THE MISSION OF GOD IS TO BLESS OTHERS!
MATTHEW 28:18-20 MARCH 31, 2019 TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

> Spend the week reading through and studying Matthew 28:18-20. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.

> Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.

> Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: The Bible not only gives us clear direction of our mission as Christians, but it also helps us know how to do it.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT: The Bible gives a foundation for the task of missions and teaching for principles concerning the execution of the mission.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: As Jesus sent the first disciples, so we are sent to tell the world about Him (Matthew 28:16-20).
TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION
As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

1. Do you know any missionaries personally? What do you know about their work and cultural context?

2. What is your overall impression about missionary life? Have you ever considered that the Lord might be calling you to mission work?

Most of us know someone personally who has served or is serving on the mission field. We have probably heard stories of strange foods, bizarre customs, and challenges to ministry. You may have even heard stories of persecution and tragedy.

Regardless of the opinions we’ve formed about missions, the Bible is clear about our calling to make disciples of all nations. The real question isn’t whether or not we will participate in mission endeavors, but what will be our role? What is your role? As we think about that question, let’s make sure that we have some basic building blocks in place in terms of our calling and our equipment for missions.

UNDERSTANDING
Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:18-20.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- What is the most basic answer to the question of why we should go and share the gospel with others?

We cross borders and cultures with the good news about Jesus because Jesus Himself commanded us to do it. Matthew recorded some of Jesus’ final words: “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…” (Mat. 28:19-20).

- Where do we see glimpses of the Great Commission in the Old Testament?

In the Old Testament, we see that God’s intent all along was the redemption of people from every people group. In Genesis 12, God called Abraham to go to a new land. God was in the process of preparing a people through which His rescuer, Jesus, would come. God told Abraham, “And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3).

And then, in Isaiah God said this about Israel: “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Is. 49:6).

And finally, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, as He was about to begin His public ministry, he said: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29).
What is the point of missions? What purpose does it serve in the world?

Biblical missions are focused on evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. We may conduct other sorts of activities that assist in those primary endeavors such as medical clinics, sports camps, or construction projects. The reason that the spiritual aspect of missions is more important than meeting social needs is because the soul is eternal, and physical suffering is only temporary.

The point of missions is getting the gospel to those who don’t know it so that they can call upon the Lord for salvation. The point of missions is to help establish healthy churches in areas where no healthy church exists. All of this is for the good of human souls and the glory of God.

It is easy for us to slip into pragmatism and self-reliance in mission work, but the Bible teaches that the work of God is completed by the power of God (Zechariah 4:6; John 15:5).

Read Acts 1:8. From where did Jesus say that His disciples would receive power to be His witnesses? How do we receive this power?

Jesus told His disciples the specific means by which they would be able to accomplish the overwhelming task of witnessing to the ends of the earth. He said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).
There are two things that we should remember here. First, every person who is born again by repenting of sin and placing their faith in Jesus Christ receives the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:9). If you are in Christ, you have the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through you. Second, every person in whom the Holy Spirit lives has been given spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7). So, all Christ followers have special gifts in order to help build up the church and reach the nations in specific ways.

- We must rely on the power of God to work in us for the advancement of the kingdom, but what is our role in that process? What should we do?

First, we must give the Holy Spirit sway over our lives. If you are in Christ, then the Holy Spirit dwells in you. That doesn’t change. However, our obedience to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives is largely dependent on us. Look what Paul said in Ephesians: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). Paul said this in the context of sinful behavior. The meaning is clear: When we sin, we grieve the person of the Holy Spirit and inhibit His work in us.

Later, in the same letter, Paul wrote, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Paul commanded us to be filled with the Spirit. And again in Galatians 5:16, Paul wrote: So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:16).

- What are some practical things that we can do to give the Holy Spirit more influence in our lives?
It is clear that we have a role to play in the Spirit’s influence and power in our lives. In other words, we can do things to inhibit the Spirit’s power working in us and through us and we can do things to enhance the Spirit’s power working in us and through us. Here is what we should do: First, we must repent of sin and flee from sin so that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit through our disobedience to God. Secondly, we can practice spiritual disciplines in faith individually and in community. Some examples of these disciplines include reading the Scriptures, prayer, ongoing repentance, worshiping God, and serving one another.

