

The 5 C's

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[0 : 0 0] Let me encourage you, if you have your Bible with you, to open it at Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28. Matthew 28, and we're going to read, really focusing on verses 18 through 20, but let's just read from verse 16.

Matthew 28, reading at verse 16. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. 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. Amen.

[1 : 4 2] We pray God would bless the reading of his word and the preaching of his word. It's been a little while since I've sang that song.

Freely, freely, you have received. Freely, freely, give. I said before that our salvation is always a miracle.

It is never just a mechanism. It is a miracle of the grace of God in each one of our lives. And you and I didn't play any part in it.

You and I responded to the incredible gift of God in Christ. It was his work.

It's always his work. Freely, freely, we have received. Freely, freely, let us give. Let us give what we have received to others.

[2 : 5 3] Now, at one level, that ought to sound so simple. Right? What I've received, I want to give to you. And the funny thing is, we do that almost daily with stuff that we receive.

You know, I've got five grandchildren. And I do receive income for what I do. But I've got five grandchildren that are very, very good at making sure that what I've received, they're going to get a share in.

Right? They're good at that. I've actually got three children, but I'm still very good at that, despite the age they're at. Right? So at the end of the day, we know what this is like. We know what it's like when we're given something, just to automatically have a desire within us, if we've got a heart, to share with someone.

To share with someone. And we've got the good news of the gospel. And yet, somehow, when it comes to the good news of the gospel, we can find ourselves very hesitant. Very reluctant.

Almost holding back. When we ought to be really advancing forward. And offering Jesus to everyone that we come into contact with.

[4 : 1 5] Every time I come to Bells Hill, and I usually sit in that seat there, because I know I'm usually getting up to preach. Sometimes I'm in there if I've just been over with Linda for a Sunday service.

But generally speaking, I know that I'm going to be up to preach. And every time I stand there, and I'm involved in all that the people of God together are doing, the corporate worship of the people of God, the corporate prayers of the people of God, ready to engage either in preaching or in receiving the preaching of God's Word.

Every time I stand there, I look up. And I look to the balcony. And I don't get discouraged. I get a vision. I get a vision of what it will be like to stand in this church and to see faces, people, there worshipping God as God multiplies His church.

I get a vision of that. I don't look up and get discouraged. I look up and get a vision of what can be. And I pray God it will be what will be.

But it actually takes, what it really takes is for you and I as the people of God to get very vocal about freely sharing Jesus with others. There's a very real sense in which that's what it takes.

[5 : 47] And we're going to look at that this morning, a little bit in Matthew chapter 28. And, you know, I'm going to give you five C words today.

Five C's. I'm going to be king of the five C's, right? Rather than the high C's. Right? So king of the five C's this morning. The first word is commission. And you and I all know that we've been given a commission.

And the commission is to go into other world and make disciples. Make disciples. That's the commission.

Make disciples. Pretty straightforward, isn't it? You're a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're in the footsteps of the original disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what that means is you're walking with Jesus every day of your life. And as you go alongside Jesus, you want to encourage others to go alongside Jesus with you, right?

[6 : 47] So we want to make disciples. That's our commission. It's our commission under God. You know, I was writing a little article during the week for a blog. And the interesting thing about the article, I started it by sharing something I'd read recently.

I read recently, right about the 1400s, I've said this to you before, my apologies, but right about the 1400s, I read that the word priority came into the English language.

Right about the 1400s. It's a good word, isn't it? Here's the interesting thing. From the 1400s to the 1900s, the word priority was singular.

It was singular. It was never used in a plural format until the 1900s. But somehow in the technologically advanced age of the 1900s, we thought we could cope with more than one priority.

And so suddenly we started talking about priorities. Right? And when we start talking about priorities, you know what that means? That means we're going to try and do lots of different things all at once.

[7 : 57] And what that usually means is we're not going to do any of them well. It's the truth, isn't it? I'm not convinced we actually got it right. I think they still left the word singular.

Right? But here is the priority for the church of Jesus Christ. The priority for the church of Jesus Christ is in the commission that Jesus has spoken. Go and make disciples.

