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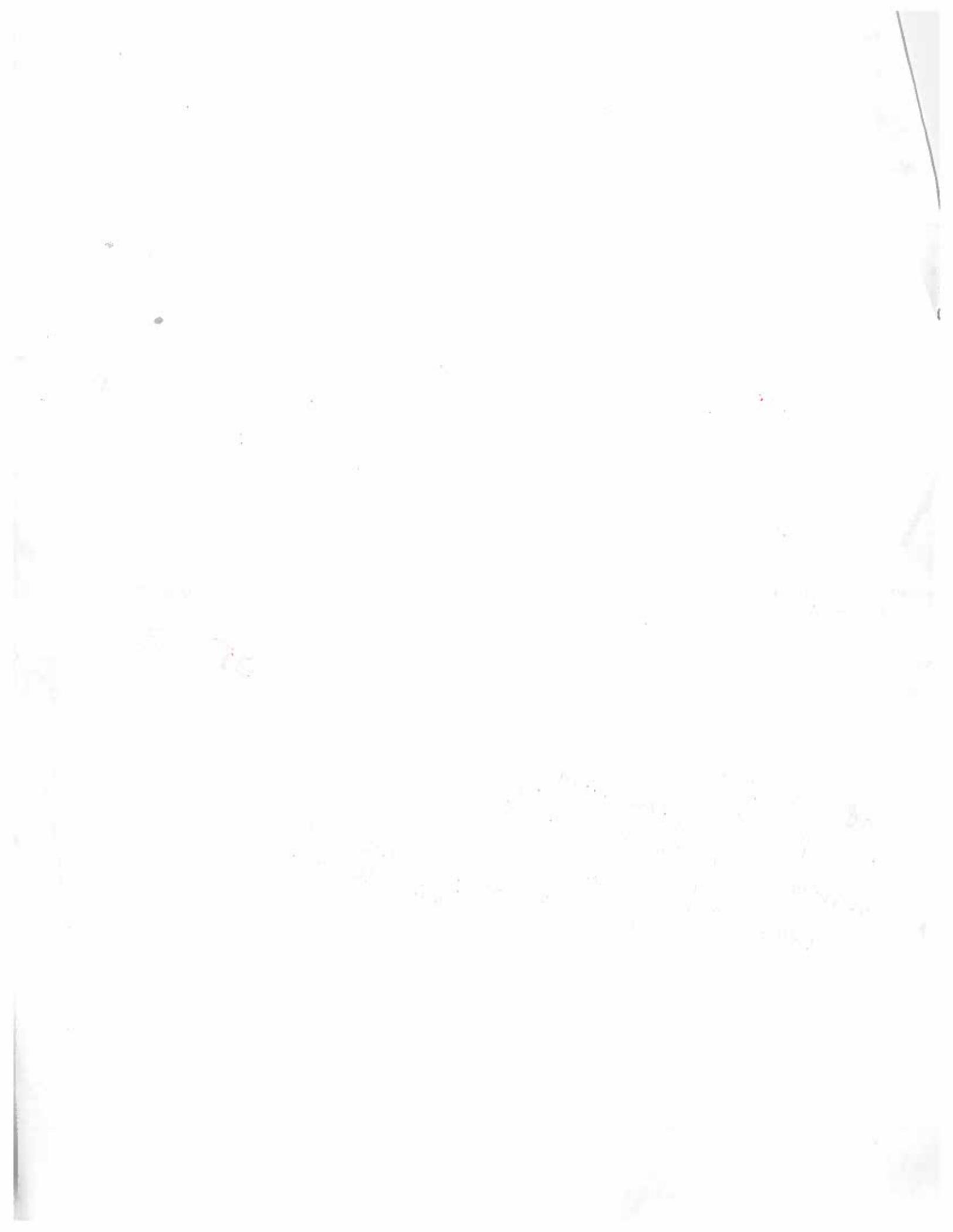
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE MEANING OF "THE GREAT COMMISSION"

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Course grade
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Earl Haynes
Capstone Course for MA and MDIV
Professor: Dr. Iria Abram
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Fall 2017



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(Turabian, 380-381)

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Abstract

↑ This study will examine a

examination

To ~~examining~~ the specific text along with an abbreviated ~~examine~~ of the words "make and disciple" in the Greek translation to see if ~~in~~ ^{the} English ~~does~~ the translations and interpretations carry out the original purpose and meaning, ~~is there~~ a further or deeper understanding and purpose, ~~while~~ ^{of the text?} examining the text against the context and the original audience. ~~Is there,~~ should there be ~~a~~ ^{different} understanding or interpretation based on the times and norms for each century/decade ~~of the existing of man?~~ ^{It will also examine} To further look at how the churches today apply the words of yesterday when referring to "The Great Commission". To further see the effect of our translations and understand of the word of God today, does it weaken or strengthen the word or is there still work to be done.

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Part of this ^{research} search will involve examining and comparing ~~some~~ commentaries against scripture in the original Greek and accepted practices and norms of today, both in interpretation and application toward requirement and life of those who feel called to be disciples, both in scripture and in practices that are implored today. Do we really live out the calling of the "Great Commission" and was that commission intended for today's churches or people?

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Introduction

This study focuses on
~~Topic~~ Exploring and developing the Bible verse Matthew 28:19, commonly referred to as the "Great Commission". The verse has a deeper implication than what is normally given to it. It commands, in Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV), "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. *Footnote*

(one paragraph)
Application and understanding of the meaning of this key verse takes on many different forms/conditions/definitions/interpretations/etc. meanings. There is the meaning to the biblical context, and there is the twenty first century interpretation of the same text.

At the time of this text Jesus has been crucified and his followers as well. His selected disciples are very despondent that their leader has been hung and buried. The disciples are gathered on the mountains of Galilee when he appeared to them and announced that all authority had been given Him. And based on that Jesus says "Therefore" make disciples.

The command has an ongoing responsibility on those who seek to be disciples and their response should require action on the part of the "disciple-maker" in response to the commandment of God, as well as a response to the one choosing to be made a disciple of Jesus. It is not just enough to tell the new comer about Jesus but the disciple maker must become involved in the new comers life and their spiritual development. There is more to deciding to

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become a disciple, such as the instructions given to, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 6:11, (NKJV)

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Jesus told us explicitly what to do. We have a manual, just like the car owner. He told us, as disciples, to make disciples. Not converts to Christianity, nor to some particular "faith and practice." He did not tell us to arrange for people to "get in" or "make the cut" after they die, nor eliminate the various brutal forms of injustice, nor to produce and maintain "successful" churches. These are good things and he had something to say about them. They will certainly happen if—but only if—we are (his constant apprentices) and do (make constant apprentices) what he told us to be and do. If we just do this, it will little matter what else we do or do not do.¹

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¹ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), xii.

