

EVANGELISM

Blessed to be a Blessing #1

1. The Great Commission

Gen 12:1-3, Matt 28:19-20, 10:7-8, John 15:16, Eph 1:3-4, 11,

What is the Great Commission all about? Is it just a call for a select group of Christians to go overseas as missionaries? Is it just an optional extra that we can take or leave depending on whether we feel like it or not? How are we to understand these final words of Jesus?

The final words a person speaks are usually very important. And Jesus' final words are no exception. They come as the climax of His life and with the highest authority in the universe. They come to us not as a choice, but as a command: "Go and make disciples of all nations".

Mat 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

With these words Jesus is telling us what is most upon His heart and what He is calling all His disciples (not just a few) to do. This was not just an after-thought that Jesus added to His teaching right at the last moment as He was about to leave His disciples. It was the end result of all that Jesus had been preparing them for over the three years He had been with them. More than that, it was something that God had been preparing Israel for over many centuries. It was the very heart of what the Old Testament was all about the very reason why God sent Jesus into the world.

2. Two thousand years earlier

The Great commission was not first given by Jesus His disciples, but was given by God to a man called Abraham two thousand years earlier.

(Gen 12:1) Now the LORD had said to Abram, Depart from thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to a land that I will show thee:

(Gen 12:2) And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

(Gen 12:3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Ever since our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden, God has been seeking to bring people back to Himself. He began this process by first choosing a man- Abraham, and then a nation- Israel. He entered into an agreement or covenant with Abraham with Israel. This covenant had two parts.

The Four Calls of Jesus #2

1. First call: Unbeliever to Believer

We start at the top of the circle with the "Unbeliever" who is lost from fellowship with God. At one stage you were in this position. But Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost."

(Luk 19:10) For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

He calls to those who are wearied and burden with life, "Come to me. Lay down your heavy burden of sin and I will give you rest."

(Mat 11:28) Come to me, all *ye* that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

He never gives up until the lost are found and brought back safely into the Father's arms. When a person hears the call of Jesus and believes and comes to Him in repentance and faith, that person becomes a "believer and a child of God. The person receives God's forgiveness and change from being lost to being found. Have you heard and responded to this first call of Jesus?

2. Second call: Believer to Disciple

The first call of Jesus is a call to salvation, but the second call, "Come follow me", is a call to discipleship. This means that coming to Christ and becoming a 'believer' is only the start of what God wants to do in your life. The rest of Christian life has to do with Jesus call to become a disciple. A disciple is a disciplined one, one who submits to Christ and is body the Church as Lord.

(Eph 1:22) And put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

(Eph 1:23) Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Do you want your life to count for eternity? Then the condition is discipleship. A disciple is one who has not just been "found", but one who is following' Jesus. Would you call yourself a disciple? Are you submitting to the loving discipline of Jesus and obeying what He tells you to do?

3. Third Call: Disciple to "Fisher of men

When Jesus first called those early fishermen with the words "Come follow me," He also told them His purpose with the words "... and I will make you fishers of men". Just as Jesus reached out to you and found you when you were lost. He wants to train you to become a part of this same process of reaching out to other lost people and bringing them to Him also. This is still a part of being a disciple. **You will always be a disciple and a learner of Christ right to the end of your life.**

But as part of following Jesus, He wants to put within you the desire to go and find others that you can bring to (Him, Church) also. Do you want to be a part of helping another person also? Do you want to help another person come to Christ? This is the third part; Jesus' call upon your life.

4. Fourth Call: "Fisher of men to Disciple-maker

Perhaps you thought that to bring a person to Christ is the end of the line. Well it isn't Jesus' final call and command to His disciples was not just to go and make converts, it was to "go and make disciples.

(Mat 28:19) Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Mat 28:20) Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the world. Amen.

Of course this will mean first of all witnessing, evangelising and leading people to Christ. But it must go beyond that. There are many people who have been brought to Christ. They have become believers, but they have not become disciple. They have been left to find their own way. As a result many have only gone so far, and remain weak, immature and often **ineffective** Christians.

(2Ti 2:2) Paul urged young Timothy with these words: The things you have heard me say... entrust (or teach) to faithful men who will be able to teach others also".

As you continue to learn of Christ and follow (Him, Church) as a disciple, you are then called to go and disciple others in the same way. Don't just be a disciple yourself! Become a disciple-maker! Learn how to multiply and reproduce spiritually! In this way the process continues and multiplies. Isn't this a simple and exciting plan? And God is calling you to be a part of it!

The First Essential Requirement #3

1. Jesus priority for His disciples

When Jesus called the first disciples, He had a two-fold purpose for them, He called them first of all to be with Him (a call to fellowship), and then after that He sent them out to preach (service). This order is important. Jesus needed to share His life with them first before He sent them out into ministry. They needed to be with Him, to listen to Him, to learn of Him, to be captivated by His love, to understand what was on His heart and to be molded and trained by Him first of all. Then after that, they were sent out to minister to others. Do you think Jesus priority for you may be the same? Fellowship with Jesus must always come before service for Jesus. Our work for Jesus will only be effective and powerful when it flows out of a close and meaningful relationship with Him.

Mar 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

Mar 3:15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out demons.

2. Jesus priority for Mary and Martha

We see this same priority clearly illustrated in the story of Mary. While Martha was busy preparing a meal (service), Mary sat at Jesus feet listening to what He had to say (fellowship). When Martha got upset about this, Jesus reminded her that what He desired most of all was not work, but herself. While He accepted her desire to serve, what He wanted most of all was to have fellowship with her. In order of priority, what Jesus desires most of all is our fellowship and worship first. Then after we have sat at His feet we will want to get up and serve Him but do so in the right way.

3. The priority in the Great Commission

Before Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission, tells us, When the disciples saw Jesus, they worshipped Him. Then Jesus said, Go and make disciples of all nations... Even the Great Commission flows out of worship and cannot be a substitute for it. A worshipper will want to serve. A worshipper will feel God's heartbeat for lost people and will want to go and find them. A worshipper will learn to first listen to what Jesus is saying and the gladly obey. A worshipper will hear the call of Jesus and want to go and make disciples. That's why worship must come first for the Great Commission to be fulfilled.

(Mat 28:17) And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted.

(Mat 28:18) And Jesus came, and spoke to them, saying, all power is given to me in heaven and upon earth.

(Mat 28:19) Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Mat 28:20) Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the world. Amen.

4. The first essential requirement in witnessing

Before Jesus sent His disciples out to be His witnesses He made one point absolutely clear. They could not reach the world on their own. Their own words and testimony would not be enough to make people believe. No Jesus wanted to do this through them. *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," Jesus said. "And then you will be my witnesses..."* (Acts 1:4-8).

It is the Spirit of Jesus filling your life who is the key to help you grow in discipleship and share Jesus with others. Like the early disciples, you need to be filled with his Spirit if you are to be an effective witness for Him. You need to depend on Him to help you. You cannot do it on your own. It is important then to keep in close touch with the source-Jesus Himself. When He fills your life you will be a witness for Him naturally and spontaneously. It will be the natural overflow of your love relationship with Him. You will be like the early disciples after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They said, *"We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:20).

5. Maintain your spiritual well

Witness for Jesus is the natural overflow of the Spirit-filled life. You must come and drink deeply of Him before you will have living water to share with others (John 7:37-38). It is out of your love relationship with Jesus that you will want to tell others about Him. It's the overflow that counts! If your spiritual well runs dry, you will have nothing to offer. You will stop growing and you will not want to witness.

Your devotional life is where you deepen your relationship with Christ. It is the spiritual well from which you draw living water. As you open your life each day to the Spirit of Christ, He will fill your well with living water. But make sure there are no cracks in your well! If there are broken relationships in your life for which you are responsible, these will be like cracks which will result in a loss of the flow of the Holy Spirit through your life. But when you are in the right relationship with Jesus and with others, the Holy Spirit will flow naturally through you.

Is Jesus the central focus of your life? Your growth and effectiveness as a disciple depends completely upon it.

