

# The Mandate Of Discipling

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Date: 07 November 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] The church fundamentally is not a place that we go to, right? Sometimes that's how we use the term church, that we say, hey, I'm going to the church, or I'm going to, Harper was playing outside a while ago, and she was doing these funny poses where she was pointing, and she was pointing toward the building.

I was like, what are you pointing at? And she's like, I'm pointing at the church. She means the building, right? So I know we use the term that way sometimes. That's not a problem. I'm just saying that fundamentally, the church is not a place that you go to.

It's not a building, right? Neither is church something that you do. That's the other way that we use the term often, that I have church on Sunday, or I'm going to go to church on Sunday, and we think of it more as a verb in that sense.

And again, that's not a wrong thing to say or think. It's just fundamentally, that's not what the church is. The church isn't a place that you go. It's not a thing that you do. The church first is a people to whom you belong.

It's people. It's not just random people. It's just not an assorted gathering of people that changes from week to week.

[ 1 : 15 ] It is a specific people, a particular people, and it is a group to which we all belong. And I think that's important for us to understand. Everything that we cover, the way that we're going to think about church, the way we're going to think about what God desires for our church, it has to start there.

We've got to understand what it is first. Well, what really is this? Is this an organization? Or is it something different than that? Would this be on par with a club or some type of subscription that maybe we would have in other ways?

You know what I mean? Like we would say, okay, the church is kind of like what I do at the country club. Or maybe it's like the thing that I subscribe to, like a streaming service. I pay my fee. I visit at my convenience.

I follow the rules the best that they have, the terms and conditions. But it's really not anything much more than that. And, of course, that's not what the church is. That's a very consumeristic way of viewing the church.

That's not what it is. We look around this room. We look at one another, and we see the church. We see Lakeside Bible Church as we see one another. And it's with that understanding that the rest of this really begins to flow, and we can begin to understand what God wants for us.

[ 2 : 28 ] And so understand that we use that term. I'm not saying that it's wrong to use the term church for other things. My point is that we often miss the foundational truth of what the church actually is. It's a particular people saved by Jesus Christ to declare his gospel and display his glory.

That's who we are, right? Together, corporately, corporately, that's who we are. We are an embassy is a good illustration of that.

We've got the kingdom of God. We're a little embassy of that kingdom situated right here in Cornelius. But we're still a part of the same group. We're defined in the same ways. We're just a local representation of what the church actually is.

So no matter where you go in the New Testament, no matter where you find it mentioned, it's always a reference to a group of people. And it's always a reference in the sense that this is a group of people that you either belong to or you don't belong to.

Not just because you choose to belong or not belong, but there are certain criteria that makes you a member, a partner, of what brings you in to the church universally or locally or whatever it is.

[ 3 : 45 ] And so we start to understand that. Okay, what is the church? The church is a particular people saved by Jesus. Then we have to start to understand then, okay, what are some important questions we need to start asking them?

If this is what the church is, if there's really a group of people to which I belong, okay, well, what exactly brings us together as a people? What makes us this particular people?

There's only one answer for that. It's the gospel, right? It's Christ. That's what binds us. We talk about this a lot in our member meetings. There's, for most of us, without our church here, there is probably no way that we would have, our paths would have ever crossed before, right?

We all have varied interests. We all work different jobs. None of us are really in the same field.

We're not really around each other. We might would pass each other out and about around town and not even realize who each other are.

There's not a lot of rhyme and reason as to why we would be together and to be friends, right?

What is it that actually brings us together? The gospel. The gospel has united us.

[ 4 : 50 ] And it's once we have seen that the gospel has united us that we find we actually have some other things that are in common too, but essentially what makes us a people is the gospel of Jesus. Well, what are the things that identify us as the church?

If that's what the church is and the gospel is what unites us, what actually identifies us as that? Our worship does that, right?

