

SHARING CHRIST

Leader pages on pp. 134-137

THE POINT:
WE ARE TO INVITE
OTHERS INTO A
RELATIONSHIP
WITH CHRIST.

MATTHEW 28:18-20; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

Matt. ^{28:18} Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

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² Cor. ^{5:16} From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, yet now we no longer know him in this way.

MEMORY VERSE

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

¹⁸ Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

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²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

²¹ He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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KEYWORDS

"... Given to me" (v. 18)—The basis for Jesus's instructions to the disciples was His relationship with God the Father who gave Jesus this authority (11:27).

In Christ (v. 17)—Perhaps Paul's favorite term for describing believers, the apostle used in Christ almost ninety times in his

letters. The words especially refer to the relationship and unity believers have with Christ which results in their unity with each other.

Reconciled (v. 18)—To be reconciled means to be changed in one's state or position from being an enemy to being a friend.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO WITH HIS MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION?

“Sharing is caring” is a popular phrase that communicates that people demonstrate that they care when they share what they have with others. We see many examples of this in our daily lives. As a teacher, I witnessed this in action when during the time of recess students would share the ball on the playing field with each other. As a parent, I saw this phrase come to life when one of my children shared with or even gave away their toys to other children.

Shoppers who run across a great sale or a fantastic deal tend to share that information with those they know and even with complete strangers. You want them to benefit from the deal just as you have. The excitement and enthusiasm that is displayed when sharing about a clothing sale, a place to get quality merchandise for cheap, or a place to save on gas can be infectious. People tend to continue to share what they deem as good news. This is sharing should look like in the body of Christ. Christians have the best news of all. As we enter into this lesson, let each of us make the necessary changes in our thoughts and feelings so we can share the best deal of all with the same enthusiasm as we do temporal things.

Take Action // Matthew 28:18-20

I grew up in a church where evangelism happened on Tuesday night at 7:30 in the neighborhoods surrounding the church building. Tuesday night visitation meant faithful church members would visit church guests and prospects, always with an aim to share about Jesus. As a young adult, I completed C.W.T (Continuing Witness Training) and learned to make door-to-door cold calls to give a brief gospel presentation to anyone who would open the door and listen.

Over the years, society has changed. (Not many people open their doors to strangers after dark these days.) And so have the church’s methods for reaching people far from God. Whatever our method, sharing our faith should not be just a once-a-week thing we do separate from the rest of our lives. Jesus’s wording in this passage suggests sharing the Good News is meant to be incorporated into the believer’s everyday goings and doings.

Reading English translations of this passage, it seems the primary command is to “go.” But the primary command is actually to “make disciples.”



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The other verbs in these verses are participles (going, baptizing, teaching). A literal translation might read, “going” or “as you go”, make disciples. It is assumed that the disciples will be going. Their everyday lives would take them in different directions, and they would move out of Jerusalem due to persecution there. God has a strategy for carrying the Good News of salvation to the ends of the earth. It simply requires we make disciples wherever God places us at a given time, whether that’s on the continent of Africa or in the small town of Benson, North Carolina.

Evangelicals emphasize missions and evangelism because we take seriously passages like Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. Christians say things like, “I wish I knew God’s will for my life in this situation.” Sometimes we focus on what we do not know, while neglecting what God has already made plain. Jesus wants us to make disciples. That can be intimidating but notice how Jesus framed this command based on His authority and His presence with us.

The word “all” (or some form of it) is interwoven throughout the following verses:

- All authority
- All nations
- All things (everything)
- All the days (always)

Because Jesus has authority over all nations, the gospel must go everywhere. Jesus insisted He was not just the Messiah for the Jews; He had come to save the world—Jews and Gentiles. Likewise, He intended for our witness to be for all people without discrimination.

What does it mean to “make disciples?” It involves introducing people to Christ and teaching them to follow Him and “all things” He commanded. Think of a disciple like an apprentice, someone who learns from another by watching and doing what they do. To disciple someone is to show and tell them how to live for Jesus.

In today’s climate, sharing your faith is not the politically correct thing to do. Our culture values letting everyone believe what they want and not offending anyone by talking about religion. As we obey, the Holy Spirit provides us the words to say and convicts the hearts of those who hear (Matt. 10:19-20).

WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU IN THE LIFESTYLE OF A DISCIPLE-MAKER YOU KNOW?



