

YOU BELONG HERE!



You Belong Here Study Guide

Week 1—Matthew 28:18-20 Make Christ Known

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.”

This passage is known as the Great Commission.

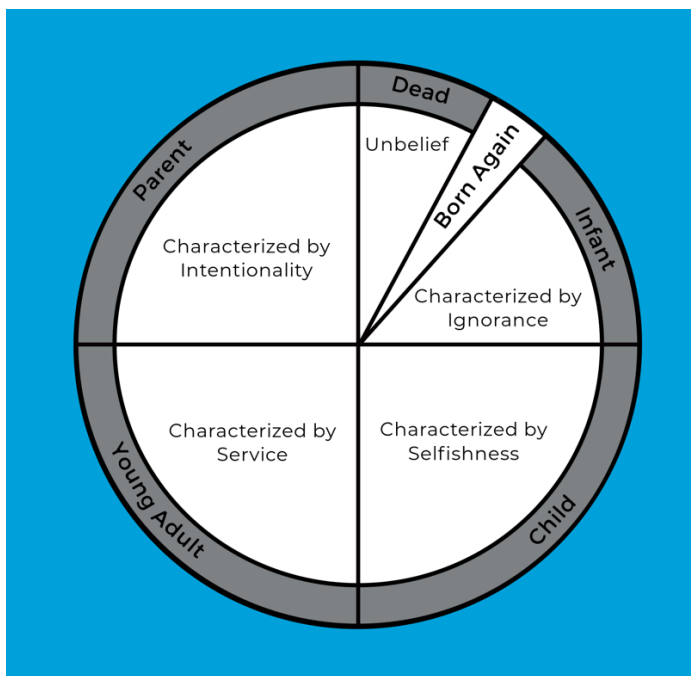
Commission means: an instruction, command or duty given to a person or group of people. A duty given to a group of people. This all aligns with how this has been positioned for followers of Jesus over the years. The Great Commission is our duty.

Jesus' work is done. On the cross He said, "It is finished." His work on earth was done, and ours is just beginning.

The work we have been called to is making disciples. All of us are on a spiritual maturity journey.

Everyone is somewhere on this spiritual maturity wheel. And wherever you are, it's okay for you to be there. The good news is, the work of making disciples includes us. Not only are we called by Jesus to help others grow, but we have to continue growing ourselves for the rest of our lives.

Which is the perfect environment to help someone else grow. When we are clear that we have to be open to growing ourselves, it makes it easier for us to walk with someone else while they do the same.



You may be wondering how do you “make disciples?” And the good news with that is it’s not all up to you. Three people are working together to make disciples. God is working, you are working, and the person you are walking with also has to work at their own growth. But there are some things we can do to promote growth.

Helping someone move from one section of the spiritual maturity wheel to the next is possible and there are a few things we will talk about next that can help.

Walking with someone who is spiritually dead starts with being in relationship with someone who is there. Ask yourself now, do you know anyone who doesn't know Jesus? If not, why not? Have you set up your world to where you regularly interact with people far from Jesus? Where could you spend time with people who aren't following Jesus in your everyday life?

Without a relationship, it is unlikely you will earn the right to have any conversations with someone about following Jesus.

Crossing the starting line of faith isn't the end of the journey. When someone moves from death to life, we may get the privilege of beginning a discipleship journey. Discipleship truly gets underway with belief, and so it goes with a spiritual

infant. Someone who's very new to believing doesn't know where to start and may not know which way is up or which way is down.

Interactions may be similar to a small child who is unable to care for themselves. Things that seem simple and clear to us, will not be to them. We need to patiently answer questions and give examples that are easy to follow. We also need to encourage them to start to try things on their own.

This stage of spiritual growth is signified by ignorance. Someone in this stage just doesn't know stuff.

As we move into the next stage a new challenge arises. The spiritual child stage is marked by selfishness. They have a little more experience in church, worship, Bible study, small groups, etc. and they have liked all those experiences and never want them to change.

But as we know, if nothing ever changes, then nothing will ever change, and who wants that?

It's likely as you are in relationship with someone in this stage you will learn about all the preferences they have for how all the things of Jesus should go. How worship should sound. How the preacher should preach. Who is in their small group. How the coffee is made. What the temperature should be in church.

There are a million preferences we could have and as spiritual children, we make certain everyone knows what they are and that we are unmovable from them. But lo and behold, there are other people on the planet. And we don't exist for our own preferences but as stewards of the Gospel of Jesus.

There is a significant struggle to get from the spiritual child stage to the spiritual young adult. It's easy to get stuck in our

selfishness and our need for our preferences to be met without regard for anyone else.

Many people will never choose to grow past being a spiritual child and it's sad because they miss out on so much of the richness of following Jesus.

The spiritual young adult stage is marked by service. Serving someone outside of yourself. Recognizing there are other people on the planet and understanding that we exist to serve them, just like Jesus.

This is such a fun stage to walk with someone in. You get to serve side-by-side with them and watch them discover what God created them to do. Once they figure that out, the excitement for their future explodes. They recognize that their lives in Christ become limitless because there is nothing keeping them from a full life in relationship with Jesus.