And sometimes I look at churches' vision statements and mission statements and all the work they do and trying to see what they do. And at one level, I can actually take all of that and summarize it in two words.

Make disciples. That's the call of God. That's the commission of God. I want you to go and make disciples.

I want you to go and make Christ followers. Here's the incredible thing. When you look at the context of Matthew chapter 28, and we read it verse 16, it says, Now the eleven disciples, the eleven disciples, went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and when they saw Jesus, they worshipped him.

[9 : 11] A beautiful picture, isn't it? But some doubted. That's an honest picture as well, isn't it? It's a beautiful picture, and it's an honest picture. The original disciples, they all go, they worship Jesus, but some doubt.

Right? And it is to them that Jesus says, and remember, this is the resurrected Christ, this is the all-conquering Christ, it is to them, he says, all authority in heaven and on earth.

All authority in heaven and on earth. Sometimes I think we imagine Jesus only to be the authority of heaven. He's the authority of heaven and earth.

Right? All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So therefore, go and make disciples. Go in the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and make disciples.

Now he said that to eleven men. That's who the eleven first disciples were. Right? There was around about, by the time you get to the day of Pentecost, there's around about a hundred and twenty of them, you know, gathering together, men and women.

[10 : 23] Right? Now these men had been with Jesus. And what did Jesus do? He taught them about the kingdom of God. What did he do?

He instilled the word of God into their hearts. And when they went out to make disciples, they went out and principally what they were about was making known the word of God, the revelation of who God is to those they came into contact with.

The most powerful way to make disciples is to go with the word of God, the revelation of who God is, and make the word of God known. Isn't it incredible that a living man can unpack the word of God, the revelation of who God is, the message of reconciliation that God has given us, right?

The revelation of God, the redemption that is ours in Christ, the regeneration that is possible by the Holy Spirit. Isn't it amazing that from a living disciples, the church of Jesus Christ has grown.

Now how big is the church of Jesus Christ? Friends, take some time just to look at the growth of the church throughout our globe. You know, sometimes we look only at the West and we get a lot of discouraged because of the shrinking size of the church.

[11 : 47] The church is utterly exploding in terms of numerical growth, in terms of spiritual life and vitality throughout vast regions of Africa, throughout vast regions of the Far East.

The church of Jesus Christ is multiplying at an incredible rate and it's multiplying because the people of God are taking unbelievers, non-Christians, folks that are not yet followers of Jesus to the Word of God and they're showing them from the Word of God who Jesus Christ is and they're making disciples.

That's our commission. That's our commission as the people of God. Go and make disciples. But here's the beautiful thing. Not only have we got a commission, we've got a context.

There's a second C. Right? We've got a context. What does he say? He says, go into all the world. Now sometimes, I don't know when this happened in the life of the church, but we separated discipleship and evangelism and we should never have done that.

Discipleship and evangelism belong together. Right? But what we've done is that we've kind of said discipleship is for in the church, it's for believers. And so that's when we kind of study the Word of God.

[13 : 09] And evangelism is about making known the message of God and that's for the unbelievers. But in actual fact, when we take the Word of God to unbelievers and we show them who Jesus is, it's my experience that countless numbers of people are becoming believers in Christ because they encounter God and His Word.

And when we do that kind of evangelism, in actual fact, you immediately start doing discipleship with them as well. And we don't get this separation between discipleship and evangelism, but in actual fact, we have to go into the world.

Now if we're going to go into the world, we've got to understand our world. Let's think a little bit about our context this morning. Go into all the world. Well, there's many, many ways in which we can apply that to different places.

But let's just think about the UK. Let's just think about Scotland. Let's think about the West. Our world. Go into a world. Into a world where, in truth, people are absolutely riddled with trauma.

That's what I mean. In the world in which we live. People who have gone through all sorts of trauma, in their lives. And they're broken by it.

[14 : 29] And they're bound by it. And they're captured by it. They're imprisoned by it. They almost can't break out of it. You only need to look at the pressure on our medical health services to understand the scale of the trauma.

Not only that, our world is full of people who are absolutely anxious. Riddled with anxiety. Riddled with anxiety.