DIGGING DEEPER SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Chapters 5-7 in the book of Matthew is traditionally called the Sermon on the Mount. The location of Christ’s sermon to the multitude was on a hill overlooking the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is considered one of the most detailed teachings from Christ. It provides the reader with guidelines for living a true Christian life. The first section called the Beatitudes because each verse begins with the word “blessed” which means “happy.” These verses teach the necessary character qualities a person should exhibit in order to be a follower of Christ. One must be poor in spirit, mourning, humble, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness. Jesus also taught about prayer, how to pray, and what real obedience looks like. The Sermon on the Mount invites us to live under God’s grace while experiencing the benefits of living Christ-like.

Are there character qualities of the beatitudes that are hard to exemplify? Why?



Talk About Jesus //

2 Corinthians 5:16-19

Whether consumers are planning a trip, shopping online, going to a restaurant, looking for a movie to watch, or a book to read, reviews matter.

Surveyors found:

- 98% of consumers read customer reviews at least occasionally.
- 77% read reviews frequently or always.
- 93% say reviews impact their purchasing decisions.

Positive online reviews drive shoppers to purchase something more than other incentives, like discounts, coupons, free shipping, or loyalty and rewards programs.⁷

As followers of Jesus, we get to be the reviewers of His mercy and grace. By our relationship to Him, we have the right and responsibility to comment on what Jesus has done for us. Each of us has a “before” Jesus and an “after” Jesus. It’s this before and after that Paul described in 2 Corinthians 5:16-19, where he explained his mission to proclaim how Christ transformed him.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians largely to defend his reputation. False apostles in Corinth (11:13-15) had attacked Paul’s ministry. He had visited the Corinthian church and followed up with a letter harshly rebuking the Corinthians (2:3-4,9). Most believers there repented, accepting Paul’s authority (7:5-7). But some remained unconvinced.

With 2 Corinthians, Paul appealed to the unconvinced and encouraged the repentant with a defense of his ministry.

So complete was the transformation Jesus made in Paul’s life that Paul viewed himself as a new creature. The old self was gone; everything was new. Paul explained this change in his letter to the Philippians, when he described his former life as a prominent Pharisee zealously persecuting the church: “But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ.” (Phil. 3:7-8).

Paul’s view of the world changed. His passions and priorities changed. His words, actions, and attitudes reversed completely. You can find Paul’s before-and-after story detailed in Acts 9 and Acts 22. It’s dramatic, complete with blinding light and vision of the risen Christ. Not everyone’s story is that way. But every follower of Jesus has a story:

- My life before I met Jesus.
- How I came to know Jesus.
- My life since I met Jesus.

God is reconciling lost people to Himself through His Son. And to the reconciled, He has assigned the ministry of telling others how they can be saved. At its most basic, this ministry is just telling our story . . . writing our review.

HOW CAN YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY BE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN MAKING DISCIPLES?

Be Ambassadors //

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

When Paul told believers, “We are ambassadors for Christ,” in essence, he was saying, “You’ve been sent as Christ’s representative to those hostile toward Him. Your job is to bring them to peace with God.” Indeed, being an ambassador for Christ is not just about our speaking for Him; it’s about God speaking through us, pleading with people to repent and trust Him for salvation. Serving as

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Christ's ambassador is not a casual responsibility. Eternity is at stake.

Paul explained how reconciliation is possible in the final verse. We need reconciliation in the first place because we find ourselves in an impossible predicament.

Jesus exchanged His righteousness for our sin. He suffered and died to pay the penalty we deserved. Consequently, those who trust in Him for salvation receive Jesus's righteousness and have their sinned wiped out by the debt Jesus paid. The cancellation of our sin allows us to be reconciled to a holy God.

The word translated "reconciled" is the Greek word *katallasso*, which means to change or exchange. It was often used in reference to exchanging money, but it was also used generally to mean exchanging one thing for another. Sometimes, *katallasso* was used in reference to changing someone from an enemy to a friend. And that's how Paul used it here. Jesus's death allows us, His enemies, to become friends with God (Rom. 5:10). Forgiveness of sin and peace with God is possible. That's the Good News we get to share as ambassadors for Christ.

WHAT PRACTICAL STEPS COULD YOU TAKE TO BE A MORE FAITHFUL AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST?

DID YOU KNOW?

