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Two Simple Words: Make Disciples

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Two Simple Words: Make Disciples Matthew 28:16-20

I can't wait to study this text together this morning because we are reading it in a whole new light, I hope, I pray. This is no longer reading about the Great Commission. This is reading that which is the very mission of our lives and that which is the very mission of this church. What does it mean to make disciples? We are not just talking about the battle plans. We are hunkered down in the bunker and we are staking everything on this mission.

So with that understanding, let's study in and read Matthew 28:16. The Bible says,

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Matt. 28:16-20).

Now I have got to be honest with you. I could preach for weeks on this text. It is so full. It is so loaded with meaning.

Our Covenant...

But what I want us to do is I want us to look at this text through the lens of a covenant with each other. What I mean by covenant is a commitment that we make to God, before God and before each other. I want us to think about this text as it relates to our lives individually and our lives corporately as this church called The Church at Brook Hills and what this text means for us. I want us to unfold and unpack three facets of that covenant.

We will be a church that trusts in His authority.

The first one is this based on this text; we are saying that we will be a church that trusts in His authority. "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*" (Matt. 28:18). That is the key statement in the Great Commission because it is the foundation upon which everything else that He says is built. All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Now this is a theme we have seen throughout the book of Matthew. This is actually the tenth time that we see Jesus' authority referenced. All throughout the Gospels we see His authority emphasized over and over again. It is not just the power of Jesus—"All 'power' has been given to me"—but it is the right to use that power. You can have power and strength but if you don't have the authority to use it, then it doesn't really get you very far.

Jesus comes to His disciples soon before He is about to ascend back into heaven, and He says, "All authority, all power has been given to me to use." We are going to get to that in a second. I want you to think about the authority of Christ on two different levels. Number one, His authority is universal. All authority on heaven and on earth that pretty much sums it up. He has got it all. If He has all authority in heaven and on earth that means there is nothing that is not under His authority. He has complete and total, universal dominion, right and power to rule.

Now this is not something that is just brand new when you come to Matthew 28. It is something we have seen all throughout the Gospels. You go back into the Gospels and you look at the different times where we see the authority of Christ pictured or referenced or talked about and you see it in all different facets. I have got a list of things here.

First, He has authority over disease. You see Jesus when it comes to a blind man and all of a sudden the blind man can see. When He comes to a lame man, He says, "Get up and walk." He has the authority to tell those who had never walked in their life to get up and walk and they do. He has authority to take the lepers, the outcasts and give them healing. He has authority over all disease. Isn't it good to know that Jesus Christ has authority over cancer, over any disease that anyone of us may ever face around the corner? He has authority over disease.

Second, He has authority over demons. Over and over again, this is one of the most common usages or references to His authority. He is casting out demons. The evil spirits flee from Him. They run from Him. He has authority over all demons.

Third, He has authority over sin. You go through the Gospels and you look at how Jesus talks about how He has the authority to judge sin in John 5 and then He talks about how He has the authority not just to judge sin, if His authority stopped there then we would really be in trouble, but He has the authority of forgive sin. Why? Because He has authority by conquering sin. He conquered death. He conquered the grave. He is Lord over sin.

He has authority over disease, demons, sin. Fourth, He has authority over suffering. "Come to me all you who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest." When you are burdened with the things of this world and nothing makes sense and you are confused and you are anxious, you have a Savior who has authority over every single burden so that you don't have to carry them so that He carries them for you. He says to those who are hungry, who haven't been satisfied by the things of this world, He says, "I am the bread of life. I am the living water." He has authority over suffering.

He has authority over nature. Jesus is out on a boat with His disciples and a big storm comes and the disciples are panicking. Jesus wipes the sleep out of His eyes, yawns and then speaks, raises His hand and He has authority to calm the seas. His buddies another time were out in the middle of the lake and He is on the side and He would like to go see them. Jesus needs no boat at that point to get out to His disciples. He just takes a stroll across the water because He has authority over all of nature.