GREAT COMMISSION

The "Great Commission," Matthew 28:19-20 (KJV) "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.", ^{the Great Commission} as a commandment does ~~this bible verse~~ have a far reaching and continuing responsibility for those who seek to be "disciples-makers" ³ as well as those choosing to accept the call to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, ^{Does it} have an equal and abiding charge. ^{is given to it} I say that ^{This paper} discipleship requires more than what we typically ~~give it~~. I intend to point out ^{The term "in"} the far reaching meaning of the call to be a disciple. "Make disciples, the New Testament Greek text of Matthew 28:19 prior to translation would appear as:

πορευθέντες ὄν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,
βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ
ἀγίου πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα
ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας
ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ ἁἰῶνος.

There are four words (all of them are underlined above) that will help make sense of exactly what Jesus was telling his disciples to do. Those words are "going", "disciple", "baptizing", and "teaching". Now for a very brief and when I say brief Greek to English lesson to understand the idea that the "Great Commission" has a deeper meaning than what we typically see or give to the words that have been translated. That means that the great commission is not about going on trips to evangelize people who speak a different language, even though that is a legitimate thing to do. The "going" in the great commission is best understood as a fact that is taken for granted. It would be more like, "While you're going through your daily routine, you, yes you – you who work there at the prison or the restaurant – as you are going along doing what you do, and going wherever you go... disciple!" That means that every person can participate in the great commission without

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ever going on a trip, because we're all involved in this Greek participle "going." We are all going through life in the every-day stuff. We all have a well-worn path that we walk every day, and that is the place where we do the great commission, which is to disciple.²

There is one imperative verb. A verb is in the imperative mood when it is making a command, The Greek word is a verbal command, not a verb followed by a noun. In other words, the text does not say "make disciples" (verb/noun) like "build a house" or "grill a steak." It does not say to *verb a noun*. It says simply... "DISCIPLE!" which is like saying "RUN!" or "JUMP!" In reality, you can't "make" a disciple. You can only disciple. So, in the great commission in Matthew, *disciple* is not an outcome (like a product that you end up with), but it is rather a *process* that you are *doing*. The grammar is not telling us to make an object. There is no noun in the text at all. There is only a single imperative verb. Only a command. Only an action word. Only something to *do*. And what is it? It is "disciple!"³

There are three participles. Participles are formed on verbs, to which is added the participial morpheme and case endings. A "morpheme" is the smallest unit of meaning.⁴ I recall participles are the words that in English we add "ing". The imperative verb, that is the word that tells you what to do, the participles tell you how to do it. "Going" conveys the idea as you live and move about in your life you should be a living example of what a disciple truly is and what a disciple looks like. An example of "going" is found in Acts 8:26-39 (KJV):⁵

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a

² Kenny Burchard, "Greek-Geeking the Great Commission in Matthew", Thinking Theology, November 7, 2013. Accessed October 12, 2017. <http://thinktheology.org/2013/11/07/greek-geeking-the-great-commission-in-matthew>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 236.

⁵ Burchard, "Greek-Geeking the Great Commission in Matthew", Thinking Theology. ??

appendix

see Turabian manual for footnote guidelines

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man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

As a recorded text, any passage in the Bible has been interpreted and granted meaning in many and widely varied contexts. At least three basic types of context can be distinguished, each of which plays a distinct role in biblical studies. One of these types consist of the context within and for which the biblical texts themselves were developed. A second is the specific context of the current interpreters—your context and ours. Finally there are all those other contexts within which individuals and communities, both past and contemporary, engage in interpreting that same text.⁶

⁶ Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation a Roadmap*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 28.

I have heard it said that the whole Bible could be considered the Great Commission in as much as the Bible contains commandments from God through Jesus to us, that the first of the Great Commission is found in Genesis 1:28 (KJV), "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." For now we will look at specifically Matthew 28:18. According to Will Metzger, "In my opinion, this commission takes precedence over the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28) since the resurrection of Christ."⁷

When you examine Matthew 28:19 in its context, you discover that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, stating, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and then they will see Me." Then Jesus appears to his disciples in Galilee and spoke to them saying,

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age."
Matthew 28:18-20, (NKJV).

In light of what they have been told lets exam the key words and try to see these words through the disciples leans and how they would receive these instructions. Not only how they would interpret these instructions but, also how they would apply these instructions today. Finally are the instructions applicable today?

⁷ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 202), 204.



"Go Ye Therefore"

In the words of the Great Commission we are to "go"—not just talk but act; "make disciples"—not just superficial professors of faith but possessors of the Son; "baptizing"—not just leaving them on their own but incorporating them into a biblical church; "teaching"—not just offering a few slickly packaged gospel facts but everything in Christ's commandments.⁸

The phrase "Go therefore," comes in light of "I have been given all authority." This is more about as you live out your life make disciples. I first viewed this commandment as something I was to do to demonstrate the love of God, not as something that is a natural part of who I am. In some sense the phrase "Go therefore" can be seen as a call to evangelism. The call to discipleship is a call to evangelism. Take the Apostle Paul who believed he was personally called by God to engage in missionary activities among the gentles, persuading these "pagans" that their own gods were dead, lifeless, and of no use, but that the God of Jesus was the one who had created the world and entered history in order to redeem it.⁹

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Several scholars have argued that in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), the phrase *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* (*panta ta ethne*, all nations) excluded Israel.¹⁰ After all, *τὰ ἔθνη* (*ta ethne*) in its eight occurrences in Matthew (4:15; 6:32; 10:5; 18; 12:18, 21; 20:19, 25) normally denotes Gentiles, usually pagans, and, it is argued, this interpretation not only makes sense of this

⁸ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Study Guide* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1964), 133.
⁹ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 214.
¹⁰ D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 147-48.

technical force in τὰ ἔθνη (*ta ethne*) but also meshes with Matthew's argument that Israel has forfeited her place, so that the preaching of the gospel must now be kept from her.¹¹

Despite its superficial plausibility, the argument has several weaknesses, not least the fact that it stumbles on this eighth fallacy. It is doubtful, for instance, that ἔθνος (*ethnos*), used anarthrously, has this exclusive force in 21:43; and when the entire expression (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη [*panta ta ethne*], "all nations"—not just, τὰ ἔθνη [*ta ethne*]) occurs in Matthew (24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19) it is very doubtful that Jews are being excluded.¹²

The "Go" has the idea of evangelism, do not stay where you are disperse and share what you have been given. The disciples were not sent out merely in their own strength, however, Jesus prefaced his commission with the statement, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18).¹³

The Acts 1:8 (KJV) commandment must have been a lot to hear. I cannot imagine what they thought when told to go disciple all nations which included the Samaritans, a people Jews despised. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The history of the Samaritans starts with Solomon's son Rehoboam who went to Shechem to become king: "Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king." (1 Kings 12:1). Since Solomon was anointed king at the Gihon spring (1 Kings 1:33). Rehoboam acted foolishly and caused the Kingdom to split into two

¹¹ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 47.

