

And Jesus said, **“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. I am with you always...”**
(Matt. 28:19-20).

One of the featured speakers at a prison ministry conference I recently attended presented a rather practical application of the principle message found in Matthew 28: 19-20. Dr. Ed Stetzer, Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism, expounded on what it means to “go” and to engage in the process of “making” disciples. He recounted how when he visited several churches in various parts of the country he noticed how different the worship experiences were and even how people interacted with one another before, during, and after each experience. While the differences were stark and noticeable, he was moved by how similar each worship experience really was. I think what was at the heart of his message was that no matter how different we all are, one truth remains and binds us all together: there is only one Lord, one baptism, and one faith.

I find it interesting that Jesus’ instructions, after his resurrection, preemptively answered all of the potential who, what, when, where and how questions that we might have today, and left very little room for doubt or misinterpretation. In Matthew, Jesus tells them what to do - to go make disciples. The *who* and *what* are clear. And then in Acts 1:8, he lets his followers know that they will receive the power to go make disciples, when the Holy Spirit is upon them. Jesus concludes by stating that they must go to Jerusalem, Samaria and Judea, and to the uttermost of the earth. It is here that the *when*, *where*, and *how* questions were clearly answered.

Jesus’ parting words were relatively plain and clear: “YOU will be my witnesses...” Jesus gave, and continues to give, his disciples the power to

“go” and engage the world with the Gospel message. He carefully laid out the process in which the disciples were to follow to ensure that neither race nor region would hinder the promulgation of the message of salvation. These instructions are particularly appropriate for us today. As we traverse the highways and byways, travel to the close and far-away places, we cannot ignore the people groups that live in those places. They are waiting for us.

Having been involved with prison ministry and reentry initiatives for almost fifteen years, I have found that one of the most unique and opportune locations to go and engage people with the Gospel message is at the local jail. And while I am aware that there is a measure of space and time between being evangelized and being discipled, I have come to realize that each person’s experience can be different and that the measure of space and time between being just a hearer and being a doer can be rather small. Because of this reason, it is extremely important that we continue to be intentional about engaging those that reside within the jails and prisons around the country and in our own communities. We must continue to view and realize that jails and prisons are situated somewhere in our Jerusalems, Samarias and Judeas (or are just slightly outside of our familiar territories).

I am certain that most of the readers and subscribers of this newsletter are well aware of the call to go and make disciples. In a way, this message is more of a reminder for us. It may also serve as a way to encourage others to be more involved engaging those men and women who reside at the local jail. They are waiting for us.

In His Service,

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