

the Journey of Discipleship

Lesson 7: Kingdom Mission

INTRODUCTION:

As we walk with Jesus along this journey of discipleship, we will soon find out that God invites us to join him in bringing forth his kingdom by making disciples of all nations. God himself will empower us through his Holy Spirit to be his witnesses –that is, he gives us the grace, love and wisdom to bring people closer to Jesus and helping them to become devoted followers of him.

1. *How would you describe the process of making a disciple?*

2. *What is your biggest challenge or obstacle in making other disciples?*

TIME IN THE WORD

The following passage takes place after Jesus was crucified and rose again from the dead. Jesus reappeared to his disciples in his resurrected body and spent forty additional days with them, teaching them about the kingdom of God. As he was about to depart and ascend to heaven, he charged them to continue God's mission on earth.

READ MATTHEW 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

3. *How does verse 18 form the basis for Jesus' command to Go and make disciples of all nations?*

 4. *In verses 19-20, how does Jesus summarize the process of making disciples (note the key action words)?*
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Verse 17 states that, "...they worshiped him, but *some* doubted." It is interesting to note that the verse DID NOT say *some worshiped* and *some doubted*, but rather implying that *all* worshiped Jesus, but *some* still doubted in the midst of worshipping. As a growing disciple, this is not uncommon and you should not be discouraged. Surely, those that doubted still had many questions –sincere, valid questions. As we mature as a disciple, we will learn the answers to many of those earlier questions we had and surely develop new ones.

One thing is certain though, whether we or the disciples are doubting or not, Jesus wants to make clear that he has been given "all authority on heaven and on earth" (a theme that's repeated throughout the gospels). And, as his disciples, he has imparted that authority to us to go and make disciples of all nations. This might not be obvious from this passage alone.

It is often helpful in scripture to study other passages that reference the same historical event or teaching by Jesus. In doing so, we can gain more insight into the scriptures. In this case, we can look at this same event from Luke's perspective in the book of Acts. Luke is the historian and doctor who wrote one of the four gospels as well as the book of Acts.

READ ACTS 1:4-8

⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

5. *In what ways is verse 8 from this passage similar to verses 19–20 in the Matthew 28 passage? How do they give a more complete picture of Jesus' commands?*

6. *Looking at both passages, what is the relationship between Jesus' statements that "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him and "you will receive power"?*

7. *How does this knowledge give us confidence in the process of going and making disciples?*

Looking at these two passages together, we see that it is God's desire that people from all nations come to know the saving grace of our God through Jesus Christ. When the first disciples heard these words, they were undoubtedly focused on their own salvation –that is the nation of Israel. Even hearing the term "all nations" or "to the ends of the earth" the early believers thought that it referred to the Israelites that had been scattered across the earth.

However, as you read the book of Acts, two themes become clear: first, God's heart was not only for the people of Israel but also for the gentiles –people who were not of Israel. God truly loves all the people of the world. We see this in the progression of the gospel as it spread to the Samaritans¹ (people that were the descendants of Israelites that married non-Jews and were despised by Israelites) and finally to the gentiles², people who had no connection to the nation of Israel.

Secondly as we see the formation of the early church through the process of discipleship, we see that the role of the Holy Spirit is vital. Jesus commands to his disciples was "go and make disciples of all nations, [but before you go] "wait for the Holy Spirit". God never intended for us to try to make disciples on our own. Jesus was clear that we needed the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the Father's will.

GOING DEEPER

Discipleship is relationship –genuine life on life relationship. To make a disciple is not to impose a religion, belief system or behavior onto someone. It's about nurturing their relationship with Jesus. It is not about acting like a Christian or doing good, Christian things. Discipleship is about growing in our relationship with Jesus and helping others to do the same.

We do not have to be perfect in order to make disciples. We just have to be honest with ourselves and obedient to Jesus. The call to make disciples is for us to share with others what we have witnessed of Jesus.

There are three main areas where it is helpful to think about how we have witnessed God at work in our own lives:

1. Our Minds –our thoughts and beliefs form our worldview, how we understand our world and attribute meaning and value to things and events. Scriptures tells us that our minds need to be renewed in order for us to understand and be a witness to what God is doing.³
2. Our Hearts –that which we desire often gains the stirring of our affections and the laboring of our strength. God assures us that as we learn to delight in him, he will grant us the desires of our hearts.⁴

¹ Acts 8:14-17 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

² Acts 10:34-35 34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

³ Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

⁴ Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

3. Our Behavior –the outward appearance and actions that reflect our internal being. This is usually the last area that should change as a result of being a disciple. The problem arises when we try to focus on behavior first but our thoughts and affections have not been changed. So any changes are only superficial and we even deceive ourselves: we may look like a disciple in appearances, but we have not truly grown to be more like Jesus.

So what areas can we testify? How do we see things differently as a disciple? How have our desires change since becoming a disciple? What have we begun to do differently in light of the Holy Spirit's power in us? No matter how long we have been a Christian, we can at least share our testimony and reasons for following Christ.⁵ When we are willing to do that with people from all cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities, we are beginning the process of making disciples of all nations.

LIVING IT OUT

8. *Thinking about your own journey of discipleship, what are some of the major "milestones" of change do you see in your own life in these areas –mind, heart, and behavior?*
9. *Is there someone in your life (co-worker, classmate, or friend) with whom you may be able to share what God is doing in your life? How might you help them grow closer to Jesus?*

MOVING FORWARD

10. *What may be discouraging you from making disciples?*
11. *Consider that Jesus has given us his power and authority and his Holy Spirit. How might this help us overcome our fears?*

⁵ 1 Peter 3:15 "...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"