The Church's mission #4

References: Luk 19:10, 1cor 9:19-22, John 21:15-17, 1Thess 2:11-12, Matt 28:19, 2Tim 2:1-2

The Great Commission is not a choice but a command! It is not something we do only if we feel like it. It has to be our top priority! But how do we go about it?

1. Go and make disciples

The central command in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is to make disciples. The other action words 'go', 'baptise', and 'teach' are supporting words showing how the main task is to be done.

This means the central task of evangelism is not just to get 'decisions' or to win converts. It is to make disciples. Nothing short of making disciples fulfills the Great Commission. "Wherever you go make disciples..." This was His central purpose for them. They were to do this everywhere they went. They were to do this with all groups of people. Going, evangelising, baptising and teaching were to be a part of this process, but the end result was always to be the making of disciples. And Jesus is also calling you to be a part of this process.

2. How is the task to be done?

Look at the following picture. This is the church's mission (and yours too!).

THE CHURCH MISSION

1. Seek the Lost

As Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (including you), so He is calling you, now that you have been found, to go and seek the lost also. The key requirement here is CARE. Do you really care enough for lost people to go and seek them? Are you prepared to go to them and show that you care? This can be done by making contact, being friendly, meeting needs, and sharing Jesus with them. Are you doing that? In the following studies we will show you how.

2. Nurture Believers

In **John 21:15-16**, Jesus called Simon Peter to 'feed his lambs', take care of His sheep' and 'feed His sheep.' The key word here is NURTURE. The young Christians (lambs) as well as the more

mature Christian (sheep) need to be cared for. This can be done in many ways but must include follow-up, nurture, and teaching.

3. Grow Disciples

Making disciples is more than just teaching Bible knowledge. It means entering into a close and meaningful relationship with another believer so that you can be a model, showing by life, by example, by demonstration, the way to go. In a discipline relationship you must be willing to share your life with that person. Paul said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ".

4. Train Disciplers

Paul said to Timothy (*2Timothy 2:2*): "The thing you have heard me say, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach other also." The key here is to TRAIN. It is important to select those who can be trained and then equip, empower, and release them to become disciple makers. In this way there will be multiplication as the process itself again.

Where are the workers?

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." (Matthew 9:37-38). There are many lost who need to be found. There are many believers who need to be nurtured and disciple. But there are few who are able or willing to be workers in this discipling process. Why?

The workers are few because many churches have lost sight of God's call to "go and make disciples". They are more concerned to keep their members comfortable and happy than to reach out to others as Christ has called them to do. Many churches have tied up their people and resources with many things that may be good, but are not central--- programs, activities, meetings--- but not are not central--- purpose for which Christ has called them.

The workers are few also because many Christians have put other things first- their work, homes families, business, hobbies and other interests- but not Christ. As a result, they have little desire, time, or energy to obey Jesus' call to go and make disciples.

Is that true of your Church? Is that true of you too? Jesus is calling His Church and He is calling you to become committed to the primary task of making disciples. It is not enough just to come to know Christ personally, to attend Church, or even become a disciple yourself. Jesus is also calling you to make disciples of other.

GO INTO ALL THE WORLD #5

1. The simple plan

To those first disciples Jesus was simply saying "Begin to tell others about me starting at your base, where you are now (your Jerusalem). Then move out from there to your Judea- to those living around you your neighbors. And then to your Samaria to those people you are not normally in contact with and would not naturally reach out to people that you have nothing to do with and may even dislike. And then be ready to go even to the ends of the earth.

2. Your world OF RELATIONSHIPS

"Go into all the world ..." starts with your world your Jerusalem, Judea Samaria...

Start by being a witness for Jesus at your Jerusalem, at your home base- right where you are. Start with those that you are already in close contact with, sharing the good news about Jesus moves most naturally along the lines of relationship you already have with people.

If something real and exciting happened in your life, you would naturally want to share this first with those nearest and dearest to you. To obey Jesus' command to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel.

3. How people come to Christ

Various surveys have been done among Christians to find out how they came to Christ and the Church. Look at the results below. You might be surprised!

- a. Special needs.....1-2%
- b. Walk in to a church.....2-3%
- c. Pastor' contacts.....5-6%
- d. Visitation.....1-2%
- e. Sunday School contact.....4-5%
- f. Evangelistic crusades.....0-5%
- g. Church programs.....2-3%
- h. Influence of friend/ relative...75-90%

People come to Christ in many ways. But perhaps the most surprising message that comes to us from these results is the 75-90% of people attending church say it was nearly always through the influence of a friend or relative that they came to church or became a Christian!

4. The Power of Personal Friendship

The message from the above results is clear. Don't wait for people in need to come to you. Go to them! Don't expect your pastor to do all the evangelizing! That's not his primary task. Don't expect your church programs to attract people. No! The primary way to bring people to Jesus is by you doing part reaching out in love and friendship to those you are in contact with, and being a clear witness in word and deed wherever you go. That's the method Jesus told the first disciples to use, and that's the method that still works now.

Jesus said, each of you go into your world and be my witnesses. People reaching people. That's how it worked then, and that's how it still works today.

1. The first step in witnessing it to make a list. We looked at this in the study. Write down those who are not Christians in your network of contact.

My network of relationship

1. Myself- (and Christ within me).

2. Immediate family _____

3. Close relatives _____

4. Close friends _____

5. Neighbors- work mates _____

6. Occasional contacts _____

Overcoming The Barriers #6

A. Recognize The Barriers

1. You may have to cross more than a fence to reach your neighbor. Between Christians and non- Christians there are many unseen barriers. The barriers can be on both sides. On the side of Christians, there can be the church culture, over-busyness with church activities, withdrawal and isolation, and no real vision for the lost. Has this happened to some degree in your own life?

2. Go out into the highways and hedges;
a. Luke 14:23 highways - progress, journey.
Hedges - barrier that, which separates, prevents two from coming together

3. On the side of non-Christians, there can be the image of church as being irrelevant, boring with nothing to offer, and Christians as being narrow-minded and out of touch with real life. These things put a gulf between the church and the community.

a. (Romans 6:23) God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord

4. It is like standing on opposite banks of a river with a stream between us. As a result, we have great difficulty in knowing how to communicate the Christian message effectively.

So what do we have to do? Call them to come over to our side? No! We must first build a bridge go over to them.

B. Separation Nor Isolation

1. You are called to be in the world, but not of it. Separation from the world does not mean isolating yourself from non-Christians. It means inwardly separating yourself from worldly attitudes, values, desires and behaviors, while outwardly living in the world amongst non-Christians.
 - a. *(2nd Cor. 6:17-18) Come out from among them*
 - b. *(John 17:15) I pray NOT that thou shouldst take them out of the world....*
2. Only then can you be a witness to them by your pure and Christ- like example. Jesus came into our world. He came right down to where we are. He identified with us. He met with us on our ground. Jesus was “*the man for others*”. He became known as “*the friend of sinners*”. And He calls us to be the same

C. Bridging The Gap

1. The first step in bridge building is simply this; don't stay closed within your church or your circle of Christian friends.
2. Mix with people who do not know Jesus. Salt is not meant to stay inside the salt shaker. As Christians, we gather together for worship, for fellowship and to be equipped to serve. This help give us favor. This is like the salt gathered inside the salt shaker.
3. Then we scatter for witness. We should go out into our world, our community, and get into close contact with people who need the favor of Christ in their lives.

a. *Matthew 5:13 Salt of earth*

D. Be Like Jesus-Mix With People

1. Did Jesus stay within the circle of His friends and wait inside the church of His day for people to come to Him? No! Jesus went after people.
 - a. *He mixed with them.*
 - b. *He ministered to the poor and the needy.*
 - c. *He went into taverns, public places, people's homes, and reached out to people in their need wherever they were.*
 - d. *He spent time with tax-collectors and sinners.*

2. Jesus went to Galilee

Matt 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

3. He demonstrated by His actions as well His words the message of God's love to broken, lost and hurting people. Why? Because this is what the Spirit of the Lord had anointed Him to do.

