

“We Make Disciples, Not Just Converts” // Matthew 28:18–20 // Be the Movement #3

[Bumper Video]

Intro

Well, my family heritage is from the country. I was born in WV and lived for a while in Yadkinville, NC, and when I hear “Country Roads, take me home,” I still get a little teary. When I lived out there I heard about a 911 call that came in. The operator answered, and the voice on the other end wailed, “Bubba is dead. Oh, Bubba is dead. We were out hunting, he clutched his heart, keeled over, and now he’s not moving. Oh, he’s dead, he’s dead.” The 911 operator says, “OK, OK. I need you to remain calm. First, we need to confirm that he’s dead.” The line goes silent for a moment and the 911 operator hears a little scuffling and then a loud shotgun blast and then the guy gets back on the phone and says, “OK, now what?”

OK, I’m pretty confident that’s not really a true story, though Joby Martin says that it is. But the point is that **clarity, especially when it regards an important assignment, is crucial**. And that’s what this series is about--clarity about who we are as a church, where we are going and what we are called to.

We get these from the life of Jesus and the example of the Apostles. We’re on #3 of 4.

- The first week we explained that **We prioritize the gospel above all**.
- The second week that **We do whatever it takes to reach all people**. Here, reaching the ONE will always take priority over the comforts of the 99.
- Today, we’re going to explore our 3rd value: **We make disciples, not just converts**.

There are two very clear action steps today: one is a tangible step I’m going to give you in becoming a DMD--like that story we just heard--and the other is to get baptized if you never have.

Matthew 28 if you have your Bibles. Matthew 28 is the last chapter in the first book of the New Testament.

Verse 19 records for us Jesus’s last words to his disciples before he ascended: **Matthew 28:19 “Go into all the world and MAKE DISCIPLES, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Now, in English, there are several verbs in that sentence: Go, make disciples, baptize, teach. But in Greek, there’s only one: “make disciples.” All the other words that are translated as verbs are actually participles, which means they modify the verb. The verb is the central thing, the other things are extensions or applications of it.
- ‘Make disciples’ is the central verb of the Great Commission. Everything else--going, teaching, baptizing--is an extension of that.
- For everything else the church does, “make disciples” is the center, the core.

I think I first learned this from a book I read in college--**it was written in 1962 and is a classic**--**which, you know the definition of a classic book is a book lots of people have heard about but nobody has read. **This is one I'd encourage** you to read.

It's called *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman. In it, Coleman says:

"The Great Commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel, nor to baptize a lot of converts, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to **'make disciples'**—to build men like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only followed Jesus themselves, but (and this is key) **led others to follow him, too.**

...*The criteria upon which any church should measure its success is not how many new names are added to the roll nor how much the budget is increased, but rather how many Christians are actively winning souls and training them to win the multitudes.*

Most churches judge their success by how many **attend** or how many decisions or baptisms they count. But **heaven doesn't celebrate** any of those numbers. It only celebrates disciples.

So, let's ask two questions **today**. First, what is a disciple, and second, what is my role in the disciple-making process?

1. What is a disciple?

If you've been in church, you probably recognize the word, but otherwise it's not super-common in our culture. It's one of those words Christians use but very few other people do. **Here's how I know that:** every time I try to type "discipling" into a document my computer autocorrects it to "discipline." So clearly Steve Jobs didn't get it.

The word we translate as "disciple" comes from the Hebrew word "talmid," which was a quite common word in the first century. A talmid was kind of like a "student" but much more. Aspiring Jewish religious and community leaders would find a rabbi, a teacher, someone they wanted to be like and whose cause they believed in, and you would go and sit at their feet.¹

- **Sitting at their feet was like your application to learn from them.** They would examine you--ply you with questions, watch your life, and **if they thought you could make a worthy talmid--disciple--someone who would carry on their cause--they would allow you to follow them.** And you would follow them for the next several years, imitating their every move.
- Write this down: **"A disciple did not merely want to know what his master knew, but do what his master did."** Ray Vander Laan Supposedly **the highest compliment** you could give a talmid/disciple was to say, ***"The dust of your rabbi is all over you."*** You were following his path so closely that whatever your Rabbi stepped in splashed up on you!
- So, again: **A disciple did not merely want to know what his master knew, but do what his master did.**

A disciple of Jesus is not someone who simply wants to know what Jesus taught, he or she also wants to do what Jesus did, to live as Jesus lived.

¹ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*

In the book of Acts, the verb “make disciples” is used to describes both the initial act of helping someone come to know Jesus²--which happens in a moment--as well as the act of helping them in the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus--which takes a lifetime.

