

LIVE|15 – The Ordinary Revolution

The Calling of Ordinary

Matthew 28:16-20

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“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped 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.”” (Matthew 28:16–20, ESV)

One of the questions that I am commonly asked is “Beside the Bible, what have been the most influential books in your life?” There are many, but I typically give some variation of this list: *The Biography of Martin Lloyd-Jones* by Ian Murray, *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter, *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul, *The Disciplines of a Godly Man* by R. Kent Hughes, and *Desiring God* by John Piper. These books are foundational to my spiritual life and pastoral ministry.

But when I look back at my life, I think that there is another question that is even more telling and revealing: “Who are the people who most influenced you?” And on that list would be my parents, who modeled Christ-likeness and a passion for Jesus in our home. Pastor Will Davis, who was my home church pastor and gave me my first opportunity to preach. Dr. Harold Green, who became a mentor in college and told me, “You need to marry Sarah, she’s a keeper!” Pastor John Street where I served as an intern my senior year of college and who did our pre-marital counseling. Dr. Jim Grier, whose view of God in the seminary classroom caused me to often feel like I should crawl out of the room. And Daniel Henderson who gave me a model for worship-based prayer.

The older I get, the more I realize that as influential as the books are on my life, the greater influence has come by virtue of the people whose lives intersected with mine. What’s more, many of the key influencers were pastors whose teaching I sat under. And yet, as helpful as their teaching was, it was not just their teaching that shaped me; it was their lives.

My life bears the imprint of these people. I would describe them as my “disciplers.” Their lives impacted mine, and I think that the ordinary Christian life is filled with those kind of relationships. In fact, I think it more central to what Christianity is all about more than what we often realize.

The basic mission for those who represent Jesus on earth is to “make disciples.” I’d like to explore what that really means and what it could look like in our lives. My hope is to show you that the ordinary **Christian life involves intentional spiritual replication.**

Make Disciples: The Ordinary Calling

This is the last Sunday of our focus that we called “The Ordinary Revolution.” Over the last three weeks we have looked at the **beauty of ordinary** from John 15, and then we looked at the **context of the ordinary** from Matthew 16 and 18 about the role of the church in a believer’s life. Last week we examined the **practice of the ordinary** through the eight marks of the ordinary Christian life in Galatians 5.

My prayer for this season has been that God would renew your passion for the ordinary Christian life such that you would make real and incremental progress in your walk with Jesus. That is why we offered you a challenge in twelve different areas each week, and I hope that you have established some new patterns in your life.

I also hope that you have come to appreciate the value and power of ordinary Christianity such that you see both the role of mountain top experiences and “walking by the Spirit.” We need both, and if we don’t have the right vision of the Christian life, we miss what it really means to follow Jesus even though it is right in front of us.

Our text today is one that many of you have heard before. It is commonly called “The Great Commission,” because it is Jesus’ final charge to His disciples regarding their mission on earth after He returns to heaven. After spending over three years together, listening to Jesus’ teaching, observing and performing miracles, and witnessing His death and resurrection, Jesus gives His disciples their mission:

“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...” (Matthew 28:19–20a, ESV)

How does this mission, so often relegated to foreign missions or pastoral ministry, relate to the ordinary Christian life? I’d like to help us understand this by answering three key questions:

- 1. Who is Jesus Calling?**
- 2. What is their Mission?**
- 3. How is it Fulfilled?**

And my hope is that you’ll be able to answer one really important question at the end: “What is my role?”

Who is Jesus Calling?

The passage begins by setting the context for this Great Commission. We learn that there are eleven disciples. Judas would have been the twelfth, but his betrayal and suicide have removed him from the disciples. They gather in Galilee, the home for many of the disciples, the starting point of Jesus’ ministry, and a great setting for the beginning of a mission to the Gentiles.

They gather on a specific mountain where Jesus had instructed them to meet. Mountains were important meeting places for Jesus and his disciples, and a place where divine messages were delivered (cf: Matthew 5:1, 15:29, 17:1, 24:3). The setting was a fitting place for what will follow.

Now verse 17 is especially significant. It shows us the unvarnished humanity of the disciples: *“And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.”* (Matthew 28:17, ESV) Matthew could have easily left this particular verse out, or he could have left out part of the verse. But we discover that when Jesus appears, there was both worship and doubt either in the same group of disciples or in the same hearts of some of the disciples. We are not sure exactly what Matthew has in mind. However, it is very clear that these followers of Jesus are weak, struggling, and very much in process when they encounter Jesus.

