

Main Idea: According to Jesus in Matthew 28:20, our mission involves teaching. If we're going to fulfill this aspect of our mission, we need to consider carefully Jesus' answer to four questions regarding teaching: who, how, why, and what.

- I. Teaching involves *who*.
 - A. Disciples need to be taught.
 - B. Disciples need to be teaching.
 - II. Teaching involves *how*.
 - A. Jesus didn't just tell us.
 - B. Jesus showed us.
 1. He used informal teaching opportunities (4:18-22).
 2. He used formal teaching opportunities (5:2).
 3. He took advantage of real life situations (8:26; 12:1-2; 14:16).
 4. He used on the job training (10:5).
 5. He used stories from everyday life (ch. 13).
 6. He taught by answering questions (18:1, 21).
 7. He taught by example (20:24-28).
 - III. Teaching involves *why*.
 - A. Our goal isn't to inform.
 - B. Our goal is to transform.
 - IV. Teaching involves *what*.
 - A. His commands are our curriculum.
 1. Follow Me (4:19).
 2. Seek first God's kingdom (6:33).
 3. Do with others what I've done with you (28:19).
 - B. His commands are costly.
- Make It Personal: Three responsibilities with Christ's commands...
1. Be a learner.
 2. Be a doer.
 3. Be a sharer.

Tomorrow I have the privilege to travel as your representative to Albania (a small country of around 4 million people, just south of Kosovo and Montenegro, north of Greece, and east of Italy across the Adriatic Sea). Along with two other pastors from the States, and at the invitation of missionaries Blair and Sue sent out by Grace Fellowship Church in Florence, KY, I'll be training Albanians how to use the Bible to give gospel-centered, Christ-exalting help to people struggling with problems. We'll be offering two biblical counseling training conferences, the first this week in Tirana (the capital city), and the other next week in Korce.

The Albanians were occupied by the Turks for 500 years, and then the communists for the next 70 years or so. So they struggle to trust people. Please pray that God will bless our relationships quickly so we have the joy of seeing them grasp the life-changing truths of God's Word.

I was telling a person in the community this week about the upcoming trip, and they responded, "Why go there! Especially with the way things are in the world now!"

The answer, of course, is twofold. First, fairness. We have something that others do not have, the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His saving work. Thousands and thousands of people don't know the truth about Him, nor about His powerful, life-transforming Word.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this text and theme, see the series at WBC which began 11/21/99.

Secondly, it's because we have a mission given to us by our Lord. Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus gave an assignment to eleven men on a hillside in Galilee. He told the men, "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 (Matt 28:18-19)."

Of all nations. Of all the ethna.

The other night a passage came to mind. Psalm 67:3, "May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you." The psalmist repeats his prayer in verse 5, "May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you."

Not just *people*, but *the peoples*. For centuries godly Jews prayed this missionary psalm. And then the missionary God answered their prayer by sending His Son into the world, who came not just to save the Jews, but men, women, and children from every language and tribe. The *peoples* of the world.

Go make disciples of the *ethne*, He said just before He returned to heaven.

So there it is. Go make disciples. Then baptize them. That's our mission, right?

Hold on. That's not *all* of it. Jesus didn't finish with verse 19. You'll notice verse 19 ends with a comma (in the NIV), not a period.² In verse 20 we find an oft-neglected, yet critical component of the mission.

According to Jesus in Matthew 28:20, our mission involves teaching.

Teaching? What kind of teaching is Jesus talking about? Who are the students? Who are the teachers? What's the curriculum?

All vital questions, and all addressed by our Savior. If we're going to fulfill our mission as a church (and as individual followers of Christ), we need to consider carefully Jesus' answer to four questions regarding teaching: who, how, why, and what.

This verse, and the answer to these questions, is why we're passionate as a church about teaching here and around the world.

I. Teaching involves *who*.

Who are we to teach? Jesus said, "Teaching *them*." To whom does "them" refer? Look back at verse 19. "Them" refers to the disciples we've baptized. You see, even though we've engaged in *going* and *baptizing*, our task isn't over. Why not? For the simple reason that...

A. Disciples need to be taught. Let that sink in. What is supposed to happen after we baptize a follower of Christ? New followers of Christ need to be taught.