Anxious over the smallest things. This is the world that Jesus says we're to go into. Go into a world of trauma. Go into a world of anxiety.

Our world is in the midst of a chaotic, confusion, catastrophic confusion over its identity. When we look at the world in which we live and we look at, you know, crazy legislation has been passed.

It actually should inform us as the people of God, not to get angry about the legislation, in the actual fact to say, what's going on in the heart of a person when they're so confused about their identity?

[15 : 45] identity. And we live in the midst of the most incredible identity confusion that our world has ever seen. People don't know who they are, what they are, why they're here, what it's about.

That ought to stir the compassion of a believer in Christ who understands their identity as a child of God.

But we live in a world that is absolutely wriggled by an identity crisis. Here's the incredible thing, that despite all of that, we live in a world where people are actually looking for meaning.

They're looking for folks to be, you know, clear. They're looking for folks to define. And you can, you know, if you're active in any way in social media, you'll see there are people of hundreds and thousands and millions of followers.

And they follow people that are very clear about what they believe, even if what they believe is very suspect in many cases, they still follow. It's because people want some kind of clarity. This is our world.

[17 : 00] The world that we have to go into in the name of Jesus. This is our world. We can't escape this world. Can't hide from it. This is our world. This is the context that we have to go into.

We live in a world where self is king. We live in a world where individual expressionism is king. I am who I want to be.

I think I am who I think I am and I feel this way, therefore you. we live in a world where self is king.

That's our world. And Jesus says, if you're my disciples, go and make disciples. We go into that world and make disciples there. Maybe that's why sometimes we don't find it easy to freely, freely give because we get overwhelmed by what's coming at us.

But what we've got to do is we've got to allow that not to overwhelm us. We've just got to realize that the one who says go into that world is one who's got authority in heaven and earth. So he's not telling us to do something.

[18 : 14] By the way, this is not you. These things have been around for aeons, right? But at the end of the day, that's the world we've got to go into. So that's our context. But here's the thing. We go into that world, that's our context, with a conviction.

What is our conviction? Our conviction is that Jesus Christ can transform everything when he makes disciples of those who come to faith. Are we convinced of that?

He says, go into the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Not that you teach them the Word of God, but teaching them to do the Word of God. Because when you start to do the Word of God, then the kind of things that overwhelm us in actual fact can disappear.

So start to think about this conviction. If I have to go into a world where people are absolutely riddled by trauma and anxiety, do I have a Jesus that is sufficient for that?

[19 : 22] I've got a Jesus who knew all the trauma of bearing the sin of the world on Calvary's cross. I've got a Jesus who knew all the trauma from the separation from his Father as he laid down his life for the world.

I've got a Jesus who enters in to all of the sin and shortcomings of society because he longs to reconcile that which he has made and created for his glory to himself.

I've got a Jesus who understands trauma. I've got a Jesus who understands anxiety. I've got a Jesus who actually knows what it is to pray sweat drops of blood in the anxiety of what it is to take the sin of the world upon himself.

I've got a Jesus who when we come to know him and love him and surrender our life to him is able to back up all the fullness of the revelation of his word by saying things like have no anxiety in anything.

Be not anxious. Do not worry. Is that our Jesus? Jesus? The one who's got all authority in heaven and earth.

[20 : 43] I've got a Jesus who in actual fact lovingly and graciously and mercifully draws alongside the person lost in the midst of their identity search and says let me tell you who you are.

you're made in the image of God and in Christ Jesus you can be a son or daughter of God by adoption.

You can discover what your identity truly is when you're a follower of Jesus. You can discover what it is to be set free to be the man or woman that God has called you to be.

We've got a Jesus a conviction about a Jesus who's able for these things. We've got a Jesus who in actual fact longs to show us that there are many things that we can be absolutely definite about positive about certain about and I said to you before that when you know people who don't know Jesus want to know Jesus there are three places they'll go.

They'll go to the word of God to see what it says and that's why we as the people of God are up to take the word to them but also they'll go to people that they know believe and live out what they believe and don't lose sight of that second part they live out what they believe.