¹² Ibid 47.

¹³ Mallard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 400.

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kingdoms. The ten northern tribes became the Kingdom of Israel under King Jeroboam.¹⁴ V17
But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.
So, being a disciple could mean going into areas that may be unsafe and may cost you your life.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18) (NIV). Having all authority, he commissioned the disciples as his agents. Thus they had the right to go and evangelize all nations. Further, Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and that they would consequently receive power. So they were both authorized and enabled for the task. Moreover, they were assured that he was not sending them off on their own.¹⁵

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I suggest that going forward, if you continue onto another degree, that you use a professional editor.

¹⁴ <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-samaritans.htm>. Accessed October 18, 2017.

¹⁵ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 400.

DISCIPLESHIP

There are three components that define true discipleship. The first is *touch*. You can't disciple at a distance. The only way iron can sharpen iron is through personal connection. This is the touch that invests when others withdraw; it perseveres when others disappear.

Second, you must make the commitment of *time*. You won't be able to reproduce your life and passion for Christ in a day. You didn't grow overnight—we humans aren't like Jack's beanstalk! We're more like apple trees that need a lot of time to grow before fruit begins to appear.

The third component is *truth*: the truth of God's Word. This keeps the discipleship process on track, rather than one opinion contradicting another. Without truth, discipleship of any kind—coaching a team, tutoring a student, teaching an instrument—will not have permanence. The center of spiritual discipleship is the truth of Scripture.¹⁶

True Christian discipleship, Lewis would have us understand, is first a matter of the heart—the inner life: the recognition, acceptance, and surrender to God's absolute authority over all the affairs of one's life in a way that leaves no place to which one may call one's own. But the surrendered heart, Lewis taught, must also express itself in active obedience to the claims placed upon the believer by the New Covenant.¹⁷

What are the requirements or characteristics of discipleship, are we as believers called to be disciples? Are just certain believers called to be disciple? The Bible says to be a disciple, according to Luke 14:27, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be

¹⁶ <http://www.jesus.org/following-jesus/discipleship/what-are-the-basics-of-discipleship.html> (Accessed September 27, 2017).

¹⁷ http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/CS_Lewis_on_Authentic_Discipleship_SinglePage. (Accessed September 27, 2017).

My disciple. Matthew 16:24, Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. Matthew 5: 13, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. These verses speak to a rebirthing of the individual. We are naturally self-centered to have our way and to seek self-satisfaction. For example, a new born child when they are hungry, uncomfortably or wet in their urine or they have an irritating rash they cry out for attention. They are not concern with what may be going on or what kind of day you might have had. They want their needs met at that moment regardless of anything else that may be occurring. However to be a disciple one must be willing to put others first and their needs over one's own needs. One thing that is very much apparent is, one cannot walk this life style alone. So as we summit to being disciples we also yield to the call upon our lives. We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image—destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them.... We become either agents of God's healing and liberating grace or carriers of the sickness of the world.¹⁸ Believing in Jesus Christ and deciding to follow Jesus comes with a commitment, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nation." In Acts 1:18 he says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This was emphasis in both accounts (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15) of Jesus last words to

¹⁸ M. Robert Mulholland Jr, *Invitation To A Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 23.

his disciples is evangelism. It appears that he regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.¹⁹

The formation to discipleship takes you to the image of God, where one finds their uniqueness, for which they were created in order to fulfill their purpose. Discipleship allows God to complete his work in us as he says in scripture, Isaiah 64:4 (NIV) "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him." So our creator has plans for us from the creation of the world, now we must allow God to complete his work in us.

Discipleship does not occur in a vacuum. It is a process that begins with God confronting us in our most broken place, the area where we struggle the most to let go and allow our lives be control and directed by someone outside of ourselves, we must surrender all. For some, another part of the discipleship shaping occurs when we reach what we commonly refer to as "hit rock bottom." God will knock to enter our lives but he will not force his entrance. Our own desire to hold on to our last bit of self-center, egotistical, self-made man or women is all part of the molding of clay, a process that we go through individually. Furthermore, spiritual formation is a journey in itself once we allow God to control our lives.

A very important part of the growth to discipleship comes through spiritual practices. Spiritual practices such as praying and fasting, repenting, forgiving trespasses, loving the stranger and your enemy, and studying the word of God. Surrendering to God is more than

¹⁹ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. 400.

simply setting back and waiting on osmosis to occur. We surrender yes, but at the same time we engage in spiritual practices that enhance, and bring about spiritual formation. Scripture reminds us 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV) Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth also 1Thesolonians 5:17 (NKJV) pray without ceasing. Spiritual formation is further revealed when you can reason to yourself that you have fulfilled this part of scripture when one ask the question, Matthew 25:37-40, (NKJV)

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink?’³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*?’³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’

The nature of humans is to seek meaning and purpose in our life and as we search, that which we are really searching for is spiritual formation to make one whole Thus the instruction, Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." While this term *disciple* is used interchangeably at times with the title *apostle* when referring to the twelve whom Christ chose to be with Him, the terms are not to be considered equivalent. An apostle is a hand-picked, qualified witness.²⁰ Then you read Ehrman and he sees discipleship as a call to discipleship, the Apostle Paul who believed he was personally called by God to engage in missionary activities among the gentles, persuading these "pagan" that their own gods were dead, lifeless, and of no use, but that the God of Jesus was the one who had been created the world and entered history in order to redeem it.²¹ I cannot be a apostle, then *can I be a Christian and not be a disciple?* Some have a post Easter Jesus, where Jesus has paid the price for our sins by His death on the cross and some accept that and thus they are now Christians. This popular gospel is what has come to be called *transactional gospel*. A transaction because we see the message of salvation in accounting terms: our sin is entered as an eternal debit on our account; Jesus' death on the cross is our full payment for our sin; by faith his credit is transferred to our account, which cancels our debt and we are handed a receipt

²⁰ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology. Vol 7*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), 120.

²¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 214.

stamped "Paid in Full." Forgiveness of our sin debt and the assurance of eternal life is the gospel. Period.²²

My church and my experience with evangelism is just what Will Metzger had in mind, when he wrote in his book that if we carry through with the logic of simplistic evangelism, we need not carefully and persuasively explain and illustrate the doctrines of the gospel. Therefore, our evangelism training is directed to mobilizing everyone (no matter what doctrines of the gospel he or she holds) quickly (enter population growth statistics and world-end-soon prophets). This large scale unity of Christians for evangelism is on the basis of a common need to get the job done and a vague belief in the conversion experience, not by theological agreement on gospel truths.²³

That is good for congregational discipleship but when you look at individual discipleship there are some serious considerations and soul searching that should and must occur. This soul searching comes with instructions that we can find in scripture. If we are to be disciples we must learn to observe: Denial of Self, Peter, the mouthpiece of God: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" ... a little later is the mouthpiece of Satan (denials). To deny self does not mean that we should be hermits or ascetics for a year, a few days, or a day and deny "things" but it means that we deny "self ... the self-life." How do we deny? Peter said, "I do not know Him." We must say to self, "I do not know you and will not obey you." Matthew 16:24. (KJV).²⁴

²² Greg Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple: Eight Sessions for Mentoring and Discipleship*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2016), 28.

