



e-devotional

A monthly devotional on the spiritual formation of Christian workers
August 2004

Mandatory Disciplines: Witnessing

Scripture: Matthew 26:18-20

Task: Develop a target list of people you encounter regularly who are without Christ and without hope.

In February 1999, Sandra and I were privilege to travel to the interior of the Amazon to visit with missionaries that Monte Vista Chapel in Turlock, CA—our place of ministry at the time—supported. If you have read John Grisham’s novel, *The Testament*, you have a feel for the area we visited. We got to the village by traveling 3½ hours by outboard motor boat up the river that divides Brazil and Bolivia and feeds into the Amazon. The shores were lined with intense jungle where monkeys frolicked and boas salivated for delicacies. Macaws flew overhead and alligators lurked beneath the surface.

Manfred and Barbara Kern had been working among a group of people known as the Pachos Novos—a tribe of only 2,000 who spoke that particular language. Manfred is from Germany, Barbara from Turlock. They met as single missionaries, married and raised a family of three talented and handsome sons. Why would a couple devote their lives to living in a remote village, scratching out a living in very humble circumstances? That is the heart of our subject this morning.

Although this couple served another mission, the Alliance has multiple like stories of brilliant, devoted, and outstanding men and women who gave themselves without reservation to a remote people. Don and Alice Gibbons. Dr and Mrs David Thompson, Peggy Drake, Bob and Barbara Boston, and others of our district are contemporary examples.

The discipline of evangelism was outlined by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20...
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”

These verses are at the very end of Jesus’ ministry. You might think he decided that since he was leaving, he would lay a heavy command on his disciples, one that would motivate them for future years and be preached in missions conferences. No, it was more likely a summary of how Jesus lived his life in the presence of his disciples and became the modus operandi of the new church yet to be established.

There is one command in this passage. Often, the command is understood as, “go”, and the English makes it appear that way. However, it is a participle that could well be translated **going**. The one command is to make disciples and we are to do that by going, baptizing, and teaching.

The One Command Is Based on the Authority of Jesus

Jesus stated all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him. By whom? By God the Father. For what purpose? The purpose of the authority is self-evident from the command that follows. Jesus intended for his disciples to get his point and do what he commanded. The word for *authority* refers to the authority of position that is given to a person. Jesus, **under** the authority of the Father and living in obedience to the Father in coming to earth to be our Savior, is now **in** authority. He expects us to obey him. Jesus' power to carry out his mission was given to him by the Holy Spirit. His personal authority was in doing what he was sent to do.

In the same way, our power comes through the Holy Spirit who enables us to effectively serve God. The authority to do that work is in our commission to make disciples.

John Stott said in addressing the World Congress on Evangelism in 1966:

" The fundamental basis of all Christian missionary enterprise is the universal authority of Jesus Christ, 'in heaven and on earth.' If the authority of Jesus were circumscribed on earth, if he were but one of many religious teachers, one of many Jewish prophets, one of many divine incarnations, we would have no mandate to present him to the nations as the Lord and Savior of the world. If the authority of Jesus were limited in heaven, if he had not decisively overthrown the principalities and powers, we might still proclaim him to the nations, but we would never be able to 'turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26:18).

" Only because all authority on earth belongs to Christ dare we go to all nations. And only because all authority in heaven as well is his have we any hope of success" (*One Race*, 46).

The one command is to make disciples.

A disciple is one who is trained. A disciple is one who knows God. We have been so oriented in American evangelism to decisions that we forget what the decision is about. It's about following Jesus into a personal, intimate, working knowledge of God. Jesus did not say to go into the world and lead people to make decisions. To become a disciple is to make a clear, irrevocable commitment of total submission to Christ as Lord and Savior. The door into a disciplined life requires a decision, but living as a disciple is much more than walking through a door.

The task is enormous. Not only are there more than 5½ billion people in other nations who don't have a clue who Jesus is, there is the growing secularization of our own country. George Barna gave these statistics that I have simplified:

- 60% of those 60 and over attend church regularly.
- 50% of those in their fifties...
- 40% of those in their forties...
- 30% of those in their thirties...
- 20% of those in their twenties...