He has authority over disease, demons, sin, suffering, nature and He has authority over all nations. Now, this has been prophesied all the way back in Daniel 7:13 and 14. You might write that down and go back and look at it sometime. It is an incredible text that talks about how the Son of Man would come who would have authority and sovereign dominion over every nation and His dominion would last forever.

Now that is the picture of Jesus' authority. When He comes to this point, He says, "All

authority in heaven and on earth is mine." He means it. He has got it all! Just get the picture. Psalm 148 sums it up. He has authority over the sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightening and hail, stormy winds that do His bidding, mountains and hills, fruit trees, cedars, wild animals, all cattle, small creatures, flying birds, kings of the earth, all nations, princes, rulers on the earth, young men, maidens, old men and children. They all bow down to the authority of Jesus Christ. Now that changes the way you look at life. That changes the way you watch television news when you know that Jesus Christ is in control and has authority over all nations. It changes the way we approach the things we come into in life when He has authority over sin and suffering.

So, His authority is universal. But, second, His authority is purposeful. This is where we see the link between the authority of Christ and the Great Commission. He is not just bragging here in Matthew 28:18. "I have got all authority." What He is saying is, "I have got all authority in heaven and on earth for a purpose." This is what feeds the Great Commission is the claim that is the foundation for what He is about to say. Because, basically what He is saying is, "I have all things in heaven and on earth at my disposal to accomplish this mission that I am about to give you." Let that soak in for a second.

Jesus Christ has said to His church right here, His disciples and to us today, "I have all authority in heaven and on earth, and I put them at your disposal to accomplish the mission that I have given to you." That is why He said in John 15, "You ask me for anything you need, anything you want to accomplish this mission and I will give it to you to see my word accomplished." His authority is purposeful.

Think about it – the authority of Jesus residing in each and every one of you, His person dwelling in you. All authority in heaven and on earth given to us. It is at this point we realize that our success as a church and our success in our lives is not based on who we are or what we can do. It is not about how smart we are, how creative we are, how talented we are, how rich we are. It is not about what we can offer. Our success is based on who Jesus is and what He is capable of doing in our lives. That is what our success is based on, His authority, not our own.

We will be a church that trusts in His authority, His person, and His Word. We will be dominated by His authority, His person and His Word; our lives, our ministry, our church governed by His Word. Everything staked on His Word trusting that He alone has all the authority. We will be a church that trusts in His authority and not our own.

We will be a church that obeys His strategy.

Second, we will be a church that obeys His strategy. Now, based on the authority, we get in to the picture. It is at this point before we study verse 19 and really start to unpack what the Great Commission is all about, this making disciples thing that we have been talking about for five weeks. I want us to think about the picture we have seen throughout the Gospels up until this point of the contrast between Christ's strategy in the world and the self-directed strategy of the disciples.

You see Christ's strategy talks about how He had compassion on the crowds because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd and He is caring for the crowds. And then you see the disciples coming up to Him in Luke 9 when they face a little bit of opposition in Samaria and they are saying, "Hey, can we call down fire from heaven on these guys?" There's a little disconnect there. You can imagine Jesus rolling His eyes at that point. At numerous points He pulls them aside and He begins to talk about the suffering He is going to experience and the death He would experience. There is one time when Peter even goes so far as to pull Jesus to the side and say, "Jesus, with all due respect, as your

Public Relations manager, I cannot recommend this particular course of action.” There is constantly, this tension between the self-directed strategy of the disciples and the strategy of Christ.

So, Jesus dies on the cross. He rises from the grave and at this point there is no telling what is going through these guys minds, what kind of plans that they could come up with at this point if left to their own. So they come up on this mountain with Christ and they come face to face with His strategy, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,” and at that point they have got two options. Two options that have been seen throughout this contrast in the Gospels and now they come face to face with them.