Yet herein lies a great challenge for many churches. We want the joy of seeing our family grow without assuming the responsibility of parenthood. We're thrilled to lead a person to faith in Christ, and to see that person identify publicly with the Lord and His Church through baptism. And rightly so--we ought to celebrate!

But then what? In far too many cases, the baby disciple is left to fend for himself.

It's not uncommon these days to read something in the news like this. The headlines on July 12, 2014, "Child Accidentally Locked In Car At Columbus Zoo." According to the report, a family accidentally locked their keys in the car, and a child too. They contacted a zoo official, who called the police and medical personnel, who came, and within four minutes opened the vehicle and removed the child. "The child is doing okay and no negligence was reported."³

²Verse 20 begins with a participle that introduces a dependent clause.

³ <http://www.nbc4i.com/story/26003488/special-duty-officers-child-locked-in-car-at-columbus-zoo>

That's a good word for our consideration. *Negligence*. If you have a child, common sense says you're responsible to provide for the basic needs of that child. Food, clothing, water, safety. To fail to do so brings consequences, for the parent, and for the child.

And so parents do everything they can for their babies, because little ones can't fend for themselves. They need constant care and careful supervision.

It's no different for brand new baby Christians. What did Jesus say that new disciples need? Specifically, they need to be taught.

If that's the case, then so is this...

B. Disciples need to be teaching. Jesus wasn't giving His disciples a *suggestion* in verse 20. This is mandatory equipment for the fulfillment of our mission.

The fact of the matter is this. You can't make disciples without teaching them. You can't bypass teaching. There's no pill you can take, no program you can incorporate that will substitute for teaching.

I remember the words a 70-year-old visitor said to me a few years ago right after a worship service, "I really enjoyed what you just did. It's almost like you were trying to *teach* us." I had to chuckle. In time, that man started coming regularly because he wanted to learn God's Word, and eventually trusted Christ as his Savior. Today he's in heaven.

Sadly, some people have a low view of teaching. They don't go to church to be taught, but for other reasons. Granted, teaching is not all that the church is to do but it must be at the heart of what we do, based on what Jesus said. Teaching God's Word is essential to our mission.

Some churches place strong emphasis on *going* and *baptizing*. So with great zeal they go reach the lost and urge them to confess Christ publicly through believer's baptism. And then they go again to reach others.

But wait. Something's missing. The going is great. The baptizing is great. They're both vital steps in the fulfillment of our disciple-making mission. But what about the *teaching*? Young disciples need to be taught so they can grow (not to mention lest they fall prey to false teaching). And the more mature disciples need to provide the teaching.

So just when does the need for teaching and learning stop? After we've been saved two years? Five years? Twenty five years? Listen to this description of the early church in Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." They--all the believers--devoted themselves first and foremost to the apostles' *teaching*.

An observation by Warren Wiersbe is worth contemplating (107), "In many respects, we have departed from this pattern. In most churches, the congregation pays the pastor to preach, win the lost, and build up the saved--while the church members function as cheerleaders (if they are enthusiastic) or spectators. The 'converts' are won, baptized, and given the right hand of fellowship, then they join the other spectators. How much faster our churches would grow, and how much stronger and happier our church members would be, if each one were discipling another believer."

Good insight. Are you teaching anyone? It starts at home, with our kids and grandkids. But our mission doesn't stop there. Perhaps you're thinking, "I'd like to but I don't know how." Thankfully, Jesus addresses that question for us next...

II. Teaching involves *how*.

How do we do it? How do we accomplish this important task of teaching? Let's answer that question with another question. How did Jesus do it? He is the Master

Teacher. As you look at the gospels you'll discover two insights into the question of how. First...

A. Jesus didn't just tell us. He did something even better...

B. Jesus showed us. Remember, the eleven men who heard Jesus' charge that day were privileged men. They personally had observed Jesus' teaching ministry for three years. What had they seen? Matthew was one of the men. Let's scan Matthew's gospel and observe how Jesus taught His disciples. When it came to Jesus' method of teaching, the word that comes to mind is *variety*. I notice that Jesus utilized at least seven approaches in His teaching ministry.

1. *He used informal teaching opportunities (4:18-22).* In Matthew 4:18 we're told that Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee when He came upon two brothers, Simon and Andrew. He simply said to them (19), "Come, follow me."

