

Matthew 28:18-20. This passage is familiar to most of you, but today we want the Lord to give our hearts a refresher, to be increased in our passion and our understanding of what Jesus is saying here so we can live it out.

So let's read here starting in verse 18. **“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘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.’”**

A disciple is someone who has responded to the gospel. In other words, you have heard the gospel, you've responded in faith and repentance, and now you're a Christian. You're following Christ. He's the Lord of your life. You are growing. The mark of a disciple is that you're growing in love for God and love for others.

Today we're just going to expand a little bit not only what it looks like to be a disciple, but what it looks like to be a disciple maker, one who makes disciples in obedience to what Jesus is saying here.

This passage Jesus gives us here is at the end of his earthly ministry. In other words, he has already spent three years investing in his men. He has already died on the cross and been resurrected. He has walked out of the tomb. Now we're at this point where he's getting ready to ascend into heaven, and he leaves this little commission: “Go make disciples of all nations.”

This picture here of *go* and *make*... These are action verbs. This is something we go and do. This isn't something that is a suggestion or an “If you feel like it.” This is an imperative. “Go make disciples.” In other words, “Just by me saying it,” Jesus says, “I'm assuming this is going to happen.” Then he gives promises. “I'll be with you always to the end of the age.”

All Christians, all disciples, are called into this with Jesus to be disciple makers. It's part of being a Christian. In fact, this passage clues us in to the very essence of what it means to *be* a Christian. The essence of what it means to be a Christian is to know Christ and to make him known. To know Christ and to make him known. In other words, if you're a Christian, you don't just know *about* Christ; you *know* him. He's your Lord. He's your Saviour. He's your Master. He's your best friend. You know him. You spend time with him.

But also that you're taking him to others who *don't* know him and sharing him with them. That is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian. In the early church when the New Testament was being written, there were no Christians who thought there was such a thing as *You can be a Christian without making disciples*. You don't find it anywhere in the Scriptures. There's a theme running all the way through the New Testament, and this picture always involves two things: It's knowing Christ and making him known. These things are walking through the Scriptures hand in hand.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Matthew 4:19. You don't have to turn there. Matthew 4:19 is on the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. He has just launched out. He's calling his disciples to himself for the very first time. He walks along the shore there at the Sea of Galilee and he comes up to Peter and those guys. They're fishing, and he says, **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”** So you see that picture there: “Follow me. Walk with me. Be my disciple. Know me. Then I will make you fishers of men.” So we're knowing Christ and we're making him known.

Jesus has an agenda here. He comes along to these guys, and he doesn't just say, “Follow me.” He tells them, “I'm going to make you into something. I'm going to make you into something that currently you are not.” They weren't fishers of men; they were fishers of fish. They were fishermen. But when he called them, what did they do? They dropped their nets and followed him.

Again, in Mark 3:14 it says, “**And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him...**” Do you see the intimacy there? Do you see the relationship? “**...that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach...**” It’s never just that they might be with him, period. It’s that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. To know Christ and to make him known.

A line I read some-where and has stayed with me say’s “If you are not fishing, you are not following.” That’s pretty powerful. That’s pretty challenging to me. Some of you might be thinking, *Man, that’s a little harsh. That’s going a little too far.* I don’t think so. I think it’s challenging to look at what Christ says in Matthew 4:19 and argue that you don’t have to fish for people if you’re a follower of Christ. That’s just for the super-spiritual. Thank God it’s not just for the super-spiritual. We all get to participate in this.

Well, to make disciples... I’m going to give a few practical things here, because the assumption is that everybody in here who’s a follower of Christ wants to grow as a disciple maker. The first thing there must be to make disciples is you must have somebody in your life who is not a disciple. You must know some non-Christians. Now I’m going to use words today the Bible uses. Words like *sinner* and *lost*. These are not derogatory terms. These are terms Jesus uses to describe us **as it relates to him**.

In other words, if someone doesn’t know Jesus, it doesn’t matter how *found* they think they are. In relation to him they’re lost. We don’t throw around the words *lost* and *sinner* in a self-righteous way. We understand, *That was me, and if it weren’t for the grace of God I’d still be lost. I’d still think I had the answers. I’d still think I know how to be content apart from God.* The fact is, I didn’t. I didn’t know how to be content apart from God, because I needed to *know* God.