Moving from spiritual young adult to spiritual parent happens when someone decides to intentionally walk with someone else. To lean into the Great Commission and be a disciple who makes disciples it's not easy, but it is rewarding.

DISCUSS:

1. Before reading this, how would you have defined "make disciples"?
2. Who do you know that's spiritually dead? What is your plan to walk with them towards Jesus?
3. Do you remember being in the spiritual child stage of spiritual maturity? What was the catalyst that helped you grow to become a spiritual young adult? Who helped you along the way?
4. Where are you serving and why are you serving there? Who have you invited to come serve with you?
5. If you believed you were called to be a disciple who makes disciples,

where would you start? How would you do it? Why would you say yes?

Week 2—Ephesians 2:1-10
Knowing Christ

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of

God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Have you ever heard of ground tying a horse? It's process of training a horse to stand in place when their lead or reins are dropped directly below them onto the ground.

They aren't actually tied, but they have been trained to stay in place even though there is nothing to actually keep them there. This is a great thing from a ranch or horsemanship perspective. That's a broke horse that is willing to that, and that skill will come in handy in the life of a rancher for certain.

But the reality is they aren't tied to anything and could leave if they wanted to, but they believe their life will be better if they just stay put. Which in this case is true. Life is better for both

the horse and the rider if the horse stays where the lead is laid.

The passage you just read is all about transformation. When you think about transformation, does that make you think about little changes to something or someone that are barely noticeable? Or does it make you think about a radical change where someone or some thing or some place is barely recognizable after the transformation is experienced?

When we read passages like this, do you get fired up? Excited? There is so much power and freedom that comes from the grace of Jesus, why wouldn't everyone want this for their lives? Good question.

Do you think some of us learn to be ground tied?

Are we trained, told, taught to believe that our lives will be better if we stay right where we are? You see, like the horse we talked about earlier, we have freedom—

ultimate freedom—at our disposal whenever we want it. We could walk away from our lives of sin at anytime and experience the full freedom of living a life surrendered to Christ.

But some of us don't. Won't. Some of us believe the life of sin we are leading is the best life can ever be and we don't want to do anything to disrupt that. And for some, we can't believe that life can be that much better. We can't even fathom the freedom we can receive from the grace of God through Jesus.

Our enemy is convincing. But ultimately nothing the enemy offers compares in the slightest to what a life following Jesus is like. The challenge is letting the transformation happen. Letting go of the old life and grabbing hold of the new. Wanting to leave our past behind and trust Jesus.

The best news ever is that God understands our sin problem and He provided the solution.

The solution is simply surrendering everything to Jesus. When we recognize we no longer want our life of sin. Knowing Christ is all about knowing you need Him. The downfall of all humanity is that we believe we know better than God. We think our plan is better than His, that we can get through this life without His help.

The fact is there is no way back to God without Jesus. It doesn't matter how far away from "good" we have gotten, Jesus makes the way back.

But knowing Christ isn't about knowing information. Billions of people know about Jesus. Jesus knows more than 8 billion people. Do you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

DISCUSS:

1. What's a sin in your life that has been difficult to get free from? Why do you think that is?
2. What do you believe is the result of surrendering all of our sins to Jesus?
3. Which of your sins will be hardest to let Jesus do away with? Why?
4. Do you believe you have to be a good person to be saved? Why or why not? What were you taught as a child? What should we teach our children?

Week 3—Colossians 3:12-14
Growing Together

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

There are a lot of tenets in life regarding how we dress and how those choices can impact us. Have you ever heard the phrase, “Dress for success...”? Or what about, “You feel how your dressed...”? Or “Clothes say a lot about the person...”?

Basically to summarize, a lot of people think what you wear matters. It communicates something. Generally when we meet someone, the first thing they can see is how we are dressed. Our

clothing, regardless of how simple or loud it is, goes before us a bit. And that's how it's intended to be, since the fall.

The language in this passage is so cool because it asks us to clothe ourselves not in a specific clothing item, but in things very different.

Compassion. Kindness. Humility.
Gentleness. Patience.

These things aren't actually clothes, so this is where the Bible is using a metaphor of sorts. These aren't clothes but these are the things that we wish everyone would see first about us. That they would see from afar that we are compassionate. Everyone could recognize that we aren't scared to step into the sufferings of others.

What do you think wearing kindness looks like? Have you checked your face recently? We know what unkind looks

like don't we? The scowl. The closed off body posture. If you are in line at the DMV, are you scanning those helping people to find the face that looks most kind?

Choosing kindness can be pretty easy when people deserve it. Where it gets challenging is when we believe someone doesn't deserve our kindness. Then what are we supposed to do? Surely this command is only for when it's convenient for us, right?

And we are really good judges of who deserves kindness and who doesn't...so that should be easy. Maybe we are supposed to always exhibit kindness.

The first two in this list are fairly easy as they can be accomplished from afar. Without having to get too dirty. We can show compassion and kindness on our faces and with our approach and still keep things at arms length. But the list is about to shift.

Humility is the next word on the list. Humility is only humility in community. It can't really be tested when we are on our own. It's routinely tested when we are with others. Can we remember that it's not our importance that matters, but Jesus? Even more, are we able to focus on deriving our value not from how other people view us but from Jesus?