And for the next three years He allowed these men--and ten others--to follow Him. He opened up His life to them. They ate together. They traveled together. They took boat rides together. They spent holidays together in Jerusalem. They did ministry together. And all the while the disciples were learning--not just from what Jesus said, but from what He *did*. Jesus was a master at maximizing informal teaching opportunities.

He didn't just spend time with men. He spent time with intent, with purpose, even in casual settings. He was intent on teaching, and we can learn from Him.

2. *He used formal teaching opportunities (5:2).* We read these words in 5:1-2, "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them." When a Jewish rabbi taught, the customary posture was to sit down. Here Jesus "sat down" indicating a formal time of teaching was about to begin. What follows is a record of perhaps the greatest sermon ever preached--the Sermon on the Mount. It was a monologue, a formal teaching event.

It's interesting to note the kind of impact this sermon of Jesus had on people. As Matthew puts it in 7:28-29, "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his *teaching*, because he *taught* as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." When He taught, Jesus didn't give people good ideas. He gave them God's Word.

As we continue our walk through Matthew we discover a third approach...

3. *He took advantage of real life situations (8:26; 12:1-2; 14:16).* When the disciples got caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee and thought they were going to drown, Jesus taught them about faith (8:26). When walking through a grain field one Saturday, Jesus instructed His hearers about the Sabbath (12:1-2). Another time when a crowd of 5,000 men became hungry He taught His disciples about His sufficiency (14:16).

These were real life situations--and Jesus turned them into teaching moments. By the way, do you do that with your children? When there are three pieces of pizza left on the table and four people are still hungry, you have a teachable moment, parents!

4. *He used on the job training (10:5).* In chapter ten, Jesus called together His twelve disciples, gave them specific instructions (recorded in verses 5-42), and then sent them out. It was sink or swim. They were going to learn by doing. O.J.T.--On the job training.

5. *He used stories from everyday life (ch. 13).* Jesus was a Master Storyteller. The synoptic gospels record about thirty of Jesus' stories known as parables.⁴ In Matthew 13 Jesus used a series of stories to teach kingdom truth: like one about a farmer who sowed seed, another about a woman who mixed yeast into her dough, and another about a treasure hidden in a field. Jesus used stories to teach. Sixthly, sometimes...

6. *He taught by answering questions (18:1, 21).* One day the disciples asked Him (18:1), "Who is the greatest in the kingdom?" And Jesus used that question to teach them about kingdom values. Then Peter came and asked Jesus (18:21), "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?" A good teacher knows how to take people from where they are to where they need to be. And Jesus was the greatest!

7. *He taught by example (20:24-28).* A mother came to ask Jesus a favor in chapter 20. She wanted her two sons to sit beside Jesus in His kingdom. Her request infuriated the rest of the disciples, so Jesus called them together and said this (20:27-28), "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus taught by example.

When it comes to *how*, there is no one way to teach. You don't need a classroom to teach, just a willing and teachable heart, and a commitment to take every opportunity God sends your way to teach.

A third question...

III. Teaching involves *why*.

Why do we teach? What's our goal as we teach? Realize this...

A. Our goal isn't to inform. We're not interested in winning Bible trivia contests. Rather...

B. Our goal is to transform. Jesus did *not* say, "Teach them." Disciplemaking is not merely an academic exercise. He said, "Teach them *to obey* (or "teach them *to observe*," in the KJV)."

The word translated "obey" (or "observe") means "to keep watch over," or "pay attention to." It can refer to guarding a prisoner. The same root word appears in verse 4 (Gk. *tarountes*) translated "guards" (or "keepers" in the KJV), referring to the soldiers whose task it was to keep watch over the body of Jesus. In Ephesians 4:3 the word appears, "Make every effort to *keep* the unity of the Spirit."

When it comes to teaching, here's the goal. It's not to fill heads with Bible knowledge. It's not merely to dispense information, though that's part of it. The goal is to teach disciples how to obey, even *guard* the Savior's commands.

To put it another way, the goal in teaching is a changed heart that show up in a changed life--a *Christ* honoring life.