[22:10] They won't go to the person that they think is a hypocrite that they think is judgmental that they think stands aloof from them but they will go to the person who is putting into practice all that they believe about the word of God who is living the radical lifestyle of Christ and they'll go to churches that are vibrant and living it out and so we've got a conviction that our Jesus is able and we've also got a conviction that mankind needs to realize that he is not king and that as long as he enthrone himself he commits the greatest travesty of all because what we need to do is dethrone self and enthrone Christ but we've got a conviction that when God humbles a man or a woman and God breaks the pride of their heart and God brings them to that place of humility where they confess their need of a saviour and they enthrone

Jesus then we have a conviction that then life will truly begin to take on all the wonder that God designed it should have you see we've got a commission and we've got a context but we've got a conviction that our Jesus is sufficient and even although some of the disciples doubted at that time when the power of the spirit came upon them they went out with boldness and with a confidence and there's your fourth C with a confidence that turned the world upside down now they weren't confident in who they were they were confident in who Jesus is they weren't confident in their ability to change anything they were confident in the power of the word of God to change everything they weren't confident in their power to accomplish brilliant things they were confident in the power of God to accomplish incredible things for God's glory there's a huge difference there isn't there about where our confidence lies when our confidence lies in who Christ is when our confidence is grounded solid on the revelation of who God is in

Christ on the power of the word of God to bring about transformation then incredible things will happen and so these are living disciples who went to Galilee to the mountain side who worshipped and yet doubted these ones were the ones that Jesus said all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me go go into the context of their world and their day and by the spirit of God and by the living breathing word of God still said to you and I as disciples today go into the context of the world that you live in today and go with a conviction and go with a confidence that in the power of Jesus Christ the word himself incredible things can happen you can make disciples you can make disciples and you can make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and here's the incredible thing why can we follow in the line of those who have gone before us because the promise of God is still true

I am with you always to the very end of the age his presence don't go alone you know we go in the in the conference that Jesus is with us we go in the conference that Jesus will empower us we go in the conference that when we sit down with somebody and we open up the pages of the word of God with them and we show them from the word of God who Jesus is that God can take that word and do something powerful in their lives almost in every evangelistic encounter I have these days I open up the word of God and show people Jesus from the word I want them to look not at who I am I want them to look at who he is

I want them to hear it from his lips not from mine I want the word of God to be cut loose in their life to bring about transformation to bring about change got a conference and these disciples when you start to read through the acts of the apostles these disciples didn't go out all confident in themselves they went out with a boldness with a courage and with a confidence in Jesus Christ confidence in the word of God it's incredible to watch isn't it you ever find yourself reading through the acts of the apostles and almost weeping with what's going on you know we'll look at Acts chapter 2 in a little while as part of this little series when we think about how evangelism word based evangelism is a community initiative it's not an individual we do this as a church of Jesus

[27 : 58] Christ but when you sit there looking at it and it just says in passing that 3,000 were added to the church one day that tells me two things it tells me somebody counted right but in actual fact what I thought 3,000 were added in one day you know what that means for Bell Sillen in one day you need to go from one service to about six if my calculations are about right in one day some of us would sit there and think oh no no we couldn't cope with that when in actual fact that's the last thought we should have in our head if that's the first thought we've got in our head then the reality is we're actually not getting this yet we're not getting it yet because we actually don't believe in the

God who can bring 3,000 it's not about 3,000 by the way I'm just making the point you get a confidence confidence in the power of the word not the confidence in any particular person a confidence in the God man confidence in Jesus and a confidence in the word of God to change that's why that's why I'm equipping people to go and open up the word of God with people confidence in that well you're sitting there thinking John you're giving us four C's what's the fifth because then you're thinking at least we know this is finished right well the fifth is actually about the culture of our church because the culture of the New Testament church was the culture that

I've outlined they knew the commission was to make disciples and they were laser like focused on that they weren't distracted by a hundred million other things even when it looked like they might get distracted because it didn't mean they weren't doing other stuff they were doing other stuff they were feeding people and looking after people but they didn't get distracted by that they were still making disciples the culture of the New Testament church was a culture of going into the world in which God had placed it it was not a culture of hiding behind the walls of the church in actual fact many of the other churches had no buildings anyway so they knew walls to hide behind it was a culture that was driven by the conviction that Jesus is Lord and that only Jesus is Lord and he was all sufficient for the needs of whosoever it was a culture that had confidence confidence in the word of