The point is that increasingly our culture is becoming secular without the commonality of a religious orientation, especially to Christianity. The task in our own country is undeniable. Our task in Turlock and the Central Valley is to make disciples. Our task includes "all nations." The word, *nations*, is really *ethnicities*. Jesus wasn't talking about political entities, but about people groups. God's vision is given in the Revelation where John saw "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'"

Where did this mass of redeemed humanity come from? Paul wrote to the church at Rome: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

God's only plan—he has no back-up plan—is for his people to obey his commission to make disciples in all ethnicities. That is the why of missions. That alone explains our missionaries. That also includes you and me and our neighbors and associates. Christianity is an aggressively evangelistic religion.

How the Command is to be Carried Out

It is Part of Daily Life—as you go

It is obvious that not every believer is called of God to go into cross-cultural work. The harvest field, however, includes everyone. You and I encounter people every day who are far from God. God has no other plan than that we should share his love and grace with them. That is the only way the task will be completed. It isn't the task of the Billy Graham's of the world, the clergy, or missionaries. The work belongs to us all. I'm not advocating the aggressive Green Beret style of evangelism. That has its place. Christianity would not be a strong religion were it not for intrepid evangelists doing the job. However, God has only equipped a few with those gifts whereas he has called every one of his people to obey his "everyday commission".

Today's cynicism requires the integrity of relationship. Beyond our culture, God calls people for the specialized work of cross-cultural evangelism. We call them missionaries. The command is carried out in daily life.

The Command Requires Building Believers

Baptism was the procedure of identifying with Jesus and disassociation from a previous irreligious lifestyle or religious devotion to some other deity. I am using it to refer to the process of building believers in their faith. The tragedy of the church in America is that so many churches devote their full energies to this one thing. Everything is designed to help believers grow. They have no strategy or plan to reach unchurched, lost people. Jesus' plan was for his church to have a balance of ministry of winning lost people, building believers and equipping workers in the harvest.

The One Command is Achieved by Equipping Workers

Jesus said we make disciples by teaching believers to obey everything he has taught us. That is equipping workers for the harvest. When the Bible speaks of workers, it does not have in mind Sunday school teachers, elders, deacons, session members, or other church workers. The worker is always in the harvest. God is concerned about the harvest of lost people for whom he gave his life. Jesus told us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into the harvest.

Our Assurance of Success

The meat of the sandwich is the command to make disciples. Encasing the meat is the top piece of bread that our authority is Jesus. The bottom slice is his promise to be with us to the end of the age. That simply states we are assured that as we are following his mandate to make disciples, he will be present in supernatural power in the corporate body of the church and in us as individuals. That doesn't mean that everyone we talk with will become Christians, but we will see some great things happen.

Leonard Sweet's book, *Soul Tsunami*, published in 1999 has had strong endorsement from church leaders across the country. Sweet is dean of the Theological School, vice president, and professor of postmodern Christianity at Drew University. He wrote: *"The Dick-and-Jane world of my '50's childhood is over, washed away by a tsunami of change.... While the world is rethinking its entire cultural formation, it is time to find new ways of being the church that are true to our postmodern context. It is time for a Postmodern Reformation."*¹

In that context he challenged the church as we begin this new millennium:

"Chaos is the word of the 21st century. It is associated with water.

"The central mystery of the gospel is the essence of water and the essence of chaos: A thing can change and still be the same. It is the symbol of the fountain:

We're always changing.

We're always the same.

We're the chaos church of Jesus Christ.

We're always in motion, going somewhere.

We're always in rest, going nowhere.

We're the chaos church of Jesus Christ.

"Both continuity and change are essential to an institution. How can the church express continuity through change? How can the church catch the waves of change without abandoning the tides of continuity?"

"The gospel is like 'living water' (hudor), Jesus told the Samaritan woman. Water fills any receptacle without retaining the form of any. The container

¹ Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), jacket.

doesn't matter. Content stays the same, containers change. Using 21st century containers are first-century imperatives.

"Jesus told us what we should be doing: 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mark 15:16). He didn't say how we should be doing it.

"The how of ministry has changed. The what of ministry has remained the same."²

The paradigm of ministry the Christian and Missionary Alliance has embraced is the pyramid of win, build, equip and multiply/send—the elements of the everyday commission.

A strategic plan calls for a strong emphasis on the winning because of the tendency of any church to become ingrown, more concerned with itself than a world of people without God. To accomplish the win block there are three ingredients that we focus on in our strategy: cultivating, planting and reaping.