- a. *Luke 4:18-19 The spirit of the Lord is upon Me*

- b. He had come to seek and save the lost. We must do the same! The true sign that we are anointed by the Spirit of Christ is that we do the same works that Jesus did.

E. Don't Reverse The Great Commission

1. Don't think you have to get non-Christians to come to church. Is this the way Jesus told us to fulfill the Great Commission? No! Jesus did not say, "Go into to church all you sinners and hear the gospel and be saved".
2. His command was to the believer to go into all the world and share the Good News. We have all too often reversed the Great Commission! We have thought we have to get them to come to us, when Jesus has clearly told us to go them!

- a. *Mark 16:15 Go you into all the world*

3. Reach out to people like Jesus did.
 - a. Go into their territory.
 - b. Join in some of their activities.
 - c. Reach out to them in friendship; through friendship you can open the door into their lives.
 - d. Then at the right time, God will give you the opportunity to point them Him.

1). *Luke 19:1-10 There was a man named Zacchaeus*

2). *1st Timothy 6:17-18 Charge them that are rich*

Reach Out To People #7

1. Mix with people

You can't teach people if you are not in meaningful contact with them. Jesus reached out to people as He mixed with them. You do the same. Be salt and light where it is needed. Don't stay isolated and separate from non-Christians. Go to where they are. Meet and mix with people on their own territory rather than waiting for them to come to church! Then take these next steps.

2. Establish common interests

Try to discover common interest with non-Christians. There will be many things you will no longer have in common because you are now a Christian – certain attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that you have turned away from. But there will be other natural interest that you can still share (such as – being parents of children, interests in sport, crafts, hobbies, work, camping, fishing, etc). Use these common interests as a means of getting close to people so that you can become friends. Begin first with where their interests lie. This may not be easy or what you naturally feel like doing. You may much prefer to stay within your own circle of Christian friends, or only get caught up in your own interests. But Jesus calls you to go out. Common interests are ready –made bridges into people’s lives. Make sure you find these bridges and cross over them.

3. Bridge Building

A key step in bridge building is to learn how to listen. Sometimes we think that witnessing means to do all the talking. But more can be done by listening than perhaps we realize. Many people would give anything to find someone who would just listen to them. As Christians we need to be genuinely interested in people’s lives, rather than just wanting to quickly speak about our own ideas and beliefs.

As people questions about themselves and then learn to listen to what they say in order to come to know and understand them. When you take time to listen long enough you will gradually find points of contact and needs they have that will be like doors opening into their lives. People will have respond to you if you are genuinely interested in who they are. By listening first to them you are also gaining the right to share something about yourself and your faith in Christ later on.

4. Find points of contact

Paul tells us that he was prepared to identify himself with people in whatever situation he found them in order to try to win them to Christ. One way to identify with people is to look for points of contact – events in their lives that you can relate to and share in. Below are some of these key contact opportunities:-

Times of joy

- birth of a baby;
- engagement;
- wedding;
- achievements;
- graduation;
- getting a job;
- promotion;
- birthdays, Christmas;
- anniversaries etc;

Times of sorrow

- financial loss;
- loss of a job;
- failure;
- an accident;

- sickness of injury;
- crisis in family life;
- family problems;
- grief and loss;
- trouble & hardships

These are all important opportunities to reach out and touch people's lives in some way. In times of joy identify with them in their joy by sharing with them where you can. Attend their parties. Show that you care by remembering important events in their lives (e.g. sending birthday and Christmas greetings). Even more important are times of sorrow and loss. If you really show kindness and care for people during difficult times in their lives, they will never forget you. Their times of need can become a doorway into their hearts. Don't miss these opportunities.

(1 Corinthians 9: 19-23)

5. Accept people as they are

In trying to reach out to unbelievers, don't condemn them for living in ways that are not in line with Christian values. If they drink, smoke or swear, don't react or reject them. Just accept them as they are. That's what Jesus did. Realize that these people have not come to know Jesus yet, so how can you expect them to live by Christian standards? If people feel you are rejecting them this will hinder your attempts to witness to them later. After they have come to meet Jesus personally and surrendered their lives to Him, then God will do the changing in their lives. But for now just accept them as you find them for that's what Jesus did with you.

The Process of Making Disciples #8

1. The Engel Scale (continued)

We have already looked at the first half of the Engel Scale in Part 1 of 'Go and Make Disciples' (study 12). There we saw the stages a person moves through in coming to Christ. But now in this study we return to look at the second part of the Engel scale (which I have modified and developed below). This shows the stages a new believer should go through in order to become a mature and strong disciple of Jesus.

o Conversion

- +1 Evaluation of the decision;
- +2 Follow-up and nurture;
- +3 Declaration of faith through water baptism;
- +4 Joined into a fellowship of Christians;
- +5 Discipled in the basics of Christian Life;
- +6 Growing in holiness and obedience to Christ as Lord;

- +7 Active in serving and witnessing;
- +8 Becoming part of the disciple-making process;
- +9 A God-centered life-style and world-view.

2. The stages of spiritual growth

The stage of conversion marks the turning point and the biggest and most important decision that you will ever make in life. But what happens from that point on?

In almost all major decisions you make in life, there is an evaluation of the decision (+1) stage. This is a time straight after the decision when you think about what you have done. It is a key time in the life of a new believer (like the **critical** moments **straight** after a child is born). How we minister to people as they go through this evaluation process will have a major impact on their future. This is why immediate follow-up and nurture (+2) is so important.

Once the decision to follow Christ has been settled, the new Christian needs to move on through the following steps if the **initial** commitment is to become real and lasting. The order of these steps may vary from person to person but they are all important for ongoing growth and development. Baptism (+3) should come soon after conversion because in the New Testament it is regarded as a part of the conversion process. And with that, being joined into a fellowship of believers (+4), and being disciple in the basics of the Christian life (+5) are closely joined together in establishing a new believer in the faith. (See Acts 2:37-42).

3. The need for discipling

Many new Christians never go on to become strong mature disciples of Jesus Christ because some of these important first steps are never taken. They may not have properly understood the importance of baptism and so have not taken this step of obedience. They may not have joined a spiritually alive group of believers. Or they may never have had someone to disciple them and so tried to find their own way instead. This may have left big gaps in their understanding of the Christian life, and an **inadequate** foundation for strong spiritual growth to take place.

Where a **solid** spiritual foundation has been laid and ongoing discipleship is taking place, the believer should grow in holiness and obedience to Christ as Lord (+6), becoming active in serving and witnessing (+7), and eventually take part in the disciple-making process (+8). Through all these stages there should be the development of a God-centered life-style and worldview (+9).

4. Discipling in the early church

As we look at the early church, we see these important discipling principles at work. The early disciples were filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and guided by the same Holy Spirit they instructed and disciple their converts. Immediately following conversion, the new believers 'were baptised', were added into the church, and were nurtured, instructed and disciple. They were also encouraged to take their part in serving, witnessing, and winning new converts into the Kingdom (Acts 2:37-47). (Acts 2: 1-4)

The rest of the book of Acts shows how the Holy Spirit taught the early believers to develop a vision for the world (and not just for their own community or national group).

We see the Holy Spirit using persecution to push them out of their spiritual centre in Jerusalem, and lead them increasingly into world mission. The result of all this was the amazing growth of the early church and the spread of Christianity to many new places.

If we are to see the rapid growth of the church today and the spread of Christianity across our nation and across the nations of the world, then we must return to these same basic principles. We need the same infilling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, and we need to apply the same principles of discipling that we see illustrated in the early church.