Our worship. I thought about it this afternoon. I pulled in to the driveway real quick to go and change clothes before coming back over here. And I noticed as every Sunday, my neighbor's car is parked right in the driveway where she always has it.

She doesn't go to church. She's there every Sunday. Worship is not a part of her life. And when I see that, I think, okay, my neighbor doesn't worship the Lord on Sunday.

She must not be a Christian. Because what identifies us? What is an identifying marker of who we are in Christ? Our worship, right? It doesn't make sense for someone who says that they're a Christian who isn't committed to the regular worship of our Lord and Savior.

[ 5 : 58 ] It just doesn't make sense. I'm not saying it's impossible. I'm just saying. It's not likely. It's an identifying marker. It's not just our worship. It's the ordinances, right?

The ordinances. Baptism is what identifies us as a professing Christian. It brings us into membership in the church, right? In a local sense.

Communion is that regular rehearsing and identification with Christ and the gospel. And as the church, those things are identifying markers, right? The New Testament tells us that.

And so what unites us? It's the gospel. What identifies us? Worship and ordinances. What about this? What is our purpose in a corporate sense?

Like why? Why does the church exist? Why is this even necessary? Well, because we have a mission, right? And that mission is really, it flows from what we're talking about tonight.

[ 6 : 56 ] Making disciples. Which is not just evangelism. It's more than evangelism. It is helping one another to grow as we follow Christ together. That's the purpose that we have.

That's God's purpose for the church in the world. What kind of relational responsibility do we have to one another? That's an important question. We get into all of those one another commands in the scripture then, right?

Just in the New Testament. What is it? 50 or 60 of them that are unique one another commands.

That God commands us is to identify or be present in our relationships to one another.

Loving one another. Encouraging one another. Teaching one another. Admonishing one another.

Guarding one another. Disciplining one another. We have a lot of responsibility, don't we?

It's not just this thing that we go to on Sundays. That's not what it is. It's so much bigger than that.

It's a people to whom we belong that we have been united with by the gospel.

[ 7 : 58 ] That we are identified with through the regular practice of worship and the administration of the ordinances. That we are on mission with as we take this same gospel to the world.

Help one another follow Christ. And then as we interact with one another in regular life. That's what the church is. That's important. And unless we view the church as a group of people to whom we belong.

We're always going to fall short. We're always going to fall short of all of those things that we just said. We might be believers. But we'll still fall short of what God has instructed us to be.

And how we're to identify as his people. So when we take these particular questions to the Bible. We start to quickly learn what the essentials of a healthy, biblical, God glorifying church actually are.

And at this season in our life together as a church. I think that the best thing for us to consider right now. Is what it means to be a discipling church.

[ 9 : 03 ] What it means to be a discipling church. And I want to tell you why I came to this conclusion. Why we're dealing with this particular essential. In the summer we dealt with, and just in a single Sunday. The essential of communion.

The reason we dealt with it then is because we needed to. Because Jared needed to. Was really the biggest part of it. Jared needed to get his head right. About communion. And why we do it. And what that means.

This starts there too. Jared needs to get his head right about this. It started a few months ago. Many of you I had these conversations with. Trying to think through.

Okay. You know. Most of what we do as a church right now is limited to Sunday morning. Sometimes we do other things. We have some fellowships. We do some other outreach events from time to time.

Most of what we do really is Sunday morning. And we need to be doing more. If you don't feel like we're doing what the Lord desires for us to do in every possible way.

[ 10 : 02 ] So just start having conversations with some of you about discipleship. And maybe groups. Or this program. Or that program. Or what can we do to be meeting together more regularly. And those kinds of things. Good questions. But then I realized very quickly.

That what it was becoming for me. Was just a way to feel better about the way I was administrating our church calendar. That's really what it boiled down to more than anything else.

Because I didn't care. I want everybody to grow. That's my heart honestly. I want everybody to grow in the word. But there was a side to me that was trying to figure out. Just a program that we could institute. Or a way that we could put more things on the calendar.