Number one, first option is they can give themselves to a self-directed strategy that hopes for His blessing. What I mean by that is they could come up with some good things at this point. They were sharp guys and they had great motives. Believe it or not, even when they wanted to call down fire from heaven and wanting to redirect Jesus, they had got good motives. They wanted to see the King Jesus glorified.

Could it be possible that even 2,000 years later in the church today, that we could have the option of coming up with some great strategies and great plans and great methods? Could it be that our Christian bookstores are filled with books on new strategies and new plans and new methods that we could adapt to as a church, that we could adopt as a church? The dangerous thing is we can adopt those strategies, plans and methods and even have God glorifying motives at the center. We want God to be glorified in our church. We want God to be glorified in this community, so let’s come up with a new strategy. Let’s come up with a plan for how to do that.

It is at this point folks that we have got to realize that nowhere in Scripture does God promise to bless us based solely on our motives. Now I am not saying motives are not important. They are extremely important. But nowhere in Scripture does God promise to bless based solely on our motives but Scripture does give us very clear warning for the fact that God always promises to bless His plan.

So we have got two options. Either number one, we can give ourselves to a self-directed strategy that hopes for His blessing, or number two, we can give ourselves to a Christ-directed strategy that is guaranteed His blessing. Could it be that our job is not to come up with a new strategy, a new plan or method? Could it be that God does not desire to advance our dreams and our goals and our ambitions? That God is not looking for us to come up with a new agenda? Could it be that our primary responsibility is to know His will through His word and obey it wholeheartedly, the strategy that He has already given to us. Because we can spend the rest of our lives and the rest of the life of this church coming up with new strategies and new plans and new methods. But if we ignore the Christ-directed strategy, we will miss the whole point. That is why we need to focus on what it means to make disciples of all nations.

So what does a Christ-directed strategy look like? I want you to look at a few different components of a Christ-directed strategy in this text. Number one, Christ is our vision. That goes all the way back to Matthew 4 where this whole thing started. It is the thing that is driving this series. Two words: “follow me.” Look at me. Give yourself to me. Christ is our vision. Remember His whole picture. There was no formal school, no regulations and procedures, no seminaries, no membership classes. It was just following Christ. Our agenda, our vision is to be like Christ and that is non-negotiable in the church. This is what drives us. We see Christ and we want to be like Christ. We are being conformed in the image of Christ.

We study His Word so that His image will take root in our hearts, in our minds, and in our lives. We want to be like Christ. Our vision, Christ is our vision.

Second, making disciples is our mission. When you get to Matthew 28:19, really this whole text that we have just read, there is in the original language of the New Testament, one imperative verb. Just in case it has been a little while since English class for you an imperative verb is the command. When Heather gives me an imperative that is a command. Do it right then. So there is one command, one imperative verb in Matthew 28 verses 16–20. The imperative is make disciples. One word in the Greek, two words here. Make disciples. That is the command around which this whole thing revolves.

Now it is at that point that we say, “Well how do you make disciples?” Thankfully, based on what we have been studying the last four weeks, we now know the answer to that. Here is where I want you to draw the connection between what we have been studying for four weeks now and what we have seen in this text. Because this imperative, “Making disciples”, is surrounded by other verbs and other words that help describe how that looks.

For example, it starts off and says, “*Therefore go and make disciples*” (Matt. 28:19). “Go” is really a participle much like baptizing and teaching later on. “Therefore, going, as you go, make disciples.” Going is a part of making disciples. We go and what do we do? Think about the “incarnational” facet of disciple-making. We have the Word of Christ entrusted to us, His Word becoming life in us, incarnated in us. How do we go?

First of all, we share the Word. Does that sound familiar? We take the Word that has been entrusted to us, the gospel that has been entrusted to us and just as Jesus went preaching, proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom, He said, “You go and you do the same thing. Share the Word.”