These three activities come out of Jesus' use of agricultural imagery. Cultivating is developing friendships with unchurched people. Planting is injecting God into the relationship in many different ways, and reaping is seeking to bring them into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Pastor and official worker, when was the last time you injected God into a conversation with a lost person? When did you last lead someone to salvation in Christ outside of a response to a sermon preached?

The challenge of this message is that we take seriously and personally Jesus' command that we make disciples as we go about our daily life. There are multiple ways of doing so, but successful evangelism will involve the ingredients of cultivating, planting, and reaping. May God be pleased to grant us a record harvest this coming year in the Central Pacific District C&MA. I don't think there is anything that will bring him greater joy.

² Ibid, 72.

On Matthew 28:19-20

Jamieson-Faussett-Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible...*

Verse 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations—rather, “make disciples of all nations”; for “teaching,” in the more usual sense of that word, comes in afterwards, and is expressed by a different term.

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—It should be, “into the name”; as in [1 Corinthians 10:2](#), “And were all baptized unto (or rather ‘into’) Moses”; and [Galatians 3:27](#), “For as many of you as have been baptized *into* Christ.”

Verse 20. Teaching them—This is teaching in the more usual sense of the term; or instructing the converted and baptized disciples.

to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I—The “I” here is emphatic. It is enough that *I*

am with you alway—“all the days”; that is, till making converts, baptizing, and building them up by Christian instruction, shall be no more.

even unto the end of the world. Amen—This glorious Commission embraces two primary departments, the *Missionary* and the *Pastoral*, with two sublime and comprehensive *Encouragements* to undertake and go through with them.

First, The Missionary department ([Matthew 28:18](#)): “Go, make disciples of all nations.” In the corresponding passage of Mark ([Mark 16:15](#)) it is, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” The only difference is, that in this passage the *sphere*, in its world-wide compass and its universality of *objects*, is more fully and definitely expressed; while in the former the great *aim* and certain *result* is delightfully expressed in the command to “make disciples of all nations.” “Go, conquer the world for Me; carry the glad tidings into all lands and to every ear, and deem not this work at an end till all nations shall have embraced the Gospel and enrolled themselves My disciples.” Now, Was all this meant to be done by the Eleven men nearest to Him of the multitude then crowding around the risen Redeemer? Impossible. Was it to be done even in their lifetime? Surely not. In that little band Jesus virtually addressed Himself to all who, in every age, should take up from them the same work. Before the eyes of the Church’s risen Head were spread out, in those Eleven men, all His servants of every age; and one and all of them received His commission at that moment. Well, what next? Set the seal of visible discipleship upon the converts, by “baptizing them into the name,” that is, into the whole fullness of the grace “of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” as belonging to them who believe. ([See on 2 Corinthians 13:14](#)). This done, the Missionary department of your work, which in its own nature is temporary, must merge in another, which is permanent. This is

Second, The Pastoral department ([Matthew 28:20](#)): “Teach them”—teach these baptized members of the Church visible—“to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” My apostles, during the three years ye have been with Me.

What must have been the feelings which such a Commission awakened? “WE who have scarce conquered our own misgivings—we, fishermen of Galilee, with no letters, no means, no influence over the humblest creature, conquer the world for Thee, Lord? Nay, Lord, do not mock us.” “I mock you not, nor send you a warfare on your own charges. For”—Here we are brought to

Third, The Encouragements to undertake and go through with this work. These are two; one in the van, the other in the rear of the Commission itself.

First Encouragement: “All power in *heaven*”—the whole power of Heaven’s love and wisdom and strength, “and all power in *earth*”—power over all persons, all passions, all principles, all movements—to bend them to this one high object, the evangelization of the world: All this “is *given*

unto Me.” as the risen Lord of all, to be *by Me placed at your command*—“Go ye therefore.” But there remains a

Second Encouragement: “And lo! I am with you all the days”—not only to perpetuity, but without one day’s interruption, “even to the end of the world,” The “Amen” is of doubtful genuineness in this place. If, however, it belongs to the text, it is the Evangelist’s own closing word.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Walvoord and Zuck

28:16-20. Matthew did not record the meeting of **Jesus** with the 10 disciples later that same day ([John 20:19-23](#)) or the appearance 8 days later to **the 11 disciples** ([John 20:24-29](#)). But he did record an appearance occurring some time later in **Galilee**, where He promised He would meet them ([Matt. 26:32](#); cf. [28:7, 10](#)) at a **mountain**. Which mountain He specified is unknown. When Jesus appeared **they worshiped Him, but some doubted**. Since Jesus had appeared to them earlier and verified Himself to them, they were not doubting the Resurrection. There was probably simply a brief question among some of them as to whether this was truly Jesus appearing to them. There was no indication that any miraculous element was involved in His being there and since unusual circumstances had occurred with previous visits, perhaps they wondered.