²³ Metzger. *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person*. 30.

²⁴ Al Bryant, *Sermon Outlines on Lay Ministry Opportunities*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1955), 34.

Responding to a call of discipleship should not be taken lightly, overt calls to discipleship are focused at a few well-specified turning points in our lives: profession of faith, the decision to enter seminary; and perhaps in wrestling with the decision of whether to accept a call to a new field of service or to remain where one is.²⁵

The Apostle Paul who believed he was personally called by God to engage in missionary activities among the gentiles, persuading these "pagan" that their own gods were dead, lifeless, and of no use, but that the God of Jesus was the one who had been created the world and entered history in order to redeem it.²⁶

The act of evangelism and/or teaching does not necessarily have to have a formal format, though formal is nice. Sometimes the opportunity for evangelizing and or teaching can occur in a non-traditional setting and the opportunity must not be missed. There are times when I am sitting in the hospital waiting room or a doctor's office waiting room with others, which seems to be quite often recently. I will usually take this time to talk about Jesus and what he has done in my life. People in the hospital waiting area or doctor's office are often in a mind to listen attentively to anyone who will talk with them. This sometimes helps them focus elsewhere for the moment. Which provide fertile soil for discipleship. Whether they are converted is not my concern. I hope I have planted a seed on fertile soil. I have since learned that evangelism and discipleship are the responsibility of all Christians. A Christian must be vitally interested in

²⁵ Ian F. McIntosh, "Dialectics of Discipleship," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, (1969): 67-70.

²⁶ Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 214.

people, not only in their eternal destinies by being an active soul winner, but in their temporal lives by being a loving helper and edifier.²⁷

True Christian discipleship, Lewis would have us understand, is first a matter of the heart—the inner life: the recognition, acceptance, and surrender to God's absolute authority over all the affairs of one's life in a way that leaves no place to which one may call one's own. But the surrendered heart, Lewis taught, must also express itself in active obedience to the claims placed upon the believer by the New Covenant.²⁸

Has that fear of surrendering control of my life to God or any want-to-be disciple cause the gospel to be changed or repackaged the gospel to make the gospel readily transferable so as to gain the mental assent of the hearer. This has led to the idea of the "simple gospel," which we all supposedly know as soon as we become Christians. But this approach encourages us to think of the gospel as a pill that will cure all. We, as doctors, dispense it freely. We need not worry about the patients symptoms. No matter what the symptom is, the pill will cure it.²⁹ Then to add to the understanding of the commandment is Jacques Dupuis, S.J. understanding as he writes, the Church teaches, first of all, that there is question here of a very strict command of Jesus Christ. In unmistakable words he gave his apostle the command to teach all nations to keep whatever he had commanded [cf. Mt 28:19-20]. Not least among Christ's commands is the one which orders us to be incorporated by baptism into the mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and to be

²⁷ Walter and Trudy Fremont, *Becoming an Effective Christian Counselor*: (Greenville, South Carolina: BJU Press: 1996), 99.

²⁸ http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/CS_Lewis_on_Authentic_Discipleship_SinglePage. (Accessed September 27, 2017).

²⁹ Metzger. *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person*. 34-35.

united to Christ and to his vicar, through whom he himself governs the Church on earth in a visible way.³⁰

My early understanding of Evangelism was discipleship, that it was something that people did in foreign countries in an effort to introduce people to Christianity in undeveloped countries. It was something people did which had nothing to do with me. What I knew about evangelism I gained from the little glimpses that came through movies or television where I observed the portrayal of an absent minded white headed man living in the jungle with natives trying to reconcile himself to the barbaric ways of the natives as he told them about Jesus and God and God's expectation of them. It was viewed as something for the wild, but not here in tamed America. The dictionary defines evangelism, zealous preaching and dissemination of the gospel, as through missionary work.³¹ My thought was that evangelism was for improvised countries and people who did not live as we do with modern conveniences. I don't know when, but I came to know the message is to all believers ...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.³² This is a response, at least in part to "Go therefore."

I am presently a member of a church where one of our mission works is in the form of what we call "Empowerment Packages". The source of Empowerment Packages is that 10 per cent of the church's collection is set aside each week to makeup the packages, which are given as monetary gifts to address a particular need within the community where we worship.

³⁰ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 128.

³¹ American Heritage College Dictionary, 3rd e. s.v. "evangelism"

³² Acts 1:8 (KJV)

One of our first Empowerment Packages involved assisting a home for battered women. The battered women's organization had acquired a house, but the house was in need of some major repairs. It needed a new roof so we provided funds to put on a new roof. The house was then divided into four units in order to accommodate several small or large families. We as a church were also able to provide small appliances for each of the four units. We are still called on from time to time to provide some form of aid for this shelter. Along with providing them with their needed items we shared with the occupants and staff of the house the love of Jesus that we were able to be generous because God has so richly blessed us and our desire to share with others.

I have such a good feeling and I believe God does also, about what we have been able to do through the blessings of God. We are according to my pastor, able to connect our giving to a higher cause and to answer the question that if we were no longer in place would anyone know it. I recognized early on in this endeavor that we were really doing what God intended for us to do, for those we encounter who are in need. What it means to be a believer and a follower of Jesus, having a chance to not only talk of the love of Jesus, but to demonstrate the love of Jesus as it works in the community.

Evangelism according to Will Metzger is carry through with the logic of simplistic evangelism, we need not carefully and persuasively explain and illustrate the doctrines of the gospel. Therefore, our evangelism training is directed to mobilizing everyone (no matter what doctrines of the gospel he or she holds) quickly (enter population growth statistics and world-end-soon prophets). This large scale unity of Christians for evangelism is on the basis of a

common need to get the job done and a vague belief in the conversion experience, not by theological agreement on gospel truths.³³

³³ Metzger. *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person*, 30.

BAPTIZING

Baptizing has been interrupted in a number of ways. In the 19th verse of Matthew chapter 28 "baptizing" and "teaching" was two steps in the process or the path to disciple along with "going." Baptism is the first step of obedience for a new Christian. It is a theological mandate rather than an option to initiation.³⁴ Now I believe Rainer is talking about a water baptism and not a spirit baptism. The spirit baptism first occurred and is recorded in the Bible is recorded in Acts 2: 2-4, (KJV)

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Thus a distinct groups, as far as their religious backgrounds were concerned, were introduced into the body of Jesus Christ, namely Jews.

