

The Process

'Last words are lasting words.' The final words people utter before passing into eternity are usually full of significance for their audience. Gone are the superficial niceties, for when the time is short, words of consequence are conveyed.

Jesus' last words to His disciples before ascending to His Father's throne are recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. They convey His heart's desire and final instruction to those into whom He poured His life. In these instructions are found both the priority and the program for His disciples' to follow.

Memorize →

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,
"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
19 "Go therefore
and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo,
I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

- ✓ Circle what was given to Jesus.
- ✓ Underline to where this 'authority' extends.
- ✓ Circle each of the four verbs He uses.
- ✓ Underline of what we are to 'make disciples'.
- ✓ Underline into what we are to 'baptize' these disciples.
- ✓ Underline what we are to teach them.
- ✓ Underline where He will be.
- ✓ Circle till when will He be with us.

Matthew 28:18-20, often called 'The Great Commission', is Jesus' 'Job Description' for His disciples. He is not *suggesting* that we undertake this task ... He is *expecting* us to fulfill it! But through the ages, His disciples have not heeded His Commission. Even today, there are multitudes who have yet to hear the life saving message of the Gospel. If Christ were to return today, I would not expect much commendation for our delinquency! But He tarries, giving us time yet to complete the task! And it behooves us to devote ourselves fully to completing this task that we can do only this side of heaven. So let us look afresh at this familiar passage and let it reopen our eyes to the task at hand!

'All Authority'

1. What is the significance of verse 18? _____

📖 John 5:21-27
Ephesians 1:20-21

▶ Jesus has been given authority both to give life and to condemn sinners to eternal punishment. How does this relate to His command for us to 'make disciples of all nations'?

Making Disciples

Jesus' command can be better understood when broken down into its main verb and its participles. These present participles are best understood by prefacing them with the word 'by' and attaching an 'ing'. Jesus is commanding us to:

'Make Disciples' ... by
'going'
'baptizing' and
'teaching'

The Commission is prefaced with Jesus' incredible statement that 'All authority ... in heaven and on earth' has been given to Him. In doing so, He is not only establishing His right to command us but also His absolute authority over 'all the nations'. He has delegated to us the right to invite all people into His Kingdom ... no matter their race, their country, their age, gender or station in life.

'Make Disciples of All Nations'

2. What is meant by the phrase 'make disciples of all the nations'? _____

'Make disciples' is the main verb of this passage. It is the one verb written as a command and is therefore the heart of what Jesus expects us to do. Everything we do as His disciples must ultimately relate to this one purpose for it will be the basis of our accountability when we stand before Him.

Note that the task involves 'all nations'. The word 'nations' is the greek word 'ethnos' which is where we derive the word 'ethnic'. 'All nations' encompasses people from every ethnic group in the world! And then will be fulfilled John's vision when he saw 'a great multitude which no one could count, from **every nation** and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands;' Revelation 7:9. Praise God!

'Go, therefore'

3. What is the significance of the command 'Go, therefore'? _____

Jesus did not only command us to 'make disciples of all nations' ... He provided the steps by which we are to complete the task. These steps are best taken in the order they are presented. The first step is expressed by the participle 'Go', or more properly translated, ... make disciples 'by going'. Making disciples of all nations requires going to the nations. **That must be the highest priority for the Church because it was the highest priority of our Lord!**

Unfortunately, for many Christians, this is not a priority but an option. Being a missionary is viewed as a special calling for a few Christians when it is actually a calling for every Christian. Instead of finding reasons not to be a missionary, we should be asking ourselves, 'Why not?!' Can you imagine if every Christian made themselves available to serve overseas as missionaries, teachers, medical personnel, agricultural advisors, health workers, builders, mechanics, etc. and not just for a few weeks? We would fulfill the Great Commission in every generation! That we don't is our failure, not God's.

'in heaven and on Earth'
Jesus stated His absolute authority in two ways for emphasis. First, by the adjective 'All' elevating His authority above all others, and then specifying 'in heaven and on Earth', establishing its scope. In other words, there is no authority that supersedes, nor which we can use to avoid, His. His authority comes from the highest command which is God's Throne itself!

 Acts 7:1, 4-5

► The early church was growing in Jerusalem around the teaching of the Apostles. From Acts 7:1-5, how did they become refocused on the task Jesus gave them?

'baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'

4. What is the significance of 'baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit?' _____

For many, this step involves the act of water baptism and/or church affiliation. I am convinced that in the context of discipleship, there is more to it than this. The word 'baptize' is the transliteration of a word that means 'to dip'. It is a simple word possessing a profound meaning. It was used to describe the act of dyeing cloth whereby a plain white fabric was baptized into a vat of dye and emerged completely changed, taking on the color of the dye. The word baptism came to symbolize that complete change.

In the context of discipleship, baptizing someone 'in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' is to bring them into a genuine life transforming relationship with the One True God, resulting in being spiritually reborn as God's child and a corresponding change in their lives. This change is not just a conformation to the accepted mores of a church community, but a transformation of their heart from being self centered to Christ centered. The proof of genuine change is a life characterized by a love for God and a desire to please and glorify Him.

'teaching them to observe all that I commanded you'

5. What is the significance of the phrase 'teaching them to observe all that I commanded you?' _____

The third step can only be taken after completing the second. It does no good to teach people God's commands if they have not experienced a spiritual rebirth and transformation. Doing so may produce a 'disciple' who may be doing the right things but for the wrong reasons. A truly transformed disciple will observe Christ's commands because he wants to, not because he has to!

Please note that Jesus instructs us to teach them to observe *all* of His commands, which includes this one as well! Therefore, making disciples must include expecting them to become involved in this process, until people everywhere have been given the opportunity to receive God's gift of forgiveness through Christ!

Baptizing them in the Name ...'
In the Bible, the 'name' of a person was more than an identifying tag. Names had meaning and represented everything the person was. Jesus' command was more than a ceremonial formula, but an injunction to bring people into a spiritual regenerated relationship with the Living God!

Transformation

It is possible to be baptized in water and not be transformed. It is impossible to be baptized into God and not emerge a changed person ... from the inside out!

Jesus' Commandments

Jesus commanded that we should 'follow' Him, 'love God' supremely, 'love one another' as He loved us, 'love our neighbors', 'take the Gospel' to the world and 'make disciples of all nations'. Can you imagine what would happen if we, and those we teach, fulfilled His commands?

'Spiritual Multiplication'

If Jesus had stopped His instructions before this final injunction, there would probably not be any Christians around today. The Church grows because Believers in every generation obey God and share the Gospel with their generation. The multiplication of disciples making disciples results in an exponential growth which is the only way we will ever reach the entire world.

'I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'

6. In light of the context, what is the significance of Jesus' promise to be with us to the end? _____



Hebrews 13:5-6
1 Chronicles 28:20

Jesus closes His great commission with a grand promise. But His Promise must be interpreted in the context of His Command. As we go to make disciples of all nations, we can be assured of this, that Christ will be with us all the way and all the time.

But whether we are venturing across the street or across the ocean, the everlasting presence of our Lord gives us the assurance that because the work is His, not ours, He will do it through us! And let it be clear that from the beginning Christ anticipated this task to continue till the 'end of the age'. There is much to be done and many to reach, therefore let us recommit ourselves afresh to the task, and labor toward its completion, knowing that our Lord and Savior is with us every step of the way!

The Process

List key Truths and Principles you learned from this study:

- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

In light of what you have learned, list what you will do.

- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

*"The things which you have heard from me
in the presence of many witnesses,
entrust these to faithful men
who will be able to teach others also."*

2 Timothy 2:2

Memorize