

You have something in your house that you consider a family heirloom. Something that has been passed down in your family through the generations. It's something that has great value. It may be worth a lot of money, but that's not its true value. Its true worth is in the family history and legacy it carries with it. It might be an item of furniture or a piece of jewelry.

I have at home a set of Bible commentaries that once belonged to my grandfather. These are the commentaries he used to help prepare his sermons when he first entered the ministry. Their history is much older than that. They date back to something like 1897.

For me, they represent a legacy of Raymond men who faithfully followed Jesus and faithfully proclaimed His word.

I want you to know this morning that we all have another priceless heirloom— something once possessed by Jesus himself and he handed it down to his disciples and it has been handed to each generation of Christian ever since.

This year we are looking at 52 of the most important verses in the Bible. If you understand these 52 Core Verses, you will have a good, working understanding of the Christian faith.

We are looking at a series of Core Verses right now where Jesus looks to the future and entrusts us with certain responsibilities. Or, He asks us to look to our own future and consider our present lives in light of eternity.

If instead of Core 52, we were doing Core 10, the 10 most important verses, today's Core Verse would still make that list. It's found in Matthew 28, and it's universally known as the Great Commission.

This is one of Jesus' final moments with his disciples after his resurrection, but before His ascension back into heaven. This significant moment happens on a mountain in somewhere in Galilee. Several of His disciples' most formative moments with Jesus happened on a mountain— There was the Sermon on the Mount, the Mount of Transfiguration, and some of their most intense and intimate moments they shared on the Mount of Olives. This follows a rich biblical tradition of mountain top experiences from Noah's Ark settling on Mount Ararat to Abraham offering Isaac on Mount Moriah to Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

In this particular mountain top experience, Jesus looks to the future and entrusts the disciples, and ultimately, He entrusts us with His most important mission. It's a great co-mission, because it's a mission that we share with Jesus. He asks us to partner with Him in achieving this mission.

What was Jesus' mission? In Luke 19:10 Jesus says, *"For the Son of Man came to...seek and save the lost."* That was His passion. That was His purpose, and here in Matthew 28:19-20 he passes the torch on to us.

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [b] the*

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

What is Our Co-Mission?

All three of these verses center on one core command. **We are to make disciples.** Jesus appeals to all His authority as Creator of all creation, as the Conquerer of death, and the Savior of our Souls to tell us to devote our energy, our effort, our time, our money to one mission– to make disciples.

What is a disciple? **A disciple is a learner and a follower.** In Jesus’ day, there were many popular teachers or what they called rabbis. They were kind of the 1st century equivalent of a social media influencer, or a podcaster with lots of followers. When someone really wanted to be devoted to a particular rabbi, they would leave their home, leave their work to become their disciple, someone who would literally follow the rabbi around from place to place, live with them, work with them, so they could hear every word they said, so they could learn by example. It was like an apprenticeship. You followed and you learned.

So, a disciple of Jesus both learns from Jesus and follows Jesus, and one of the things we are to do as a follower of Jesus is to make more followers. A disciple makes more disciples. We aren’t to take the journey alone. We are called to reproduce our faith in the lives of others. This is a mission that was passed on from Jesus to the disciples, and because they are the foundation of the church and we are the church, it has been passed on from them to us.

We don’t follow Jesus like you might follow someone on Twitter or Instagram. It’s not like having a library card where you go to the library once or twice a year. If you “gave your life to Christ” and you show up to church for Christmas and Easter, that does not make you a follower of Jesus. Following Jesus is a wholehearted devotion to learn from Jesus and to follow Jesus. A disciple is a someone whose life is defined by who they follow.

Just how important is our co-mission? This was the last thing Jesus did on earth. If you knew you were sharing your last words with someone, you’d want them to be important, right? That’s how important this co-mission is. The Great Co-Mission is mentioned in some form in all four gospels and in the book of Acts. That’s 5 times. This is a big deal. By way of comparison, Jesus’ birth is only mentioned two times in the Gospels. This is more important than Christmas.

Who is our Co-Mission For?

So our co-mission is to make disciples, but who? Who are we called to make disciples of? Jesus says we are to “*make disciples of all nations.*” **The word translated “nations” is *ethnos*.** That word looks familiar doesn’t it? It’s where we get our word “ethnic.” All peoples. All races. All places. All nations. All languages. Who is our co-mission for? Everyone.