So I would feel like I'm actually doing what I'm supposed to do. And leading in the way that I'm supposed to lead. And then I realized quickly. I think through by God's grace. That we needed to slow down.

And actually think for a second. Before we start instituting programs of discipleship and discipling in our church. We need to actually start to think a little bit about what it even means. What does it even mean to be a disciple?

[ 11 : 00 ] What does it mean to disciple others? And is it really just about a program? Or is there something more to this? And so I took some time to try to think through those things.

And what we're going to go through in these next few weeks. Is the overflow of some of my thoughts on that. Okay? Discipleship is a buzzword in the evangelical world. Isn't it? It should be. It should be. We need to talk about it. We need to talk about it a lot. But not everyone means the same thing when they talk about it. For instance, as I've alluded to already.

Some people when they talk about discipleship. What they really have in mind is a program that functions within the church's ministry. Right? It's almost a kind of an arm like a children's ministry would be.

Or a music ministry would be. Or another outreach ministry would be. It's kind of a subset of the church. And it's something that people in the church, individuals can register to attend.

[ 11 : 58 ] Or they can volunteer to teach. It's more of a program. It's a class. It has different looks and styles. But consistently across the board with that kind of mindset.

Discipling is for a specific amount of time. And it involves a specific group of people within the church. Right? It's not so much about the church as a whole.

It's not so much about what is woven into the DNA of the church. It's just another program. Right? I'm not saying discipleship programs are bad. They're good. We need them.

Hopefully we're going to have them here. And that's not what I mean. I just mean some people when they think of discipleship. That's all they think about. This thing over here that you can take the class if you want to take the class. You can graduate, get the certificate.

Or you can be involved or to volunteer to teach it or whatever it is. Some people that's really what they have in mind. For others, discipleship is more about training an individual to be a good follower of a particular church tradition.

[13:03] Does that make sense to what I mean by that? It's less about, like I remember going through a class. This may have been when I was in college. It's a church. And the form of discipleship.

It was a discipleship class that we went through at this church. And it went through an acrostic for Baptist. And each letter meant a different thing.

You know what I'm talking about, Kyle? You probably went through some of these. And it's not that those things aren't important. They are important. Of course, baptism. It went through it. Each one represented a different thing. Individual, soul, liberty.

All that stuff is in there. The perseverance of the saints. All that kind of thing. Ordinances. And it's not that those things aren't important. But what that church was doing was not really discipling me to follow Christ as much as they were discipling me to be a good follower of their tradition.

Now, I believe their tradition. I'm happy about that. But that's not really what discipleship is, right? We're not exactly looking to train each other to be good followers of one tradition or another.

[14:05] We want to help others follow Christ, right? We want to help others follow Christ first, not just our church. So let's start with a couple of simple definitions.

These aren't original to me. I think I've found these in a Nine Marks catalog or something like that a while back. They're not original to me. They're very simple. But let's, if you're taking notes, you might would be helped to write this down.

Here's what we mean by discipleship, okay? Here's what we mean by discipling. It just means to follow Jesus, right? It just means to follow Jesus, to be a disciple, right?

That's all we mean by that. Discipling is what Jesus said in Mark 8. When a person comes to a point where they deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him, it's the point of conversion.

You become a follower of Christ. That is discipling. And it characterizes the rest of your life. You spend the rest of your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. That's what we mean when we say discipleship.

[15:06] We're talking about our personal efforts at following Christ and being a disciple of his. Now, there's a second definition, which is discipling.

Discipling, which is really just a subset of discipleship, but it's the actionable part. Discipleship is more like a noun. This is who I am. I'm a disciple of Christ.

Discipling is to help other people follow Christ. To help other people follow Christ, okay? What we're talking about in these next three Sundays or next three gatherings that we're together for this particular purpose is we want to look at what it means to be a discipling church.

The very fact that we are a church shows that we are disciples. We are followers of Christ. But what does it actually mean for us to be a discipling church? That we're going to help other people, others follow Christ.