Their doubts were quickly dispelled, for **Jesus spoke to them** claiming **all authority in heaven and on earth**. This authority (*exousia*, “official right or power”) had been given to Jesus by the Father and now He was instructing the disciples to **go** on the basis of that authority. Their field was to include **all nations**, not just Israel (see [comments](#) on [10:5-6](#)). They were to **make disciples** by proclaiming the truth concerning Jesus. Their hearers were to be evangelized and enlisted as Jesus’ followers. Those who believed were to be baptized in water **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**. Such an act would associate a believer with the person of Jesus Christ and with the Triune God. The God whom they served is one God and yet is three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those who respond are also to be taught the truths Jesus had specifically communicated to the Eleven. Not all that Jesus taught the disciples was communicated by them but they did teach specific truths for the new Church Age as they went abroad. Jesus’ commission, applicable to all His followers, involved one command, “Make disciples,” which is accompanied by three participles in the Greek: “going,” **baptizing**, and **teaching**.

The final words 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.

Vincent Word Studies, Vol I, Synoptic Gospels

Title: Vincent’s Word Studies Vol. 1: Synoptic Gospels

Edition: First

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Matthew 28:19

Teach (μαθητεύσατε)

Rev., rightly, *make disciples of*.

In the name (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα)

Rev., correctly, “into the name.” Baptizing *into* the name has a twofold meaning. 1. *Unto*, denoting *object* or *purpose*, as εἰς μετάνοιαν, *unto repentance* (Matthew 3:11); εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, *for the remission of sins* (Acts 2:38). 2. *Into*, denoting *union* or *communion with*, as

Romans 6:3, “baptized *into* Christ Jesus; *into* his death;” *i.e.*, we are brought by baptism into fellowship with his death. Baptizing into the name of the Holy Trinity implies a spiritual and mystical union with him. *Eis*, *into*, is the preposition commonly used with *baptize*. See Acts 8:16; 19:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15; 10:2; Galatians 3:27. In Acts 2:38, however, Peter says, “Be baptized *upon* (ἐπι) the name of Jesus Christ; and in Acts 10:48, he commands Cornelius and his friends to be baptized *in* (ἐν) the name of the Lord. To be baptized *upon* the name is to be baptized on the confession of that which the name implies: *on the ground of* the name; so that the name Jesus, as the contents of the faith and confession, is the ground upon which the becoming baptized rests. *In* the name (ἐν) has reference to the *sphere* within which alone true baptism is accomplished. The *name* is not the mere *designation*, a sense which would give to the baptismal formula merely the force of a *charm*. The *name*, as in the Lord’s Prayer (“Hallowed be thy name”), is the expression of the sum total of the divine Being: not his *designation* as God or Lord, but the formula in which all his attributes and characteristics are summed up. It is equivalent to *his person*. The finite mind can deal with him only through his name; but his name is of no avail detached from his nature. When one is baptized into the name of the Trinity, he professes to acknowledge and appropriate God in all that he is and in all that he does for man. He recognizes and depends upon God the Father as his Creator and Preserver; receives Jesus Christ as his only Mediator and Redeemer, and his pattern of life; and confesses the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier and Comforter.

Alway (πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας)

Lit., *all the days*. Wyc., *in all days*.

Matthew 28:20

End of the world (συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος)

Rev., in margin, and lit., *consummation of the age*. The current age is meant; and the *consummation* is coincident with the second coming of Christ, after the Gospel shall have been proclaimed throughout the world. “The Saviour’s mind goes no farther; for after that, evangelizing work will cease. No man, after that, will need to teach his neighbor, saying, ‘Know the Lord’” (Jeremiah 31:34) (Morison “On Matthew”).