Then He says, “*Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matt. 28:19). What is that? Show the Word. This is the way that we identify our lives with Christ and His church. Literally, it says in the original language there baptizing them into the name, which is identified with the name, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into His character, into all that He is. You identify, you associate your life with His. Your life is now a demonstration of His life. That is why baptism is so extremely important, I believe, in the Great Commission and I believe in the church. Because what happens in physical baptism is we identify our lives with the life and the death of Christ. We identify our lives with His church. That is why that is so important. It is involved in showing the Word.

We go and we share the Word. We baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We show the Word. Then we “*teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” Third, we teach the Word. Is this sounding familiar? Are you seeing the connection here? Teach the Word. Teach them everything I have commanded you.

Now I want to show you something really cool here. As we come to the end of Matthew 28 we have got to take a little trip through the book of Matthew to see it. What I want to show you, start turning back to Matthew 5. What I want to show you is that Matthew’s Gospel is split up into about five different sections that really focus on Jesus’ teaching with His disciples and there are five different times where we see a pattern emerge. Each time the disciples are brought together either by Jesus or they come to Jesus, then He teaches them something for an extended period of time and then that section closes off with Matthew saying, “After Jesus had finished teaching them these things,” and then He moves on.

I want you to see that unfold. I want you to see the beginning and the end of each of those times. Look at Matthew 5:1. This is the Sermon on the Mount, *"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them"* (Matt. 5:1). So in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, He teaches them. Then I want you to go to the end of Matthew 7. Look at Matthew 7:28. Here is a phrase you might underline in your Bible because it is phrase that is going to be repeated over and over again. It says in verse 28, *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law"* (Matt. 7:28-29).

Now flip over a couple of chapters to chapter 10. Look at verse 1. He does the same thing. We see the disciples coming to Christ. *"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness"* (Matt. 10:1). It lists their names in verse 2, 3 and 4 and then in verse 5 it says, *"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions"* (Matt. 10:5) and then He gives them instructions, and then you get to chapter 11:1 and what does it say? *"After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee"* (Matt. 11:1). So that is the second one.

Third one, go over to chapter 13:1. This one has to do with parables. It says, *"That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables"* (Matt. 13:1-3). He began to teach them. Go to the end and look at chapter 13:53. It says, *"When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there"* (Matt. 13:53). So He gives the closure there and He moves on.

Two more. Look at chapter 18:1. Now in between we have got Jesus healing people; we have got Jesus doing all kinds of different things but these are concentrated blocks of teaching. Look at chapter 18:1, *"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven'"* (Matt. 18:1). He begins to teach them. You get over to chapter 19:1, and Matthew gives the conclusion, *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan."* One more. Look at chapter 24 the last block of teaching that we see in Matthew. It says in chapter 24:1, *"Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings"* (Matt. 24:1). They start this dialogue. He begins to teach them all the way to chapter 26:1 and here it is one more time. Matthew gives us the conclusion, *"When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples..."* (Matt. 26:1) and they move on to other things.

That is the theme that we are seeing. It is repeated over and over again five different times in Matthew. Then you come to Matthew 28. The passage we just read, once again Jesus pulls his disciples together. The same pattern and He begins to teach them. He gives them these words. Now obviously not quite as long of a block but extremely a significant block of teaching. What you will notice is, if Matthew was really a literary scholar, then he would have known that it would have fit best for him to offer a little conclusion here at the end when Jesus had finished teaching these things and then maybe even give us a picture of the ascension. That would be really cool. That would be a good addition to the book of Matthew.

But, what he does is he leaves it open-ended. In this last part where Jesus pulls His disciples together and He begins to teach them, Matthew does not include the statement, *"When he had finished teaching them these things."* Why not? Here is why. Because the teaching of Christ was not finished with His disciples. It wasn't going to stop with them. It was going to spread through them. They would now continue His teaching.