Jesus gives us all-inclusive vision of a world-wide church. We have been sent to all nations. This is a mission that crosses borders, is greater than politics, and transcends race, ethnicity, and culture. The church is truly a global community of people who love and follow Jesus. We are an international body. It's not just a Jewish faith. It's not just a white faith. It's not just an American faith. It's a black faith. It's a brown faith. It's a yellow faith. It's a faith that invites anyone and everyone to Jesus. Jesus died for all people, and Jesus has sent us with this message of hope for all people.

It cannot be stressed enough, especially at a time when there are protests and riots in the streets whether it's demonstrating for Black Lives Matter or a protest against NASCAR for banning the Confederate flag, that Jesus is a Savior for everyone.

How Do We Fulfill Our Co-Mission?

So, that's our co-mission— to make disciples of all nations. How do we do that? How do we make disciples? Will you permit me to geek on the Greek for a minute? Grammatically speaking, make disciples is the main action verb in these sentences. It is the primary command, but in the original Greek, there are three participle clauses that explain how to fulfill this command. In English, a participle is simply an ING action— reading, seeing, walking, and so on. The three –ING actions in our Core Verses are these: going, baptizing, and teaching.

You want to know how to make disciples? There it is: going, baptizing, and teaching. We make disciples by going, by baptizing, and by teaching. Let's look at each one a little more closely.

I. Going.

Most English translations make it sound like "Go" is the main command here, but it really isn't. It's an introductory participle. Literally, you would translate it this way, "*Going, make disciples of all nations,*" or "*As you go, make disciples of all nations.*"

For Jesus' vision of a worldwide church to become a reality, we must first go. We aren't to take the wait and see approach. This isn't a call to just hang out behind our four walls and hope they come to us, it's a call take the initiative. We are to go. We are to speak out. We are to act. We are to make the first move. We cannot keep our faith to ourselves.

A. We Will Go

Jesus says this in a way that just assumes we are going. "*As you go, make disciples of all nations.*" This means, first of all, we will want to go. Of course we want others to know. Since we love Him, since we follow Him, we are going to want what He wants, we will desire that which He longs for, and so we will go.

But do we want to go? Let me break your heart just a little bit this morning. At least I hope it does. Sharing your faith has become completely optional for many Christians. A 2018 Barna Research Group study found that only 64% of Christians agree with the statement, "Every

Christian has a responsibility to share their faith.” That number has fallen by 25 percent in just 25 years.ⁱ That’s frightening.

74% of believers seldom have a spiritual conversation with anyone.ⁱⁱ Nearly half have never shared their faith with anyone. Ever.ⁱⁱⁱ How does something that was the heartbeat of our Lord and Savior become so unimportant to us? Let that not be us. Let that not be Son-Rise Christian church. May we be a church that is bursting at the seams to share what we have in Jesus.

B. We Will Share As We Go

The second thing going means is that we share as we go. It isn’t just go so you can then share. It’s share your faith as you go about your other activities. “Going” isn’t just about missionaries going to Africa. “As you go” means as you work your job. As you go to school. As you workout at the gym. As you go fishing. As you go to the flea market. As you go about life, you can share your faith, you can have spiritual conversations, you can be salt and light, you can speak words seasoned with grace, and YOU CAN MAKE DISCIPLES.

II. Baptizing

The second ING action that describes how we make disciples is baptizing. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...”*

Let me cover the basics real quick. Baptism is a word that was brought directly into English from the Greek word, *baptizo*. It means to plunge, to dip, or to immerse. In the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, it was used to describe all sorts of things that were dunked under water- fishing equipment thrown into the water, ships being sunk, fabric being dyed, or people drowning. It also described a religious ritual where someone would immerse themselves or be immersed under water.

Baptism existed long before Christianity. It was long practiced by the Jews. They even had baptisteries. They were called mikvehs. It was done as a ceremonial cleansing ritual. The symbolism of water in cleansing is fairly obvious. John the Baptist took this Jewish baptism and practiced it as a baptism of repentance. It was an appeal to God to cleanse you of your sin.

The Great Co-Mission though, is the first time that baptism is commanded as practice for the New Testament church.

Christian baptism still contains the cleansing symbolism. We see this connection of cleansing and baptism in Acts 2:38, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

The New Testament then takes the symbolism of baptism even further. It is a reenactment of death, burial and resurrection as baptism is designed as a union with the death and resurrection of Jesus, which makes our salvation possible.

Notice Jesus doesn't say that you are baptized into the church. I know a lot of churches practice baptism as an act of church membership, but that's not what we see here. Jesus says we baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

That isn't just some formula we use in baptism— "I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." That is certainly appropriate and has been used that way since the beginning, but that isn't the point. It is to impress on us that baptism, when done for the right reasons, joins us into the holiest and highest of unions. We become a part of a divine and eternal relationship. Salvation is a process that involves all three members of the Trinity. God sent his Son because of His love for the world. Jesus willingly went to cross and sacrificed his life. It is the Holy Spirit who comes to reside in lives after our salvation to complete the divine work of renewal, restoration and reconciliation.