God in the power of the word of God to bring about transformation and when we when we grow in our confidence in these things what happens is the culture of our church is strengthened now I've said before that every church has a culture of evangelism has a culture of reaching the lost every church has one it's either healthy or unhealthy we all have one it's just healthy or unhealthy and I work in many many churches where the culture is not that healthy and it's in need of a good dose of health and I work in others where that culture is getting stronger that culture is getting healthier that culture becomes the dominant and driving force of who the disciples of Jesus Christ are in that place and they're driven by the kind of things we're talking about you know in making disciples and we long for our church culture to be healthy we long for our church culture to be vibrant we long to for our church culture to be a culture where people are becoming disciples followers of the Lord Jesus

Christ on a daily basis and you know the incredible thing is when you think about this whole business of a healthy culture of church sometimes you've got to look to other parts of the world to understand that it never amaze you when you look at the incredible growth of the church of Jesus Christ in China that in actual fact the bulk of it took place very quietly hidden underground it's called the underground church that means they didn't have the big church buildings they couldn't have the big events they couldn't invite people along to hear all the teaching but what they did have was faithful pastors who moved from house to house a little group to little group who taught people the word of God and he said to them you know things like I've been saying this morning our commission is to make disciples as you go that little word go and make disciples it's as you go our commission is to go and make disciples our context is to make disciples amongst the people that we move amongst our conviction is that

[34 : 04] Jesus is their greatest need and our confidence is that the word of God is powerful and can bring about that transformation and so these Chinese believers well equipped well taught as they went and they couldn't say do you want to come along to the Christianity Explored course because that would have got them in prison they just said you know I find my faith and trust in Jesus and people said you're what you're who and they said let me show you in the word of God who he is and some of the actually paid a terrible price for it some of them ended up in prison because they did that but others didn't as they went the people went can I know this Jesus can I follow this Jesus and they said yes and they became part of the church church it was all scattered in different places but they started very quickly to grow in their own faith and confidence in the word of God and they started to say to their own family members and their own colleagues and their own neighbors the same things and the church of Jesus

Christ grew at the most phenomenal rate and so when eventually the Chinese government could hold back no longer because all authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus not to any government but we get the governments that God appoints so when it got to that stage where they could no longer hold back they said oh we're just going to open up again for the gospel and they thought the gospel was dead in China and they thought there'll be any believers anyway and they discovered something the church was not just living in China the church was healthy and thriving and bigger I mean unbelievably bigger than they could ever imagine and the problem they ever would have been if they'd had the freedom that we have interesting isn't it how often the story is that persecution and hard times actually make the church stronger not weaker it thrived and so my friends

I just want to encourage us in this little series we're thinking about word based word centered evangelism just with those five C's this morning we have a commission that's from God we have a context that's our world we need to understand the world but we need to apply an unchanging gospel to the needs of our world we've got a confidence that Christ is sufficient we've got a conviction that he can change things and as we do that the culture of our church gets stronger and thankfully we do all that knowing that he is with us always even to the very end of the age let's pray our gracious father we thank you for the good news of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ we thank you

Lord our God that you are with us we pray Lord our God that you would enable us to respond to your word today we thank you that you've called us to yourself and given us a commission to be those that by your spirit would make disciples of others father we acknowledge that the context in which we have to do that is in the world that does not know Jesus so help us to understand that world and to find the points of connection that we can share Jesus in our world our gracious father we do have a conviction that you and you alone are Lord and you and you alone are able to bring about the healing and restoration and wholeness of the nations so give us confidence give us confidence to make you known to share you in your word with others and as we do so Lord God strengthen the culture of our church that we might be known as those who stand on the authority of every word that you have spoken and who take that word and proclaim that word to a world that needs Jesus strengthen our culture for your honour and for your glory in Jesus name

Amen