5. Taking your part

You are called not just to become a believer, but to become a Spirit-filled disciple. And as a disciple, you are then called to take your part in God's mission to the world to share the good news and make disciples of others. You are called to reproduce spiritually, and then to teach others how to reproduce spiritually. If all Christians became active in multiplying like this, how quickly the church would grow and Great Commission be fulfilled
(Mat 18:20) For where two or three are assembled in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The Four Commitments of Discipleship #9

1. A Disciple is committed to Christ as Lord

To be a disciple of Jesus means first to develop a close and intimate relationship with Him through times of prayer, worship, and stillness in His presence. It also means learning to bring every part of your life under His Lordship, co-operating with Him Holy Spirit's work in your life, and learning to obey what He tells you to do. (These and other areas are **covered** fully in the earlier book in this series – *“Come Follow Me”*). In **Luke 6:46** Jesus said, **“Why do you call me’ Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?”** A disciple is one who recognizes that Christ is Lord over all of life and is learning to obey Him in everything.

2. A Disciple is committed to Christ's Body

The church is not a building, not an institution, or an organization. It is a body of believers – family of God. When you become a born-again believer, you become a part of the Body of Christ. But to become a disciple you need to become committed to it. This is why in the early church, those who believed in Jesus and professed their **allegiance** through baptism, were immediately joined into the fellowship of the local body of believers. They were ‘added to their number’. They were disciple into the church. They committed the two always go together. The New Testament knows nothing of Christianity.

Acts 2:42-46 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Act 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Act 2:44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

Act 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Act 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

3. A Disciple is committed to the Word

True discipleship depends upon your continuing obedience to the words of Jesus and His apostles, Jesus said in **John 8:31**, “If you continue in my words, then you are truly my disciples”. But if you do not continue to read, hear, study, and obey the Word of Christ, can you really be called a disciple of His?

In the early church, those who accepted the message, were baptized, where added to the church, and “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”

Acts 2: 41-42 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Act 2:42 and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Their commitment to the Word was both an **initial** and a continuing thing. Is this what you are doing? Are you continuing to receive and apply the Word of God to your daily life?

4. A Disciple is committed to Christ’s mission in the world

What is Christ’s mission ? It is to “go and make disciples of all peoples”. A disciple is one who obeys Jesus’ call and is actively involved in the process of making disciples of others. A disciple and multiples spiritually. A disciple becomes part of Christ’s mission in the world. As you become committed to Christ as Lord, committed to his Body, and committed to living in obedience to His Word, you are also going to naturally be committed to His call and command to “go and make disciples”. Is that true of you?

Matt 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mat 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

To be part of Christ’s Mission’ means learning how to make disciples of others. You can never take another person further than you have gone yourself. But as you grow stronger in these four commitments yourself, Jesus is calling you to lead, encourage and teach others to grow in these same ways too. Are you willing to be a part of that process?

Follow-up and Nurture #10

1. The need for discipling

It is not enough to bring a person to Christ and then leave him (her) there. It is no good just concentrating on the first part of the process and forgetting all the rest. New Christians need to be disciplined and established so that they can grow up to spiritual maturity and then become disciple-makers. It is not enough to hope this will happen by itself. We need to provide for this

establishing process and make sure new believers are properly disciple. Let's look at the steps that need to be taken in nurturing a new Christian.

2. Immediate follow-up of a new Christian

The moment of conversion is a very important and dangerous time (like the moment of physical birth).

It is a time the new Christian needs very special care. Looking back to the Engel scale (page 9), you will see that immediately following Conversion (0), comes the step - Evaluation (+1). This is the time new converts think about what they have done, trying to understand what it all means, dealing with doubts, and looking for some assurance that the right decision has been made. It is at this point that follow-up and nurture (+2) is needed. A new convert needs someone to come alongside and give some assurance and encouragement in the step they have taken and to explain what it all means.

3. Nurturing a new Christian

In nurturing a new convert it is important to understand the four basic needs of a new Christian:

1. Protection

A new Christian is just like a new-born baby, under and vulnerable and open to diseases and dangers of many kinds. A new believer has been born into the family of God. Satan will do anything he can to spoil and destroy this new baby in Christ. It may be through the deception of false teaching or false cults. Family and friends of new converts may put pressure on them to give up their new faith. They may face temptations of many kinds to turn back to their old ways of life.

Just like a new-born baby needs a mother (and father) to care for it and protect it, so an new born Christian needs a spiritual mother and father to be responsible for his (or her) safe development and growth. Each new believer should have more mature Christian to guard, guide, nurture, encourage, and protect them. This what the Apostle Paul did with his new converts (Thessalonians 2:7-12)

2. Fellowship

Just like a new-born baby also needs warmth and a sense of love and acceptance from its family members, so too a new Christian needs to feel the love, acceptance and care of other Christians in the family of God. In a spiritually cold world, a new convert will not last long without the warmth and support of other Christians. This why it is important that a new Christian is joined into a spiritually alive church where Christ is central, where He is loved and worshipped, where the Bible is clearly taught and obeyed, and where the members love each other. A cold or lukewarm church environment undercuts the truth of what you are trying to teach new Christians because they will not see it demonstrated in the lives of other Christians. Also make sure you join new Christians into a nurture group with other new believers so that more mature Christians can love and care for them at their own level of need.

3. Spiritual Food

New babies need food regularly, and the kind of food they need is milk. Spiritual babies need regular feeding too, and the kind of food they need is 'spiritual milk'. 'Spiritual milk' is that basic teaching from the Scriptures that someone else breaks down to a simple level for them – a level that they can understand and which ministers to their present needs as new believers. Spiritual babies will not know how to feed themselves properly and so for a while will need someone else to do this for them. (In our next study we will introduce “My First Steps” which is like a bottle of 'spiritual milk' prepared for those who are nurturing new Christians). (1 Peter 2:2-3)

4. Training

A new-born baby first need to be bottle-fed and then spoon fed, but gradually a mother or father will teach the child how to feed itself. And as the child develops, its parents will train it in other areas as well so that eventually it will grow up to maturity in every way. So it should also be with new Christians. We don't want them to forever remain immature spiritually babies always expecting to be pampered and bottle-fed! No! We want to see them grow up to spiritual maturity – to be able feed themselves spiritually and become a strong disciples and disciples-makers. But you cannot expect a new Christian to become a strong disciple without some carefully planned discipleship training. (Hebrews 5:11-14)

A Tool to Help You Disciple Others #11

1. Checking the foundations

The book – “My First Steps” is specially designed to help you nurture and disciple new Christians.

Take your copy of “My First Steps”. Look through the first 5 studies. You will notice these are a shortened and simplified version of the book “Come to Me”.

Nearly all books for new Christians assume that a clear commitment to Christ has already been made. In some cases openness to the things of Christ and some kind of responsive has been interpreted as conversion. But the person may not fully understand the way and may not have yet made a true commitment. Because of this, these first 5 studies are included as an opportunity to check that the gospel is understood, and the commitment to Christ is clear and solid. It is important at the time of immediate follow-up that you take a new Christian through these 5 studies one at a time. With anyone you disciple you should make sure you check the foundations first as outlined in these first 5 studies.

2. What new believer needs to know

There at least six things that a new believer needs to know straight after conversion. These things happen in a person's life the moment he (she) surrenders to Christ as Savior and Lord. They need to know they have:-

- Received forgiveness;

- Have new spiritual life;
- Christ lives within;
- God is now 'Father';
- They are now part of a new family;
- Satan's power is broken.

A new Christian also needs to come to understand:-

- Assurance of salvation; and
- What Christ's Lordship means.

· Now turn to Section 2 of 'My First Steps' (page 29). Read first the introduction to this section on page 30. (□ Tick when you have done this).

· Now look through Studies 6 and 7 in "My First Steps". On the basis that true conversion has taken place, these studies explain six things that happen the moment a person becomes a Christian.

· Now look through Studies 8 and 9. These two studies cover the topics of Assurance of salvation, and the important subject of Christ's Lordship.

- Tick when you have reviewed Studies 6-9.

The above topics are all important foundation truths a new Christian needs to know.

3. What a new believer needs to be able to do

We have looked above at some of the important truths a new believer needs to know (through instructions). But there are some important things a new Christian needs not only to know, but to do in the weeks following conversion. These are best taught by example and demonstration.