So we see the story of the New Testament or the church in the New Testament is a story of discipleship and discipling. Being a follower of Jesus is what brings you into the church, makes you a part of the church.

[16:15] Helping other people follow Jesus is what a disciple does because he or she is a part of the church. So some people would even frame this, and I like this thought, they would frame this and describe it as mutual soul care.

Perhaps you've heard that term before, mutual soul care. Discipling is certainly that. It's not less than that. But there is more to it than that. Discipling isn't only about what we do with one another within the church.

There's an also external dimension to this. Discipling also involves what we do with those outside of the church. We are making disciples, helping people to follow Christ, and that even begins with unbelievers.

And so the gospel is so fantastic, the command to do this, so explicit, that discipling is the natural and inevitable result of being a faithful Christian.

Let me say that again. The gospel is so fantastic, and the command to make disciples is so explicit that it is the natural and inevitable result of just being a faithful Christian.

[17:35] If you're a faithful Christian, you will inevitably find yourself helping other people be faithful Christians, whether that's with a primary focus on evangelism, or discipleship within the church, or within your home, whatever it is.

A faithful Christian will make disciples. It's just natural. Mark Dever says this. I find this challenging. He says, If you're not helping others follow Jesus, then I don't know what you mean when you say that you are following Jesus.

If you don't help others follow Jesus, then I don't know what you mean when you say that you are following Jesus. What does he mean by that? You know what I just said?

Discipling is the natural and inevitable result of being a faithful Christian. That to be a follower of Jesus is to trust him, to learn from him, to imitate him.

And Jesus himself is the supreme example of what it means to disciple others. That's what he did. We've been studying it for so long now in Mark's gospel about how Jesus was focused on discipling others to follow him.

[ 18 : 50 ] So an essential quality of a healthy biblical church is that it is a discipling church. And I want you to know that the ultimate goal of these three lessons is not that they would produce a particular program in our church, though I think that's going to happen and I hope that does happen.

But that's not the goal. The goal is that we will begin to learn how to have a church culture that is shaped by discipling.

That discipling one another and discipling others outside of the church is so integral to the DNA of who Lakeside Bible Church is and what Lakeside Bible Church does that we can't think of our church without thinking about this process of discipling, of having a mindset of following Christ and helping others to do the same.

So in the next two lessons, next week, we're going to talk about the ministry of discipling. We're going to go to Ephesians 4, Lord willing, and we're going to look at the responsibility of every believer, every Christian to be a faithful minister of the gospel in evangelism, but especially to one another.

It's not just a pastoral responsibility. It's all of our responsibility. We're going to look at that more specifically next week. In the last week, the 28th, we're going to look at methods. We're going to get really practical.

[ 20 : 16 ] How can we actually do this in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our church, so on and so forth. But before we can get to those things, we have to start here at the very basics, which is the mandate for discipling.

The mandate for discipling. So you're in Matthew 28. Let's read it together. Matthew 28, verse 16. Now the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. 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 things that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Well, it makes sense for us to begin here, right? The Great Commission, as we know this passage to be, perfectly summarizes what a discipling church does.

[ 21 : 25 ] But its significance really lies first in the fact that making disciples is the explicit command of Jesus.

He said it plainly. Because of my authority, go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. There's no other way to read that.

It's the explicit command of the Lord. And here in this passage, Jesus is removing all possibility of indifference to discipling.

He places every disciple of his in a position of either obedience or disobedience, which is why it's so important that we think about a culture of discipling being the goal of this series, being the goal of our church, over and above merely a program.

Every Christian must be engaged in helping others follow Jesus. Or they're living in disobedience to Jesus Christ.

[ 22 : 28 ] He plainly said it. Make disciples of all nations. And we can look at many other places in the New Testament. We're not going to do that. But we look at many other places where this is an explicit command.

Some people have tried to diminish the significance of this passage, saying that since this was given just to the 11, that it only applies to them, that it was a command for the apostles.