It can be easy to be humble when interacting with Jesus, but how do we do when we are interacting with God's creation? As God's chosen people, humility is our way. Regardless of our circumstances. That can't be, how would we ever get our way? But that isn't the point, Jesus getting His way is the goal and the point of all these interactions. How can we best represent Jesus? Humbly.

Have you ever witnessed a stumbling toddler sprinting towards a brand new baby? What is the first thing that is

generally said in that toddler's direction?
Gentle.

Gentleness is a suggestion for how we handle other humans both physically and emotionally. We aren't the Marines, so our goal is not to break them down and build them back up. Maybe Jesus will do that, maybe He won't. That's not up to us. Our role is to be gentle regardless.

Gentleness means not forcing the result you want because you are bigger or stronger or more intimidating. It means being able to walk with someone no matter how fragile they are when you first encounter them. Our example in Jesus provides us with the ultimate gentleness guide.

Lastly is patience. You know what they say, "Be careful praying for patience, because God will give you the opportunity to be patient."

Patience is probably the top thing on this list that we want for other people. We want someone else to be patient, that's for certain. We tend to believe we are patient enough. But other people, they could definitely be more patient.

Have you ever been to a foreign country where you were in the minority? You didn't look like the majority of the people and you couldn't speak the predominant language? How did that make you feel? What interactions do you remember from that experience? Do you have any fond memories of someone choosing to slow down and help you? Choosing patience over productivity?

Jesus gives us this word in our list of what we are supposed to clothe ourselves with because He knew we'd be working with humans. Broken, sinful, loud humans. Patience will be needed. He also knew we would fail in our battle against sin sometimes. We

must learn to be patient with ourselves.

Patience means being okay with repeating ourselves. Being okay with people making the same mistakes over and over again. And remembering we are asked to be patient, because Jesus is patient with us.

Choosing these five things: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience creates the best environment possible for us to grow in community with each other. To get closer to Jesus while leaning on each other. The sustainable model that Jesus has given us is seeking Him, and following Him in community with others who are doing their best to do the same. Lifting each other up when we fall. Encouraging one another as we continue to battle the same challenges over and over again.

That's the plan, the design and our future.

DISCUSS:

1. Share about a time when someone showed you compassion. Share about a time when you showed compassion to someone else. Share about a time when you showed compassion to yourself.
2. Share about a time when someone showed you kindness. Share about a time when you showed kindness to someone else.
3. Share about a time when you experienced humility in someone else. Share about a time when you exhibited humility.
4. Share about a time when someone showed you gentleness. Share about a time when you showed gentleness to someone else.
5. Share about a time when someone was patient with you. Share about a time you were patient with someone else.

Week 4—Revelation 7:9-12

Reaching Beyond Ourselves

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

Have you ever had the experience of being in a large group of people speaking different languages but saying the same thing?

Do you ever think about all the things you interact with on a daily basis that are uncountable? The stars in the sky are uncountable. Sure, some people have estimated how many stars exist, but they use huge ranges after counting a tiny section of the night sky. The truth is they are uncountable and even if you tried, you wouldn't live long enough to count that far. This is the definition of uncountable.

Mosquitoes. There have to be billions of them, but who knows; because who wants the counting mosquitos job? No-one, that's who.

Grains of sand. Hairs on your head. Delusional Nebraska football fans, all uncountable.

We know they exist, we can see them but we can't inventory them because the numbers are so large they are unmanageable for us. This is the kind of thing God is doing with heaven. The numbers of people are uncountable for humans. Beyond our comprehension.

God wants to fill heaven to the brim and who has He enlisted to help Him? Us. We are plan "A". That's part of our role as followers of Jesus.

In order to do that successfully we have to reach beyond ourselves. Get outside of ourselves and focus on others. It's what God created us to do.

Have you ever seen the old pickle jar that's full of Skittles and there is a contest to guess how many are in it? Just like we think we know how many Skittles there are; we can think we know how many people are supposed to go to heaven. How many and who has qualified for heaven. But that's not our role in the story.

Our role in the story is to tell people about how Jesus has impacted our lives. Reaching beyond ourselves means setting aside our preferences to point others to Jesus. It means standing outside of our comfort zones to meet other people in theirs.

And with heaven being populated with “every nation, tribe, people and language...” God may ask us to get uncomfortable. Not for our sake but for those who don’t know Him yet.

Heaven is going to be filled with different voices all singing the same song. Have you ever been in a room where people who speak different languages are all singing the same song? People singing “How great is our God, sing with me...”, ¡Cuán grande es nuestro Dios, canta conmigo!, Cé chomh mór is é ár nDia, canadh liom, Que notre Dieu est grand, chantez avec

moi, Hoe groot is onze God, zing met mij...

That's the beauty that God has called us to be a part of.

DISCUSS:

1. When and where are you most comfortable? Uncomfortable?
2. Have you ever pictured heaven? What does it look like in your mind? What does it sound like in your mind?
3. Who do you think should decide who gets into heaven?
4. What role do we play in populating heaven?