

CORE

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A FIFTEEN-MINUTE DAILY GUIDE
TO BUILD **YOUR BIBLE IQ** IN A YEAR

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Our Co-Mission

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

—MATTHEW 28:18–20

Question: What's the mission of the church?

Global evangelism is not *our* mission; it's *God's* mission. It's merely our *co*-mission. Hence, we call it the Great Commission. We're not trying to evangelize the world on our own; we're merely trying to partner with God in what he's already doing in our midst to rescue the world he loves.

This is a crucial concept for Christians. The world is not our responsibility but God's. Ours is merely to be available to go where God needs us to go and to be who we already are, influencing those whom we already have a relationship with. That's the implication of the Greek word for "go." It could literally be rendered "as you are going." In other words, "As you go about your business, remember to make Jesus famous." We don't need marketing skills, sales tactics, or intellectual answers to people's questions. We simply need to follow Jesus and help others walk along with us.

The Great Commission is simple: walk with people as you walk with Jesus. Before long, they'll meet each other.

The Great Commission isn't complicated. It is, however, a big deal. In fact, all four Evangelists have their own version of the commission, as does the apostle Paul:

[Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15–16)

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:47–48)

"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (John 20:21–23)

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

All of the Call

Clearly the Great Commission calls for "all hands on deck." Every Christian in every vocation at all times is a participant in expanding God's global enterprise. How?

It feels intimidating to share our faith. What if someone asks us a question we can't answer? What if my life falls short of the good example to back up my words? What if my friends reject me because of my witness or I lose my job? These are all valid questions that Jesus dealt with in the commission.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). Because of Jesus's impeccable life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, God made him ruler and judge of the world. When we enter his service, we carry his authority. As his ambassadors, our words carry his weight. Paul made that clear in 2 Corinthians 5:20: it's all about "God making his appeal through us." Consequently, we have the authority to actually offer forgiveness of sins on Jesus's behalf.

Obviously, we can do that only by his authorized channel of grace through faith. In other words, we cannot offer forgiveness to anyone who hasn't pledged allegiance to Jesus. But let's not miss the magnitude of this authority. We offer God's grace through Jesus's blood. This is not a job reserved for a priest or bishop but the right and responsibility of every Christ follower.

In political terms, we're Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our declarations are not empty pageantry. Ambassadors bear the weight of the government that authorizes them. As an ambassador of Christ, you can declare a person a friend of God or his enemy based on that person's response to Jesus.

So if someone asks you a question you can't answer, that does little to affect the declaration you're able to make. But what if it's an essential question that needs an answer?

Imagine you're an ambassador sitting at a conference table with foreign leaders. They ask about a process of peace. You don't know the answer. Your president is listening in on a conference call. Don't you suppose he would send you an email or shoot you a text with the proper response? Of course.

This is precisely the promise Jesus made: "When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:19–20). If our fear of not having answers keeps us from sharing our story, it's because we lack faith in Jesus

to keep his word. There's no way God is going to abandon you if you open your mouth. Why? Because this is *his* mission and *your* commission. He's more committed to the process than we will ever be.

"Make disciples of *all nations*" (Matthew 28:19). One of the most extraordinary things about Jesus is his global aspirations. You probably couldn't have predicted that during his three-year ministry. After all, he focused on Israel, not foreigners. Prior to his death, he never ordered his disciples onto foreign soil. He never traveled outside the traditional boundaries of Israel. So why all of a sudden would he aim at global conquest?

The fact of the matter is that Jesus always had that in mind. He started with his own people and culture because the nation of Israel was the hope of the world. Even at the earliest stages, however, Jesus's ministry was always outward focused. His healings, preaching, and commands always push us further and further away from the center.

This is in stark contrast to virtually every other religious tradition that drives its adherents further inward. Through deeper devotion, more demanding rituals, or higher knowledge, the disciple of Islam or Judaism or Buddhism or whatever religion will seek a higher position in the religious hierarchy. But for Christians, it's our outward focus through evangelism and social service that fulfills our deepest obligations in Christ Jesus.

