

Series: Basic Evangelism

Title: The Great Commission

Text: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8

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The Great Commission is a teaching that was given by Jesus. It provides the basis for the purpose of the church. The New Testament recounts the Lord's giving of the Great Commission in different passages (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8).

The Great Commission reveals four important truths about our gospel witness...

1. The Person of Our Witness

Matthew 28:18

“Authority” = the right to determine a course of action.

Point: Jesus is the person who sets the agenda for our witness. He is also at the center of the message we share. He has commissioned us to tell others about Him.

2. The Proclamation in Our Witness

Mark 16:15

“Proclaim” = to announce publicly.

“Proclaim” = Use elsewhere in the New Testament of public preaching on the Lord's Day (2 Timothy 4:2); however, the Great Commission teaches us that all believers have a responsibility to preach in a sense. Each is called to herald the gospel.

Point: In the most basic sense, witnessing involves making a public announcement about the good news of Jesus. Our Lord has commissioned us to proclaim his death, burial, and resurrection on behalf of sins.

3. The Places of Our Witness

Acts 1:8

“Jerusalem” = this was the city from which the Great Commission was given. The disciples were to proclaim Jesus within the most immediate context in which they found themselves.

“Judea” = this was the surrounding region around Jerusalem. It was a territory. We could think of it as being similar to our concept of states in the United States.

“Samaria” = This was a region outside of Judea. Most Jews in Jerusalem and Judea regarded residents of Samaria as a lower class of citizens. Few would dare travel to the region. Jesus did, however, showing His love for all people (John 4:4-30).

“Ends of the Earth” = this referred to other nations or people groups, as the concept of nations as we know it did not necessarily exist in the first-century world.

Point: Acts 1:8 served as a sort of table of contents for the book of Acts. The rest of the book provides a chronicle that tells of how the early church took the gospel to the four locations mentioned above. Chapters 1-7 of Acts describe the gospel penetrating Jerusalem; chapters 8-12 depict it going into Judea and Samaria; and chapters 13-18 show it going to other nations.

Point: God’s people are called to be witnesses for Him everywhere. There is no geographical location that should be regarded as off limits to gospel proclamation.

We are called to proclaim Christ across the streets, across the states, across socio-economic boundaries, and across the seas!

4. The Pattern of Our Witness

Matthew 28:19

“Go” = In the original language of the New Testament, Matthew used a present active participle. The verb carried the idea of “while going” or “as you are going.”

Point: Witnessing should be a lifestyle type of thing. It should not be relegated to a weekly event. Scheduled and organized times for witnessing can be helpful; however, God’s people are called to witness throughout their daily routine and wherever they may go.

5. The Peace in our Witness

John 20:19

“Peace” = related to the Hebrew concept of “shalom.” Referred not just to the absence of war, but also include ideas of harmony, prosperity, and abundance.

Point: Believers experience peace positionally with God at the moment of salvation (Romans 5:1); however, they also enjoy practical peace throughout their Christian life through the prayer (Philippians 4:6-7) and meditation on God’s truth (Philippians 4:8-9).

Point: In our attempts at witnessing, we will encounter critics and hostile individuals. The disciples and their experiences in the book of Acts give witness to these realities. Fortunately, we have the peace of Jesus to help us through such experiences.

6. The Power for Our Witness

Matthew 28:20

“I am with you always” = referred to the promise Jesus had made concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31). The Holy Spirit descended upon the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

Point: Believers are inhabited by Christ’s Spirit at the moment of salvation (John 3:5-8; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 3:2; Ephesians 1:13-14; Titus 3:5). Throughout the Christian life, one is empowered to live differently (Galatians 5:22) and serve Christ (Romans 12:6-8) through the power of the Spirit’s presence in his or her life.

Acts 1:8

“Power” = the Greek word underlying English translations is one from which we get our word “dynamite.” It referred to power that made one “able” or “capable.”

Point: Our ability to witness effectively comes from the Holy Spirit. Via His presence in our hearts and His power in the gospel message (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12), we have divine capabilities to assist us in sharing the gospel.

“Being an effective witness involves sharing the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.” **Darrel Robinson**