In a moment, I’m going to break down the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus into 5 components.

But first, let’s ask our 2nd question:

2. What is my role in the disciple-making process?

This commission to make disciples--called the Great Commission--was given to every Christian. It wasn’t a special assignment for a few, but the central calling for every follower of Jesus.

In **Titus 2** Paul commands the older women to train younger women. In **2 Timothy 2** Paul tells Timothy to train faithful men in his congregation “so they can train others also.” **In Eph 6**, Paul tells fathers to train their children in the ways of God. In **Matthew 28** he commands missionaries to make disciples of all the nations. In **Heb 3** the writer commands all Christians to exhort each other and build each other up every day. **Peter and Paul in their letters** command each Christians to use their gifts to build up and serve others.³ **The Great Commission applies to everyone.**

**There is no such thing as a non-reproducing Christian. Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men.” Which means if you’re really following Jesus, he’s making you into that.

***John 15:8**, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Look at that! How do you prove you are a disciple? By bearing fruit. In this area as well as others in the Christian life. And if you are not bearing fruit, you have reason to question whether you are a disciple at all. Living organisms reproduce.

Robert Coleman again: “A barren Christian is a contradiction. A tree is known by its fruit.... Fruitlessness was the thing lacking in the lives of the Sadducees and Pharisees (a group of people with the outward form of religion and no internal reality) which made them so wretched in his sight.” He said, “You are so fervent in your religion but you don’t reproduce faith in and love for God in others.”

A movement of DMD was God’s plan for teaching the world. **You get that right?** His plan for reaching the world is not big ministries with uber-talented preachers, but ordinary Christians filled with the **Spirit**, making **disciples** everywhere they went. You. You are God’s method.

Robert Coleman: “When will the church learn this lesson? Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training

² Acts 14:21; Acts 11:26

³ In Acts we see an entire church mobilized in the process of changing others (Acts 18:24)

classes for Christian workers do this job... *Individual women and men are God's method. God's plan for discipleship is not something, but someone.*⁴ **You. You** are God's method.

- You say, "Me? What could I do? I don't know that much and I'm not super talented." It doesn't matter. Jesus said it wasn't about your natural ability, but your availability to be used by the Holy Spirit.
- Matthew 11: *"Of all those born to women, there has not risen any greater than John the Baptist. But I assure that he who is least in my kingdom..."* (If you asked Jesus who the greatest preacher was/ Least in my kingdom means/ His Spirit in the mouth of the weakest vessel is more powerful than the most eloquent speaker without him. Not ability, but availability)
- It just starts with you saying simply, "Yes, Lord!"

**This is the primary need of the hour. Kevin Ezell, who is the President of the NAMB, the largest church planting org in the world, through whom we plant almost all our churches, says that their greatest need is not money, it is qualified planters. He said, "Of course we always need more money. But we have more money right now than we do qualified planters and church leaders."

And the reason we are short of planters and church leaders is that we have neglected discipleship. We've acted like our main scorecard is getting people in the door of getting them baptized. And that's important. But Jesus has called us to disciple them, to turn them into spiritual leaders.

Listen, if the church got good at discipleship, then church growth and church planting would take care of themselves.

- Summit, I think I've told you before why this is so personal to me (My dad had just gotten a new job in a new city and they stumbled into a new, exciting church. For most of my life, they had just been cultural Christians and in this church God really got a hold of their lives. But after they were saved and baptized, the pastor took a special interest in my dad and made him part of his life. He turned my dad into a spiritual giant who became the godliest man I knew, who in turn poured into me and now I'm pouring into you. We're now a church of 12K plus in the Triangle because a man poured into my dad--because he wasn't satisfied to let my mom and dad merely come in, make a decision and get turned in as a number--but knew that he needed to train him up as a leader so that he could train others.
- Recently, that pastor went to be with Jesus and my dad and I drove down to GA to his funeral. My dad said, "I don't remember many of the sermons he preached. But I remember hearing him pray. I remember watching him share Christ with the lady at the grocery store. I remember hearing him counsel someone in pain. Observing his life impacted me far more than hearing him speak."

This is your role! You may not all be able to teach like me, but you can invite someone into your life to observe your walk with Jesus, to show them how to follow Jesus like you follow him.

Bottom line: Summit, if we are going to be a movement we can't just reach new people. We've got to turn them into disciples; and not just disciples, but DMD's.

Summit: Reaching new people has always come naturally to us. But this, not as natural. And that's partially my fault. We've focused a lot on reaching--growing wide--but not as much on growing deep. I often say we're like the **middle school boy who grew 5 inches** one summer, which was awesome, but none of his clothes fit and he's all gangly. He needs to put some meat on those scrawny little bones. That's where we are now.

