

The Great Commission

By Vern Charette

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 28:17 in the section **It's in the Book**. Now read Revelation 19:9–10 and 20:8–9. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Since John is corrected twice in Revelation for wrongly worshiping an angel instead of God, what does this say about Jesus, who allowed His disciples to worship Him?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Matthew 28:19 in the section **It's in the Book**. Now read Luke 14:25–33. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How “weighty” is Jesus’ call of discipleship? What should a true disciple be willing to leave in order to follow his Lord?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to **Motivation for Evangelism and Missions** in the section **It's in the Book**. Now read Philippians 2:5–11. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What was Jesus willing to lay aside in order to obediently leave heaven and come to earth?

Scripture to Memorize

... *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 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 that I commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Matthew 28:18–20

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the importance and meaning of the Great Commission and will accept its challenge.

Vern Charette is assistant professor of Preaching at Southwestern Seminary. Vern has also continued to serve the local church for well over two decades as an itinerant evangelist. He attributes his full speaking calendar to an overwhelming sense of God’s grace and an unflinching commitment to text-driven preaching. With the pathos of an evangelist, Vern has never forgotten how God radically saved him when he was a high school dropout, in trouble with the authorities, and living an immoral life. You are invited to read more about Vern, including his powerful testimony, at www.VernCharetteMinistries.org. Vern is married to Jennifer, and they have a son named Christian.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Stephany's mother asked her what she might do after high school. Stephanie answered, "It seems like everyone has it all together but me." She felt bad enough being the younger sister of a brother that was away at college pursuing his lifelong dream. She just wasn't at all sure what she wanted to do with her life.

She thought to herself: *It's not a crime to be a teenager and not have it all planned out yet, is it? If only God could give me a little purpose and direction in life, it sure would help.*

Read Matthew 28:16–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 16. the mountain to which Jesus had directed. The final event at the end of Matthew's Gospel climaxes on a mountain. Jesus had already died for the sins of the whole world and been raised again from the dead. **the eleven.** Now in a glorified body reflecting the scars of His sacrifice, He gathered the eleven apostles (minus Judas) to give them some final instructions.

Verse 17. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him. The New Testament contains other passages where Jesus is clearly worshiped (see Luke 24:52). Have you ever stopped to think about what this simple statement means? This is a clear declaration of Jesus' divinity, for only God is worthy to receive worship. **some doubted.** The fact that some were called doubtful may be explained by the word translated "doubted." The Greek word may just mean that some were hesitant to know what to do.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: Since John is corrected twice in Revelation for wrongly worshiping an angel instead of God, what does this say about Jesus who did allow His disciples to worship Him?

Discussion Questions

Do you believe Jesus was fully God and worthy of worship? Have there been times in your life when you easily worshiped Him in obedience and other times when you did not know how to respond to Him? How does knowledge of Him directly impact your worship?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a few traits about Jesus that cause you to respond to Him in thanksgiving, awe and worship. Be ready to share these with the group.

Read Matthew 28:18–20 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 18. All authority. . . has been given to Me. At least two things are true if Jesus has all authority. First, He has the authority to command His disciples, and second, He has the power to help them carry out His orders.

Verse 19–20. Go therefore and make disciples. The central command is to “make disciples” while the “Go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” are ways of fulfilling the central command. Jesus’ disciples should be about the main task of reproducing themselves in the world.

Verse 19. all nations. This primary task is extended to all peoples and nations. This means disciples are expected to leave their comfort for the sake of reaching every ethnic group in the world. The command is the salvation and discipleship of the whole world.

Verse 20. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. The original Greek emphasizes the “and behold” in this verse. That is the reason verse 20 should be taken as a certain promise—surely, certainly, or in our vernacular, “You can take this to the bank.”

Jesus, the one with all authority and power (v. 18), certainly promises to be “with” His disciples. But notice, the promise is not just to the original disciples. This promise is to every disciple (including those in the twenty-first century) that would follow Jesus until He returns. The Great Commission is for all disciples of every “age,” not just the original group.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share answers to the following questions: How “weighty” is Jesus’ call of discipleship? What should a true disciple be willing to leave in order to follow His Lord?

Discussion Questions

What modern-day comforts might an American disciple have to leave in order to carry out the great commission? Do you think Jesus is calling everyone to become international missionaries in this passage? How might “ordinary disciples” participate in the Great Commission in everyday life? What are some practical ways someone might be involved in the Great Commission right now?

On Your Own

Think of the seriousness of the Great Commission. Ask yourself if you are involved and if you are willing to pay the price of obedience. In the space below, list a few of the personal costs of discipleship. Then list a few of the rewards. When everyone is finished, compare and discuss the cost and reward of following Jesus in this task.

Read John 20:19–23 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 21. as the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you. After Jesus rose from the dead, He unexpectedly showed up to His fearful disciples in order to comfort them and to challenge them. John's Great Commission included Jesus using Himself as an example missionary. Jesus was sent by the Father, and now Jesus is doing the sending.

Verse 22. Receive the Holy Spirit. Following Jesus' command to go into the world would take the power of the Holy Spirit. The commission could not be accomplished in the ordinary strength of the disciples. The breathing here is probably a foreshadowing of the actual filling of the Spirit the disciples would receive on Pentecost.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: What was Jesus willing to lay aside in order to obediently leave heaven and come to earth?

Discussion Questions

How is Jesus the perfect example of the Great Commission? What did Jesus have to leave behind in order to be obedient to His Father? How important is it that Jesus provided the Holy Spirit for His disciples on the day of Pentecost?

On Your Own

Think deeply of Jesus as the supreme missionary. In the space below, write some specific ways you want to follow the example of Jesus as you fulfill the Great Commission. Be ready to share these with the group.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

The two Great Commission passages that were studied create a powerful challenge.

- In Matthew 28:16–20, Jesus, as the resurrected Savior, proved His deity by accepting worship from His disciples. He also, by virtue of His supreme position, issued a command to be followed by all of His disciples, including those in the twenty-first century. The command to go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching is not a suggestion. This is what every believer should do. Jesus promised His presence to all who would be involved in this great endeavor.
- In John 20:19–23, Jesus, as the resurrected Savior, revealed Himself to His fearful disciples and commanded them to go. The nuance of John's Great Commission is that Jesus included Himself as the supreme example of obedience. The One who was sent is now doing the sending. He also promised His presence through the Holy Spirit, who would empower His disciples to carry out the mammoth task of reaching the world with the message of forgiveness.

The Great Commission provides direction and purpose for every disciple of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission is to be obeyed by every disciple of Christ. This does not mean every single person is called to serve as a career missionary overseas. Each disciple of Christ has to seek the Lord to find where they fit in the larger scheme of local and global evangelization.

Each of us has immediate and practical ways to be obedient. We can all share our faith with those around us. This begins with our family members, friends and those we come into contact with every day. We can pray for those who do not have the gospel, especially for those in countries with vast numbers of lost people. We can give financially to Great Commission endeavors. We can also go on short-term mission trips and continue to educate ourselves about missions.

At the same time we can always listen for a call to go to the nations for the rest of our lives.

Follow up Question

What is the Great Commission, and why should we be involved in it?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.