



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Acts 1 – 12 Sermon Series

Supports Session 1: Commissioned

Sermon Title: “The Great Commission” (Matthew 28:16-20)

Connection to Session 1

We studied Acts 1 in our groups this morning. In it, Jesus commissioned His followers to be His witnesses. The text for today’s message shows us another account of Jesus’s commissioning from Matthew’s perspective. We will learn what Jesus expects His followers to do and how we are to faithfully live out this command.

Introduction/Opening

We all most likely remember middle school gym class, and a few of us remember it fondly. The worst part was when it was time to pick teams. We all knew who was going to be picked first and who would likely be chosen last. If we were the one being picked last, we would hide in the back and convince ourselves that we did not go first because they did not see us. We will learn in today’s sermon that Jesus sees us differently and has chosen us to make disciples and to be His witnesses. Thankfully, Him picking us is not contingent on our athletic ability or even our ability to pass a Bible quiz. Instead, He picks us out of love, and He coaches us on how to fulfill the Great Commission.

Outline

I. We are commissioned to make disciples (v. 19)

- a. **Making disciples is the command.** If we use good exegetical skills, we will find that “make disciples” is the command in the verse. Many wrongly believe that the command is “go.” A close study reveals that “make” is the verb and hence this is the action. We will learn later in the passage how Jesus wants us to fulfill this command.

Now that we understand what the command is, we need to understand what a disciple is so that we can be faithful to make disciples. Simply stated, a disciple is a follower. Therefore, fulfilling the command means to actively seek to lead others to be followers of Jesus. Being a follower of Jesus is more than seeking to obey a set of rules. Instead, it means to engage in an ongoing, loving relationship with Him. As we do this, He changes us to make us more like Himself.

- b. **The command is for everyone.** We started today’s message with a story about being in middle school gym class where only the athletic students were picked first. Jesus does not see things this way. We see in verse 16 that the eleven disciples were present. We also learn in verse 17 that some doubted. Who were the doubters? We learn from 1 Corinthians 15:6 that Jesus “appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time.” It is highly likely that some of these five hundred were present when Jesus commanded them to make disciples.

Given this fact we can be encouraged by the words and actions of Jesus. He did not give the Great Commission only to those who had no doubts. He did not give the Great Commission only to those who had all the answers to any question that may be presented. Instead, He commanded His followers, even those without all the answers, to make disciples. Therefore, if we are a follower of Jesus today, then the Great Commission is for us too.

II. How do we make disciples (vv. 19-20)

- a. **Go – outward focus (v. 19).** The Great Commission teaches us how Jesus wants us to live out the command of making disciples. The way to live out the command is to go. If we look closely at the original language, we see that this is more than an event; it is a lifestyle. For example, as we go to work, we are to make disciples. As we take our children to ballgames, we are to make disciples. As we live our lives, we are to make disciples.
- b. **Baptize – bringing them in (v. 19).** Our next command is to baptize. We know that being baptized does not save us; it is a symbolic act that shows our relationship and commitment to Christ. If you know someone who is married, their wedding ring does not make them married. The ring tells everyone who sees it that the person is in a lifelong committed relationship to their spouse. Being baptized shows everyone that we are in committed relationship with Jesus, and we are a part of His family.
- c. **Teaching – keeping them connected (v. 20).** The final step in making disciples is to teach them everything Jesus had commanded. The only place to find the commands of God is in the Bible. When Satan tempted Jesus to turn stone into bread, Jesus said, “Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Jesus knew the importance of God’s Word and He told His followers to faithfully fulfill His Great Commission. We must teach His disciples God’s Word.

Conclusion

We learned in our group study this morning that we are called to be witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and throughout the world. We have learned in the message today that

we can accomplish this by going, baptizing, and teaching. It all begins, however, with personally becoming a follower of Jesus. If you do not know Him, let today be the day that you say yes to His invitation to follow Him. If you do know Him, then let's be found faithful in fulfilling the commission He has placed upon our lives.

Tod Tanner holds degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, TN, and he is serving as the Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible, Copyright 2020 by Holman Bible Publishers.