The second spiritual baptism occurred at Caesarea. Acts 10:44-48 (KJV),

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

³⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 54.

Then the third was at Ephesus, disciples of John the Baptist received the Holy Ghost. Acts 19:1-7 (KJV),

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance, a water baptism which was related to the act of repentance on the part those who sought and received it.³⁵ There is so much written about baptism which when you think about it, it is the idea of interpret, understanding and application that sometimes separate us. Whether you believe that one has to be immersed to be baptize or is sprinkling accepted. I think that the desired results is critical not necessarily the manner for it is a sign of the union between the believer and Christ as the believer savior, redeemer but it is an act of faith and obedience to Christ. Over all this there is scripture that should direct our behavior and give us reason for hope. Ephesians 4 (KJV), just some of the verses that shine through for me.3-7, Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in

³⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Fictionary: For a Deeper Understanding of the Word*, (AMG International, 1993), 312.

you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. I have difficulty restraining myself as I try to carve out just some of the chapter that strongly encourage us to unity.

Baptizing has a formula; "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The three in one, each distinct and equal embodied in one and the one is God. Baptism, according to the sacramentalists, is a means by which God impart saving grace; it results in the remission of sins.³⁶ Christians have debated three basic questions about baptism: (1) What is the meaning of baptism? (2) Who are the proper subjects of baptism? (3) What is the proper mode of baptism?³⁷ You can look at the question and you can see the issues involved. It is not my intension to address the issues but, simply to point out the formula for baptism and not the method or who should be baptized, and when should a believer be baptized. It is almost universally agreed that baptism is in some way connected with the beginning of the Christian life, with one's initiation into the universal, invisible church as well as the local visible church.³⁸

Whatever the mode, the subject of baptism, is not to be taken lightly, it is of great importance for it is a sign of putting to death the old and coming of the new person. Part of the denominational difference lies with the initiatory rite of baptism. The safe position is to agree on what we can agree on, one faith, one baptism, and one God. The other issues with baptism we can continue to discuss and disagree respectfully. The ultimate goal is to be baptized in the knowledge of God and to teach as the believer, "Go, therefore."

³⁶ Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 264.

³⁷ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 412.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 412.

TEACHING

Teaching is not something that occurs without a purpose. The purpose is to edify believers and disciples. The church edifies its members through instruction or teaching.³⁹ This is part of the broad task of discipline. One of Jesus' commandments within the Great Commission was to teach converts "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). To this end, one of God's gifts to the church is "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11) to prepare and equip the people of God for service.⁴⁰ Teaching was seen by Thom S. Rainer in his book "High Expectations" and Sunday School as being a component of the teaching. I have been in discussions where ministers have expressed the idea of eliminating Sunday School because they are poorly attended in some churches. Poor attendance is an indictment on the church and more specifically the church's leadership. The hope is, that the "equipping for service" will occur through preaching. Rainer further says "A well-organized Sunday School will integrate the principles of effective teaching, effective evangelism. The key words, however, in the preceding sentence were "well-organized."⁴¹ He goes on to say, "The most frequently omitted purpose of the church was evangelism. It is difficult, if not impossible, to motivate our members to be involved if they do not even know why the church exists."⁴² Teaching is so critical and it can take on so many ways and not just in a classroom. One of the best teaching tools is to demonstrate whatever it is you

³⁹ Edmund Clowney, "Toward a Biblical Doctrine of the Church" Westminster Theological Journal 31, no. 1 (November 1968), 71-72.

⁴⁰ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 402.

⁴¹ Rainer, *High Expectations*, 36.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 145.

are attempting to teach. You should demonstrate discipleship by living your life as a believer day in, and day out, in every aspect of your life and not just on Sunday while in the church. You should be authentic, sadly though, the term *authenticity* has almost fallen to the place of a buzzword in our churches. You can be honest in the flash of a second, but to authentically relate to other people takes time. The one being disciple and the one doing the discipline must prove to be trusting and trustworthy over the long haul. It must move beyond quips of self-deprecating humor to the honest conversations about the state of our souls.⁴³

The great key for many of us in discipleship is the willingness to delay instant gratification while we and others are in the growth process. If maturing were easy, everyone would do it. But it is not and so many fall away from the journey. As a leader or a follower, we need to show patience as the Lord shows it continuously. As we delay our infantile need to gain complete satisfaction by our own efforts and the efforts of others, then we will better enjoy what God is currently doing among us.⁴⁴

I am aware that there are some inherent problems with having a church, not to mention having church in another country. Some of the same difficulties they may have exist in the United States. I think some difficulties can be overcome to some extent by a personal network that the individuals develop. It allows for participation as you teach. We in Christendom call it

⁴³ Phillip Nation, "*Discipleship Takes Time*" Today's Topical Bible Study, October 25, 2017. Accessed October 25, 2017.

<http://www.crosswalkmail.com/ViewMessage.do?m=csssshshzy&r=etrbyshpsqs&s=ojfrzmtlfrtqlvkgnscctmqjggqfwtczzv&q=1508922900&a=view>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

"born again." John 3:1-21 (KJV) God gives meaning to this requirement followership, discipleship, and the believers:

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the

light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The global leaders in the business world have coin the biblical principal but they refer to it as *Frame Shifting*. Once leaders have come to view themselves as the product of a particular cultural context, are positioned to listen for the unexpected, and have built strong relationships with their global counterparts, they must learn to shift their perspective and leadership methods to better fit different circumstances. *Frame-Shifting* requires the cognitive and behavioral agility to alter both one's style and strategic approach. "Once leaders have come to view themselves as the product of a particular cultural context, i.e., "disciple," are positioned to listen for the unexpected, and have built strong relationships with their global counterparts, i.e., "Go therefore." "Baptizing and teaching" i.e. they must learn to shift their perspective and leadership methods to better fit different circumstances.⁴⁵ One of the biggest problems in the global world and right here in the United States is that so often churches assume we all understand the language and jargon that we use. Once one joins a local church we move on as though that new member is fully equipped to function as a believer with all the necessary knowledge to function as a disciple. In some churches there is no vetting or giving of instructions for a new member to gain understanding of the churches' vision and mission to insure that this new member is ready for the world of discipleship.

⁴⁵ Ernest Gundling, Terry Hogan and Karen Cvitkovich, *What is Global Leadership: 10 Key Behaviors That Great Global Leaders* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011), 62.