So this brings in this idea of evangelism. Now when you talk about *evangelism*, that can be a scary word. That word is a little bit intimidating because it might bring to mind images of the worst-case scenario, most awkward conceivable conversations known to humanity. How many of you have ever been in an awkward conversation with somebody about Christ? Yes. If you’ve been in a conversation with a non-Christian about Christ, chances are it was awkward.

Some of that isn’t going away. There’s no way to smoothly enter into these conversations with such skill that it’s like, “Man, that wasn’t awkward at all. You just told me I’m a sinner and I’m going to die and go to hell and I’m in need of a Saviour. Man, you made that so smooth.” That just doesn’t exist. So we have to be okay with a degree of awkwardness.

I can remember the first time guys were trying to share Christ with me. It was awkward. It was like, “Leave me alone. Get out of here, man.” I can see how we can just basically be monologuing the gospel, and people are just kind of listening politely.

I’m not limiting God, but I *am* saying that’s not probably the most effective way to do that all the time.

**Agreed?**

Because what we’re wanting here just isn’t to share the gospel but it’s to share the gospel effectively. **Right?** We want the conversation to go well, as well as it can.

Jesus, I think, gives a much better picture of what this looks like. With Jesus, whenever he would share with people about the kingdom, about himself, it was done with great intentionality. Jesus was intentional. He never spent any time just walking through life by default. He had intentions. He had something in mind he was accomplishing, and he was real clear about that.

For us to make disciples, we have to be more intentional. **Okay?** We can't just go out into life thinking it's just going to happen. Like, "You're never going to believe what happened today. I was just walking through the mall, bumped into this guy, we started talking about God, and he came to Christ. It was so easy. It just fell out of the sky." You just don't hear stories like that. It just doesn't happen. What's more likely to happen is through intentionality, you going and sharing Christ with people in the context of a friendship. That's probably the most effective way.

If you flip back a few pages to Matthew, chapter 9, we'll look at an example of this. Jesus is still at the beginning of his ministry here. He's still calling his disciples to himself. It says here, **"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners..."** These are all Matthew's friends. This is his crowd. This is the tax collector/sinner crowd. **"...were reclining with Jesus and his disciples."** They're eating together. They're eating a meal together.

**"And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"** Jesus here gives us a very good picture of evangelism in the context of... He was a friend of sinners. Jesus' friends were sinners. He would spend time with them and he would talk to them and he would eat meals with them and they would follow him. That's a better picture for us.

So you think about that in your own life. That's not as daunting, honestly, as walking up to a stranger on the street. This is your life. These are friendships. These are people you go to school with, people you work with, people in your family, your extended family. They're all around you all the time. Intentionality is a great way to start thinking more productively and effectively about them coming to know Christ.

In his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J.I. Packer says that evangelism, like love, is enterprising. What he means by that is if you love someone... Raise your hand if you love someone. That person doesn't have to be in this room, but you have someone in your life who you love. Raise your hand. Okay. What he's saying is the fact that you love this person must be demonstrated in action.

In other words, just looking at me from the outside, you couldn't say, *Man, he loves his wife*, until you saw me acting in a loving way toward my wife. Does that make sense? It has to be demonstrated. It has to come out. If it's in there, it will come out. It would just be flowing out.

Well evangelism is the same way. If you're spending time around those who don't know Christ and the gospel is on your mind and their salvation is on your mind and on your heart and there's a burden that has gripped you for their eternity, I'd say it's very likely you will find a way to share the gospel with them. It will come out of you. It's enterprising.

So again, working backwards (and this isn't meant to cause any kind of condemnation or guilt; this is just...let's be honest), if I'm around those who don't know Christ and I'm *not* looking for ways to share the gospel with them, I'm *not* thinking about their eternal soul, I'm *not* thinking about their spiritual wellbeing, you could make the argument that the gospel is probably not on my mind. The love of Christ for that person is probably not controlling me. Like Paul says in 2 Corinthians, we're controlled by the love of Christ. That's what we want. We ought to cry out to God, "Control me with your love so that when I'm around those who don't know Christ I can make disciples, I can share the gospel with them."

The first last thing here is prayer. If you want to make disciples, you must be praying for those who are lost. You must spend time before the Lord lifting these people up to the Lord by name. This has nothing to do

with you, really. This has to do with your friend and their relationship with the Lord. The only good thing you have to offer them is the fact that Christ has changed you. He has shown you himself, and now you just want them to see too. It's that kind of love. That should lead to prayer.