Despite all that they had seen, heard, and experienced, some of them are still struggling to not doubt. Or maybe a better way to say it is that in their doubt they were still worshipping. It is very clear that they disciples are very human. They are anything but heroes.

Before we say anything about the mission that Jesus entrusts to them, I think it is worth noting that they were very ordinary men. We know for sure that Peter, James and John were fisherman, but it is also likely that two or three others were fisherman or tradesmen as well. Matthew was a converted tax collector, and Simon was a zealot, an insurrectionist group that wanted to overthrow Rome. They were a group that did not come from the halls of power, the highly educated, or the spiritual class of people.

In Acts 4, Peter and John are hauled before the Sanhedrin under charges of healing in Jesus’ name. The religious leaders were astonished at their answers because of how ordinary they were.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13, ESV)

Now, does it encourage you that the disciples are just ordinary men? It should. In a few verses we are going to hear about Jesus’ all-encompassing authority and the Great Commission. The power and the scope of what Jesus is going to say is stunning. And yet, the people to whom He entrusts this mission, the people who He calls, are very ordinary people.

Jesus is going to entrust His mission to imperfect, struggling, and weak-faithed disciples. One commentator said this: *“Christians are both believers and doubters, adoring and wondering, trusting and questioning. Is it not refreshing that Matthew admits this?”*¹ My answer is *“Yes!”* Jesus’ disciples have always been ordinary people who were entrusted with an extraordinary mission.

Is that how you see yourself? Do you see yourself as being a part of this mission? I think there are a few barriers that ordinary Christians face. Maybe you can relate to one or more of these:

¹ Fredrick Bruner, *Commentary on Matthew – Vol 2*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 810.

- **Insecurity** – Many believers fail to live on mission because they feel inadequate for the calling that Jesus gives them. They don't feel like they have enough answers, they lack sufficient faith, or they don't feel as gifted as others.
- **Misunderstanding** – Some followers of Jesus have the wrong vision of how God is going to accomplish His mission on earth. They think it is the job of professionals or church programs to carry our God's mission on earth.
- **Distractions** – Other believers allow other things in their lives to become more practically central than the ordinary calling as a follower of Jesus. They fail to see that the beauty of the gospel is the way that it affects ordinary people in ordinary callings.
- **Disobedience** – There are also believers who know better. For a certain group of people, it is simply a matter of disloyalty to Jesus. They know that God is laying opportunities in front of them, but their heart is hard. What they need is ordinary repentance.

In a moment we are going to look at the scope and depth of this calling, but before we look at that, I want to suggest to you that there is a calling that every Christian has upon his or her life. Christianity spread from eleven ordinary disciples, and I believe that is still happening.

God is on a mission to reach the world, and His strategy is to use ordinary people. So this message applies to every single person who calls him or herself a follower of Jesus.

What is Their Mission?

Now that we understand to whom the calling is given, let's see if we can understand the significance and meaning of what Jesus says in verses 18-20. Many of you are used to hearing these verses in the context of a message about foreign missions, and it certainly applies to that. However, although our global mission is extremely important, it is only one application of this mission.

The mission and its characteristics are laid out for us:

1. It is rooted in the authority of Jesus. The mission that the disciples are about to receive is something that is a derivative of Jesus' victory. Jesus says "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." By virtue of His death and resurrection, the Father has given Him "the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). And with this name comes authority, which in Matthew's gospel is how he distinguishes Jesus from the other religious leaders (Matt. 7:29), how he describes Jesus' power to forgive and heal (9:6), what he gives to His disciples (10:1), and what makes Him a credible teacher (21:23-27). For Matthew, the authority of Jesus means that He is Lord. It means that He is the King of Kings and the Lords, and that government shall be upon His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6).² The Great Commission is rooted in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

2. It is a movement. Verse 19 begins with the important word "Go," and Jesus says this in light of His previous comment about all authority being given to him. The mission of Jesus is a movement which means that He envisions them not staying on the mountain but spreading, reaching, moving, and growing. In other words, there is a "tilt" or a "lean" when it comes to being a disciple of Jesus. The

² Bruner, 813.

posture of a Christian is moving toward people not away from people. There is a bias for action in the Christian life. We are called to “Go.” Sometimes that involves leaving your country and your extended family. Sometimes that involves another language and culture. But the call to “go” is not just for missionaries. The central idea here is that the follower of Jesus does not gather just to gather. They gather to be scattered. It means that their central ministry is not only caring for one another, it is doing that because of their movement. The mission of Jesus requires movement. It is a movement.