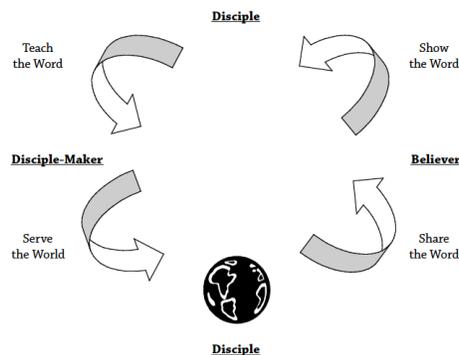
The book of Matthew is an open-ended book and the last chapter is still being written in the hearts and minds of disciples all over the world who are teaching the words of Christ. It is not stopping with them. It is spreading through them. That is the picture we see. It is intended to be left open-ended where we, all of us are teaching the Word of Christ as individuals. Not just in the church in classrooms, but as individuals.

It says, *“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:20). Maybe a better word even to think about when we think of teaching them to obey is almost training people to follow Christ. Not just giving them cold truths but training them to follow Christ. This is why we can’t give this responsibility just to the church as an institution or just to the Bible study class or the small group because if you want to learn to pray, what is the best way to learn to pray? By sitting in a class or by sitting down with somebody who has a strong prayer life and learning from them and being taught from them how to pray. What is the best way to learn to study the Bible? By going and sitting in a class on how to study the Bible? It would be helpful and give you some tools. But wouldn’t it be better if a believer sat down with you and said, “Hey, let me show you how I study the Bible. Here is how I walk through the Word in my quiet time.” Teaching them to obey.

What is the most effective way to learn to share your faith? Go to a class on sharing your faith or actually go out sharing your faith with somebody else and see them do it and have them pass that on to you. It is a picture of teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you that is at the core of making disciples.

So we go and we share the Word and we baptize, we show the Word, we teach the Word and then we do it in all nations, which we talked about last week. We serve the world. Each one of these components is vital for our transformation in this disciple-making process.

Here is an illustration of how this might look on the back of your page there. What we have is a drawing; we have the world, over six billion people and over a billion who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. That is the picture of the world we have got.



Now, what we do is we go into the world and we share the Word, and once we share the Word, we have a believer. We lead people to believe in Christ, to put their faith in Christ, to trust in Christ. Then, once people believe in Christ, then we begin to show them the importance of the Word, identifying with Christ, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so that we are identified with Him, not just as I place my faith in Him. We are established as disciples of Christ and all that that encompasses in Matthew 4, like we studied at the very beginning of this series. But we don’t stop there. Now, we take the Word and we begin to reproduce it in the lives of others so that we are teaching the Word, we are training people in the Word. We are going from believer to disciple, and then to disciple maker.

Now I hesitate because I don't want to differentiate even biblically. I believe a disciple of Christ is a believer in Christ and a disciple maker. But I do want us to see a progression here that when we give ourselves to disciple-making then we are now beginning to engage the world.

Now I want to give you that picture because I want to ask you two questions. As you look at that image, believer, disciple, disciple maker and that kind of journey in the process of disciple-making, I want to ask you two questions. Number one, I want to ask you where you are on that journey. Where would you put your life and your Christianity? I am wondering if many, if not most of us are stalled at one of the first two. If we have placed our faith in Christ and we have trusted Him to save us from our sins, many of us haven't even come to the point where we have been baptized and even been identified with Christ. So the possibility of us giving ourselves to this mission is undercut from the very beginning because the one biblical way where Christ has commanded us to identify with Him, we haven't followed through with yet.

Some of us are stalled at number one there. I think a lot of us may be stalled at number two. "Okay, I am a follower of Christ. I have been baptized. I'm identified with His church." But we are not intentionally investing our lives in a process called disciple-making. Are you a disciple maker? That leads to the second question.

Have you ever taken someone through this whole process through your one life? Have you lead someone to Christ, showed them Christ with your life, lead them to show Christ through baptism, identification with the church so they begin to take on the character of Christ and then begin to teach them the word of Christ, you have personally invested your life in them, showing them how to pray, showing them how to study the Word, showing them how to share their faith, training them to follow Christ so that they are now going out and doing the same thing in the world with you. Have you taken somebody through that journey?