I want to point out something curious and important here. Notice that Jesus says we are to baptize in the name, singular, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't say we are to baptize in the names, plural, of the Father, Son and Spirit. A single name for all three. Father, Son, and Spirit form one identity. There is an essential oneness to the divine community.

Baptism plays a part into bringing us into this divine relationship. Baptism is all about relationship, bringing you into a sacred relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. I can't explain how all this works. There is something deeply mysterious and numinous about baptism. We're just scratching the surface of our understanding of baptism.

I was talking with Jim Ray last week. I wanted to see his bee hives. Jim's a bee keeper. How cool is that? So he was giving me the grand tour of his and Sandy's little corner of God's green earth, and we got to talking about church, and Jim was talking about how they feel quite at home here at Son-Rise, but he also said, "You guys sure do talk a lot about baptism."

And then here it pops up in today's Core Verse. So, I called Jim and asked if he didn't mind me sharing his comment, because I think that if Jim wonders that, he's not the only one. Some of you, especially if your background is in some different tribes of Christians may wonder why do you guys make such a big deal about baptism?

A part of the answer is right here. We make a big deal about baptism because Jesus said that making disciples of all nations by baptizing them is one of our primary missions as church. Based on nothing else alone, the Great Co-Mission should be reason enough.

Let me say this, if you have any questions about baptism, If you see yourself as a follower of Jesus, but you haven't yet followed Jesus in baptism, If you've been thinking about baptism, if you have doubts about your own baptism from years ago, then please come and talk to me.

III. Teaching

The Co-Mission to make disciples means going. It means baptizing, and finally it means teaching. We must continue to learn and grow. Baptism isn't the be-all and end-all; it is just the start of a lifelong journey of becoming more like Jesus. This is why the third part of making disciples is, *"teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."*

Think about this. If you are a Christian, you are a disciple, but we are still learning and growing. In other words we are still in the process of being made into disciples, because we are still learning.

Our goal isn't just to get people to make a decision. It isn't just to get people dunked in the baptistery. We are to make disciples and a disciple is a follower and a learner. We are to grow in Christ. We are to mature in our faith. So we continue to teach and we continue to learn.

Peter tells new Christians in 1 Peter 2:2-3, *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."*

I might be a little biased, but I believe one of the highest purposes and functions of the church is to teach. The church teaches. It is a part of our core identity, our core purpose. The church is to be a people that teaches, a people that are taught and teach the Bible, a people that teaches Jesus. A church that doesn't do that, isn't a church. It might be a club, it might be a political organization, it might be a charity, but it isn't a church that follows Jesus.

Of all the things the church teaches, Jesus must be at the center. Notice what it is we are to teach. Jesus says, *"All that I have commanded you."* And this isn't just so that you can learn it, and know it. It's so that you can *"observe all that I have commanded you."* That means do it. Practice it. Live it. Our teaching must focus on what Jesus taught. Naturally, this includes all that is recorded in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But it also includes all that revealed to the apostles and the biblical writers and the teachings of Jesus they've passed on to us in the pages of the New Testament. As Paul told the Corinthians, *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you."*

We are a church. We are a church of Jesus Christ. We are a Bible Church. We are a New Testament church. That doesn't mean that the Old Testament doesn't matter or shouldn't be taught. Far from it, but the words, example, and inspired teaching of Jesus will always remain front and center. That's who we are, and that's what we're all about, because that's what Jesus was all about.

Making disciples by going, by baptizing, and by teaching— This is our Mission. This is our Purpose. This is our identity.

There is an old tale. When Jesus ascended into heaven, the angel Gabriel was the first of all the heavenly beings to see Jesus.

As they looked down over the earth, Gabriel asked Jesus “Now that your work is finished, what plans have you made to insure that the truth you brought to earth will spread throughout the world?”

Jesus answered, “I called some fishermen and tax-collectors to walk along with me as I did my Father’s will.”

“Yes, I know about them,” responds Gabriel, “but what other plans have you made?”

Jesus added, “I taught Peter, James and John about the kingdom of God; I taught Thomas about faith; and all of them were with me when I healed and preached to the multitudes.”

Now, Gabriel started to lose his patience with Jesus. “Really? That’s it!”, Gabriel said, “Surely you must have other plans in place to make absolutely sure that all your work continues.”