⁴ All Coleman's words, but pieced together from various places in *Master Plan of Evangelism*.

It's one of the reasons that--while I hate lockdown--I am grateful it is giving us some new opportunities to raise up disciple-making leaders in home gatherings and smaller, intentional relationships.

Listen: We're so thankful for our current leaders, and especially our new ones, who have jumped and tried to figure out in a new context without a lot of answers. BTW, some of you have been feeling a call to lead in some capacity now for some time, and have been putting it off. Don't. Jump in, now's the time."

Today, we're introducing a tool through our Small Groups that will help all of you not only be a disciple but make a disciple also. It's a study called *Groundworks* and we've been working on it for a long time. It uses the Bible to walk through the 5 core identities of a disciple--these are the essential things Jesus was talking about when he said, "teach them to obey all things that I have commanded."

- **WORSHIPER: A disciple seeks to know, love, and obey God above all else.**

- One of my favorite devotional writers, Chris Tiegreen, said: "**Worship is not part of the Christian life; IT IS the Christian life.**" Everything starts with this.
- The Great Commandment is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind. A true disciple is first and foremost a worshipper.
- At TSC, we see two important disciplines that go along with that: a commitment to regular, corporate worship with others (what we do on the weekend) and personal worship (a daily quiet time). This study helps you with those.

- (2nd identity. A disciple is a:) **FAMILY MEMBER: A disciple is actively committed to our aspiring multiethnic family.**

- A disciple is not just a believer, he's a believer. The church, we say, is not just an event you should attend, but a community, a family, you should belong to. A family whose connections should be closer than even our biological families.
- ~~**Right before we were cruelly cut off from meeting together, we were in a series called *Forever Family*. Remember this verse from that series? **Matthew 12:46** While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."~~ That's how Jesus feels about his followers. And, if so, you can see why we'd say a true disciple is a *family* member.
- ~~Our unity as a family is not something that comes from a shared skin color, ethnic heritage, common age or tax bracket. It's a family connection found in the blood of Jesus Christ.~~
- A true disciple is a family member--and you can't be a family member if you only moonlight on the weekend or dial into a few podcasts. A disciple not only believes, he belongs.

- (3rd identity. A disciple is a:) **SERVANT: A disciple gladly gives of themselves for the good of others.**

- A disciple is one who has taken on Jesus' posture of service to the world, a posture exemplified in his washing the disciples' feet. Jesus on that occasion told them that if he, who had all power, used that power to serve, they should use any power, position or privilege they have also.
- ~~We apply that in primarily two ways: First, how we use your gifts and talents. In your career. Do you primarily look at your career as a way to make lots of money for yourself, or a way to serve and bless others? (That's not saying you *can't* make money from it, of course; just that your primary attitude toward your career is that you are using your career to glorify Jesus and bless others. Paul~~

said, "Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus—who, though he had all rights and all power, took upon himself the form of a servant, considering the needs of others more important than his own."

- ~~The second way we apply "servant" is in how you serve at the church.~~ Do you have tangible ways that you serve others in this church family? Are you a committed volunteer here—or just a consumer?
- For a true disciple, their whole life is characterized by service.
- (4) **STEWARDSHIP: A disciple manages God's gifts for God's purposes.**
 - A disciple realizes that anything he or she has, ultimately, is given by God not for our own purposes, but for God's. Your money is not your own. Your time and talents and treasures are not your own. He gave them to you for a reason, and that reason was to serve HIS kingdom. ~~And if you don't use these talents for that, you are stealing. Say you were the CEO of Feed the Children, and someone gave you \$1 million gift to 'feed the children.'~~ But instead you kept it in your bank account and sat on it. ~~Someone could rightfully say to you, "You are stealing." And if you say, "How so? I didn't take anything from anyone." They could say, "It's stealing because that gift was given for the children." God didn't give you the resources he gave you primarily for you, but for the purposes of his kingdom.~~
 - If you are a disciple, you will have come to a point where you've said, "God, all these things I have are yours. How do you want them to be used for your purposes?"
 - And just like Jesus' life was characterized by generosity and pouring his life out for others, so will yours.
- (Last one:) **WITNESS: A disciple proclaims Christ in word and deed.**
 - Each disciple recognizes that it is his or her responsibility to make disciples for Jesus. Matthew 4:19, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men." That means when you accepted the call to follow Jesus, you accepted the call to bring people to Jesus. There is no such thing as someone who follows Jesus and is not actively attempting to bring others to him.
 - We've tried to make this really practical by asking all of you to have a "1"—**Who's Your One?**-- at least one person you are praying for, seeking to build a relationship with and trying to point to Jesus.
 - **Do you know who yours is?** If not, why not ask God to reveal to you who he wants that to be? Go to summitchurch.com/one today and get some resources for how to start that relationship or move it to the next level.