It's maybe just an encouragement for the rest of us. But that argument just doesn't make sense. It's unsound. Certainly, Jesus' command to teach disciples everything that he commanded includes the Great Commission itself, right?

Certainly, his desire was that these apostles wouldn't only share the gospel, but they would train those people to share the gospel as well and continue to perpetuate discipleship and discipling as people came to Christ.

The very nature of discipling is that it continually replicates itself. That's what it does. That's what Jesus means. This wasn't just for the apostles. This is for all of us.

[ 23 : 38 ] All of us need to take this seriously. They had a specific role to play in the church, no doubt about that. But they were really just the setting into motion at the start of the church what all of us are to be faithful to do.

And there's one more note I want to make before we jump into four quick points. And it's this. I want you to notice the indicative that precedes the imperative. You know what I mean?

There's a statement of fact that precedes the command. Look at verse 18. That's where the indicative is. What does Jesus say first? All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And it's because of that indicative that Jesus then immediately says, therefore, go and make disciples. So before he ever commands them, he reminds them of his supreme authority.

So then our obedience to the great commission, it's not just about growing our church. That's a good thing. That's a good goal. We want growth in our church, right?

[ 24 : 44 ] We want to see people following Christ. But it's not first about that. It's first about looking at the authority that Jesus Christ has in our lives and saying, I'm going to obey the master.

You know, obey the Lord. All authority on heaven and earth belongs to him. Because of that, he says, go. And our response as faithful disciples is to obey, to obey what he's commanded.

But then surely there's a connection here between Jesus's statement that all authority on heaven and earth belongs to him. And therefore we are to go to all nations.

Surely Jesus meant for there to be a link in those two statements. That's an encouragement to us. We can confidently take the gospel around the world with the expectation that Jesus will produce more disciples through us.

So the indicative not only produces the imperative, it motivates it. It motivates it. Not only do we go because we want to obey Jesus, we go because Jesus has promised his authority over all people.

[ 25 : 51 ] Therefore, as we go, he will produce disciples through us among all people. That's fantastic. That's amazing. We get so worried. Sometimes we don't do this because we're maybe fearful.

I know that's one of my reasons that I'm less faithful to do this than I should be. Maybe we get fearful or maybe we just get discouraged because we don't see the fruitfulness the way that we wish that we saw the fruitfulness.

But Jesus says, go and I'll provide this. All authority belongs to me. I will save them. I will call them. So let's look at four quick things here.

First, discipling is intentional. Discipling is intentional. Look at the first phrase in verse 19. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

The first thing I want you to consider here is that no one ever makes disciples on accident. No one makes disciples on accident. This doesn't happen.

[ 26 : 50 ] It takes initiative, intentionality to make disciples, which I think is why Jesus at the very beginning emphasizes this, go, action, go, be intentional, initiate this in your life.

So the great commission then combats a missional laziness and lethargy that exists in so many Christians.

So there's one sense in which the go here is essentially Jesus's way of saying, hey, get off the couch, get out in the world, make some friends, share the gospel, help another believer follow Christ.

And consider the perspective of the disciples here. This is post-resurrection. This is not yet the ascension of Christ. They're in Galilee, not the Mount of Olives. Remember, Jesus had told the apostles, after I raised, go to Galilee and wait for me there.

And that's what they did. And while they were there, they were so overwhelmed and excited by all that had happened in Jesus's atonement and in his resurrection that they just couldn't help but tell everybody about it.

[ 28 : 03 ] No, that's not what they did. They went back discouraged is what they did. In fact, many of them were like Peter that were so discouraged by their own failure that they had all but given up on what the Lord had actually called them to do.

Remember Peter at the end of John's gospel? He grabs a couple of the other fellows and he just says, let's go fishing. And it's not that he's abandoning Christ. It's not that he doesn't want to follow Christ.

He's discouraged because he failed miserably in denying Christ right before his crucifixion. And he's down about that. He has reached a missional lethargy.