Jesus looked at Gabriel with a steady gaze and said with finality, “I have no other plans. I’m depending totally on them!”

Ways We Can Go:

Be Prayerful

Be Real

Be Relational

Be Big Hearted

Be Intentional

Be Invitational

Our important mission comes with an incredible promise. We are never in this alone. Notice Jesus doesn't say, "I will be with you." He says, "I am with you." Already, right now, if you are a disciple of Jesus, He is present with you."

His Mission; Our Co-Mission

How important is it? It was the last thing He did. If you could say one last thing to someone, you'd want it to be important.

It is mentioned in some form in all 4 Gospels and in Acts. Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; and Acts 1:4-8. By way of comparison, Jesus' birth is only mentioned in 2 Gospels, but his death and resurrection are mentioned in all four.

50% actually share their faith. 96% of Christians never lead someone to Christ. Shouldn't this be our highest priority.

Who should fulfill it?

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said, “that’s all well and good, but surely you must have other plans in place to make absolutely sure that all your work has not been done in vain.” Jesus looked at Gabriel with a steady gaze and said with finality, “I have no other plans. I’m depending totally on then!”

“So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’” 2 Cor. 5:20. For someone in this world, You are God greatest appeal to follow Jesus.

Romans 10:14

II. The Great Commission – Jesus has all authority to give us this command. He has all power and right to command. Over every government, over every power. Nothing catches him off guard. Philippians 2:9-11

You may never reach the mission field on your feet, but you may reach it on your knees.

“Here is a test to see if your mission on earth is finished. If you are alive, it isn’t.”

John Harper was a Scottish preacher aboard the Titanic. When the ship hit an iceberg and sank, Harper was clinging to a piece of drift wood. As he was out in the darkness a man drifted close to him crying, and Harper shouted to him, “Are you saved?” the man replied, “No.” Harper said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” The man drifted away, but shortly came back into sight. Again Harper asked, “Are you saved?” the man again said, “No,” again Harper shouted to the man, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Soon after that, Harper slipped under the waves and went home to be with Jesus. The other man was rescued a short time later by the S.S. Carpathia, and later testified that he was John Harper’s last covert. With his dying breath John Harper gave a good word spoken in due season!

Make Disciples

1. Going
2. Baptizing
3. Teaching

The disciples are now the eleven and not the twelve. Judas is no longer a part of the picture, and Matthias and Paul are not yet a part of it. According to Acts 1, Jesus spent a period of 40 days appearing to his followers and imparting his final teaching to them. We don’t know when within this period of 40 days this particular appearance takes place. Jesus had earlier told the believing women that he would later appear to the disciples in Galilee, and that is what happens here.

The disciple's response is to worship. We don't know what their worship entailed. Did they pray? Did they sing songs of praise, or did they simply fall on their knees before Jesus? We don't know. Well, that was one response anyway. Verse 17 also says, "some doubted." The language used here communicates the idea of hesitation. They wanted to worship, but they weren't sure. Is it really Jesus? Is it really him? Did he really rise from the dead?

Do you ever feel like that when you come to church to worship? You feel hesitant. A bit unsure. You really want to be able to worship, but you have some questions. There are some things you're just not quite certain about. That's okay. You're in good company. Even some of the disciples felt that way.

Worship leads to mission. When you worship, you encounter the heart of God, and when you experience the heart of God, you also see his heart for this world. For God so loved the world. So much of modern worship is me focused. It's all about how it makes me feel and what kind of experience I have. This is such a shallow understanding of worship, if it is worship at all. Worship should move us to the things that move God. It's a dangerous thing to walk away from true worship unmoved by the things that move God.

Worship is both the focus and the fuel for evangelism. I love what John Piper says, "Missions exists because worship doesn't. We share our faith because the joy of knowing Jesus is not a private, ethnic or national privilege. Once we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we want others to know this joy too.

The heart of our mission is for all of humanity to be united as one in worship, and so, it only makes sense that our worship leads to this mission. We will worship alone if we must, but worship longs to be joined by other voices. The greatest moments of worship in church are whenever voice lifts together in song. When every heart is moved by prayer. When a tear fills every eye. That's powerful. Our mission. The goal of missions. The purpose of evangelism to swell the ranks of worshippers until the vision of Revelation 7 becomes a reality "*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*" And what were they doing? They were worshipping.

ⁱ <https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.rotw.com/get-facts/3-out-4-christians-74-seldom-have-%E2%80%9Cspiritual-conversation%E2%80%9D-anyone>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/study-most-churchgoers-never-share-the-gospel/>