When joining most social groups, they have requirements for membership such as paying dues, regular attendance of meetings and committee assignments which is getting involve. The church is no different, one supports by giving and getting directly involved through actively participating. Typically, new member class is required once a person join a church. Rainer, in his "High Expectations," says expectations of new members should be communicated at the point prior to a person's becoming a member of a church. "Frontend" requirements or expectations were deemed to be much more effective than the communication of expectations later in the tenure.⁴⁶

The difficulty of effective communicating an idea or concept is ongoing. This problem has two critical obstacles. The problems are the communicators understand and the receivers understanding, as each have built in filters, the words chosen to communicate verses the receivers perception of the words they hear sometimes may lead to misunderstanding.

⁴⁶ Rainer, *"High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church"*, 106.

"lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"

The final word of the Lord, recorded by Matthew were a promise that He would be with them always until the very end of the Age. Though the Lord did not remain physically with the Eleven. His spiritual presence was with them until their tasks on earth were finished. These final words of the Lord were carried out by the apostles as they went everywhere, proclaiming the story of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews.⁴⁷

Following Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven the first Christians celebrated Pentecost, the official "birthday" of the Church. This was the moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples of Jesus, converting them to apostles, and empowered them to preach the Gospel of Love to the end of the earth. Christians believe that God the Holy Spirit continues to live and dwell among men and women of faith within the worshipping ecclesial communities throughout the world—forgiving, healing, illuminating, transforming, and saving humankind. These acts of grace uniting us with God allow for participation in the divine life, actualized in part within history, and to be fully realized in the finalization of God's eternal kingdom at the end of time.⁴⁸

We are to be disciples unto the end of the world, pretty straight forward now, where and to whom we disciple, baptize and teach, may and should change but discipleship should always be the posture of the believer and true disciple of Christ Jesus. John 14:15-16 (KJV), And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

⁴⁷ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck *"The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament"* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1983), 94.

⁴⁸ Ann Marie B. Bahr, *Christianity: The Illustrated Guide to 2,000 Years of the Christian Faith*, (North Narrabeen: Millennium House, 2011), 17.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Limits to Discipleship and Over Coming

The limits to discipleship is the greatest fear we all face in life and that is "fear", itself. We fear the dark as children, we fear the first day of school, whether it is nursery or public education. We fear the first day on our first job or a new job. We fear speaking in public, we fear the move to ownership of a home. This fear is the unknown, the unknown of what "if's". What if they don't like me, what if I cannot answer a question put to me, what if I give the wrong answers? This thought can be crippling and suppress one taking their rightful place in the kingdom of God. God create each of us with a function within His kingdom, and true discipleship should take us to that place. Not on our own, but the promise that He gave, that he would be with us until the end. So I guess you could say another part of fear is our lack of trust in God to keep his promise. As long as we remain in the safe confines of the comfortable, minimal growth will occur. Biblical faith compels us to take risk. It is popular wisdom that God will not give us more than we can handle. More accurately God promises to be with us in whatever situation that risky faith has led us into.⁴⁹ Matthew 17:20 (KJV) "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Whenever I find myself in a fearful position I remind myself that others have traveled this road and were able to overcome and I am at least equal to them and in some cases I may even be better. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,

⁴⁹ Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple: Eight Sessions for Mentoring and Discipleship*, 104.

“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Everyday leaders face hundreds of challenges to their intentions to be servant leaders and to encourage the heart of others. Our adversary is waiting every day to get us to be ego-driven, to be self-serving. EGO stands for edging God out. The temptations of life, particularly false pride and fear, make it easy for us to edge God out as the focus of our worship, as our source of security and self-worth and as our primary audience and judge.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ James M. Kouzes, Barry Z. Posner, John C. Maxwell, David McAllister-Wilson, Patrick Lencioni, Nancy Ortberg, Ken Blanchard *Christian Reflections on Leadership the Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 115.

PATH TO DISCIPLESHIP

I recall as I think of it and looking back over my own journey to discipleship I can see glimpses of the "Wounded Warrior." An aspect of the spiritual journey formation involves becoming a "Wounded Healer" in the community of Christendom as we become Christ like. The "Wounded Healer", I had heard of, but I was not familiar with it as a community within our society. However as I briefly research the idea in another course, I became keenly aware it is just what Jesus Christ intended for us as he instructed. (NKJV) James 5: 14 "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord". Elders, not in chronologically age or only but in experience as a result of having lived and experienced similar or same condition, or has observed and as such has gained some wisdom i.e. knowledge.

The wounded healer is a phenomenon that occurs between the healer and the one receiving the healing. Psychologist Carl Jung used the phrase to describe experiences in the relationship between the analyst and their patient, where the analyst would examine themselves and experience depths of their own pain, in order to probe, understand, and heal the pain of their patient. Jung expressed that the experience was entirely necessary to the healing process, as well as warned of its many dangers. Jung was an analyst.⁵¹

The "Wounded Healer" does not have to be a professional psychologist or therapist it can be a friend or anyone who hears the pain of another and feels sympathy. The listener also feels empathy for the pain of another as the hearer sees and considers the anguish of another. As the hearer listens it brings to mind similar, or the same pain of suffering that has occurred in the

⁵¹ Khris Krepcik, "The Wounded Healer," *The Hooded Sage* (2011), accessed June 2, 2016, <http://www.thehoodedsage.com/2011/10/the-wounded-healer/>

hearer's life. As the hearer continues to listen, they have to guard against reliving their own pain, anguish, suffering and falling back into needed healing once again. The hearer must guard against adopting or taking on the pain or views of the wounded. There is a word of caution against becoming self-absorbed as you play the role of the healer, do not become self-destructive in trying to heal the pain of another. I am reminded of another scripture that is applicable (NKJV) Matthew 17:21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

We come to Jesus as wounded vessels. We confess our sins and ask Jesus to come into our lives and to make and shape us anew. We then repent, we see the world and our surroundings different way and our approach to our surroundings are different. We now allow Christ to use us to bring out his desire for our life. Our life now becomes one that is directed by and for Christ.

Consequently everyone has phases that they go through in their spiritual formation. The "Wounded Healer" process has phases that the healer finds themselves going through with caution along the way. Whereas there is no caution or pause when we surrender to Jesus Christ. Spiritual formation occurs first when we stop running from Jesus Christ and we surrender to Jesus Christ. Second we allow our Spirit to be directed by Jesus Christ. Third we are saved, and set aside for the work of Christ. Fourth we now serve Jesus Christ in our new selves, the four S's, Surrender, Spirit, Saved, and finally we serve.