Laziness perhaps would fit this to where he wasn't doing what God had actually called him to do.

Why? He wasn't going. So what does Jesus do? He comes and he says, go, go and tell, go and tell all that you have seen and heard.

And I think many of us can identify with that. Our lack of intentionality in discipling others can often be boiled down to spiritual lethargy.

[ 29 : 13 ] And what we need to do is listen to Jesus's call to go. I love that old hymn we sing, that old missional hymn.

I can't remember. Facing a task. Facing a task. I'm finished. I think it's the last verse. O Father who sustained them, O Spirit who inspired, Savior whose love constrained them to toil with zeal untired. And then it says, From cowardice defend us. From lethargy awake. Forth on thine errands send us to labor for thy sake.

That's an important verse of that hymn. We need to be awakened to that. That's part of what Jesus has in mind there with the go. It's intentionality. It's initiative. But there's a second consideration here that isn't the same as lethargy or laziness.

For some of us, the problem is missional indifference. It's not so much laziness. It's not a lethargy. It's just kind of indifference. It's not always that we don't care about helping other people follow Jesus.

[ 30 : 22 ] It's that we don't care enough to change the structures of our lives to actually do it. And this one hits hard for me.

Because to take the initiative and intentionality of actually making disciples takes time. It takes effort. Study. A lot of times you're going to be carrying a burden that doesn't actually belong to you first.

You're helping a brother or sister in Christ carry a burden. Or you're carrying the burden of a lost soul that you're trying to pray for the Lord to open their heart to the gospel. And it takes time and energy and study and faithfulness and prayer and all of those things.

All of those things. And let's just be honest. We're busy. We're busy. We've got a lot going on between our jobs and our kids and our hobbies and all the things.

It's not that we don't want people to follow Christ. We just don't care enough about that to actually change the structures of our life to help people follow Christ. always hoping that somebody else with less going on can do it.

[ 31 : 26 ] Somebody else with less going on can step up to the plate in these matters. But that's not what the Lord commands. He commands for all of us. It's not unreasonable to translate this particular participle go to as you go.

The assumption is that you are going in the sense of you are going about your life. And Jesus is saying is as you're going intentionally take the initiative to make disciples.

Whether you're at home or at work or on the soccer field or in the grocery store or on the golf course or at church, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, have a mind that is intentionally looking for ways to help other people follow Jesus.

But it takes initiative to do that. Intentionality to do that. It doesn't happen by accident. And if we're waiting for it to be convenient, we'll never help anybody follow Christ.

It will never be convenient. The best things never are. Even in our homes with our kids. You'll never help your kids follow Christ.

[ 32 : 38 ] I'll never help my kids follow Christ unless I do it on purpose. Unless I do it on my purpose. Dad didn't accidentally talk about the Lord when we're driving down the road or on the golf course.

He didn't do that on accident. He did it on purpose. You don't read your Bible to your kids on accident. You don't pray with your kids on accident. It takes intentionality.

This also needs to be intentional within our church fellowship. Right? Think about your attendance to church this morning. All of you are here except Marty and Faye. Marty just wasn't feeling good. But think about it. If you would have been here, think about this. When did you get here? How late did you stay? Where did you sit? Think about it. Just put your place, put yourself back in your own shoes from this morning. Or maybe, or any Sunday for that matter. Where did you sit? Where did you park? Who did you bring? Who did you speak to?

[ 33 : 38 ] What was the nature of those conversations? Think about it now for a moment. Now how much of those things, the answers that you have for that, was motivated intentionally by your desire to help somebody else in our church family for five minutes?

For five minutes. Follow Jesus more faithfully. I don't know that I can say that I did that this morning. I mean, it's unfair.

I came to preach this morning. That's cheating, right? But outside of the sermon. I don't know. I don't know that there was any of you that I had first and foremost in my mind when we were having a conversation this morning.