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) promotes a great evangelistic tool called "The 3 Circles." It is quick, simple and visual. It helps you to share the good news in 3 steps. The first circle states that God has a design for our lives. If we live according to His purpose, we can live according to His plan. God wants to have a relationship with us. The problem is that sometimes we put our desire above God's desire and that is called sin. This leads to the second circle. Sin leads to brokenness. We try to mend our brokenness in different ways. It feels like pain and emptiness. We tend to fix the brokenness sometimes through drugs, alcohol, sex, selfishness, money, fame, etc. But the only way to fix it is Jesus. This leads to the third circle. Jesus lived a perfect life and died for our sins. Jesus received the punishment for our sins. He heals the brokenness in our lives.

Biblical Truth: When we become disciples of Christ, we have a responsibility to make other disciples.

How can we be more proactive in sharing the truth of the gospel with others?

LIVE IT

How will you respond to the lesson?

We can identify the ministry of Jesus through several ways. He used miracles to show His power. He showed through love His character. His mission was revealed through His teachings. These things lead us to how to have a productive relationship with God. Our lives should reflect our relationship with Jesus so others may see. Let do this in the following ways:

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- **Commit to Prayer.** You may have encountered someone that is difficult to love. Commit to praying for them daily. Ask the Lord to help you love them the way He loves them.
- **Commit to Memory.** Commit to learning the Beatitudes this week to memory.
- **Commit to Action.** God wants our time. Write a 24-hour journal of what you do on a daily basis. Take a personal inventory to see what actions needs to change in order to reflect more time with the Lord.

DAILY READINGS

1. IT'S PERSONAL // COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Since, Christianity is no longer the religion of most Americans, America has been redefined as post-Christian. But truthfully, there is no such thing as a Christian nation, nor cultural Christianity. True Christianity cannot be legislated in the halls of Congress, nor made into law by the striking of a gavel. It cannot be received as a right or privilege at birth. Nor gifted as an inheritance. Moreover, church membership is no guarantee you are a Christian. Christianity is personal and a matter of the heart. Each person must accept the biblical truths of Jesus's virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, resurrection and promised return for themselves.

With the Lord's help, we grow in living for Jesus through His Word, and by His Spirit.

2. JUDGMENT FREE ZONE // 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

When the Spirit provides the opportunity for us to share the good news of Jesus, we need not shrink back but pray to create a judgment free zone where all are welcome. Jesus has left us several examples. One is a midday meeting with a woman at Jacob's well. The first issue of potential judgment, religion. She was a Samaritan, Jesus a Jew. Jews viewed Samaritans as half-breeds, due to intermarriage with non-Jews. The second issue, gender. In that day, women were persona non grata, nevertheless Jesus starts the conversation. The third issue, she was an outcast. A woman alone, at a well, at midday, shouts rejected.

Our issues don't repel Jesus. In fact, they are what draws Him to us.

3. ALL ABOUT JESUS // 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4

The Bible says that God, our Savior, desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He longs for all people to respond to His love, accept His gift of grace through Jesus Christ, and be transformed by the Spirit. His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power has no

boundaries. His mercy has no end. His forgiveness is inexhaustible. And His patience delays His return, for He desires no one to be lost. When we share Christ, it is all about what He has done to save us.

Witnessing is all about Jesus. It is all about how He has changed us with the eternal truths in His Word.

4. ME, AN EVANGELIST? // 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

The Bible confirms all believers have been given the ministry of reconciliation. From the pulpit to the pew. No believer is exempt. So, why are we hesitant to co-partner with the Holy Spirit in the harvest of souls? Fear! Yes, fear has closed many a mouth. There is fear of rejection, ridicule. Fear of loss of friendship. Fear of not knowing what to say or when to say it. Our excuses are endless. But fear is a liar and Satan's primary weapon. And it works. We can never make peace with fear. It's not going away. There will probably never be a time when we don't experience a level of unease, sharing the gospel. However, that cannot stop us from carrying out the Great Commission.

So, what's a saint to do? Prepare. Pray. Feel the fear and do it anyway.

5. TELL IT ALL // ACTS 1:8; MATTHEW 28:19-20

A young man rushed home after a Billy Graham meeting, burst into his apartment and told his roommate he had received Jesus as His Savior. His roommate smiled saying he had been living the Christian life for years and hoped his friend would trust Jesus. The new convert was surprised, then confessed it was because he felt like a failure around his roommate, who lived such a perfect life, he had invited Jesus to be his Savior. The new convert asked his roommate why he had not told him how he was able to live the way he lived, or how he could know Jesus, too.

Our Christian witness has two parts: displaying a transformed life and telling others what Jesus has done for the world and for us.