isn't done!

*[pause]*

Making disciples is more than just evangelism, for evangelism is only step #1—it's only a part of the task.

We must teach them, Jesus says. *[pauseeee]*

If you lead someone to Christ, you shouldn't think, "OK, I'm done. I can move on to another person."

Rather, they must be shepherded along in discipleship. *[pauseeee]*

Now I understand that it can't always be done by the person who led them to Christ because of different reasons, but they must be led along by *someone*.

So whether that's you connecting them with another fellow believer, connecting them with a solid local church to have someone there disciple them, or something along those lines...

They need to be taught! *[pauseeee]*

Imagine a bunch of new Christians, who were never taught and disciplined after being saved.

*[pause]*

They have no idea what all is involved in following Jesus. *[pause]*

They may know a little bit, but not what it actually looks like and means. *[pause]*

When trials come their way, how will they be prepared to persevere?

And how will they know how to live for Christ, unless they are taught what He said? *[pause]*

That's why it's important to teach and lead new believers along in their faith. *[pauseeee]*

In Colossians, Paul talks about how he toils hard to proclaim Christ, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."<sup>5</sup> *[pause]*

Paul's ultimate goal wasn't *just* people's salvations, it was their salvation and then their maturity in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

So we share the Gospel with people, people get saved and baptized, and then the next step kicks in—teaching. *[pause]*

We teach people to personally live for Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>5</sup> Colossians 1:28–29.

Sometimes it's easy to get into this mode of thinking that we are all about hands raised and mere mental decisions to follow Jesus.

But Jesus wants us to call people to a whole new way of life and worldview. *[pause]*

He wants us to call people to a new identity, where they now follow and adhere to what Jesus says...

We teach them to observe Christ's commands. *[pauseeee]*

So if we are to teach disciples to observe Christ's commands, it means that *there is something that they must know and believe*. *[pause]*

Disciples must know things. *[pause]*

Sometimes people try to throw doctrine out the window, and say, "Why can't we all just follow Jesus without this doctrine stuff?"

But how will you know what to observe if you don't know what to observe? *[pause]*

How will you grow in maturity and obedience, if you aren't taught the deep doctrinal truths of who Christ is, why salvation is important, how we grow, and what our goals should be? *[pause]*

How will you go through the hardest trials of your life with a solid faith without knowing the glorious truths of God's sovereignty, eternal security, and everlasting bliss? *[pauseeee]*

There's a reason why Paul would often craft His epistles in such a way where he gives deep doctrinal truth, which is then followed by imperatives to live in light of that truth. *[pause]*

Disciples need to be taught!

Everything doesn't just magically get downloaded into the brain of a new disciple.

So we must *teach them* Christ's commands. *[pauseeee]*

We don't teach them our opinions and preferences. *[pause]*

We don't teach them what the world says. *[pause]*

We don't say, "Whatever you want to believe, and however you want to live, it's all good."

No, we teach them what Christ has said, so that they become people submitted to and governed by Christ's words. *[pause]*

We teach them to *observe all that Christ commanded*. *[pauseeee]*

To observe Christ's commands means to keep, obey, and pay attention to them.



That’s why Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”<sup>6</sup> *[pause]*

So Jesus doesn’t want only knowledge of what He has said, but He wants obedience to what He has said. *[pauseeee]*

You must get this ingrained down deep into your mind and heart—being a disciple is more than head knowledge, it’s a life lived in obedience to Christ. *[pause]*

Now this is hard because sometimes Jesus’ teachings are hard, as they rub up against our selfishness or our culture’s values.

But being a disciple is about following Jesus, isn’t it? *[pauseeee]*

Did you notice what He said?

“Teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded you.” *[pause]*

We don’t get to “pick and choose” which words of Jesus that we feel like listening to, but we submit and obey it all.

And if someone wants to pick and choose, they need to return back to being a student in the school of Christ and taught once again. *[pauseeee]*

We don’t call people to some lighthearted, superficial response, but a total commitment to Jesus. *[pause]*

We call them to a life governed by Christ’s words. *[pause]*

As one commentary said, “The commission is concerned with making true disciples who obey Jesus—their Lord—not just casual hangers-on who may listen to his message without doing it.”<sup>7</sup> *[pauseeee]*

We should not be content with people who are just cultural Christians, casual Christians, or Christians in name only.