As we live a life of avoiding sin and practicing the disciplines, the Holy Spirit’s influence grows in our lives. This gives us more spiritual power and makes our gifts more useful to Him and others.

> Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 9:20-22.

20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

It is imperative that we rely upon the Holy Spirit’s power and work in and through us as we seek to take the gospel message to all nations. At the same time, we have been given intelligence, gifts, and wisdom at work among people that are unlike us. Like Paul, we should look for ways to remove barriers between our audience and us in order to share the gospel effectively.

It may seem simple or obvious, but missionaries must learn how to communicate. We must learn to share the good news of Jesus in a way that is understandable to our audience.
What are some observations from the life of Jesus that can help as we seek to share the gospel with others?

First and very simply, Jesus was able to speak the language of those He interacted with. He taught in Hebrew and Aramaic (maybe Greek also). Likewise, in order to be able to share the gospel, we must be able to speak with those whom God sends us to. This may mean learning another language or it may mean learning to communicate better with those who share our language.

Second, Jesus chose to relate the message to them in terms with which the people were most familiar. Have you stopped to think about how often Jesus related the kingdom of God to agriculture and nature? He taught on the kingdom of God in a way that connected to what the people knew well.

Finally, Jesus communicated truth through narrative. When Jesus opened His mouth, more often than not a parable came out. This was because Jesus lived in an oral culture. Oral learners prefer to receive, process, remember, and pass along information in story form.

Why was it important for Jesus to communicate well with those He taught? Why is it important for us as well?

Jesus, the perfect missionary, was deeply committed to receptor-oriented communication. In other words, He adjusted His communication to be understandable to his audience. His metric was not the number of sermons he preached, but by the number of people who understood.
Receptor-oriented communication is characterized by humility, service, sacrifice, and love. We must take the responsibility in the communication process. And that means placing our preferences aside and learning to communicate in a way that truly speaks to our audience. When we pursue missions in this way, keeping biblical priorities our priority and relying on the power of the Spirit, we are a great blessing to those to whom the Lord sends us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

1. What ought to be the priority in missions? Why?

2. What does it mean to rely upon the Holy Spirit in mission work? What are some practical steps that we can take to give the Spirit room to work in us and through us?

3. What does “receptor-oriented” communication mean? How might this posture be useful as we take the gospel across cultural borders?

PRAY

Pray for missionaries by name that you personally know. Pray that they would rely upon the Triune God to powerfully work in them and through them. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give them power to communicate across cultural barriers. Pray also that they would use their wisdom and gifts to communicate in ways that remove unnecessary barriers to the gospel.
FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

> Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:

◦ Who is God calling you to share the gospel with this week?

◦ How will you seek to communicate the gospel in a way that might best be received by the hearer?

> A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

> The challenge to memorize Matthew 28:18-20.
MATTHEW 28:18-20

28:18-20. The Great Commission passage is reminiscent of Acts 1:6-11. In Matthew, Jesus issued a similar commission in different words with a different emphasis. However, the setting in the Acts passage was in Jerusalem. It coincided with Jesus’ ascension into heaven at the end of the forty days. Jesus probably met with the disciples in Galilee and then instructed them to return to Jerusalem. All of this was done in preparation for their receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5) and their continuation of his Spirit-empowered ministry in Acts 2 (in Jerusalem).

Matthew did not record Jesus’ ascension into heaven, as it likely would have distracted from his emphasis in 28:18-20. He wanted the Great Commission to linger in people’s minds as they finished his Gospel. Jesus had a big job in mind for his followers. All is a key word in 28:18-20. It emphasizes Jesus’ divine identity: all authority, all nations, all things.

Before issuing his commission, Jesus laid the foundation for the success of their future ministry: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. This was critically important. Without the Messiah’s authority, the mission of the disciples and our mission today would be doomed to failure. The reader of Matthew’s Gospel should know well by now the nature and power of the Messiah’s authority.

The heart of the Great Commission is 28:19-20, the last words of Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew knew the principle that “last words are lasting words.” He chose carefully, under the Spirit’s direction, the words he wanted to linger in his readers’ minds. Therefore identified Jesus’ authority (28:18) as the reason the disciples must carry out his orders.

