

Jesus' Commands for Us

Introduction

A mission is a task we have been given to accomplish. A co-mission is a task we have been given to accomplish in partnership with someone else as a partner. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He spoke it to His eleven disciples ... and by extension, to us today. That commission is recorded at least four different times in the New Testament – each with a slightly different emphasis. It's obvious that Jesus didn't simply give this command *once* – He gave it over and over so that the disciples would know how important it was to Him.

In Ephesians 3:10, Paul writes that *"the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church."* The church is God's vehicle to present the gospel of God. As we plant churches throughout a region, we can saturate that region with the proclamation of the gospel.

Let's take a look at each of those statements about the Great Commission ...

We are Sent – John 20:21

John 20:21 *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

Our God is a sending God. He is missional. He is the God who sends His people to all cultures. And because it is God's will for us to go into all the world, there are no permanently locked doors. God can open any door. Who would have imagined the collapse of the former Soviet Union? Or church planting exploding in China? I

It's important to note that there is no single culture that God prefers. He sends us everywhere. We must take the gospel message and adapt it to the needs and nuances of each particular culture.

Church planting is the key to accomplishing this. New churches must relevantly proclaim the gospel in words and ways that their culture can understand and respond to.

Finally, this commission is always accompanied by the presence of the Holy Spirit or the promise of His presence with us. Jesus communicated peace to His disciples – peace that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit. (You'll see the presence of the Holy Spirit or the presence of Jesus in each of these commands.)

To all Peoples – Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

This command begins with Jesus proclaiming He has all authority in heaven and earth. No earthly king or government controls our Lord. He is King of heaven and earth. We bow to no

one but Him. And we are called to obey Him supremely. (Please balance that with Paul's teaching in Romans 13 to submit to governmental authority when appropriate.)

All the nations is "Pante ta ethne" in Greek. It refers not to political boundaries but ethnic groups. Every ethnic group (villages, sub-cultures) must have the gospel presented clearly to them.

For a moment, let's take a look at Paul's ministry. He said to IMITATE ME! Take a few moments to study each of the three passages below. You will see that Paul used a different strategy in each city ... there were unique approaches to unique people groups. But even though there were different beginning points, the "end point" of each of his messages was the same: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ – that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that there is salvation in no one else. Take a few minutes and study these passages:

Acts 13:1-3, 16 ff – Psidian Antioch

Acts 14:6-18 – Lystra

Acts 17:22 ff – Mars Hill

With a Message – Luke 24:44-49

Luke 24:44-49 *Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

Jesus commands us to go with a message. That message was repentance and forgiveness of sins. It is to be proclaimed everywhere.

Questions to answer:

What is repentance?

How do we explain repentance and forgiveness in the 21st century?

Now read this passage:

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 *Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Paul calls us ambassadors. What does an ambassador do? Who dictates the message the ambassador proclaims?

In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about the stumbling block of the cross. A stumbling block is something you trip over. It causes us to miss the path of God. Answer these questions:

Why do people stumble over the cross?

How does the cross make people stumble?

Empowered for the Task – Acts 1:6-8

Finally, the fourth command of Jesus tells us that we are empowered for the task. God desires us to be equipped for the mission – and the necessary tool for accomplishing His commands is the empowering of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

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.*

This passage in Acts (read the context in verses 5-8) tells me two things:

1. Be focused on the right things

We are not to be focused and caught up in Biblical prophecy. So many people get caught up in that. But Jesus says, stay focused on the mission.

Another aspect of this is that we must trust the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of new believers, new pastors, new churches. Give them freedom. Don't try to control too much. You should seek to *influence* them, but not *control* them. There's a big difference!

2. Be focused on the right places

Jesus says, start in Jerusalem – but don't stay there. Go to Judea (the surrounding areas), and to Samaria (I take that to mean those living close to us but with a different culture), and finally to the ends of the earth.

Conclusion

Do you know that everybody thinks it is somebody else's job to go to the ends of the earth? Jesus tells us that it is *our responsibility*. There were two primary churches in the book of Acts: Jerusalem (which was an inward-focused church) and Antioch (which was focused outwardly). Which type of church are you?