3. Its goal is disciple-making. The mission and its movement have a purpose and a goal. That goal is simply to “make disciples.” It is interesting to note that Jesus doesn’t use words like convert, preach to, or to win.³ Instead, He uses a word that is more organic, more slowly developed, and yet more personal for them. They are His disciples, and His command involves them making disciples.

The word discipleship is always hard to define. As a pastor, I have frequently encountered two extremes when it comes to this word and its definition. First, I have found that some people define discipleship institutionally. Therefore, discipleship is merely a series of classes or a program in which one is engaged. Discipleship for them means that someone is “in the system.” Discipleship is a class you take. On the other hand, I have also found people who define discipleship experientially. They base their definition on either really good experiences or really bad experiences of discipleship in their young adult years. For them, discipleship is a very personal, intimate, and relational process. Discipleship in this model is really spiritual mentoring or coaching.

I think that there are elements of truth to both of these. People are certainly disciplined in a class as well as in a highly relational setting. But when you take the command “make disciples” in its context, it is simply Jesus saying to his disciples, “Do to other people what I have done to you.” Whatever Jesus did to the disciples, they are now charged with doing the same thing.

Therefore, my definition of disciple-making would simply be “**intentional spiritual replication.**” It seems to me that this is what Jesus did with His disciples. He did it in a variety of ways, in many different settings, and it wasn’t the same for each of His disciples. But His life’s mission was to intentionally and spiritually replicate Himself in the disciples.

4. It involves evangelism and obedience-oriented instruction. What are the core ingredients in making disciples? The text tells pretty clearly. There are two participles that are connected to the command “make disciples.” First, disciples are made as they are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible frequently links baptism with conversion because it marks “going public” with one’s relationship with Jesus (see Acts 2:37-38). So making disciples, first and foremost, means that a person trusts Christ as his or her savior and becomes a follower of Jesus. Disciple-making starts with evangelism.

Secondly, it involves obedience-oriented instruction as indicated by the next participial phrase: “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). To make disciples is to impart truth such that it works in the lives of others. Therefore, disciple-making cannot just be relegated to teaching alone or to actions alone. Disciples are those who know and live truth. Disciples

³ Bruner, 815.

are those who learn by listening, watching, and living. It is the truth of the Word worked out in people's lives.

Remember, this is the target of our "going." Our aim is a ***movement of intentional spiritual replication through evangelism and obedience-oriented instruction.***

5. Its aim is to saturate the world. Where is this mission meant to happen? What is the hope when it is difficult? Both answers are stunning. The scope of this mission is everywhere. Verse 19 says, "make disciples of all nations." The mission of God on the earth is no longer to be limited to the Jews or the city of Jerusalem. Jesus desires that all the families of the earth are blessed by this disciple-making mission (Gen. 12:1-3). The scope of this mission is to have the gospel saturate the earth, looking forward to the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God like the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). And our role in that mission is to 1) make disciples everywhere and 2) everywhere we go, to make disciples.

When we were doing the research for the Fishers campus, we plotted out the location of our people all over the city. We used a map to show us where they lived so that we could know where to put our first campus. I can't help think about that map as it relates to our disciple-making strategy. Just think of the gospel saturation that could happen and is happening in our city as we scatter each week with a vision to saturate our city with the hope of the gospel. Do you see the city and our mission through this hopeful lens? Your perspective on this matters.

I was talking with a Christian leader this week, and we were discussing the challenges of living in a post-Christian culture. He said that someone challenged him to think differently about the culture. Instead of seeing it as "post-Christian" he was challenged to see it as "pre-Christian." It is a slight change but it reflects a revolutionary vision shift. Do you see yourself as a part of the mission of God?

6. It involves the personal presence of Jesus. The final characteristic of this mission is often overlooked. The statement "*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" can be treated like the sunset in a missionary presentation or the credits in a movie. But there is so much more here than that.

Jesus promised that as His disciples carry out His mission, that they will never, ever lack His presence with them. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the personal presence of Christ is mediated to Christ's disciples as they scatter into the world. Therefore, there is hope that no matter what happens, the believer will always have the presence of Jesus in his or her life.

But this statement is not just about comfort. It is also reflecting the fact that we are not just saturating the world with information, we are introducing people to Jesus. In the accomplishment of the mission, we are taking Jesus to people. We are leading people to Jesus. We are making people into disciples of Jesus. We are His ambassadors in the world, and Jesus is with us in this mission.