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, Paul is basically rebuking the Corinthian church because they had kind of divided off into little groups. There's this one group: "We follow Paul. Paul is our leader." Another group: "We follow Peter." "We follow Apollos." Then there was one group, the really spiritual group, who were like, "Yeah, well, we follow Christ."

Anyway, they were divided by their leaders. He says, **"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."**

In other words, you can share the gospel till you're blue in the face, you can water that with more conversations about the gospel, but if God doesn't move in that person's heart, they aren't coming to Christ. So we have to be praying, going to the Lord with nagging persistence on behalf of our lost friends and family. I'm very thankful that when I was lost there were people praying for me to come to know Christ. At the time, maybe I would have been offended by that, but now I'm so grateful that people were praying for me.

Now once they come to Christ... That's exciting. If you are praying for the lost, being intentional to share the gospel with the lost, guess what? People will come to Christ. It's going to happen. All right? When that happens, what do we do? Is that the end? Like, "Hey, another one saved for the kingdom. Awesome. Let's move on"? No. Really, the work is just beginning. The process of evangelism might have come to an end, but now there's a *new* process. For our purposes I'm going to call that *follow-up*.

Walter Henrichsen. He says, "Follow-up, then, is spiritual pediatrics—the care and protection of the spiritual infant." This is a key process in disciple making: What to do with the person when they first step into the light and come to Christ. What I want to do is use an analogy the Bible uses, which is the analogy of a physical child, a baby. A physical child being born is analogous to a spiritual person coming into the kingdom for the very first time.

We should expect people to be coming to Christ. If they're hearing the gospel and we're praying for them and we're being intentional to have conversations with them and spend time with them and interact with them about Christ, we should expect them to come to Christ. This should not be shocking. You should be having conversations. "Hey, Peter is really close. Man, I just talked with him. He's wrestling with this idea of lordship. He's taking inventory of his life. He's thinking about, *What is really keeping me from coming to Christ?* He's really close. Let's pray right now." We should sense it coming. We can see the Lord working in their lives, so much so that it's like, "Hey, something is happening with this guy, with this girl." Does that make sense? It should be expected.

What if the person you lead to Christ who works where you work, or where you live had a horrible experience with church growing up, and they don't want to come in here. Who's going to feed them? *You* are. You're responsible for their spiritual nourishment until they're ready to come in here where they can just get nourishment from all sides. When they come in here your job is kind of easy. They're hearing Me and others preach. They're singing worship songs. They're running into all these other Christians. People are saying super-encouraging things to them.

But until then, you have to be thinking intentionally for their growth, to get them in the Word, to start praying with them, to start teaching them about what it means to follow Christ. Eventually one day hopefully they'll come in here and be part of the church, but until then you're responsible. You led them to Christ. You have to raise them. That's the privilege and the joy of making disciples.

Now you want to get them in here as quickly as you can. That's another thing about physical babies. When they're born they are immediately brought into the family.

We need to be okay with that. If you're one of these believers who doesn't like interacting with young, immature believers, you need to repent of that. You need to be able to invite new baby Christians in here and understand that there's a period of time where they're not going to know all the rules. They're not going to know all the stuff to say. Thank God. They're just going to need encouragement and nourishment, and they need to be able to grow in their walk with the Lord. So immaturity is expected with young children.

Let's look at a biblical picture of this. First Thessalonians 2:1-8. ***Why don't you turn there or read from the screen with me?*** In the meantime I'll say this: The other thing a new baby Christian needs is a lot of unconditional love. If a young child can sense from you, their parent, that you love them *if*, or you love them *when*, or you love them *because*, they're going to start to sense that, and it's not going to be appealing. What they want to sense is that you love them. *Period*. Not love *if*, not love *when*, not love *because*, but love. *Period*. "It doesn't matter what you do. I love you."

That's what a baby Christian needs as well. I think that's what we see here in Paul's life. First Thessalonians 2:1-8: **"For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict."** So Paul and his crew have already come here and proclaimed the gospel to this church.

**"For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ."**

Here's the exciting part: **"But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children."** Now picture this. Paul is writing this to adults. Okay? These are grown men and women who are hearing this letter, and he's comparing them to a nursing infant. What was Paul talking about? Spiritual infants. It goes on to say how he loved them. **"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."**

Have you ever been loved by someone where you could describe their love as affectionately desirous of you? Do you know what that feels like? Man, that's wonderful. It's wonderful to be loved like that. That's how we need to be loving our disciples. That's how you need to be loving the people you lead to the Lord. That's how you need to be loving people even before they come to Christ, with this kind of love.