In his book *The King Jesus Gospel*, Scot McKnight argues that we have come to equate the gospel with "the plan of salvation" that is usually summarized in four points, God loves you,

you messed up, Jesus died for you, accept Jesus into your heart.⁵² Then we have Jesus message in Mark 1:14-15 (KJV) Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Then there is the verse that screams Acts 1:8 (KJV) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Imagine you hear these instructions. Is it instructions or just statements? And keeping it in context, their end of the world concept may have perceived the world ending with what they knew, and that would mean the end of the world was probably Rome, which was a long ways off. Couple that with the disciples/Apostle belief that the return of Christ would occur within their own life time and they would see the return of Christ. Add to that the suppressive reign of Rome and the Samaritans who were also the enemy of Christian Jews.

Mulholland writes that there are **four stages of the classical Christian pilgrimage**. They are the **awakening** where one encounters God, or with oneself. The encounter comes with two emotions, a comfort and a threat. Followed by **purgation** described as a renunciation of blatant sins and willful disobedience. The sins may be unconscious sins and omission followed by coming to trust God. Then there is the stage of **illumination** described as total consecration to

⁵² Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 73 as cited in Greg Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple: Eight Sessions for Mentoring and Discipleship*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 2016), 28.

God in love, God experienced within, unceasing prayer and finally union in the fourth and final stage **prayer of quietness, full union and ecstatic union.**⁵³

My encounter occurred right after retirement. I had no plans following retirement. I was looking forward to just being on my own schedule. I was a member of a local church, in as much as I occasionally would attend Sunday bible study followed by a Worship Service, I had no affiliation beyond that. I was then offered a job that initially I turned down because I just did not want to be in another structured environment. The job would mean relocating, my four children who had either finished or were in college or in military service. My bride was within one year of retirement. I was not living the life of a Christian man. I was not a criminal but I was not what I was supposed to be. I finally agreed to accept the job offer with my wife's blessing. She was going to finish her last year of teaching and if I found the job not to my liking I would just come home. For one year we lived apart and we saw each other on weekends. I either flew to Virginia or she flew to Ohio. At the end of the year I was transferred to Atlanta, Georgia where my wife joined me. From that day up to and including now my life has been like I am on a gliding path. I am on this gliding path with someone else at the controls.

When I arrived in Atlanta in 1996, I knew a few people through a social club of my bride. One day I ran into one of the few people I knew while visiting someone else I knew in Atlanta. When asked how I was settling in Atlanta, I responded in a way that I don't quite understand my

⁵³ M. Robert Mulholland Jr, *Invitation To A Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 81.

response was "I need to find a church to attend". My response gave rise to an invitation to attend a church that was located near the home I had purchased.

I began to attend Sunday School and Sunday Worship Service, then midweek bible study. I noticed right away there were several men in the men's bible study class who appeared to possess some knowledge of scripture and of God. I was awoken to the fact that though I had attended church before I had not retained anything that I was taught. I knew nothing, but right away I wanted to know. One particular person was a retired minister, I befriended him along with another gentleman who I had observed, who also knew scripture and God. I later learn that their expressed knowledge mirrored their life at least what I could observe. I don't remember how it came about but the three of us began to come together to study the scripture led by the retired minister. Until my ordination as a deacon in my church in 2005, I continued to study and unexpectedly the minister died.

The times studying the scripture with him had waded a flame to know more about God and how he works in our life. That flame continues to burn with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge of God and the things of God. My **awakening**, propelled me into the second stage of my Christian pilgrimage, purgation to wit renunciation of blatant sins and willful disobedience. At this stage I felt I could repair, fix, and do anything until the news came in 1996 or 1997 that my bride's heart was damaged during chemical treatment for breast cancer. I am now confronted with something I cannot fix with all my supposedly "skills".

Initially the treatment would be medication and a strict adherence to reduced activities. What a blow for both of us. She had taught physical education for over twenty five years and had

taken care of herself to stay healthy and fit. Now purgation for me, I must find trust in God where I am basically a spectator in this game. Now to stage three, illumination. "God I need you now like I have never before. I am not sure what to pray for but Lord please heal my wife. She has been a very loving wife, she is more than I deserve. I have not been what I should have been. Please give me another chance."

Following a series of ups and downs my wife was scheduled for a heart transplant in 2012. On this memorable day as I sat in the hospital waiting room surrounded by family and friends. I eased off alone to call on the Lord. "Please be in the operating room and let all those in attendance be at their very best. Let them recall all that you have poured into each of them, collectively and individually. Concluding my prayer I was suddenly at peace, no apprehension. So much at peace I was afraid that I was taking God for granted not knowing that what I was really doing was trusting him, thus stage four of my Christian pilgrimage as stated by Mulholland when he penned God calls us out of that unlikeness (awakening) and moves us to an increasing relinquishment of the unlikeness (purgation); this leads to a new structure of being and doing (**illumination**) and eventually culminates in Christlikeness of spirit and behavior at that particular point of our life (**union**).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid., 80.

My pilgrimage is now in a state of illumination I still try to control things and I still see myself doing things to try to manipulate life, to obtain my desired result as I think it should be in keeping with my perception of God's instructions for life.

The Journey Starts at Home

Talking about planting a seed and teaching, as I thought about the broad meaning of evangelism/teaching along with evangelism's application I interviewed my own son. He is unchurched in that he does not attend church that I am aware except on Father's Day. On Father's Day in response to his question to me about what do I want for Father's Day? I tell him I want the family to worship together on that day. Below are his responses to each of the questions in bold.

I was careful to not sound accusatorial or that I was preaching to him, but to listen to his response to the questions (in bold), following the questions:

a. How would you define God?

An entity/being that some believe created the universe

b. Can a person know God? (And, if so, how)?

To "know" is left to interpretation--for those who believe, and quite the opposite for the ones who do not

c. Who was/is Jesus Christ?

An entity/being believed to be the son of God.

d. What is the biggest problem, in your opinion, facing humankind today?

Lack of unity

e. What is sin (and how do you define it)?

**The act of not following the "norm," according to God's word, written in the bible by man-
by which this ideology is based**

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f. How do you feel about the church (and/or Christianity) and why do you feel this way?

I do not feel and one way about the church. It is supposed to be a place of worship, but any place can be--it's personal. Christianity is too broad and vague for me to formulate a thought or opinion.

g. How would you define the concept of salvation?

The process of being saved, or rescued from possible harm

h. Do you think that there's only one way to reach God? (Please elaborate)

Uncertain

i. What happens after we die?

It is believed that our spirit leaves our body (its shell) and roams

j. How would you define a Christian?

A person that believes in Christ

k. How does a person get to Heaven?

Supposedly by living a life based on God's word

l. What is your philosophy of life?

To live and let live. What is "right" and credible to some, may not ring true with others.

Respect one another's differences.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ (Charles H. Haynes, 2015)

While being careful to just listen and not trying to convince him he's wrong or what he should think. It may be helpful to understand my son's age, he is 50 years young in July of this year. He is unmarried and has never been married, no children and lives alone.