Most school teachers have a lesson plan. The plan lists the teacher's objectives, what he or she plans to accomplish on a particular day, week, or year.

The fact is, Jesus gave us a lesson plan. He told us what He expects us to do with the pupils He entrusts to us. We're to teach them to obey.

In his helpful book, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker*, Bill Hull remarks, "The words 'to obey' have been referred to as the great omission in the Great Commission. The great omission is that we have not really made disciples if we have not taught them to obey. There is no discipling without training, and there is no training without accountability."

⁴Parable means "a placing beside. Jesus illustrated spiritual truth by placing a common, everyday event by that truth.

It's great to *hear* God's Word, isn't it? But Jesus said there are two kinds of hearers. Remember His story about the two men who built houses in Matthew 7:24-27? The fact is, there are two types of people in this room this morning. There are those who hear and *do*, and then there are those who hear and *don't do*.

Anybody ever heard these words from your medical doctor? "If you don't get some exercise, you're heading for trouble." Your doctor knows that too much intake and too little output is a dangerous combination.

I'm sobered by the following possibility. Do churches in America, even Bible teaching churches like ours, foster the mentality of hearing the Word without doing it? Do we not have the tendency to turn the ministry of the Word into a type of "Christian entertainment?" Have you ever analyzed the comments people make after hearing messages from God's Word?

"He did a good job." Or, "I really enjoy listening to him. He's a good speaker." And, "He sure can tell great stories."

Hold on! God didn't give us His Word to entertain us, did He? We're not supposed to be spectators. God expects us to listen to His Word with an intent to *do it*.

We ought to leave every church service, and come away from every Sunday School lesson or small group study with this commitment, "I am going to *do* something with what I just learned."

I'd like to offer a challenge to our teachers. If you have a "formal" teaching ministry in this church--whether it's from the pulpit, or in a Sunday School class, or with a teen or children's group--keep this goal in mind. Don't teach to inform. Teach to transform.

To help us assess how we're doing, I encourage you to ask yourself the following three questions every time you prepare and teach God's Word.

1. *Is my teaching biblical?* Thoroughly biblical. God's Word is powerful, not our ideas. Have I invested the time and hard work that's necessary to insure that my teaching is biblical?

2. *Is my teaching purposeful?* Will it help people know and obey the Lord? Am I teaching to inform or transform?

3. *Is my teaching prayerful?* The fact is, I can't change anybody. Jesus knew that. Which is why He concluded verse 20 with this amazing promise, "And surely I am *with you always*, to the very end of the age." So I must ask myself this. Am I teaching this lesson in absolute dependence upon Him? Have I been on my knees during the week calling out to Him, "Lord, prepare me and prepare the hearts of the people I'll be teaching. Cause the seed of Your Word to fall on fertile soil and bear fruit. If You don't, nothing of eternal value will happen."?

Perhaps you're thinking, "Okay, I see the importance of teaching. I understand the *who*--disciples need to be taught and then to be teaching. And the question of *how* is clear--there are lots of ways we can teach. And the matter of *why* makes sense--our goal is to transform, not inform. But something's missing, isn't it? We've got the teacher, the pupil, and the lesson plan. What about the curriculum?"

That brings us to our fourth question...

IV. Teaching involves *what*.

What did Jesus tell us to teach as we make disciples? Notice the end of verse 20, "Teaching them to obey *everything I have commanded you*." There it is. When it comes to the question of *what*...

A. His commands are our curriculum. Which commands? Jesus said to teach *everything* (or *all things*, KJV) I have commanded you. We're not to give disciples the discipleship-lite version, but the whole package (or as Paul put it in Acts 20:27, "the whole counsel of God").

Here's where we get into trouble. We tend to be selective in our teaching. We tend to view certain portions of the Scriptures as more relevant than others. We may never say it, but we might think it, "I like the verses that talk about God's *love*, but I'd just as soon stay away from those that depict His *wrath*." Or, "I like _____, but I don't like _____."

When I was growing up, I don't ever recall saying to my mother, "Thanks, Mom, for fixing the green beans." No, I didn't particularly like green beans. I liked the cubed steak, mashed potatoes & gravy, and the chocolate cake. But she knew I needed the green beans, too!

When it comes to disciple making, Jesus told the eleven to teach "everything I have commanded you." His commands are our curriculum.