That is what disciple-making is about. I think we miss this. I think we have a dangerous temptation to stop at one of the first two blanks even in ministry in our lives. We may lead somebody to Christ but we have a pretty bad reputation for once people come to know Christ for leaving them on their own and kind of leaving them hanging in their early Christian life. "Oh that is great. Somebody got saved." Then we just kind of check that off and move on.

Or maybe they become identified with the church and they get baptized but then we refer them to a class to do the disciple-making instead of us investing our lives in this process. Let me ask you a question.

I want you to imagine with me that tomorrow God were to give you the opportunity to lead someone to faith in Christ. Whether it is at work, at home, in your neighborhood, you had the opportunity to lead someone to faith in Christ. If that were to happen tomorrow, what would be your plan over the next six months for how to walk them through this process? What is your plan for that? How many of us have that kind of plan? I am guessing most of us probably don't. That signals one of two things. Either number one, we are not planning on leading anybody to Christ tomorrow which is not a very good thing or number two, we are planning on leading somebody to Christ and leaving them hanging there.

If we are going to give ourselves to anything, this is what we are commanded to give ourselves to in the church reproducing our lives in the lives of others not living Christianity in self-absorption, stopping at one or two but giving ourselves to disciple-making, taking on

the world with our one life. The results are evident. Over a billion people in the world have not even been engaged with the gospel. What if the disciples had taken our strategy? What if they had stopped at one or two instead of giving themselves to this picture? We need to come face to face with this.

Now I know that at this point some of you are thinking, "Okay Dave, you talk about how we are supposed to take on the world with our one life and I don't get it. How can I take the world on with my one life?" Well, that is a question I am really glad you asked.

I want you to picture two scenarios with me. I want you to picture one scenario over here. I want you to imagine that together as a faith family that will come here for worship today together, over the next year, imagine together combined we were able to lead one person to Christ every single day over the next year. It would be tough but it could be done. Now this time next year, 365 people were to come to faith in Christ. It would be an exciting year. Imagine we were to do that the next year and the year after that and the year after that. It would be tough but imagine we did it. After 30 plus years we would see well over 10,000 people come to faith in Christ. We would make a small dent in the lost population of the United States of America. That is scenario number one.

Now let me give you scenario number two. What if just one person from this room, just one person, not everybody, just one, over the next year didn't lead someone to Christ every single day? But over the next year, you lead just one person to faith in Christ but you didn't stop there. You showed them the Word and lead them to be identified with Christ and you began to teach the Word and to show them how to follow Christ so that they were able to go out and be disciple makers themselves with you. Just one person over the next year. Automatically, this time next year your influence would now be doubled. There would be two going out and the next year four continuing this journey. You do the math and in the same time frame over there where we saw over 10,000 people come to faith in Christ, in this scenario, same time frame, you would see nearly four billion people come to faith in Christ.

Maybe Jesus knew what He was talking about when He said, "Make disciples. Give yourself to this. This is my strategy. Make disciples. Pour your life. Sacrifice your life on behalf of others." Just imagine. What if we did that and we really took this thing for real and each of us did this with our one life? In a year or two years, we would double our influence for the gospel for the kingdom of Christ. Imagine if we doubled our influence and those people actually caught it too, we would quadruple. All of sudden your life is now quadrupled in influence. You don't have to be a math genius to see that multitudes come to know Christ, His love and His grace and His mercy as we give ourselves to this mission of making disciples.

Where are you on the circle? Are you taking people through the circle? That leads us to this third facet of the Christ directed strategy. Making disciples is our mission. Third, people are our dreams. People are our dreams. This is where we see it all come to a bottom line. We know, we have seen it in John 17, Jesus saw the world through the lens of these men. They were His dreams. He pulled them together. This is a picture. Everything is staked on these guys obedience to this mission.