To follow Christ is not a small, nor shallow thing! *[pause]*

We are not to be all about mere hands raised, but we are to be about making disciples, who follow Jesus faithfully until their final earthly breath. *[pauseee]*

This is why Paul says in Ephesians how God has set things up in the church so that the body of Christ would be built up, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

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<sup>6</sup> John 14:15.

<sup>7</sup> David Turner and Darrell L. Bock, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, Vol 11: *Matthew and Mark* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 377.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 4:11–13.

So really, you could put it this way—we are to lead disciples to *maturity*.

We are to be about making committed disciples of Jesus. *[pauseee]*

As a church, therefore, we are to be about seeing people saved, yes!

But we should also evaluate and reflect upon this question: are people growing in their spiritual maturity, Christ-likeness, commitment, and obedience? *[pauseee]*

If people are becoming less mature, or even remaining the same over time, then we are failing in what we are called to do.

We should be able to look back over the past 5, 10, 15 years and say, “People here have been growing in their love and obedience to the Lord.” *[pauseee]*

Now this command isn’t only to churches, for it’s also to individual disciples, for we *each* are called to do this...

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

Paul says in Romans 15 that the Romans were able to instruct one another.<sup>9</sup> *[pause]*

The Bible says that we are to teach and admonish one another, warn each other as brothers, and speak the truth in love, so that we each grow up in every way into Christ.<sup>10</sup> *[pauseee]*

You must remember that you as a disciple of Jesus ought to be discipling others. *[pauseee]*

Jesus has commanded you to do this in the Great Commission, yet I fear that this is lacking among us.

Way too often, we are focused on our own individual faith, instead of being intentional about how we can help others along in their faith, too. *[pause]*

We just kind of live our lives on our own terms, instead of seeing the need to disciple other Christians. *[pauseee]*

There are some of you in this room who have been Christians for 50, 60, 70 years and you have never taken another believer under your wing and taught them how to live the Christian life. *[pauseee]*

Other people need your wisdom, experience, and knowledge! *[pause]*

Others need to see your faith in action, and be taught what it means to persevere in the faith. *[pause]*

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 15:14.

<sup>10</sup> Colossians 3:16, 2 Thess. 3:15, Ephesians 4:15 (in that order).

Instead of complaining about how younger Christians are acting, how about you take a younger person under your wing and decide to help them and disciple them to maturity? *[pauseeee]*

We sometimes wonder why people are where they are in their walk with the Lord, yet not realizing that *we* are called to play a part in helping them to grow. *[pause]*

Could it be that *we* are part of the problem that we complain about? *[pause]*

Rather than seeing people's immature faith as a time to grumble and complain, what if we saw it as an opportunity to step in and help? *[pauseeee]*

Jesus makes it clear here that we each are called to make disciples, and a part of that is teaching others to follow Jesus faithfully.

So that means that if you are not teaching and encouraging others in their faith, then you are neglecting a prime responsibility in your Christian walk. *[pauseeee]*

Don't you think it's time to step up and be more intentional about discipling other people? *[pause]*

There's no better time than now.

If you have failed at this in the past, know that there is grace and forgiveness in Christ, but then step up and rely upon Christ to help you to disciple someone else. *[pauseeee]*

Now you may be wondering, "OK, but *how* can I practically disciple someone else? What does it look like?" *[pause]*

I came upon an article written by a pastor named Garrett Kell, who gave some excellent ideas for how discipling relationships could work, and they were too good to not share. *[pauseee]*

He says, "Maybe two friends decide to read a chapter from the Gospel of John and then discuss it over coffee or a workout at the gym. *[pause]*

Maybe two businessmen read a chapter each week from a Christian book and then talk about it on a Saturday walk through the neighborhood with their kids. *[pause]*

Maybe two couples do a date night together once a month and talk about what the Bible says about marriage. *[pause]*

Maybe a godly older lady has a younger single woman over to her home on Tuesday afternoon to pray and study a Christian biography. *[pause]*

Maybe a mom spends time at the park with other moms each week [to talk about what God has been teaching them]. *[pause]*

Maybe a father and a son sit on the porch and reflect on God's glory being displayed in a sunset.