So what are His commands? The apostles knew. As we scan through Matthew's gospel we discover three basic commands that provide the framework for the curriculum Jesus used in disciple making.

1. *Follow Me* (4:19). Here's where it all starts. Before you can make disciples you must *be* a disciple, a follower of Christ. You must admit your utter sinfulness and acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Hear His call, "Follow Me." Why would we not want to follow Him? He Who left the splendor of heaven, died on a cross in the place of sinners, and rose again *deserves* for us to put our total trust in Him and follow Him!

Have you settled this issue? Are you a follower of Jesus? Jesus said (16:24), "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." That's His first command: Follow Me. Here's His second...

2. *Seek first God's kingdom* (6:33). In Matthew 5-7 Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Basically, the Sermon on the Mount is "Kingdom Living 101" for disciples. Here King Jesus tells those who've followed Him what kingdom living is all about:

In chapter five--Be salt. Be light. Don't be angry with a brother. Don't lust. Don't divorce. Don't break oaths. Don't retaliate. Love your enemies.

In chapter six--Give to the needy, but not so as to bring attention to yourself. Pray. Fast. Don't serve money, but rather store up treasure in heaven. Don't be a worrier, but trust God.

In chapter seven--Don't judge others. Before trying to remove a speck from a brother's eye, make sure you don't have a log hanging from your own. Ask, seek, and knock--you can't make it without Him. Watch out for false teachers. Make sure you're not kidding yourself because not everyone who calls me "Lord" is truly my disciple.

That's kingdom living. Disciples need to be taught in practical terms how to live for the King. In fact, as you continue to move through Matthew you'll find Jesus elaborating on the commands He gave in the Sermon on the Mount.⁵

First, Jesus commanded, "Follow Me." Then He commanded, "Seek first God's kingdom." Third (and finally), He commanded His disciples...

⁵For instance, He gives more teaching about forgiveness (in ch. 18) and love (in ch. 22).

3. *Do with others what I've done with you (28:19).* Go make disciples. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Do with others what I have done with you.

Friends, this is the Master plan of evangelism. His commands are our curriculum. And realize this...

B. His commands are costly. The curriculum for being a disciple of Christ is costly. Teaching is costly. Jesus spent three years pouring His life into twelve men. And He commanded us to do likewise.

So where do we go from here?

Make It Personal: Three responsibilities with Christ's commands...

1. *Be a learner.* You can't obey what you don't know.

What's your plan for learning the Word of God? Learning doesn't just happen. We must be intentional. It starts, of course, with coming to know the God of the Word.

Have you invited His Son to become your Savior and Lord?

If so, are you setting aside time each day to learn His Word? If this is a new thought to you, I encourage you to read daily through a gospel, perhaps Matthew. Then move to the next book, and the next. Read through the New Testament. Then go to the Old Testament.

Then supplement (but don't substitute) your Bible study with other resources that will help you grow to know Christ and His Word better. Like one of our current Growth Group books.

Here's another practical suggestion. Make Sunday School a priority in your weekly schedule. That's a great place to learn God's Word. We have three excellent adult Sunday School classes, as well as quality teaching ministries for teens and children. Our teachers work hard to prepare lessons that are biblical and practical. The Sunday School format allows for valuable interaction and discussion in a small group setting. By design our Sunday School classes are both learning centers and caring centers.

I challenge you. Resolve to be a lifelong learner.

2. *Be a doer.* Suppose your car was stuck in a ditch and I said, "I've got a chain. I'll pull you out. It's a good chain. Ninety-nine of the one hundred links are in good shape." Would my help be reliable? Not until I fixed my chain. So in our lives. Ninety-nine acts of obedience do not justify one act of disobedience.

So resolve, by God's gracious help, to do what you're learning. Are you living right now in light of what you know? Is there any known area in which you are not living in obedience to Christ? I challenge you today. Resolve to be a doer of the Word, and not just a hearer.

3. *Be a sharer.* If you've been a Christian more than a couple of years, you know plenty of truth to be a sharer. So resolve today to make teaching a priority in your life. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities. Start spending time with those younger in the faith than you. Ask them questions. Be a good listener. Share God's Word with them.

Be a teacher.