

# Understanding the Great Commission

## Matthew 28:18-20

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

### One Command

**make disciples  
matheteuo (3100)**

### Three participles which tell us how to obey that command

**going (to all - Mark 16:15)  
baptizing (all who repent - Acts 2:38-41)  
teaching (them to obey all that Christ commanded - Matthew 7:24-27)**

### Where should this command be carried out?

**among all the nations (ethnos)  
among all the ethnic and people groups  
Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8**

### Whose power should we depend on?

**We cannot depend on our own strength  
John 15:5**

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...”

**We must depend on the power Christ provides**

**“Lo, I am with you always”**

**Acts 1:4-5, 8**

“And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ *He said*, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

## Making disciples defined

### Matthew 13:52

“Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.’”

**instructed  
matheteuo (3100)**

**one who has been made a disciple**

**A person who has been made a disciple of the kingdom of God is like:**

**A householder - the head of a spiritual household or family  
(to have a spiritual family, we must be a spiritual parent)**  
a spiritual newborn - 1 Peter 2:2  
a spiritual toddler - 1 Corinthians 13:11  
a spiritual child - 1 John 2:13; Luke 2:40  
a spiritual young man - 1 John 2:13-14  
a spiritual parent - 1 John 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

**Has a treasure - that treasure is the Word of God**  
1. involves hearing the Word of God - Romans 10:17  
2. involves reading the Word of God - Revelation 1:3  
3. involves studying the Word of God - 2 Timothy 2:15  
4. involves memorizing the Word of God - Psalm 119:11  
5. involves meditating on the Word of God - Psalm 1:1-3

**Brings out of that treasure things that are new  
(is continuing to learn new things)**  
a learner’s attitude - Philippians 3:7-14  
growing in Christ’s righteousness  
growing in knowing Christ  
keeping our eyes focused on the goal

**Brings out of that treasure things that are old  
(can teach the basics of Christianity)**  
a spiritual mother provides tender care - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9  
a spiritual father provides example and teaching - 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12

## Making disciples practiced by Christ

### Matthew 27:57

“Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.”

**Understanding the Great Commission** (page 2 of 6) Updated: July 2023

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## Making disciples practiced in the book of Acts

### Acts 14:21

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.”

**made many disciples  
matheteuo (3100)**

### The early church started with at least 120 disciples

#### Acts 1:15

“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said...”

### The early church focused on making disciples

#### Acts 6:1a

“Now in those days, *when the number of the disciples was multiplying.*”

### The early church focused on multiplying disciples in Jerusalem

#### Acts 6:7

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

### The early church focused on making disciples throughout Judea and Samaria

#### Acts 9:38

“And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them.”

### The early church focused on making disciples in Antioch

#### Acts 11:26

“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

### The early church focused on making disciples everywhere

#### Acts 16:1-2

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.”

**making disciples was the key ministry of the early church**

## Making disciples defined by Paul

### Disciple making is not mentoring

The word “mentor” was first introduced to the world by Homer in his *Odyssey*. Mentor was the name of the slave (paidagogos) who was given the responsibility of raising the son until he reached maturity in the *Odyssey*. Historically the Greeks used the word (paidagogos) to speak of the slave who was assigned the responsibility to raise the child until puberty. The “paidagogos” usually focused on severe discipline to prepare the boy for manhood. The Greeks felt that raising a child was not the work of a parent but just the work of a slave. Today, many people have the same attitude.

In recent years, the world has placed great emphasis on the role of mentoring in the business world. As a result, in recent years, many Christians have started to use the word “mentoring” to describe their concept of how to make a disciple. (Isn't it interesting how the church often tries to follow the world, which has absolutely no concept of spiritual life and spiritual maturity, to describe spiritual ministry.)

**However “paidagogos” is only used three times in the New Testament and it is always used in a negative sense. Making Disciples is not providing a “mentor” to help a Christian in his development. Notice how the word “paidagogos” is used in the New Testament.**

#### Galatians 3:24-25

“Therefore the law was our tutor (paidagogos) *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” (paidagogos)

#### 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors (paidagogos) in Christ, *yet you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

**The Old Testament Law caused us to recognize our sin so that we came to Christ. However, we have been set free from the Old Testament Law. Just like in Corinth, many Christians try to help others grow as Christians by laws, instead of through love and example. We Make Disciples by inviting others to imitate our lives. We motivate others by the Love of Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**

## Disciple making is spiritual parenting

### Characteristics of the parenting of Paul of the Corinthians

#### 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

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**Paul warned them as beloved children**

**Paul became a father instead of a mentor**

**Paul taught them to imitate his example**

**Paul sent Timothy to remind them of his ways**

**Paul was consistent in his teaching everywhere**

### Characteristics of the parenting of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy in Thessalonica

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. *You are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

**they provided the gentle care of a nursing mother**

**they shared their lives and not just the Word of God**

**they provided an example of godly Christian living**

**they provided encouragement and challenge to a worthy walk**

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## **Disciple making must focus on developing “adult sons”**

**Spiritual maturity is the goal of disciple making**

**Newborn babes - 1 Peter 2:2**

“...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...”

**Spiritual toddlers**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 5:11-14**

(everything it says about the spiritual toddler is bad)

**Spiritual children**

**Spiritual young men**

**Spiritual parents**

**1 John 2:12-14**

“I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who* is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who* is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.”

**Spiritual maturity requires helping Christians become “adult sons”**

**An “adult son” is a Christian who gives as well as receives**

**Titus began as a new convert of Paul - Galatians 2:3**

**Titus became a spiritual son to Paul - Titus 1:4**

**Titus provided rest to the spirit of Paul - 2 Corinthians 2:12-13**

**Titus provided encouragement to Paul - 2 Corinthians 7:5-7**

**Titus brought joy to Paul - 2 Corinthians 7:13-15**

**Titus ministered on behalf of Paul - 2 Corinthians 8:6**

**Titus had the same concern for others as Paul - 2 Corinthians 8:16**

**Titus was viewed as a partner by Paul - 2 Corinthians 8:23**

**Titus walked with the same spirit as Paul - 2 Corinthians 12:18**

**Christ illustrated the transition as Christians become “adult sons”**

**A child is provided with supervision - Galatians 4:1; Matthew 4:18-22**

**A friend shares plans and reproduces - John 15:12-16**

**A brother is treated as an equal partner - John 20:17-23**

**an “adult son” is one who has become an equal partner in ministry**

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