

From the West Meadow
Pastor Wes Higgins

In Matthew 28:18-20, we find what has been labeled “The Great Commission”. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the 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...” Most Christians know what is meant when someone mentions the great commission. They may even know where it is found in scripture. But at the same time, many of those same Christians believe that the job of doing the great commission is the job of the church.

Let’s notice to whom the great commission was given. “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them...And Jesus came and spoke to them...” (Matthew 28:16, 18) It was to the individual disciples that the commission to preach the gospel was given. There was no church yet, there were only disciples sent forth to do the job.

In the gospel of John, chapter 17, we find Jesus praying for His disciples. “I have given them your word...” (verse 14) And, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” (verse 18) “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word...” (verse 20) The Great Commission was fulfilled as each disciple taught new disciples to observe the teachings of Jesus Christ.

So if the individual Christian has been tasked with the job of spreading the gospel, what is the job of the church?

As we are called to go into the world, making disciples, baptizing and teaching, the local church gives us a base from which to work. It’s a place to plan and prepare, a place for rejuvenation and regrouping. And of course, it’s a place to worship and be renewed in our relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. Church, as it says in Acts 2:42, is a place to continue steadfastly in “doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Simply put, the job of the local church is to enable us to take the gospel to the world around us. Notice how Paul describes the work of the church:

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:11-16)

God has called each one of us as Christians to proclaim His good news, to actively reach out to the world around us. Don’t sit back and wait for the church to do it. We are the church, the body of Christ. And we—each of us, individually—have a job to do.

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