If discipleship is intentional spiritual replication, then the ultimate aim is for people to look like Jesus. Our mission is to introduce them to Jesus, to teach them about Jesus, to show them how to walk like Jesus so that together we look like Jesus.

When you think about Christianity, do you see it in the light of these six characteristics? Do you see it as something rooted in the authority of Jesus, as a movement, with a goal to make disciples through evangelism and obedience-oriented teaching that saturates the world with the personal presence of Jesus?

What's more, do you see this as the ordinary calling for all us? Do you see that the divinely given strategy for accomplishing Jesus' mission involves a critical mindset when it comes to how we think about our lives?

What Does this Mission Look Like?

My aim this morning has been to highlight the critical importance of disciple-making as it relates to the ordinary Christian life. I want all of us to think about being engaged in a movement of intentional spiritual replication.

This assumes, of course, that there is something to replicate. You cannot replicate nothing. So, from a spiritual standpoint this mission does not apply to you if you are not a follower of Jesus. In fact, if you have not given your heart and life to Jesus, you are our mission right now. We want you to turn from your sin, trust in Jesus, and then to replicate yourself. And it may be that this message today is a stark reminder that there is something missing in your life. You wouldn't want to replicate your life. What you really need is a radical change, and that is what Christ can do for you today. This mission starts by being a Christian.

Part of the challenge with talking about disciple-making is that it is designed to be all-encompassing and the flavoring of the Christian life in many different contexts. Disciple-making is bigger than a single category. Let me show you:

Discipleship is both corporate and personal. When we gather, sing together, learn together, worship together, and spend time together around the Word, that is discipleship. There is something powerful and helpful about the large gathering of God's people. The Holy Spirit uses the official and large-scale gathering of the church for discipleship. But that is not all there is.

Discipleship is also very personal and individually oriented. Our aim is to present "everyone mature in Christ" (Col.1:28). Discipleship happens through the corporate gathering and the personal interactions, conversations, one-on-one times, and how we care for one another. Discipleship happens one person at a time.

Discipleship is both structural and relational. One of my favorite books on this subject compares discipleship to a trellis and a vine. In order for a vine to grow, it needs the trellis. In the same way, the life blood of discipleship is relationships. People make disciples. But the structure of those programs, resources, or events create the context for those relationships. The challenge is just to be sure that we don't limit discipleship to one or the other. In other words, become a member, join a small group, and come on Sunday mornings, and use those structures as the place where you build relationships with other people. Schedule time in your calendar, have people over, meet a friend for coffee, but be sure to use those moments for one another's discipleship. Ask yourself, "What should be different about

this moment or event because of my mission as a disciple-maker?" Intentional spiritual replication requires the intersection of relationships with gospel purpose.

Discipleship is both formal and informal. Making disciples can be a formal and official relationship – like an established accountability partner, a 1:1 discipleship meeting or having a mentor. I would commend these to you and encourage you to either be discipled or consider discipling someone. But it can also look like a gospel-centered conversation when you are riding in the car with your teenager, the sharing of what you are reading in the Bible while on a 5k run, or stopping and praying for someone after this service who is struggling and hurting.

As a dad, I have found it helpful to have regular and scheduled breakfasts with my kids to talk about spiritual things, their struggles, and just to be together. But I've had just as many important conversations about spiritual things driving home from ball games, around the dinner table, during a trial, or after a sin issue has surfaced. The point is simply that our mission requires both.

Discipleship is both global and local. Making disciples is the fuel behind global missions. Unreached people will never hear about the gospel and never become followers of Jesus unless someone goes to tell them. Reaching all nations is the end-game for our mission. But so is your neighbor, your co-worker, the barista at Starbucks, the guy at the gym, and anyone in proximity to where you live your life. And I want you to think with me about where God has placed you.

Why has He placed you in your neighborhood? Why did He cause you to cross paths with that person last week? Why has this person's sin issue surfaced in your small group? Why did God give you the teenager in your home? Why did you have that great conversation with someone at a wedding last weekend? Why are you sitting next to the person in this room? All of these questions are a part of the beautiful plan of God in the world.

God is on a mission to save people from their sins and make them into the beautiful and compelling likeness of Jesus. He is on the move, wooing people to Himself and changing them! It is a beautiful mission, and one that He entrusts to ordinary people. He calls us to make disciples – to be involved in intentional spiritual replication.

Jesus gathered eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, and He told them to "Go and make disciples." And these ordinary men, entrusted with an extraordinary message, changed the world! And God is still doing that today. The revolution of the gospel is still spreading through ordinary people. Disciple-making is the ordinary revolution of the gospel. It is our calling.

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