"Teaching them to observe *all that I have commanded you*" (verse 20). This is, at first, overwhelming. Who can possibly remember, let alone obey, all the commands of Jesus?

Well, they're not that hard to remember, since Jesus reduced all the commands of the Old Testament to two simple instructions: love God and love people (Matthew 22:37–40). While that's easy to memorize, it's impossible to perfect. That's why it requires teaching. The role of every Christian is to help apply these commands. It's the role of the mother with her children, the husband with his wife, the employer with his workers, the coach with her players. Wherever God places you, your purpose is clear: to help at least one person take at least one step toward God and others.

Lest we think this is too much to ask, Jesus added to the commission a

promise: “Behold, *I am with you always*, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Because this is God’s mission and our co-mission, he’s fully prepared to be fully present. Jesus himself will continue to be with us through the Holy Spirit, who will guide, chide, and provide the wisdom, power, and opportunities.

The completion of this command will usher in the new age of eternity. When our full obedience fulfills his commission, his presence will become tangible, and our troubles will meet the end of time.

Make Disciples

Matthew 28:18–20 packs a powerful punch. The commission is a single sentence with only one verb, which happens to be an imperative. It isn’t “baptizing.” That’s not our command. Nor is it “go.” We may or may not be sent to far-flung places. The singular command of this commission is to “make disciples.”

That command comes with considerable freight, to be sure. There are shelves of books on discipleship. All kinds of authors argue for all kinds of methods. Most of these can be helpful. Many of the books are insightful. Nonetheless, right here, right now, let’s keep this simple. In a single sentence, *a disciple is a learner*—a student, so to speak.

However, the particular type of learning in Jewish culture had less to do with information and more to do with transformation. It was more about behavior than about books. It’s what we would call mentoring or life coaching. A learner would observe and imitate the practices a mentor would model. That’s the core of the commission, and it’s the obligation of every Christ follower.

Though all of us are at different levels of maturity, all of us have someone who looks up to us. For some it’s a child; for others, an athlete; for others, a newbie at work. We can each leverage those relationships to help someone else walk a bit closer to Christ.

Before Jesus left this earth, he gave us one last command. The “all of the call” requires that “each one reach one.” From the moment we drip dry in the baptismery until we cross the threshold of eternity, our commission—our partnership with God—is to make Jesus famous.

Key Points

- The Great Commission is God's mission, not ours.
- This command is universal: reach *all* people in *all* places at *all* times.
- Our prime directive is to make disciples by mentoring others to loyalty to Jesus.

MATTHEW 25:41-26, COMMISSION, MATTHEW 28:18-20 27, GOSPEL, MARK 1: 28, FAITH

This Week

- Day 1:** Read the essay.
- Day 2:** Memorize Matthew 28:18–20.
- Day 3:** Read Acts 10–11.
- Day 4:** Meditate on Mark 16:15–16; John 20:21–23; 2 Corinthians 5:20.
- Day 5:** Identify by name one person whom you could bring at least one step closer to Jesus.

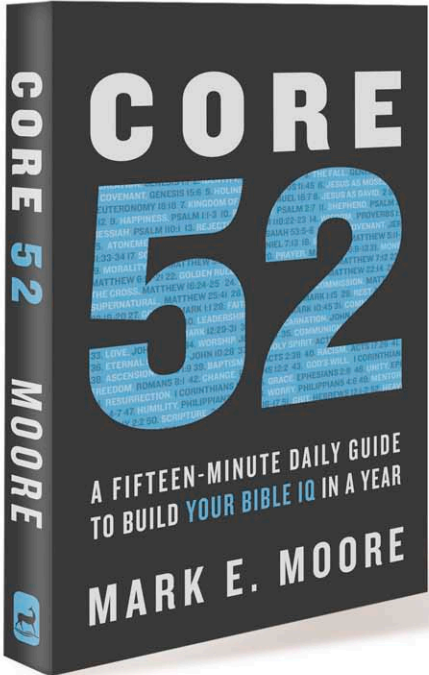
Overachiever Challenge: Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Bonus Read: Bill Bright, *How You Can Help Fulfill the Great Commission*.

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