I blame myself for him not being in church. It was my fault that I did not at an early age take and involve him in church on a consistent basis. My son also share in the blame because he is responsible for his own salvation and though I did not involve him in church but, I pray that God in His time will call my son.

I put the same question to my son two years later with his amended thoughts recorded in red. You see there is very little change and his life style has not change. You know the saying, "No change in life, then there is no change in the person."

a. How would you define God?

An entity/being that some believe created the universe

b. Can a person know God? (And if so, how)?

To "know" is left to interpretation--for those who believe, and quite the opposite for the ones who do not

c. Who was/is Jesus Christ?

An entity/being believed to be the son of God.

d. What is the biggest problem, in your opinion, facing humankind today?

Lack of unity

Ethnocentrism

e. What is sin (and how do you define it)?

**The act of not following the "norm," according to God's word, written in the bible by man-
by which this ideology is based**

The ideology of not adhering to the teaching of God as it is written in the bible.

f. How do you feel about the church (and/or Christianity) and why do you feel this way?

**I do not feel any one way about the church. It is supposed to be a place of worship, but any
place can be--it's personal. Christianity is too broad and vague for me to formulate a
thought or opinion.**

g. How would you define the concept of salvation?

The process of being saved, or rescued from possible harm

The process of living a life of piety.

h. Do you think that there's only one way to reach God? (Please elaborate)

Uncertain

i. What happens after we die?

It is believed that our spirit leaves our body (its shell) and roams

j. How would you define a Christian?

A person that believes in Christ

k. How does a person get to Heaven?

Supposedly by living a life based on God's word

l. What is your philosophy of life?

**To live and let live. What is "right" and credible to some, may not ring true with
others. Respect one another's differences.**

Closing Remarks

There is a deeper meaning in the Great Commission. The commission calls all believers to be actively involved, in not only following His teachings so that we may be more alike but also share with those we come in contact with whether intentionally or just happen-stance, the gospel. We have adopted an unbiblical and costly distinction that says you can be a Christian without being a disciple. As commonly understood, a Christian is someone who has trusted Christ for forgiveness of sin and been assured of life forever with Jesus. The focus is on the benefit we received from Jesus, not relinquishing our life to follow Jesus. Although our current definition of a Christian does not contain a need to actually follow Jesus, a disciple is someone who is following Jesus in order to learn how to be more like him.⁵⁶

I don't see how you can reach the point of truly calling one's self a Christian and not want to tell someone and recognize the saving grace that comes only through knowing and accepting Christ as your savior. How can you remain quiet, being a Christian and following the commandments, when you have by acquiesce to be an evangelist. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19-22) KJV.

⁵⁶ Ogden, *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple: Eight Sessions for Mentoring and Discipleship*, 25.

One of the usual processes is that an individual accepts the call to fellowship with Christ by an expression of faith. They are baptized, then they are declared members of the local church. Often that is the end and, the new member sees themselves as a Christian. It is seen as a requirement to "get to heaven," nothing less nor more. Most of the time there is no explanation or edification to them as a new member that there are certain activities that they should be inspired to perform as part of their Christian life, such as attending Worship Services, Bible Study and other church activities in an act of support of the local church. According to the New Testament and thus upon the authority of God, what makes one a believer or Christian? Answers to this question are varied, sometime falling so low that the title *Christian* is assigned to one who merely holds citizenship in a so-called Christian country.⁵⁷

Fellowship with Christ rest on us making a decision to join a local church but, the truth of the matter is universal church membership is triggered by the Holy Spirit within each of us responding to the divine will of God. The image of the potter and the clay, used in a specific and somewhat narrow reference (Rom. 9:20-23), expresses Paul's whole philosophy of history. He regards "everything" that happens as part of God's intention for his children (Eph. 1:11-12), so that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28), his purpose being that we might be "conformed to the image of his Son" (v.29).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 7, 74.

⁵⁸ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 124.

A great opportunity is missed when there is no requisite for membership. The edification class prior to membership in the local church for new believers to explain the expectation for all members. Expectations are set regarding new member classes, tithing, attendance, participation in Sunday School, and adherence to doctrinal guidelines.⁵⁹

After studying nearly two thousand churches in America for the past six years, I have heard prospective members and new converts ask this question with a slight change of words: "What must I do to join this church?" Unfortunately, the leaders of the vast majority of churches responded with a nod to walk an aisle or to fill out a membership card. (*Go to our app and click on our (About Us) then go to the membership tab and complete the membership application and you will have started your membership process.*) Nothing else was expected or required. Is it any wonder that the membership standards of civic organizations are usually much higher than those of local churches?⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Rainer, "High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church", 13.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 49.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the Greek text is very revealing. One gets a true sense of the thoughts that were being conveyed in the conversation and/or commandments of God as well as the writings themselves at the time they were written, keeping in mind the recipient of the writings. The research was narrowly constructed to reviewing and focusing on what others have wrote. Focusing on four key words in the text of Matthew 28:19-20, The Great Commission. Those four words are poreuthentes-having gone, mathēteusate-disciple, baptizontes-baptizing, and διδάσκοντες-teaching.

The research then turns to what, one must consider, and ^{" "}do before "having gone."
One must examine their own walk, and ask, "Am I"
Examine ones walk, and ask am I a carbon copy of Jesus, at least most of the time. Realizing we are all flawed, and where and to whom am I expected to go? When I arrive, "having gone," what am I to do? By whose authority or whose ambassador, or further who do I favor as "having gone?"

Πορευθέντες οὖν **μαθητεύσατε** πάντα τὰ ἔθνη **βαπτίζοντες** αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ
having gone therefore **disciple** all the nations **baptizing** them in the

ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετείλαμην ὑμῖν καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ
teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you And Behold I

μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος
with you am all the days until the completion of the age⁶¹

⁶¹ <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/matthew/28-19.htm>. Accessed November 1, 2017.

Believers are not making disciples we are merely helping to shape and mold. The final step is the work of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the will of God for his purpose. We are "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" Ephesians 2:12 (KJV). The idea of making Believers, is that we are not commanded to "make disciples", we are call to live out the commandments of God. As a result those we interact with as well as those seeking to be "*disciples*" in our daily lives will be an impacted by what they see in the life of the believer. As you live shower, "*baptizing*", those in your surroundings with the word of God and share how God in your life has changed you to a new person. The Great Commission is more of living your life aligned with all of God's commandments at all times by doing so you are "*teaching*."

The idea of The Great Commission is a process that continues in our life, "*all the days until the completion of the age*." There is no retirement, there is no "having done enough," as we sometimes say about our lives, but we must go on until "*the completion of the age*." In terms of ministry, people are everything to us because they are everything to Christ. Our job is to learn how to be healthy, sanctified connectors,⁶² "*all the nations*."

⁶² Beth Moore *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things: Arming Yourself in the Age of Seduction* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 148.

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