Here are some of the important things a new believer needs to know how to do.

- How to pray;
- How to read and use the Bible;
- How to have time alone with God;
- How to deal with the past (things from the old life);
- How to develop Christ-like attitudes;
- How to resist Satan and overcome temptation;
- How to tell others about Jesus (witness).

Take your copy of “My First Steps” and quickly look through studies 10 – 20. You will see how these studies in different ways work through the above (and other) areas.

Now let’s take a closer look at some of these studies and how you can use them to teach and train new (and older) Christians in the foundations of the Christian life.

Study 10: Prayer – your spiritual breath

A new Christian needs to quickly learn that prayer is the heart of our love relationship with God and a vital to everything else (like breathing is to our physical well-being). So this is a very important study for new Christians.

As you take new Christians through this study (and the other studies as well), they will be looking for more than just information about prayer. They will also want to know how you apply these principles of prayer in your own life. They will want to see how real and vital prayer is in your own walk with God. So make sure you are growing and applying these dimensions prayer in your own life first.

The best way to teach on prayer is to show how to do it. Take time through the lesson to pause and pray. Demonstrate each of these was of praying praise, adoration, petition, confession, intercession mentioned in section 4 of the study. Let them hear how you pray! Then gradually encourage them to pray in these same ways too.

But remember, if prayer is talking with God; make sure you pray in simple conversational style. No old style language or theological words they may not understand! Just keep it simple like it’s meant to be. And let it be from your heart, not just from your head.

How to Use “My First Steps” #12

Study 11: The Bible – Your Spiritual Food

A new Christian needs to learn the importance of the Bible as the Word of God and to begin reading it. Towards the end of this study it may be helpful to show samples of Bible reading guides such as-Scripture Union notes, or ‘Every Day with Jesus’. While you are taking new Christians through “My First Steps”, they will probably not need these other Bible reading guides yet, but it is good that you let them know about them for later use.

Study 12: Time Alone With God

This study shows the importance of building into your daily routine a time to meet alone with God.

Again (like Study 10 on prayer), this study is not just a knowing exercise but a doing one. If you are able to study, using your own example (or the examples of others), do so. In Fact, you could use part of your meeting time to actually show those you are discipling how you have a ‘Quiet Time’. Take 15-20 minutes of the session to go through section 2 of Study 12 in ‘My First Steps’. Actually have a ‘Quiet time’ with them (and even kneel during your prayer time if that’s appropriate). Just show them how to approach God in this way.

Again learning from example and demonstration is much more effective than just learning by listening or discussing. Where possible, try to arrange to share a 'Quiet time' with a member of your group during the week (if you are working one on one or with a small group). In this way you can help the person even further to establish this practice by doing it together.

Study 14: The Three Sides of Conversion

This is a transition study in the book where we pause to think again about conversion, an all that should be taking place to make it complete. Then over the next few studies, we will work through some of these parts one by one.

Notice that this is like a summary study, helping the new Christian to see the full picture of the conversion process. It is a check-up to make sure the new Christian understands all the parts of the conversion process and has (or is) working through each part to make it complete. Then in the following studies, we look at each of these three sides of conversion one by one, starting with the side repentance.

Study 15: Dealing with the Past

This is the study that is not normally found in most books for new Christians, yet it is absolutely essential. This study looks more closely at what repentance really means as part of conversion. How can a new Christian expect to have victory over sin and grow strong in the Christian life if the initial act of repentance is not complete or areas of the old life are not properly dealt with? Some new converts don't properly deal with things in the past life that need to be dealt with (often through ignorance). They bring a lot of wrong and even harmful things from their past that have not been cleaned out of their lives. As a result they soon run into problems that block their spiritual development. These surrendered areas give Satan legal ground and a foothold in their lives to keep them in bondage. These not dealt with areas become like a chain holding them back from making progress in their Christian lives.

This is another very important study that usually opens up a lot of issues and creates a lot of discussion. There may be questions asked that you are not sure about. The best policy to follow if there are questionable things in people's lives in this: "if in doubt, throw it out". Make sure that your members take whatever action is necessary (however drastic) to make their repentance real.

Study 16 - 20: Holy Spirit

These studies all follow on from one another looking first at:

- Baptism,
- The Holy Spirit's ministry,
- Spiritual warfare.

This follows the same sequence of events that we see in the life of Jesus after his baptism. The Holy Spirit came upon him in a fresh way to empower and equip him, and immediately he was taken into the wilderness to be tested and tempted by the devil.

In the final two studies, we look at the importance of being Part of the Body, and then Witnessing. Again your personal example in these areas is going to be very important. So plan where you can to participate in church life together, and let the new Christian see how you fulfill your part in all the areas listed on page 84 of *My First Steps*. Work with them through the steps of 'The simple plan' (page 88) and show them how you are doing these same things yourself.

All of these studies in *My First Steps* are key studies in nurturing and establishing a new Christian in the foundations of discipleship. Use this as a tool to help you get started in discipling new Christians.

Principles of Discipling #13

1. What is discipling?

From this illustration we can learn something about discipling. Discipling is a process by which a more mature follower of Christ establishes a relationship with a newer believer so as to share with this person the commitments, understanding, and basic skills necessary to help that person know and obey Jesus Christ as Lord.

Teaching Biblical truth is an important part of this discipling process. But a new Christian also needs an example to follow and a model to copy. He needs to see the Christian life demonstrated in a living way. The early converts received instruction in the truths of Scripture. But they also needed to see this fleshed out in real life. "This is why Paul could also say, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."* (1 Corinthians 11:1); Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1 KJV) (Acts 2:42) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

2. The power of example

There is something powerful in seeing the Christian life lived out before you. In this way the truths of Scripture become alive and real. This is how Jesus trained His disciples. He didn't just give them knowledge through formal instruction. He also modeled the Spirit-filled life before them. He taught by example. He shared his life with them in a very close way. He walked, talked, worked, ministered, relaxed, and shared life's experiences with them. He entered into their lives and allowed them to enter into His.

Though this close sharing together, they could see how His relationship with His Father worked out in daily life. They could see how He prayed. They could see the way He ministered. Then He encouraged them to do the same.

3. Principles of discipling, Mentoring

There are five key principles to follow in discipling:

Spiritual maturity

The starting point in discipling is your own level of spiritual maturity. You will need to have at least a basic understanding of Biblical truth and a close relationship with the Lord. You also need to be a growing Christian. Why? Because discipling is not just teaching information, it is

also showing by example the way to go. It is inviting another to follow your lead as you demonstrate how to live the Christian life. Discipling another therefore will be a real challenge to your own walk with God. What kind of example will you be? What quality of spiritual life do you have to transfer? Would you be happy for another believer to become just like you?

Commitment

Discipling requires commitment to the person you are trying to disciple. If you are really convinced that Jesus' final words—"go and make disciples"—are top priorities for His followers, then you will need to ask yourself the question: "Am I willing to spend the time necessary to obey Jesus and make disciples?" There could be no greater or more fulfilling task than helping another person follow Jesus more closely!

Relationship

Part of discipling is sharing life. This means showing an interest in a person's life and taking time to share personally with them (visit them at home; invite them to a meal etc.) The key to building any relationship is to spend some informal time together outside of your study time. A person will often become more open and honest about what's really going on in their life during these informal times of sharing together.

Spiritual formation

The spiritual formation of a person is the heart of discipling. Establishing a close relationship with a newer believer is for the primary purpose of helping to influence and encourage that person to grow deeper in Christ. Your aim is to help them to grow in their commitment to Christ as Lord, to the Body of Christ, to the Word of God, and to Christ's mission in the world (See Study 17).

