

Mission

Mark 16: 15 He said to them, 15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Matt 28: 18 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.” (NIV)

When we hear the words “Great Commission” it’s tempting to think of the big bag of money your real estate agent took when you sold your last home. In the Renaissance Baptist community however when we say “Great Commission”, we are referring to Jesus famous words at the end of two of the Gospels (Matt28 /Mark 16/). We believe this is the best concise summary of what any Church that claims to be following Christ is to be about.

First of all we at Renaissance make special note of the fact that timing is crucial for understanding the great commission, specifically the timing of when Jesus gave these words. He had already died on the cross and had risen from the dead, so when he says he has all authority to define our mission, he is perfectly qualified! We claim to be participating in God’s actual plan for all of history; Jesus is the answer to the obvious question of why we would think we have any kind of right to have such lofty aspirations!

So Jesus gave us at least three key activities that we are to be about in this world”

Evangelism (Sharing the Biblical Gospel Message)

He said to them, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* Mark 16

“Go and make disciples of all nations” Matt 28

We believe we are called to faithfully proclaim God’s message of salvation to as many people as possible.

Fellowship (Bringing those who have responded to the gospel message into participation in the family of God).

“...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

We seek to do this by leading our community to make the public commitment of faith in baptism and a meaningful covenant relationship with one another.

Disipleship (Helping believers grow into mature Christ followers.)

“...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

We believe that the Christian message is extremely invasive! Jesus plans to not only save you from judgment (which we feel is a good thing by the way); He also means to be Lord over all of your life. Real freedom interestingly is found in submission to someone else's authority (Jesus Christ's). We are called to help people along in that journey!

A Biblical Case Study:

Another key passage of scripture for us is found as a description of what the very first local church devoted themselves to in order to obey Jesus' Great Commission

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (NIV)

They seem to have concluded that they were doing the great commission when they were :

“devoting themselves to the apostles teaching” ...we do that as a church when we continue to seek to immerse ourselves in God's word (Holy Scriptures , The Bible) . We try to do that by significant time spent under biblical preaching in our worship services and in growth groups and our children's programs. We also encourage regular private study of God's word for everyone.

“devoting themselves to...fellowship” ... we do that as a Church by encouraging the development of intentionally Christian , nurturing relationships. Again as we have stated elsewhere we strongly believe that following Jesus is a group hike!

“devoting themselves to the breaking of bread” ...we do that as a Church by regularly following Jesus instructions to celebrate the Lord's Supper. There really is something significant and powerful about that event as we remember our common dependence on what Jesus accomplished on the cross as the basis for our hope and life!

“devoting themselves ...to prayer” ...we do that as a church in our worship services , in regular church wide prayer meetings, in our small groups and classes , in our homes for one another and if you begin getting to know some of our folks many of them just get together to pray for and with one another in less formal ways as well.

What about the Missions of Mission?

Something of which we need constant reminding, after all we have said so far in this article, is that the Great commission begins with the word “Go”! it's not a small “go “ it is a massive “Go” as it is a sendoff into the whole world ...to go to “all nations”. This shouldn't be too much of a surprise to any Christian. You could say that this emphasis goes all the way back to Abraham , one man chosen by God to be in a special relationship with himself *in order to be a blessing to the whole world* (Genesis 12:1-3 ; 22:15-18). We believe we are really to be channels of blessing to our church,

neighborhood, city, country world. While we have high aspirations to “get our house in order” in an Acts Chapter 2 sort of way, the bible seems to be encouraging us to be actively sharing the love and compassion God has shown to us “ while we were yet sinners” in an active way with those around us. We will possibly never achieve a perfect balance between developing a healthy church and reflecting Christian compassion and service in a way that blesses our community. So we will keep trying to do both and trust God to bless even our imperfect efforts!