

Go and Make Disciples – Teacher’s Guide

Part Five: The Disciple-Making Church

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 28:18–20 NIV).

1) How does the Great Commission relate to the church?

- A) It speaks to the church’s **identity**, for the local church is a group of **disciples** who are practicing **discipleship** together (Acts 2:42). They seek to commit, follow, imitate, coach, and persuade in a corporate setting and with a united purpose.
- B) It speaks to the church’s **mission**, for making **disciples** who in turn **make** disciples is the principal mission of the church (Matt 28:18–20). Every program, sermon, special, presentation, function and activity should be evaluated by this criteria: is this helping to accomplish the mission of making disciples?
- C) It speaks to the church’s **life**, for the local church is the primary **community** within which discipleship should take place (Heb 10:24–25). Francis Chan comments, “While *every individual* needs to obey Jesus’s call to follow, we cannot follow Jesus as **individuals**. The New Testament is full of commands to do this or that for ‘one another.’ Love one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, etc. So how can we teach people to ‘observe all that I have commanded’ if they have no one to love, pray for, or encourage? It’s impossible to ‘one another’ yourself. It’s impossible to follow Jesus alone.”¹
- We should note here that our typical worship services are often not the best place to practice the many “one another” commands. For example, we are told to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16), but the Sunday morning gathering is usually not the best place to do this, especially considering the nature of certain sins. This means the church must exist as a community of believers who have relationships with each other and interact with each other apart from the normal services.
- D) It speaks to the church’s **future**, for the church is a **family** of families who are **evangelizing** and **discipling** their children to carry on the identity, mission and life of the church (Deut 6:6–7; Ps 78:5–8; Eph 6:1–4). Why should the world be interested in following Christ if our own children don’t? If we grow the church by making disciples of our kids, we’ll have no trouble reaching the world! How tragic it would be if we lost our children to the world while we were out trying to convince the world to follow Jesus!

¹ Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), p. 51.

2) How does the church fulfill its mission of making disciples?

A) By every **member** doing their **part**.

- (1) Paul compared the church to the human **body** (1 Cor 12–14; Eph 4:7, 11–16; Rom 12:3–8; cf. 1 Pet 4:7–11). In the body, each member is **necessary** and none can exist on their own. If one member of the body doesn't function properly, the whole body is **affected**. This means each of us has a **responsibility** to contribute and participate. The teacher must teach, but those being taught must listen and learn!
- (2) Francis Chan comments, “The moment you begin to believe that your church can be healthy while you sit on the sidelines, you have given up on God's plan of redemption. God placed you in your unique situation because He wants you to minister to and with the other Christians He has placed around you. If you are not active in the church, you are hurting your brothers and sisters. One paralyzed leg forces the rest of the body to work twice as hard to make up for that leg's inactivity.”²

B) By providing **leadership** and **training** in personal and family discipleship.

- (1) Lead by **example**. Pastors and church leaders need to tell their congregations that they are committed to practicing personal discipleship and then lead by example.
- (2) Train the **men**. The men in the local church are the leaders of their **families** as well as the leaders of the **congregation**. This means they must be trained in personal and family discipleship. The church can't function properly if the men aren't thoroughly equipped in the basics of discipleship.
 - Begin with the **core**. These are the men who attend faithfully, tithe regularly, and give sacrificially. These men should be trained with the stated goal that they, in turn, will be **training** others.
 - If possible, hold **weekly** training sessions. Depending on the number of individuals, it may not be possible to train the core all at once. Start with one or two men and build from there.
 - Start with **personal** discipleship and make sure they're firmly **grounded** in what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The website provides all the material needed for teaching the basics of personal discipleship.
 - Once they're established in personal discipleship, begin modeling **family** discipleship. The “Disciple-Making Family” lesson explains how to do this, and this approach can be followed for the weekly training sessions.

² Chan, p. 62.

- After a while, have them try **leading** one of the weekly sessions. This will give them practice in family discipleship and also prepare them to train others.
- Spend a **year** with these men, and then have them begin training others. They should know at the beginning that this is the natural progression: be disciplined so they can then disciple others. At the very least, if they do nothing else, they should be discipling their own families.
- Recommended resources:
 1. *The Disciple-Making Church* by Bill Hull.
 2. *The Disciple-Making Pastor* by Bill Hull.
 3. *The Complete Book of Discipleship* by Bill Hull.
 4. *Multiply* by Francis Chan.
 5. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* by LeRoy Eims.
 6. *Following the Master* by Michael J. Wilkins.

C) By **car**ing for and **nurturing** new believers.

- (1) Consider this: “In 1997, the Chicago Tribune reported the story of a mother who let her nine children, aged 8 months to 11 years, fend for themselves in a gritty apartment filled with trash and excrement. Public officials, responding to a neighbor’s call, entered the apartment at 2 A.M. and took the children into custody. The mother, said the owner of the apartment building, was more interested in partying late than in caring for her children.”³
- (2) Now we’re outraged by such a story and rightly so, but we need to think about this because the church sometimes commits the moral equivalent of child **abuse**. How so? When we spend our time and effort persuading the lost to follow Jesus and then **fail** to make sure they are given the **love** and **guidance** they need to grow into healthy, mature disciples of Christ. The church must come alongside new believers and actively **disciple** and **train** them in how to follow Jesus.

D) By cultivating a sense of **community**. Western culture is characterized by individualism. We place great value on independence and self-reliance, and we tend to think that the interests of the individual should take precedence over those of the group. Because of this, we often forget that we’re members of the body of Christ, and our primary goal is to strive for the health and well-being of the body. The church must do all it can to provide venues and opportunities for **connection** and **fellowship** between the members of the congregation. The more interconnected families are, the more they are able to **imitate** each other and **model** for each other.

E) By promoting biblical **understanding** and holy **living**. The church is uniquely gifted by the Spirit to help believers understand what God has said and how to **apply** it to their lives. This is essential for personal and family discipleship. When people have a proper understanding of the Bible and know how to live in obedience to God’s commands, they are then able to be and to make disciples of Christ.

³ “Make Disciples, Not Just Converts,” Editorial, *Christianity Today* Vol. 43, No. 12 (October 1999): 28–29.

- F) By providing **discipline** and **accountability**. Being part of a local church involves not only a call to imitate the faith of church leadership, but also a commitment to **obey** them and **submit** to their authority (Heb 13:7, 17). Church leaders watch over our souls, for they must give account to God. We should live in such a way that they may do this with joy and not with grief. Believers are also called to submit to each other out of **reverence** for Christ (Eph 5:21). This means we are to hold each other accountable to live careful, godly lives.
- G) By persuading those within our sphere of **influence** to become disciples of Christ. This refers to our extended **family**, our **friends** and acquaintances, our **coworkers**, our **neighbors**, and others we encounter in daily living. This is done in two ways: first by **living** a godly life in front of them and then by looking for opportunities to share our **testimony** and tell them the good news.
- H) By **supporting** and **participating** in global missions. This is done in a variety of ways: **praying** for our fellow workers in other parts of the world, contributing **money** and **time** in support of various missionary endeavors, **personal** participation in missionary activity, and developing a **passion** in our children for spreading Christ's kingdom across the world.