It is at this point that we need to ask ourselves what it would look like if people, producing people, for the kingdom were our dreams. This is where there are many of us who have been Christians for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years and we cannot name one person who we have walked through this entire process with that is now engaging the world with their life as a result of our life. We have gone to church and we have sat in the seat

and we have sung the songs. We may have even served on committees and teams and done a lot of things inside the church building but we have got to realize that where the purpose of Christ lies is not in all this spiritual activity. It is in spiritual productivity. It is our lives being reproduced in the lives of people. People are our dreams.

Fourth, the world is our goal. "Make disciples of all nations"—this is a great phrase. It is used four different times in the book of Matthew to talk about all nations, but Matthew, which is rich in Jewish heritage, starts off with the picture of Abraham back in Matthew 1. If you go back to Genesis and you see the picture of Abraham, God is calling Abraham's life. He says in Genesis 12:3 to Abraham, "Through you all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed." Genesis 18:18, same thing, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed through your offspring." Genesis 22:18, "All the nations of the earth are going to be blessed through your offspring." Now we come to Jesus in the line of Abraham and all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed through the proclamation of this gospel, all nations without distinction. We do not pick and choose where we make disciples. We make disciples in all nations.

That is the Christ directed strategy. He is our vision. Making disciples is our mission. People are our dreams and the world is our goal.

We will be a church that depends on His presence.

We will be a church that trusts in His authority that obeys His strategy and fifth, we will be a church that depends on His presence. When you come to the end of the Great Commission and Jesus gives these words, "*Surely I am with you*" (Matt. 28:20). The emphasis in that verse is on that "I am with you." Almost like He is saying, "I, myself, am with you. I am with you always even to very end of the age." If you hold your place here and go back to the very first chapter in Matthew, I want you to see how Jesus was introduced.

The introduction of Jesus in the book of Matthew. We have got a picture of His name. It says in verse 22 just to get a little bit of the context, the birth of Christ, Matthew 1:22, "*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet.*" Now here it is, verse 23, "*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*"—which means—"God with us" (Matt. 1:23). That is the introduction of Christ; the conclusion of this picture of Christ in Matthew 28, God with you.

Now the picture we have got in between, don't miss it, is God in the flesh with His disciples this whole book through. Then He dies. He is gone so they think. Then He rises from the grave, and He is back. Now we have really got it made. Look what all we can do now that Christ is back. Then, He ascends. That would seem like a bad thing. However, the beauty of this is Jesus ascends to heaven days after this so that His presence is no longer limited to one physical body on the face of this earth. His presence is now dwelling in every single disciple of Christ on the face of this earth. "*I am with you always*" (Matt. 28:20)—"I give you my presence."

Now, here is the deal. We know throughout the Bible that God promises to be with us. We all know. It says it over and over and over again that God will be with you wherever you go. We know God's presence is always with us. Why did Jesus emphasize it right here in Matthew 28? Why would He bring that up right here? I want you to see how His presence is linked with the Great Commission. I believe what He is saying very clearly is that you will never realize the power and the greatness of my presence until you give yourselves to this mission. However, when you give yourselves to this mission you will see and experience and know my presence in ways you never could have imagined before. I want you to see how that plays out.

First, we will need, if we give ourselves to this mission, we will need the promise of His presence. Let me ask you a question. If we give ourselves individually and corporately to making disciples of all nations, will we need His presence more or less as a result of our obedience? Undoubtedly, we will need His presence more.

I am convinced we could sit back as a church and drift through this Christianity thing and even be successful in our church world and never even need the presence of Christ to do it. This haunts me. This haunts me! You do the right marketing and you have the right charisma and you come up with good strategies and you plan well and in our church culture today you can be extremely successful and do it all in your own strength.

I want to live my life and my ministry and I want us to be a church that needs the promise of His presence that without His presence, we fall flat on our faces and everything falls apart if He is not true to this promise right here. We will need the promise of His presence and it is at that point I am convinced, second, we will know the power of His presence. We will know the power of it because He will enable us by His power to accomplish His mission. He is faithful. He will give us everything we need to accomplish that mission.