Concentrate on a few

Perhaps in your eagerness to grow many disciples you might think you should disciple as many as possible. But the very opposite is true! The more widely spread you are, the shallower your influence becomes. Effective discipling can never take place if you are trying to work with too many at once. It is better to work with a few at a time to produce quality disciples. Jesus poured three years of His life into twelve men. And even then He selected out three (Peter, James, and John) to become an inner circle that He shared with more closely. If Jesus concentrated His discipling on only twelve at one time, you will probably need to disciple a lot less! (Mark 9:2; 14:32-34)

Every new believer needs to be disciplined. Every new Christian needs someone to establish this kind of discipling relationship with them. Much of my growth as a young Christian was because of a person who was willing to disciple me at a stage of life when I needed it most. Are you willing?

What Is Mentoring? #14

1. The influence of others

As we study the lives of great Bible characters and the biographies of Christian leaders in the past, we see that one of the most important influences that God used to shape their lives was significant people who had input their lives just when they needed it. In a survey of Christian leaders, it was found that almost all of them could identify 3 to 10 people who had a very important influence in their Christian development.

There are many Christians who are hungry to grow in Christ and who desperately need someone who can show them the way and help them develop into strong followers of Jesus. Usually we might think these people are all new Christians. But increasingly today we are finding older followers of Jesus wanting to find someone who can be a model or a mentor, someone to disciple them because they missed this relationship in their earlier years.

2. So what is mentoring?

In mentoring a more experienced person (mentor) sees potential in a less experienced person (the mentored). A close relationship is established so that the more mature person can share the specific things needed (wisdom, knowledge, insights, values, experience, resources, and skills) to help the less experienced person grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. If the mentored is willing to accept and use what is being shared, a transfer of power takes place. We call this transfer between mentors and mentored – empowerment. This process is the heart of mentoring.

3. Barnabas – a Biblical example

The story of Paul and Barnabas is an example of a mentoring relationship. Barnabas was one of the early followers of Jesus. After Saul of Tarsus was dramatically converted on the Damascus road, Barnabas believed in Saul and could see potential in this new convert. So he drew him into the Christian fellowship and stood by him. No doubt Barnabas also encouraged and taught Saul during those early days and helped him to become established in his Christian life. Later, as the gospel spread to Antioch, the apostles sent Barnabas a mature disciple to Antioch to establish the new believers in their faith. But as well as encouraging and teaching these new believers himself, Barnabas found Saul and drew him in to work alongside him. He could see that this was just the right opportunity to help Saul grow in his Christian life and develop his ministry gifts. So for a whole year the two of them worked side by side. (Acts 11:19-26; Acts 9:26-27)

Thank God for Barnabas and the gift he gave to the Church by taking an interest in young Saul—who later became the great apostle Paul! How many Saul's are there in our churches today just waiting just waiting for a Barnabas to come alongside and mentor them?

4. Different kinds of mentoring

There are eight different types of mentoring.

On one end of the scale there is the more deliberate and intensive mentoring styles. A Disciple mainly works to help establish a person in the basics of following Christ. A Spiritual guide

provides direction, insights, resources, and ideas that help a person develop towards spiritual maturity. A Coach provides the encouragement, motivation, and training needed to meet a particular task or challenge (e.g. ministry leader, music director, team leader, etc.).

In the centre of the scale we see the less intensive or occasional forms of mentoring. The Counselor gives guidance, help, and advice when needed. The Teacher gives input of Biblical or practical knowledge. And a Sponsor gives guidance and support to those within an organization to help them find their place and develop their potential.

On the passive end of the mentoring scale we have contemporary and historical models. These forms of mentoring are called 'passive' because the models do not make any deliberate attempt to be mentors. Contemporary models are those people we admire and who influence us (perhaps even without them knowing it). It could be a youth leader, a pastor, a musician, a speaker of Christian of some kind, whose life and ministry skills we admire and desire to copy. Historical models are people we may read about in biographies-great Christians of the past-whose lives and faith still influence us now.

5. Empowerment

Many different kinds of relationships have the potential for empowering a person who desires to learn and grow. You may have experienced something of this empowering in your own life through different mentoring relationships that you have had. But now the challenge comes to you – as you have received, so be willing to give! As God has blessed you, so be willing to bless others! Recognize the potential that mentoring may have in releasing God's power to flow through your life to others. Are you beginning to sense that God may want you to establish mentoring relationships with others so as to make a difference in their lives?

How to Begin Discipling #15

1. Pray about it

Jesus spent all night in prayer before He chose His disciples. He had probably prayed at other times about this too. So you should pray likewise for God to confirm that this is what He wants you to do, and to show you the right ones to disciple.

Luke 6:12- And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luk 6:13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles

2. Select carefully

You will usually find more people who need discipling than you can manage on your own. And because discipling takes time in building relationships, you should work with only one or a few at a time. Look for certain qualities in the ones you choose:-

- *attraction between the person and you;*
- *a hunger to know more of Christ;*

- *responsive and eager to learn;*
- *a teachable spirit;*
- *willing to be committed;*
- *faithful and dependable;*
- *willing to be accountable.*

You could waste your time and be very disappointed if you choose people not **suitable** or ready for the commitment that discipling requires. You may need to talk to your pastor about this first, and get his agreement and support. And in this kind of ministry it is important to be accountable to a more mature Christian, or one who can be your **mentor** or spiritual guide.

Spend time with your **potential** disciples first before inviting them to enter into a discipling relationship with you. Tell them exactly what this relationship will mean and the time involved and wait to see which ones respond positively.

3. Be a servant

Be careful to avoid feelings of superiority in your discipling role. Remember that it is Christ's call that this person must respond to. Therefore, he (she) is Christ's disciple, not yours. Like your Master, you should be the servant of those you are discipling. Look for ways to demonstrate this servant attitude towards them.

4. Spend time together

Let your disciples enter into your life to see how your Christian commitment works out in practice. Invite them into your home. Your effectiveness will increase if you take time to build good relationships of friendship with them. Take time to do things together in addition to the planned study program that you might work through.

5. Keep the focus on spiritual formation

Work through a planned discipling program together (like *"My First steps"*, or *"Come Follow Me"*). Then try to establish growth habits in your disciples in such areas as:- prayer, studying God's Word, daily devotional life, commitment to the Body of Christ, Christ's Lordship over personal, family and vocational life, witnessing, etc. Be ready to show by example how you do these things yourself. But don't try to give the impression that you have it all together. Let them know your own struggles and failures and that you are still a learner too.

6. Remember your goal

Your goal is not just to have another follow you. Your goal is to encourage your disciple to more fully follow Jesus and to become like Him. John the Baptist pointed his disciples to Jesus and said, *"He must become greater; I must become less"*. This must be your attitude also. Don't make your disciples become dependent on you. Teach them how to become dependent on Christ and to know and follow Him more closely. Encourage them always to move towards that goal. (John 3:30)

7. Encourage areas of gifting

As well as discipling in the general areas of spiritual formation, realize that your discipling is unique and has special areas of gifting that may be quite different to yours. Don't make the mistake of trying to force your disciples to develop in areas of gifting that may be yours, but not theirs. Try to recognize and discover what their unique gifting is and encourage them to develop into all that God has for them. Recognize your limitations and don't be afraid to let your disciples know your limitations and weaknesses. Unlike Jesus, you are not perfect and complete as a disciple. So open them to the wider ministries within the Body of Christ. Be willing to let other people have input into their lives. And be ready to release them to grow and develop far beyond where you might be able to take them.

8. Know when to release your disciple

The length of time should be agreed to at the start of the discipling relationship. It maybe for 6 months, or a year, or longer, or shorter than that. But perhaps more important than the question of length should be the question: "What are the signs that this new believer is now becoming a disciple?"

In Study 17 we looked at the four commitments of discipleship-commitment to Christ as Lord, to the Body of Christ, to the Word of God, and to Christ's mission in the world. When you see these four commitments becoming strong in the person's life, then you know that he (she) is beginning to run the race as a disciple. Then it is time to release them to go on without you. From that moment of releasing your disciple, your relationship will no longer be that of a disciple. You can now become a prayer-partner, or a mentor of a less deliberate kind.