Now as this young disciple begins to mature, as they begin to grow their roots a little deeper down into Christ and they begin to start walking with him a little bit.

So as they mature, what becomes so important is your life, your model. I always say, "More is caught than taught." Whatever is in your life, your young disciple will catch it. Think of it this way, those of you who have kids. You could tell your child a thousand times about respecting authorities, self-control, fair play, respect... "Son, you're going to respect your authorities. Understand me? No backtalk. You're going to honour your father and mother."

You could be the best at saying it in the world, and then you show up at their soccer game and you go berserk when the referee blows the call and you start flipping out and you have to be restrained and all these other dads are grabbing you. Your kid is going to be over there going, *I got it. Okay. That's how you're supposed to act.* More is caught than taught. They're going to see it in our lives.

I'm hoping they'll catch that from my life.

Here's the question for you when you're making disciples... *Who is it right now who's watching your life to learn what it looks like to be a Christian?* Do you desire that? Do you want, "Hey God, I want some disciples who I can lead and train and give them life-on-life, on-the-job training in what it looks like to follow Christ and what it looks like to make disciples"? If you want that, start asking the Lord for that. That's one of those prayers God is just sitting on ready to answer. He wants to use your life. Your life is a great tool. There are things in your life that are built in that God has changed you. He has worked in your heart. He has gripped you on some things. The way you treat people is so different from when you didn't know Christ. Maybe you're more patient, or whatever. Young disciples need to see that. That's a fantastic tool.

You think about the circles you run in... your friends, your family. Nobody can reach those people like you. We could take, let's say some Christian you really look up to and put them in your social circle, and there's no possible way they could be as effective as you can be, because God has placed *you* there. He wants to use *your* life in that circle. That's exciting. What a privilege. We should desire that.

Here are some examples from the life of Christ about this idea of modeling, on-the-job training, more is caught than taught: The 12 disciples witnessed first-hand how Jesus proclaimed the gospel, so they learned how to proclaim the gospel. They witnessed first-hand how Jesus prayed, so they learned to pray. Remember that? "Jesus, teach us to pray." Why did they want to learn to pray? What could they see him doing? Praying.

They witnessed first-hand how he loved people. Remember when Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman? His disciples walked up and they were like, "Hey look. He's talking to a woman. He's talking to a *Samaritan* woman." They were shocked. Remember that? More is caught than taught.

They witnessed first-hand how he served people. Jesus said about himself, "I'm among you as one who serves." Remember when they walked in and he took the towel, put it around his waist, and went around and washed their feet? Remember what he said? "I'm leaving you an example for how you should go wash each other's feet." They caught it. More is caught than taught. He could have preached a thousand sermons about servanthood, but he just served them.

They witnessed first-hand his passion when he cleared the temple. Remember that? They turned the temple into kind of a marketplace, and he went in there with a whip and flipped over their tables and drove them out of there. They saw his passion, and they said, "Man, that's what passion looks like." So they were passionate for the right things.

They witnessed first-hand how Jesus treated children.

What did Jesus say? "Don't stop those children from coming over here to me. Guys, get out of the way. Get over here, kids." They're running over, jumping up on his knees. He blessed them. It says he put his hand on

them and blessed them. Kids aren't important. Do you know what I mean? Kids can be ignored. But he took time with the kids. His disciples were sitting there watching that. *Got it. I get it now.*

They witnessed first-hand how he treated lepers. Do you know any lepers? Anybody know a leper? You know the thing about leprosy back in those days? If you had leprosy, you had to walk wherever you went yelling, "Unclean!" Can you imagine walking through Hillcrest shouting "Unclean!" at the top of your lungs, and you're talking about yourself? As you shout that, people are just running out of the way to get away from you.

What would that existence be like? Do you know what Jesus did with lepers? He walked right up to them and touched them, put his hands on them. "Give me a hug. Bring it in here close." His disciples witnessed that first-hand. So you know what happened in their lives? They became the kind of people who were kind to lepers. They witnessed first-hand as Jesus laid down his life on the cross. He didn't just talk about it; he went and did it. What did they all end up doing one day? They all laid down *their* lives as well for Christ.

Paul and Timothy...that's another one. Listen to this. This will blow you away. Philippians 2:22, just to give you a little glimpse into Paul's relationship with Timothy. It says, "**But you know Timothy's proven worth...**" He's writing to the Philippians. "**...how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.**" Timothy was not Paul's biological son, but Paul says, "Just like a son with his father, that's how he has served with me in the gospel."