How can I help them love Jesus more? How can I help them follow Jesus better today? When we come to church, come early, not just to hang out.

Like I typically do. Come early to encourage somebody in their faith. Stay late to encourage somebody in their faith. Bring somebody with you to hear the gospel.

[ 34 : 39 ] Go talk to somebody that maybe you don't often talk to. Sit with somebody different. Sit in a different place. Look for intentional ways to help one another follow Christ.

And I know what you may be thinking. Jared, this all sounds so radical. It sounds like Jesus expects us to abandon our lives for this.

Yeah. Yeah. That's right. That's what he wants. Discipling takes initiative. The next three will be faster. Okay, number two. Discipling includes evangelism.

It includes evangelism. Look again at verse 19. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now it may be helpful here to understand a little bit more about the grammatical structure of these verses.

Now there's only one imperative in these verses and it's the phrase make disciples. That's the imperative statement here. Go, baptize, teach.

[ 35 : 44 ] The other verbal ideas in this, in the Great Commission, they're not actually imperatives. They're participles. So Jesus says, big thing, big thing, make disciples.

And then he says, make disciples by going, baptizing, teaching. Those three things are the way that Jesus intends for us to make disciples.

And here at the end of verse 19, he says that one part of fulfilling this command of making disciples is by baptizing people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

And we understand we're Baptists, but we understand that doesn't mean that baptism saves a person. We understand baptism is a public identification with Christ.

It's a stated declaration that a person is saved and now following as a faithful disciple. But though it has no saving power, baptism in the New Testament is very closely related to conversion.

[ 36 : 45 ] In fact, there are times when the New Testament authors actually used the word baptism to refer to conversion. Not that it's the baptism that produced salvation, but it's so closely linked to the early church, baptism and conversion, that they didn't separate those two things.

So when Jesus says here that one of the ways to make disciples is to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, he's not talking about baptism for baptism's sake. He's talking about faithful evangelism.

He's talking about taking his gospel and sharing it with other people in order that you may call them to believe. Call them as he did to turn away from their sin to follow him as a faithful disciple.

Listen, we can't help people follow Jesus more faithfully if they're not his disciples to begin with. The work of discipling starts with evangelism. And though the Bible speaks of evangelists who are uniquely gifted at sharing the gospel with unbelievers, nowhere in the New Testament are other believers exempted from the responsibility.

In fact, faithful evangelism is assumed everywhere in the New Testament. Somebody tried to tell me a year or so ago after I preached a message on, remember when the four friends lowered their crippled friend down through the roof in Peter's house and preached a message on evangelism

from that.

[ 38 : 12 ] And somebody told me afterwards that they thought that I did not preach that text right. They said the New Testament doesn't actually command that we evangelize. And so for me to exhort our church to evangelize was to be inconsistent with the New Testament.

And I think that's foolish. I think it's foolish. These New Testament authors, they didn't have to exhort the early church to evangelize. They were just doing it.

In almost every letter that Paul wrote, what does he say? I thank God for your faith that is known around the world. Their faith can't be known around the world if they keep it to themselves and never share it with anyone else.

Peter writes and says, endure faithfully, persevere in persecution for the sake of the gospel. Well, how can anybody be persecuted for the gospel if no one knows you're a believer?

Of course they were telling people. Of course they were evangelizing. The church in Jerusalem was growing daily such as should be saved. It wasn't just the apostles.

[ 39 : 16 ] The gospel message was on the lips of every believer in Jerusalem and the church was growing. Wasn't evangelism a part of Jesus' promise to Peter and Andrew and James and John when he called them to follow him?

What did he say? Follow me, I'll make you fishers of men. Of course, it's assumed everywhere in the New Testament. We have to be faithfully evangelizing the lost.

It's a part of making disciples. Number three, discipling requires teaching. Discipling requires teaching. Look at verse 20. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

There's some people who think that evangelism is the whole of making disciples, but it's not. Jesus didn't just stop at baptizing them.