That's the essence of what it means to be a disciple. And to make a disciple means you train someone, basically, in those 5 things. The tool I mentioned earlier, Groundworks, is designed to help you go deep in these identities with 2–3 other people, preferably within your SG. We want all our members to go through it this Fall. And if you aren't in a Small Group, you can still get it and do it, but we encourage you to get into a group. You can talk with your Campus Pastor, or go online to (summitchurch.com/groundworks).

The key thing is no one should do this alone. That's not how it is designed. Pick someone from your work, neighborhood, school, or even a family member. You can download it for free RIGHT now and start this week. Again, summitchurch.com/groundworks. You'll also find some helpful videos of people who have done it and how it's been helpful.

(Conclusion)

So, again, our 3rd value is that we are committed to making disciples, not just converts, because this is the essence of the Great Commission.

So, I have three practical questions for you today:

1. **Are you a disciple? An actual disciple?** Let me tell you what I'm worried about as your pastor--I'm not worried that most of you will become raging atheists. I am worried that many of you will never really become an actual disciple of Jesus. If I ask you, 'Are you a Christian?'" you might say yes, meaning, "I'm not an atheist, Jew or Muslim." But if I ask you, "Are you a disciple?" you may hesitate. Because you know 'disciple' means more. A disciple is someone not merely seeking to believe in Jesus and know what Jesus knows, but someone committed to living like Jesus lived.

Did you know, the first Christians did not call themselves Christians. They called themselves disciples. Christians was a name attached to them later! **Acts 11:26 ...And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*** "Were called" – That's passive! The first Christians didn't **call themselves** Christians--that was, at first, a derogatory name that meant "little Christs." **What did they call themselves?** You see the answer **right there in Acts 11:26: disciples.** They called themselves 'disciples.' In fact, the word "**Christian**" is only used 3x in the NT, but "disciple" is used 281x.

You say, "Well, so what?" Here's what. In changing the word that we use to describe ourselves, I'd suggest that we lost the clarity that the word "disciple" conveyed about what a follower of Jesus actually is! Our use of "Christian" today obscures the fact that a lot of people who call themselves Christians are not actually disciples.

A lot of people might say, "I am a Christian because I believe in God and I'm not a Buddhist or Muslim." But have you surrendered your life to be like Jesus, to live like Jesus? There's no such thing, biblically, as a "Christian" who is not a devoted disciple.

So, you can understand why my question is not, "Are you a Christian?" but "Are you a disciple?" Be honest. Right now, would you say "Yeah, I am a Christian, but not really a full disciple yet"? Jesus talks about a large group of people who on the last day say to him, "Lord, Lord... didn't we do lots of stuff in church and ministry and know lots of verses?" And he'll say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." I never knew you. You knew who I was and hung out at my house on the weekends, but I never knew you. **He's talking there to "Christians" who aren't disciples. Are you a disciple? If not, you don't belong to Jesus. But the good news is that you can become one today through a simple act of surrender.**

Jesus doesn't say, "Prove yourself to me, and I'll let you be my disciple." He says simply, "Receive me. Turn your life over to me and I'll make you my disciple."

Right now, pray with me:

2. **Have you been baptized?** It's the first part of following Jesus. You can see it right there in the GC! / People say: Why important? / Already been baptized / COVID:--chlorinated Baptism service; take out your phones and text BAPTISM to 33933. When you do that you'll get an auto-response with a form that will put you right in touch with our campus teams to help you take your next steps in getting baptized. Even if you're not in the Raleigh-Durham area, we even have next steps for you--as there is a team ready to connect you with a local church in your area.

3. **Are you a disciple-maker?** Are you intentionally bringing someone else along as a disciple? Interesting, in the NT the verb “make disciples” applies to both helping someone with the initial act of conversion as well as helping them grow the rest of their life. You are supposed to be involved in all of that.

It doesn't matter if you're still growing yourself or even if you're a brand-new Christian. Every disciple of Jesus can be a disciple-maker. Every Christian is born to reproduce. And maybe you're just realizing this and you're ready now to take a first step. Don't feel beat up about it--just start today! We've made it really easy for you to start by giving you this Groundworks study to take someone else through.

summitchurch.com/groundworks. This can be the beginning of a whole new disciple-making lifestyle, a life that impacts others for eternity! So do this today... PRAY