If you're going to be like a son serving with your father, that's a lot of hours y'all are logging together. Y'all are with each other. You're seeing your father's life firsthand. Fast-forward down to 1 Corinthians 4:14-17. It gives you a glimpse of Paul's relationship with Timothy, what that looked like. We're talking about modeling here, how important your life is for young believers when you're making disciples.

First Corinthians 4:14-17: "**I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.**" Again, he's writing to adults. He calls them his children. We're talking spiritually here. Paul understood disciple making. "**For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**" In other words, "When I came and preached the gospel to you and you responded, I became your spiritual father." Not in the place of Christ, but for a time as they grew, Paul was the one helping them grow.

Listen to this. "**I urge you, then, be imitators of me.**" What? How many of you have ever thought to walk up to a bunch of young Christians and say, "Hey, imitate me"? Doesn't that sound a little arrogant? Like, *Bro, did you just say that? Did you just say, "Imitate me"? Aren't we supposed to say, "Imitate Christ"?* So what is Paul doing here? He understands disciple making. He understands that, for a time, young believers have to have an earthly model for what it looks like to follow Christ. As they're weaned off of that they can follow Christ on their own like a big boy, but there's that time there where there has to be discipleship. There has to be disciple making.

Listen to this. "**I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy...**" Who did he send? Timothy. "**...my beloved and faithful child in the Lord...**" Why did he send him? "**...to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.**" This is remarkable. Listen to what Paul is saying. He's saying, "I have so reproduced myself into Timothy that if I desire for this church to be reminded of my ways, I don't even have to go myself. I'll just send Timothy." They'll look at Timothy and they'll be reminded of Paul's ways.

Do you see that picture of modelling? How Timothy caught it? He learned it first-hand by watching Paul's life. He didn't just read Paul's biography; he saw his life.

“Your life.” That’s the discipleship material for another. That’s the notebook a young disciple needs to see...your life. They don’t just need a book; they need *you*. Life-on-life discipleship. More is caught than taught.

Lastly, reproduction. We have evangelism; we have intentionality, praying for them; we have follow-up after they come to Christ, we rejoice and then we get to work helping them grow; we have to model as they begin to mature, life on life, on-the-job training; and now we have reproduction. Gospel-centered multiplication.

We should have a desire to make disciples and train disciples up in such a way that if you died it would continue right on going without you. If it’s a scenario where you’re doing work and you die and all the work stops, you didn’t multiply. You didn’t reproduce it. You just did it, and nobody caught it. Nobody picked up the torch and kept running. You didn’t multiply. You just maybe... You were busy.

Second Timothy 2:2. Here’s another picture with Paul and Timothy. This shows you Paul’s understanding of multiplication. “...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” So you see this picture of Paul training Timothy and now telling Timothy, “Everything I’ve taught you in the presence of many witnesses, entrust those things to faithful men, who will then be able to teach others also.” So Paul understands, *When I die, and Timothy dies, this thing needs to keep going*. Do you see that if Paul had not multiplied, maybe none of us would be here following Christ? If it hadn’t made its way down the generations? Well guess whose turn it is now? It’s your generation’s turn. Multiply or die.

In conclusion, we’re called to make disciples. This is an exciting, challenging call, because it requires you to die to some things to lift others up. We have a good example of that, don’t we? Didn’t somebody we love do that? Christ did that. He died to lift us up so we could be saved. That’s the model. That’s the picture. Let’s pray, and let’s ask God to not only use us as disciple makers but to make us disciple makers who make disciple makers. Okay?

### Let’s pray.

Father, thank you so much for your Word. Thank you, Jesus, that you didn’t just leave us behind with no model, but you let those men see your life. You let them in. You didn’t find it inconvenient for them to be around you. They were trained and they saw first-hand and then they passed it down the generations. Now we’re here. Now it’s our turn. Jesus, use us. We’re here. We want to be used.

Every believer in this room desires to be a multiplying disciple maker who would make disciples who then make disciples. That’s what we want, God. We pray you do it. We know it’s not going to happen overnight, but we pray you would change us. Grip us with intentionality. Grip us with a burden for the lost. Let it mean something when we walk around saying we’re Christians. Powerfully use us for your glory. Not for us. This isn’t about us. It’s about you, God. We give you the praise. We give you the glory. Thank you for this time. We pray these things in Christ’s name, amen.