

What does it mean to fulfill The Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20)?

I. In order to fulfill the Great Commission we must see this command as Christ's pattern for His church (Col 1:28-29).

A. The Great Commission is not only Christ's mandate for world missions, it is also His pattern for the local church (Acts 14:21-22).

B. The Body of Christ is the corporate expression of the grace, or virtues of Christ (1 Jn 4:17).

II. In order to fulfill the Great Commission, we must regard Christ's command as joined to Body life (Rom 15:1-2; Col 2:19).

A. Body life or fellowship involves translating vertical fellowship with the Lord into horizontal fellowship with the brethren (1 Cor 1:9-10; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:25).

B. The communal nature of the church helps us understand the function of the church (1 Cor 12:12-28).

III. In order to fulfill the Great Commission we must practice intentional Body life with a view to nurturing disciples (Eph 4:12-13, 16).

A. Intentional Body life (building with Christ) is central to fulfilling the Great Commission (Rom 12:3-5).

B. Intentional Body life means that the church builds itself up in love as each individual part makes the Body grow with a growth from God (Col 2:19; 1 Cor 12:20-28; 1 Thess 5:14).

IV. In order to fulfill the Great Commission, the local church must seek an 'every member' ministry (Col 2:19).

A. Each believer is a steward of God's grace for the purpose of building with Christ (1 Pet 4:10-11).

B. Each believer has a crucial part to play in the discipleship 'growth continuum': *gifted men equip, members of the Body minister, each joint supplies = resulting in growth from God* (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19).

V. In order to fulfill the Great Commission, we must regard disciple-making to be the priority of the church.

A. Disciple-making is the calling of the entire Body. A true disciple of Christ follows Christ and is therefore a disciple-maker (Jn 15:19-20).

B. Jesus commissions His disciples to make disciples of all the nations. In the Great Commission passage, the main verb is not 'go'—instead the emphasis is on the command 'make disciples' (Mt 28:18-20).

C. Baptizing and teaching to observe Christ's commands (obey His commands) is the means by which the disciples are to be made (Jn 14:21-24). Obedience is best learned in close, caring relationships.

What does it mean to fulfill The Great Commission? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What elements of discipleship are described in Acts 14:21-22? Are they normative for today?

- 2) Every 'joint and ligament' in the Body of Christ is to contribute to the growth (spiritual maturity of the Body) Colossians 2:19. How does God intend this truth to change our thinking? (HINT: no spectators!).

- 3) Discuss the fact that we are called to close relationships, and without close relationships it is not possible to truly benefit from the spiritual gifts of the members of the Body (1 Cor 12:20-28).

- 4) 'Intentional Body life' means each believer is Christ's instrument for transformation, to move others closer to Christ. What would need to change in order for you to see all of your relationships in this way?

- 5) What tends to keep us from being agents of change is that our conversations seldom move from the mundane and the casual, to actually prayerfully speaking the Word of God to others in the Body. Discuss Ephesians 4:29, 5:18-21; Hebrews 10:23-25. How can you begin to obey these commands in your speech?

- 6) The shape of Christ's pattern for His church is the Great Commission; it's the divine 'template' for an *every member ministry* (see Eph 4:15-16; Col 3:16-17). Discuss the concept of an *every member ministry*.

- 7) Discuss some of the creative and effective ways a Bible study could be changed into a very intentional meeting in which very deliberate disciple-making takes place.