The central command is make disciples. At the heart of our mission is the reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in us: faith, obedience, growth,
authority, compassion, love, and a bold, truthful message as his witnesses. They were learners commanded to produce more learners.

Jesus’ disciples were to reproduce other disciples of all the nations (the word translated x is the plural of ethnos, meaning “peoples, ethnic groups,” as in 24:14). He was hinting that their fulfillment of their commission would ultimately lead to his second coming. It is significant that Matthew ended his Gospel with one more reference to the Gentile mission, challenging the Jewish Christians to lose their prejudices and unify the church. This also challenges us to break down any artificial boundaries erected by our culture. We must minister impartially. Jesus was an equal-opportunity Savior.

We see three participles here that are subordinate to the central command to make disciples. Each of these clarifies the way in which Jesus’ disciples are to make disciples.

First, in the emphatic first position, even before make disciples, is the aorist participle go. In the context, this Greek participle is best rendered, “when you have gone.” “Going” is one of the three means by which to fulfill the central command to make disciples. Going means more than traveling across geographical borders, although this is part of Jesus’ meaning. The point is that we believers are active; we are not inert. Going means crossing boundaries to make disciples—going across the street, going to dinner with an unbelieving friend, going into the inner city, going beyond one’s comfort zone to make the gospel accessible to the lost. Living life is “going” with a purpose, every day.

Going also implies our support of people who are literally going to other cultures. We must support global outreach financially and support the people going emotionally and personally as well as through prayer.
We are a part of their team. In all these ways we “go,” in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

We also “go” when we support efforts to equip indigenous ministers in different cultures. We help equip them to lead people of their own culture and language. This enables them to fulfill the Great Commission at home and in cultures where they will find a better reception than we would.

Second, we come to the participle baptizing (present participle of baptizo, meaning “continually immersing them”). Because baptism was so closely associated with the decision of faith (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 10:47-48), it may be best to see baptizing as Jesus’ way of summarizing the evangelistic half of the disciples’ ministry. The third participle, teaching (Matt. 28:20), represents the other half of the disciples’ ministry—the edification of those who are already believers. Baptism is an initiating rite that “immerses” the believer into a whole new world.

Baptism is not a step to salvation. Rather, it is an initial step of obedience that results from a person’s decision to trust the Messiah. Baptism represents the identification of people with this new way of life and faith. Baptism should be experienced as soon as possible after a person trusts Christ.

Jesus specified that we are to baptize disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The use of the singular name implies clearly that this listing of three persons should be thought of as one name. Here is a clear affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity—one God, three distinct persons. The believer who chooses to submit to baptism into this name identifies with God’s name as well as the spiritual family of all others who are identified with this same name.

This is a good summary of the evangelistic task of the church. It is bringing those who identify with the
world into a new identification. It is seeing themselves anew as citizens of God’s kingdom, as children of God, as brothers and sisters of the Messiah, and as brothers and sisters with the rest of the family of believers. Our mission is to bring people to a point where they see themselves differently—because they have become different through the transforming work of God’s grace.

Third, the participle teaching (present participle of didasko, meaning “keep on teaching them”) completes the series of three means by which we fulfill the Great Commission. This represents the other half of our mission—the edification or building up of those who are believers.

Jesus instructed us not only to teach content, but to train people into obedient action: teaching them to keep everything I have commanded you. The teachings of Jesus recorded in Matthew are the essence of the practical teaching we are to pass on to new disciples. There is much more teaching from Scripture beyond Matthew that the church needs. But his teaching in Matthew serves as a strong foundation.

By fulfilling the teaching portion of the Great Commission, we take believers at every stage of spiritual maturity to the next stage of growth. This can range from the infancy of a brand-new believer to various levels of spiritual adulthood. Every believer should progress toward the perfect character of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16), but none will arrive there short of eternity. So we must see ourselves as learners in a family of teachers, who themselves are also learners. The believer who is most mature will be most ready to listen and learn, even from the newest member of the family (cf. Matt. 18:4).