Word Pictures in the New Testament: A. T. Robertson, Vol I Matthew, Mark

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Matthew 28:19

All the nations (*panta ta ethnē*). Not just the Jews scattered among the Gentiles, but the Gentiles themselves in every land. And not by making Jews of them, though this point is not made plain here. It will take time for the disciples to grow into this *Magna Charta* of the missionary propaganda. But here is the world program of the Risen Christ and it should not be forgotten by those who seek to foreshorten it all by saying that Jesus expected his second coming to be very soon, even within the lifetime of those who heard. He did promise to come, but he has never named the date. Meanwhile we are to be ready for his coming at any time and to look for it joyfully. But we are to leave that to the Father and push on the campaign for world conquest. This program includes making disciples or learners (*mathēteusate*) such as they were themselves. That means evangelism in the fullest sense and not merely revival meetings. Baptism in (*eis*, not *into*) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Trinity. Objection is raised to this language in the mouth of Jesus as too theological and as not a genuine part of the Gospel of

Matthew for the same reason. See note on Matthew 11:27, where Jesus speaks of the Father and the Son as here. But it is all to no purpose. There is a chapter devoted to this subject in my *The Christ of the Logia* in which the genuineness of these words is proven. The name of Jesus is the essential part of it as is shown in the Acts. Trine immersion is not taught as the Greek Church holds and practices, baptism in the name of the Father, then of the Son, then of the Holy Spirit. The use of name (*onoma*) here is a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for power or authority. For the use of *eis* with *onoma* in the sense here employed, not meaning *into*, See note on Matthew 10:41f. (cf. also 12:41).

Matthew 28:20

Teaching them (*didaskontes autous*). Christians have been slow to realize the full value of what we now call religious education. The work of teaching belongs to the home, to the church (sermon, Sunday school, young people's work, prayer-meeting, study classes, mission classes), to the school (not mixing of church and state, but moral instruction if not the reading of the Bible), good books which should be in every home, reading of the Bible itself. Some react too far and actually put education in the place of conversion or regeneration. That is to miss the mark. But teaching is part, a weighty part, of the work of Christians.

I am with you (*egō meta humōn*). This is the amazing and blessed promise. He is to be with the disciples when he is gone, with all the disciples, with all knowledge, with all power, with them all the days (all sorts of days, weakness, sorrows, joy, power), till the consummation of the age (*heōs tēs sunteleias tou aiōnos*). That goal is in the future and unknown to the disciples. This blessed hope is not designed as a sedative to an inactive mind and complacent conscience, but an incentive to the fullest endeavor to press on to the farthest limits of the world that all the nations may know Christ and the power of his Risen Life. So Matthew's Gospel closes in a blaze of glory. Christ is conqueror in prospect and in fact. Christian history from that eventful experience on the Mountain in Galilee has been the fulfilment of that promise in as far as we allow God's power to work in us for the winning of the world to Christ, the Risen, all powerful Redeemer, who is with his people all the time. Jesus employs the prophetic present here (*eimi*, I am). He is with us all the days till he comes in glory.

A. W. Tozer on "Accepting Christ"
The Quotable Tozer (Parsons Quick Verse)

"Accepting" Christ

Everything is made to center upon the initial act of "accepting" Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. A 16

We must assure our hearers that Christianity is now a proper and respectable thing and that Christ has become quite popular with political bigwigs, well-to-do business tycoons and the Hollywood swimming pool set. Thus assured, hell-deserving sinners are coming in droves to "accept" Christ for what they can get out of Him; and though one now and again may drop a tear as proof of his sincerity, it is hard to escape the conclusion that most of them are stooping to patronize the Lord of glory much as a young couple might fawn on a boresome but rich old uncle in order to be mentioned in his will later on. D 17

...the formula "Accept Christ" has become a panacea of universal application, and I believe it has been fatal to many. G 18

The trouble is that the whole "Accept Christ" attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ applying to us rather than us to Him. It makes Him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life. G 18

To accept Christ is to form an attachment to the Person of our Lord Jesus altogether unique in human experience. The attachment is intellectual, volitional and emotional. G 18

To accept Christ is to know the meaning of the words "*as he is, so are we in this world.*" We accept His friends as our friends, His enemies as our enemies, His ways as our ways, His rejection as our rejection, His cross as our cross, His life as our life and His future as our future.

If this is what we mean when we advise the seeker to accept Christ we had better explain it to him. He may get into deep spiritual trouble unless we do. G 19

To accept Christ it is necessary that we reject whatever is contrary to Him. This is a fact often overlooked by eager evangelists bent on getting results. G 74

We are telling people that the easiest thing in the world is to *accept* Jesus Christ, and I wonder what has happened to our Christian theology which no longer contains any hint of what it should mean to be completely and utterly abandoned to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. J 53