[Or] maybe you invite visitors from church over for lunch and ask everyone how they came to know Jesus.”<sup>11</sup> *[pauseeeee]*

You could come up with your own creative ideas to spend time with someone, encouraging them with truth, talking about God and His Word, and challenging each other to be more like Christ. *[pausee]*

This could involve scheduled times or spontaneous times, but there should be *times* that we are doing this with other people. *[pauseeeee]*

We should regularly be discipling others. *[pause]*

I’d love for our church to get to the point where it’s normal for each of us to do this with others. *[pause]*

It would be amazing if this kind of discipleship was ingrained into our culture here.

Where whenever you are going on an errand, you just naturally think, “Why don’t I ask so-and-so if they want to tag along, and I can encourage them with something that God has been teaching me.” *[pause]*

Where we just naturally think, “Why don’t I ask this person if they want to meet every other week to study the Bible together.” *[pause]*

Wouldn’t it be amazing to just have someone call you up, and say, “Hey, I know that you are going through a rough time, can I just quickly stop over and pray with you?”

Or even, “I know life has been rough lately, do you need someone to just come over and talk through what you are feeling?” *[pause]*

That’s what it looks like to disciple others...

It’s intentionally taking the time and effort to speak God’s Word, encourage, pray with, and at times challenge another person in their walk with the Lord. *[pauseee]*

**This is how we can teach others to observe all that Christ has commanded us.**

For it’s by regular, formal or informal times of helping someone along, so that they grow in their knowledge, faith, love, obedience, and commitment to Jesus Christ. *[pauseee]*

*You see...*

**To make disciples is to lead others to live a life committed to Jesus Christ.**

As we think about making disciples, we should be about sharing the Gospel, and seeing people saved. *[pause]*

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.9marks.org/article/journaldiscipleship-according-scriptures/>.

Last week's sermon was all about that, and that is a critical part of making disciples, but that's not the whole task...

Evangelism is only step #1—it's only like laying the foundation of a home. *[pause]*

After someone gets saved, they need to be led along in their faith by others.

We need to see that their house of faith is built up. *[pause]*

So we encourage them by calling them to get baptized, publicly identifying with Jesus Christ in a beautiful symbol of what happened at salvation.

And then we teach them to observe all of Christ's commands. *[pause]*

We don't let them flounder, or just live a superficial, shallow Christian life.

Rather, we teach and show them that to be a disciple of Jesus is to live a life committed to Jesus.

It's to faithfully follow Him in love and obedience. *[pauseeee]*

But in order to do this, guess what?

*You have to be living a life committed to Jesus. [pause]*

So let me ask you: are you actually living a life committed to Jesus, or are you living for yourself with a little bit of Jesus sprinkled on top? *[pause]*

Are you willing to observe and obey all that Jesus has commanded, or do like to pick and choose what you feel like doing?

Because guess what...

One thing that Jesus commanded was to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that He commanded.

So a part of a life committed to Jesus *is* to disciple others—are you doing that? *[pauseeeee]*

The journey of following Jesus is not an easy path, and it's not always pretty, as we often stumble, and those we disciple will often stumble. *[pause]*

It's a journey filled with joys, sorrows, "I don't get it's", and mess ups. *[pause]*

It's a pilgrimage filled with times of great growth, times of struggle, and times of needed repentance and forgiveness. *[pause]*

But it's worth it because of *who* we follow—the One who died and rose again for us in amazing grace.

The One who extends forgiveness towards sinners, beckons them to come and find rest,<sup>12</sup> and promises to be with them and strengthen them for each day. *[pausee]*

We follow Jesus Christ, Lord of Heaven and Earth, and there's no one more worthy to commit to and follow with our lives.

So we seek to follow Him, and we strive to lead and help others to follow Him, for He is our Savior, Lord, and King.

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<sup>12</sup> A reference to Matthew 11:28.