It was seven years ago that Heather and I got married. It was just a few years after that that we began to have the desire to have children. We began planning toward that and soon found out that the plans weren't working out quite like we had them laid out. For whatever reason, God in His sovereignty was not providing for that plan in the way we had thought. In that process over the last few years, God has taught me a lot about what it means to have the heart of a father who longs to reproduce his life in the life of someone else and to not see that come to fruition.

But, by His grace that plan is now coming to fruition in a way that we never could have imagined. We get on a plane tomorrow to go pick up our son. I can't help but think that God in His timing would take us through that journey, particularly in light of the passage in this series we have been studying over the last six weeks where Heather and I have gone from the emotions of, "This is never going to happen to holy cow it is happening!" And to see that longing and that ache now be released into reality.

I think that in this process, God has given me a little bit of a glimpse of what it means to have a father's heart that longs to reproduce life in others. I have been given a little bit of a glimpse of what I believe is the ache in our Heavenly Father's heart when there are over a billion people who still don't even know about His salvation and His Father's heart that longs to see His life and His mercy and His grace reproduced through His body – the church. A Father who has said to His church, "I will give her everything she needs to reproduce my life and the glory and the beauty and the majesty of Christ to the nations." The church sits back with much spiritual activity doing all kinds of good things but missing out on the one thing.

So we come to this series and we see a picture of our Father's heart and ladies and gentlemen, I want us to be that church that takes the life He has entrusted to us and takes everything He has given to us and reproduces it to the nations. Through His strategy of making disciples, I want us to be a people and I believe God longs for us to be a people who take our one life, our church, the relationships God has entrusted to us and use them for His glory in this process called disciple-making. And ladies and gentlemen, I believe as we come to the end of this series that we need to repent. We need to repent for giving a tip of our hats to the Great Commission while giving nominal adherence to it in our lives and the church as a whole. I believe we need to renew our devotion to the Christ directed strategy He has laid out.

Our Confession...

I don't know what that looks like in your lives, but I want to invite you today into a time of repentance. You have got in your notes there our confession. What this is is the confession of God, and we have missed the boat and many if not most of us can name very few, if any people, that we have produced for the kingdom. We need to confess our need for His. Knowing that He is gracious and merciful and He stands ready to forgive us and that He stands ready to empower us to accomplish the mission He has entrusted to us. So, I want us to have a time of confession. Will you bow your heads with me?

What is it going to look like to you to make disciples of all nations? How is that going to transfer into your life, to your dreams, to your ambitions? What do you need to let go of in your life in order to make disciples of all nations? What do you need to surrender yourself to in order to give yourself to this mission? I am about to pray for us then I want to invite you just to continue in prayer. I want us to just spend some time individually between us and the Lord and reflect on this mission that He has given to us and what this looks like in each of our lives.

God, I praise you for your grace and your mercy and your love and we praise you for the heart that drove you to seek us that sought after reproducing your life and your love and your grace and your mercy and your majesty in our lives. God, we praise you for the opportunity to be in this room. We praise you for the forgiveness of our sins. We praise you for the promise of your Word. We praise you for the authority that you have over sin and over death and over disease and over suffering and how you have shown that in our lives. God, we say to you this morning that we don't want to live as disciples of Christ for our self-absorption. We want to live to reproduce that which you have entrusted to us in the lives of men and women around the world, starting in this community. God, I pray that you would raise up a faith family that is absolutely surrendered to your mission of making disciples of all nations and we will take you at your Word. We will trust in your authority. We will obey your strategy and we are going to give ourselves to it, oh God. And we pray that you would show us the promise and the power of your presence in ways that we never could have imagined before. God, we pray that this mission would be a reality for us. By your grace, and for your glory we give this time to you and we pray you would show us in our hearts what that means and what that looks like and that you would refine us and transform us and forgive us the way we need to be forgiven, and that you would change us and bring us in line with your strategy.

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