He takes it a step further that once they're following Christ, help them be faithful to that. Teach them everything I've taught you. And we know how this goes, right?

[ 40 : 22 ] We've been Christians long enough to know that we're in constant need of discipling.

We're in constant need of instruction, constantly needing someone to model for us the truths of the scripture.

And we need to be constantly doing that for others, teaching them, modeling for them, encouraging them. It's a part of making disciples. We're going to flesh that out in greater detail over the next two lessons, so I'm going to leave it there for now, except to say this is a part of our responsibility to one another.

When we talk about church membership or church partnership, I want to change it. I want to stop calling it church membership. We'll get into that another day. Well, church membership is discipleship, right?

To submit yourself to a local church is to submit to the discipleship of a local church and to engage in discipleship with that local church. It's really what it is. We have a responsibility to one another in this.

We have a responsibility to help one another follow Christ faithfully, to constantly teach one another, encourage one another, admonish one another, help one another.

[ 41 : 33 ] We get to Hebrews 10. Remember, the writer of Hebrews encourages us to not forsake the gathering of the church, right? Don't forsake the gathering of God's people. Encourage and exhort to love all those things that happens at the gathering.

That immediately follows the third warning of apostasy in the book of Hebrews. And I think part of what the writer has to say there is that our intentional discipling within the local church is one way that we avoid apostatizing, that we protect ourselves against the warnings of falling away from Christ by constantly being together as a people.

We have a responsibility to that. Finally, discipling is empowered by Christ. Discipling is empowered by Christ. The end of verse 20, Behold, I am with you always even to the end of the age.

So I love how this mandate ends. Notice how long he says he will be with us. To the end of the age. How long is that? Until he comes back and we get to be with him.

Right? The promise of Christ's presence and power and making disciples is just applicable to us as it was to those apostles in Galilee. But it also reminds us that fruitfulness in discipling only comes by the grace of Jesus.

[ 43 : 00 ] We can devise all manner of programs and we're going to do that. But we got to remember that there's no power in our strategies. There's no power in our strategies.

If anybody's going to come to know Christ it's going to be because of the grace of Jesus that worked through us. If anybody's going to be disciplined in Christ it's going to be because of the grace of Jesus working through his word through his people.

If we lean on our own devices for success what we'll end up doing is filling our church full of people that aren't actually true disciples. but if we cast ourselves on the power and grace of the Lord he'll do his work through us no matter what our chosen method may be or what the strategy is that we devise.

It's going to look different in every church isn't it? God uses his word he does it by his spirit and he promises us his grace and his power. I am with you so go and do it I will be with you.

So let's just do a quick honest evaluation. First personally how are we doing at obeying the mandate? Are we intentionally making disciples?

[ 44 : 14 ] Are we evangelizing the lost? Are we teaching others our kids our friends others in the church to follow Christ faithfully?

We should probably also consider this corporately right? We zoom out for a minute away from our individual lives and just think about our church life and our own evaluation of what our church is doing right now collectively.

Are we making disciples? Are we evangelizing the lost? Are we mutually caring for one another's souls?

Are we developing strategies to make that possible and to make it more evident in our church? I think we could all do a little better work on that. In fact there's probably never going to be a time where I would say otherwise because we always need to do more.

We always need to be more faithful and there may be an area that you're really faithful right now that maybe five years from now you're less faithful in and you're going to need the person sitting next to you to come up to you and encourage you a little bit.

[ 45 : 20 ] Say hey you remember a few years ago you were at that class on Sunday night and this was true in your life. It's not true anymore. I just want to encourage you. Be faithful. We're going to need that for the rest of our lives aren't we?

And I think that's what Jesus commands us to do. So what does it mean to be a discipling church? It means first that we care that our church is made up of true disciples. We preach the true gospel right?

We care about church membership and ordinance all those things but it also means that we are intentionally initiating in our own lives ways to help other people follow Christ first in evangelism and then in our responsibility to one another.