Think of a relay race

As a disciple you are like a runner in a relay race. You have already run part of the race yourself and completed your lap. But now it is time to call alongside another runner, and for a while you will run together encouraging the new runner to get up to your speed. But once this runner has done that, you must pass the baton securely into his hand, and release him from staying until he is also ready to pass on the baton to someone else. Then you can look around and see if you can find someone else that has not yet begun to run the race, but who is eager to try. Come alongside this person and begin the process again – encouraging him (her) to run the race of discipleship also.

The Task Remaining #16

1. The challenge of unreached peoples

This brings us to the greatest challenge we face: that after 2,000 years of spreading the message, there is still 38 percent of the world's population (or 2.4 billion people) still unreached with the gospel. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to rise to the task of reaching them? Or are we going to keep on doing what we are doing and ignore them?

2. Make disciples of all "nations"

What did Jesus mean when He told us to go and make disciples of all nations? In today's world we usually think of a "nation" as being a particular "country" with its own political identity. But

in the Great Commission Jesus did not just mean taking the gospel to every ‘country’. He meant taking the message of His love to every “ethnic unit” or “people group” on earth (Greek world *ethnos*). Within any one country or politically defined nation there may be many languages and “people groups”. (Think for example of Papua New Guinea with over 700 distinct languages and tribal groups!) We are called then to take the message of Christ to every one of these unreached people groups.

3. How many unreached people are there?

How far are we in completing this task of reaching all peoples? According to Ralph Winter, there are 24,000 ethnic or people groups in the world, but only 58 percent have been reached. There are still at least 10,000 people groups that are still unreached.

But what do we mean by ‘reached’ and ‘unreached’ peoples? Is it enough just to take gospel to a people group through literature or preaching and say they have been reached? No! A people group can be considered ‘reached’ if the gospel has been effectively shared with that group enough body of Christians who can evangelize their own people without the need of outside, cross-cultural missionaries. On the other hand, a people can be considered ‘unreached’ if there is no church, or the church is too small or weak to evangelize its own people. It then requires other Christians from outside that culture and language group to come in to plant churches and help them grow.

4. From every tribe and language

Not only is the task of taking the message of salvation to every remaining tribe and language group an enormous and complex task, Jesus has told us clearly that He will not return until that task is done! For when we finally get to heaven and fall down in awe, worship and praise before the throne of god, in that enormous crowd there will be redeemed representatives from every “*tribe, language, people and nation*”. God alone knows how many need to be won to reach the minimum requirement. But Jesus has made it clear that He will not return until at least some people from every “people group” and respond to the message of salvation on earth have had a chance to hear and respond to the message of salvation. This is why the apostle Peter says that by living holy and obedient lives we can actually speed up that day of Christ’s return! (Matthew 24: 14; Revelation 5:9, 7:9; 2 Peter 3:11-12)

5. Can it be done?

The command of the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all people groups shows us that it is possible and it can be done.

“It ought to be done; it can be done; it must be done; it will be done!”

D.L. Moody

A global mission organization call the ‘Joshua Project’ has been raised up to provide detailed information on the ‘unfinished task’. It shows us all the ethnic people groups of the world that still need to be reached. Its aim is to join Christians together under a global vision to reach these unreached peoples for Christ. (See website: www.joshuaproject.net)

In God’s plan the goal of world evangelization can and will be reached. God has provided the means by which this can be done, but He will not do it without His church. He is waiting for us to work in partnership with Him for the task to be completed. Yes, He is waiting for you!

6. Right on your doorstep!

Not all unreached peoples are in overseas countries. Some of them are right on your doorstep! There may be unreached peoples all around you. You will find them as ethnic and social groups in cities and in the isolated country-side. These people have been “hidden” from the gospel because the church has not known about them or perhaps has not wanted to look for them. Don’t wait for them to come to you. There are too many barriers. Go to them! Find these unreached peoples around you and begin to make disciples of all nations by starting with them.

It was these unreached peoples of the world that the apostle Paul was so burdened about. But what about you? Are you really burdened for those who have never heard? Do you really care? If you do care, are you eager to obey Jesus’ command by going into the world first of all? That’s where you must start. But that is not enough. Two thirds of the world will never hear the message of Jesus that way. That’s why Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of “*all nations*”. If the whole world is to hear the message of salvation someone must be willing to cross cultural and language boundaries. Some of us must be willing to take the message of Christ to the ends of the earth. Are you willing to be that person? (Isaiah 49:6)

How Far Have We Come? #17

1. The amazing growth of Christianity

Estimates have been made to give us the following picture. This shows us the number of non-Christians for every committed Christian since the time of the early church up to the present time.

At the time of the early church (A.D. 100) for every one Christian there were about 360 non-Christians. As the Holy Spirit continued to work through His people in witness and evangelism, this ratio has continued to drop at an ever increasing rate. By A.D. 1900 the ratio was 27:1. But within the space of the last 100 years, this has now dropped to below 7:1. These figures show us the amazing growth of Christianity over the centuries, and the even more rapid growth over the past 100 years. Jesus said, “*I will build my Church...*”, and the record of history shows that He has been doing just that! (Matthew 16:18)

2. The last amazing century

Of all the countries since the time of Christ, the growth of the church in the past 100 years has been nothing short of amazing! God has been pouring out His Spirit across the nations in increasing measure! As a result, church growth has been faster than at any other time in history! Look at the following three examples of how God has been building His church:-

In Africa:

In 1900 there were 8 million Christians in black Africa (8% of population). In 1990 this had risen to 275 million (57% of population). In AD 2000 this reached 396 million (or 61% of population). In 1992 alone 6 million became Christians – that is 17,000 new Christians every day! 26 countries in sub-Saharan (or black) Africa are now majority Christian. This dramatic

growth of the church is unique in history. Africa is the first continent to become majority Christian within a single country!

In South America:

Over the past few decades there has been amazing church growth. Protestant churches have been growing at 3 times the rate of population growth.

- In 1930 – 1 million (Protestant) Christians;
- In 1980 – 21 million;
- In 1990 – 46 million;
- In 2000 – 90 million.

More became Christians between 1980-1990 (25 million) than in the previous 50 years! About 100 new churches begin in South America every week. The church there grows by around 10,000 every day, or 3.5 million a year. The most spectacular growth has been amongst the Pentecostal churches, with now over 75% of Christians belonging to Pentecostal churches. The largest denomination is the Assemblies of God in Brazil, with over 6 million members. One church alone (the Brazil for Christ church) seats 25,000 people!

In China:

The greatest surprise in world Christianity in recent years was the discovery of church growth in China. When missionaries were forced to leave China in 1950-51, there were less than 1 million Protestant Christians. The Communist government tried to destroy the church. Pastors were jailed, Bibles taken and burned, church buildings closed, Bible-schools shut down, Christian literature banned, Christian leaders imprisoned and tortured, and Christian meetings made illegal. Christians in other countries prayed for the church in China and wondered if it would survive. What was the result of this severe persecution?

As the bamboo curtain began to lift in the late 1970's and 1980's information about the church began to come out. It soon became clear that while missionaries had been forced to leave in 1950, the Holy Spirit had not left China and was continuing to do mighty things. The church, purged and purified by suffering, was large, growing, and hungry for the Word of God. The 1 million Christians in 1950 had now grown to more than 100 million. More recent estimates put the figure at 120 million or more because 80% of Christians still meet secretly in house churches and so the real number is not known.

When Jesus said He would build His Church, He also said "*and the gates of hell will not prevail against it*". Persecution and the prayers of Christians around the world have only served to make the church in China grow faster and stronger than ever before.

3. A shift from the West

In the first half of the twentieth century, the centre of Christianity and missionary activity was clearly in Western countries. This is where the greatest number of Christians lived and where the biggest and strongest churches were found. But this is no longer the case! Over the last part of the twentieth century there has been a decline in many western churches but amazing growth

in Two Thirds World countries. This has resulted in a clear shift in the centre of church growth from the West to these poorer countries (e.g. Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Pacific). By the year 2000 more than 80% of the worlds Christians were living in Two Thirds World Countries!

