The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20

1. **Introduce the discussion.** Use the icebreaker question and comments below to introduce the topic of discussion.

   - When did you hit your growth spurt? Were you an early or late bloomer?

   This Sunday is a milestone for New Vision as we move into the new worship center. In only a few years, the church outgrew the former worship center and has needed a new place for the body of Christ to gather. The primary cause of the rapid growth of New Vision has been the blessing and favor of God. As Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (ESV). At the same time, New Vision has grown because its people have been faithful with the responsibility that God has given them. God has blessed New Vision’s faithfulness with more responsibility and more opportunity to serve him. If we are to continue to be a light in our community, we must continue to prioritize those things God has called us to do. The best summary of what God has called the church to do is recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. The Great Commission, as this mandate is commonly known, compels us to center our mission upon knowing Christ and making Christ known. This is the responsibility not only of the church but also of each individual member. The task is too great for the pastor or the church staff to complete alone. Today as we look forward to New Vision’s future, let us consider our own responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission.

2. **Read Matthew 28:16-20.** Use the commentary below to give clarity to the meaning of the text.

   Unlike Luke and John, who record several post-resurrection encounters between Jesus and his disciples, Matthew quickly moves from the resurrection to Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples. By doing so, Matthew places emphasis on these instructions and wants his audience to make the connection between Jesus’ resurrection and the command to proclaim the resurrection to the nations.

   In obedience to the angel’s instructions in verse seven, the eleven disciples (the twelve minus Judas) go to Galilee to meet Jesus. This encounter will not have been the first time that they had seen the resurrected Christ, but for Matthew’s purposes, it is the most significant. Surprisingly, Matthew tells us “some doubted” (v. 17). It is unclear whether he means that some of the eleven or other followers of Jesus outside of the eleven. Either way, it is a bit surprising that Jesus’ followers had a hard time believing what their eyes were seeing. They were not prepared for the resurrection despite Jesus’ prior predictions of that event.

   Before giving the Great Commission, Jesus states that all authority has been given to him. That does not mean that he did not have authority before his resurrection: previously, he forgave sins and spoke authoritatively just as God does (9:6; 24:35). So the degree of Jesus’ authority has not changed, but the sphere of that authority has. That is to say, he is now ready to exercise that authority in all the universe (heaven and earth); the kingdom of God is about to expand through the witness of the church.
Because of Christ’s authority, his followers can have confidence to boldly “go and make disciples” (v. 19). A disciple is a person who trusts, listens to and obeys Jesus. The mission field for disciple-making is “all the nations.” Jesus’ authority extends over the entire earth, so it makes sense that he desires disciples from every nation.

Making disciples involves two complementary actions: baptizing and teaching (vv. 19b-20a). Baptism is the way a person is initiated into discipleship. Since a person is baptized only after he has professed faith in Christ, implied in the command to baptize is the command to evangelize or share the gospel. Once a person has become a disciple through faith and baptism, he grows in discipleship as he is taught to obey Jesus’ commandments.

The Great Commission ends with the Great Promise (v. 20b). Jesus does not send his disciples out alone, but promises to be with them. Later in Scripture we learn that it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that the kingdom of God spreads and the church grows.

3. **Reflect upon the Scripture.** After reading and clarifying the meaning of the passage, ask the following questions. Don’t be afraid to allow time for group members to think through each question before answering. Give some time for them to process the questions and to formulate their answers. Don’t feel obligated to ask every question.

- What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?
- What do we learn about being a disciple from this passage?
- Initially, some of Jesus’ followers struggled to accept the reality of the resurrection (v. 17). Share about how you came to know and trust in Christ. Did you respond to the gospel quickly with faith or was it more of a process of overcoming doubt?
- As you think about the Great Commission, what holds you back from actively passing on the Good News of Christ?
- Why should disciples of Christ care about making disciples?
- Matthew closely connects the Great Commission with Christ’s resurrection because the resurrection is a central truth of the gospel. How would you explain the importance of the resurrection to a non-Christian?
- Who in your life has been instrumental in teaching you to obey all that Christ has commanded? What have you learned about discipling others from the person who has discipled you?
- What is Jesus teaching you personally in this passage?
- If you do not feel equipped to share your faith with someone, you may want to consider watching the One Verse Evangelism training videos on New Vision’s website. One Verse Evangelism is a simple and easy to learn method for sharing your faith with others. You may access the videos at newvisionlife.com/romans623.

If you have questions or need clarification on any of the material covered in this discussion guide, you may contact Daniel Koon at 895-7167 x248, 624-0322, or Daniel.Koon@NewVisionLife.com.