Matthew’s last words are a concluding promise from the Messiah-King. Surely adds a note of assurance, similar to Jesus’ “I tell you the truth.” A paraphrase of the phrase I am with you always would read, “I myself
am continually with you always until the end of the age.” Among other things, Jesus claimed omnipresence, again laying claim to deity (note “Immanuel, God with us” in 1:23). He will be with us every step of the way. I am with you always reminds us of the great promises to saints of old like Moses (Exod. 3:12) and Joshua (Josh. 1:5).

This promise complements Jesus’ claim to universal authority in Matthew 28:18, and it undergirds the believer’s confidence in fulfilling the Great Commission. If we take out the three subordinate participial clauses from 28:18-20, boiling the commission down to its grammatical essence, we end up with this: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, make disciples of all the nations; and surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

1 CORINTHIANS 9:20-22

9:20-21. To illustrate just how far he was willing to follow this policy, Paul described two extremes of his multicultural ministry. First, he ministered to those under the law and to those not having the law—Jews and Gentiles. In the ancient world, the differences between these two groups could be enormous. Clothing, holidays, eating habits, religious beliefs, family practices, etc. were often very different between Jews and Gentiles. This diversity required great flexibility from Paul because he wanted to win those under the law and to win those not having the law.

Paul’s description of these groups was not precisely symmetrical. He did not speak of those who had the law versus those who did not have it. Rather, he spoke of those who were under the law and those not having the law.

Under the law, on the one hand, was Paul’s technical terminology for people under the curse of the law because they sought justification before God through
obedience to the law of Moses (Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:18). Paul understood the ways of Jews who sought to find favor with God through obedience to the law. They did not merely have the law, but they actually became its victims because reliance on obedience to the law always leads to frustration and failure.

Even so, many Jews in Paul’s day were so committed to this lifestyle that they filled their lives with all kinds of biblical and extrabiblical observances of law. Although Paul knew these practices had nearly condemned him to God’s judgment early in his life (Rom. 7:8-11), he cared so much about the Jewish community that he observed their customs and laws when he was with them so the gospel might take root in them.

On the other hand, not having the law meant that the Gentiles were “excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). They did not have the extensive rules of Scripture, but followed pagan rituals and lifestyles free of Jewish restrictions. Although Paul did not approve of all pagan lifestyles, he observed their customs and laws when he was among them so the gospel might spread among the Gentiles.

Paul was very flexible as he went from one community to another, but he knew where to draw the line. When he was with religious Jews, he always remembered that he did not seek justification through the law and was not subject to its curse (though I myself am not under the law).

Likewise, when with Gentiles who did not observe the laws of Scripture, Paul conformed his outward behavior to theirs in many ways, but he did not stray into paganism. Rather, he always remembered that he was bound to keep the law in Christ (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law).
Christ’s law is not opposed to the law of Moses. Jesus himself said, “Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt. 5:17). Christ’s law is the moral teachings of all the Scriptures as they were taught by Christ and his apostles. Paul often affirmed that God’s law was designed as a guide for Christians (Rom. 2:26-29; 8:7; 1 Tim. 1:8). Yet, here he made it clear that God’s law for Christians is interpreted in the light of Christ’s coming, and thus has become Christ’s law. While he sought to help others by becoming like them, Paul refused to fall into sin for the sake of others.

9:22. Paul added another class of people to whom he condescended besides Jews and Gentiles, one that drew attention to his concern for the Corinthian church—the weak. The strong and knowledgeable people in the Corinthian church refused to make allowances for the weak among them. The strong insisted on eating meat sacrificed to idols because they correctly understood their freedom to do so, but thereby they sinned against weaker brothers and sisters.

In contrast to them, Paul became weak by willingly conforming his behavior to that of the weak. By limiting his freedom in this way, Paul made certain that he did not cause weaker brothers and sisters to fall into sin.

In summary, Paul claimed that he had become all things to all men. Foregoing his rights to pursue his own preferences, he submitted to everyone so that by all possible means he might bring some to salvation. Paul’s chief concern was to build the kingdom of Christ through the conversion of the lost. He refused to allow his own freedoms to prevent others from following the ways of Christ. In this regard he exemplified the principle with which he had begun this section: knowledge alone “puffs up” and makes a person not care about the well-being of others, but “love builds up” (8:1). Love for others leads a person to perform those actions that bring as many people as possible into the kingdom of Christ.