There is also spiritual revival in many of these Two Thirds World countries. Christians in these countries have discovered the simplicity of Christian discipleship.

Free from the bonds of materialism, they have developed a deep zeal for prayer, and understanding of spiritual warfare, and a real concern to bring others to Christ. This has also resulted in a strong missionary movement from these countries with the sending out of thousands of missionaries. Already there are over 40,000 Two Thirds World missionaries. By the year 2000 there were more non-Western missionaries than Western missionaries!

“I will build my church” Jesus said. *“In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people”* It is an exciting time to be a Christian as we see these things happening and God working in the

Reaching the Remaining Unreached #18

1. The world to be reached

We have thought about the world in terms of the 10,000 ‘unreached people or ethnic groups’ (Study 24). Another way to think about the world is in terms of its religion. The diagram below shows the distribution of the peoples of the world by different religions in AD 2000.

2. The religions of the world

From this diagram we see that of the 6.3 billion people in the world, 2.1 billion profess to be ‘Christians’. This is 33 percent or about one third of the world’s population. But this figure includes many who are Christians in name only, who call themselves ‘Christians’, but who may not really know Christ personally (i.e. nominal Christians). On this basis Christianity is the largest ‘religion’ in the world, with the Muslim faith (Islam) coming next. “Secular religions” include such philosophies as Marxism, Communism, humanism, agnosticism, and atheism. There are 220 million in Tribal religions (Animists) who worship nature or the spirit world. Many of these are in the South Pacific region.

Looking at the religions of the world in this way given us a clearer picture of the challenge we face. It tell us that about 67 percent (or two-thirds) of the world’s people do not know or acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord.

3. Three major tasks

Fulfilling Christ’s Commission then involves three major tasks for the Church today and for each individual Christian:

Nominal Christians

We need to evangelize the millions of nominal Christians who are included in the figure of 2.1 million ‘Christians’. There are people all over the world who call themselves ‘Christians’, who may have been baptized and attend a local church, but who are Christian in name only. They

have little understanding of repentance, faith, new-birth, the saving work of Christ, and what it means to live in submission to Christ as Lord

Non-Christians

We also need to evangelize the 875 million non-Christians that we are in contact with every day (grouped under 'secular religions'). We need to find ways to share with our non-Christians friends and neighbors the love of God and His desire to make them citizens of His Kingdom. We have looked at ways to do this in the earlier studies of this book.

Unreached peoples

Lastly, we need to identify the 2.1 billion people who are still 'unreached' by any Christian witness, and work out ways to reach them. These are mainly people that are under the control of other religious systems, and who worship other 'gods'. To reach them is major task of the Church.

4. Find points of contact

Recently a new team has been used to describe the most needy target area for missions as we move into the 21st century. This is largely unevangelized part of the world, which has been the most resistant to the gospel, has been called the 10/40 window. This is a rectangular-shaped area which extends from 10 degrees north to 40 degrees north of the equator, and runs across from West Africa to East Asia.

The 10/40 window includes 3.7 billion peoples from 62 countries of the world. These are countries of North Africa (e.g. Egypt), the Middle East (e.g. Israel, Iraq, Iran), and Asia (e.g. India, Pakistan, China, Japan) etc. The majority of unreached peoples of our world live in this 10/40 window area making up 60 percent of the world's population. Over 1 billion of these people are Muslim, 886 million are Hindus, and another 340 million are Buddhists. 82 percent of the world's poorest people also live inside this 'window'. Yet only 8 percent of the Christian missionary force work in this 'window' where nearly the entire world's least evangelized countries are found. This area has come under special focus as an area that needs special effort in world evangelization.

5. It can be done

In our last study we looked at the amazing growth of Christianity through the centuries in terms of the ratio between Non-Christians and Christians. Another way of looking at the same growth of the church is to look at the number of unreached people-groups per evangelical church congregation. See Picture below.

Just think! In A.D. 100 for every 1 Christian church congregation, there were 12 unreached people groups. By A.D. 1500 there were as many church congregations across the world as unreached people groups (1:1). By year A.D. 1900 the ratio had turned the other way and was now 10 churches for every 1 unreached people group. This astonishing trend has continued until at present there are more than 670 congregations per group to be reached!

If the church is doing its job, don't you think out of every 670 congregations there should be enough Christians willing to pray and reach just one other unreached people group? Yes, the

countdown is on and the task can be done! The Great Commission is coming closer and closer to being fulfilled and every people –group on earth in God’s plan will finally be reached.

Teaming Up With God #19

1. Catch the vision

First, to become a World Christian you must catch a vision of God’s world. For this to happen you need to be informed about God’s work world-wide and then be willing to be a part of the action in whatever way God calls you to be. Sadly, many Christians and churches have become ingrown and self-centered. They look only to their own local needs, interests, and programs and have little interest in anything else beyond themselves. And if they are interested in God’s work elsewhere, it is not outside the boundary of their own church denomination! But *‘without a vision the people perish’*. The church that has no vision and doesn’t reach out will die. The Christian that remains self-centered and concerned only with personal interest will dry up spiritually. (Proverbs 29:18 RSV)

Don’t be a self-centered and narrowed-minded Christian! Lift up your eyes and see the big picture! Be identified and active in your local church – yes! But have a vision for God’s work in the world. Even go on a mission trip! Be a “World Christian”! It will change your life.

2. Pray

It is not enough just to catch the vision of the world and know what God is doing. You are also called to become a part of the fulfillment of that vision. God has a place for you in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth and in making disciples of all peoples. You must hear and obey Christ’s personal call for you. But the place to begin is prayer. Prayer is not the least you can do, it is the greatest! Praying for the fulfillment of the Great Commission should be our first and foremost concern over everything else. As someone has said: - ***“We do not just pray for the work; prayer is the work!”*** The most powerful and direct way to obey the Great Commission is through prayer. Prayer links us with God’s power. When people pray God touches lives and changes nations. Through prayer we win the spiritual battles and prepare the way of the Lord. Then evangelism is able to gather in the results. If this is true, prayer is not something we tack on to our work. It is the work! It must come before, and run underneath everything we do. Without prayer all our efforts will be powerless and fail to achieve Kingdom results. But by using this weapon the most ordinary of Christians has the opportunity to be directly involved in winning the nations.

What to pray for:

Praying for the fulfillment of the Great Commission is more than just praying through lists of name, needs and peoples. Strategic praying for world missions should focus on three main issues:-

• ***Pray for the breaking of spiritual strongholds***

We must always remember that the lost people are under Satan’s control. Therefore the battle to win people from Satan’s Kingdom is first of all a spiritual battle. Chains of spiritual darkness and bondage link unreached peoples, cities, and countries to Satan’s control through the rule of principalities and powers. So if we are going to see evangelistic breakthroughs, we must learn

how to use the mighty weapon of prayer in spiritual warfare. We must first of all break the powers of darkness before the captives can go free. (Luke 11:21-22; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

• ***Pray for the opening of closed doors I***

There are countries that are closed to the gospel. There are political and religious barriers that Christians are not allowed to cross. There are people whose minds and hearts are shut tight to the Christians message. World evangelization will be achieved first of all by the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit released in response to the prayers of God's people. Right up to modern times prayer has seen closed doors open, dividing walls broken down, atheistic governments overthrown, and hardened hearts softened to the gospel. Someone has said, "*When man works, man works; but when man prays, God works*". And when God works amazing things happen! (Colossians 4:2-4)

• ***Pray for God to send our workers***

When Jesus told His disciples, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*", what did He tell them to do about it? Did He tell them to go out and find more workers, or raise more money for missions? No! He told them first of all to pray to the One who owns the harvest to call and send out those workers who will be best able to reap the harvest. Enlisting workers is God's work, not ours. But our work is to pray, than then He raises up the ones to go. (Matthew 9:37-38)

Do you want to be a part of God's great plan for this generation? Then team up with God, first of all through prayer. And as you do, be ready to be a part of the answer to your prayers, for He may call and send YOU!