

Brentwood Baptist

The Power to do the Impossible

Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 4:24-30; Acts 1:1-8

5/23/2021

MAIN POINT

The Great Commission reveals that Jesus not only commands the mission but also empowers us to do the impossible.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins:

Have someone (pre-enlisted or in the moment) share a Gospel Conversation story.
Ask for a show of hands of those who are praying by name for someone who does not know Christ.
Pause and pray for this conversation to take root and see the individual become a Christ-follower and for each person to have the opportunity to see their friend or neighbor come to Christ.

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion:

As you've thought about it, how might Jesus be turning the tables on the culture inside the church right now?

In this session we'll focus on the mission of the church. In one sentence how would you describe the mission of the church?

If the church (you and I as followers of Christ) is going to engage the culture without compromising the gospel, it's imperative that we have a good understanding of our mission. The mission of the church helps us know where to expend our energy, focus our attention, and invest our resources. Without that firm sense of mission, the church will flounder in the culture rather than meaningfully engaging it.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:18-20.

In your own words, what mission did Jesus give each of us in this passage?

What are some competing priorities in churches today?

Although Jesus was explicit, why do you think it's easy for the church to become sidetracked?

Dr. Russell Moore once said: "cultural engagement is often where the mission of the church gets derailed, either by being absorbed by the culture or by treating the people around us like our enemies."

Have you witnessed either of those experiences firsthand? Why is it so easy to fall into those errors?

How can a firm understanding of and commitment to our mission guard against both of these traps?

Have a volunteer read Luke 4:24-30. A passage in which Jesus' teaching first excited but then challenged the crowd. They were so challenged, in fact, that they tried to throw Jesus from a cliff.

What's your initial reaction to the anger of the people? Why didn't Jesus destroy them instead of simply passing through them?

What does Jesus' response show you about His commitment to His mission? What are some ways we can imitate Jesus' response when we meet hostility to the message of the gospel?

The first imperative for us to see in this mission is that it isn't based on the ingenuity, strength, or courage of the followers of Jesus. Instead, Jesus framed His command with the authority that had been given to Him.

Ask a volunteer to reread Matthew 28:18.

Why is it important to note that this mission was given in and with the authority of Jesus?

How should a recognition of Jesus' authority shape our perspective on the church's mission?

Not only does Jesus command the mission, but He also empowers it. The mission at hand wasn't one of immediate political or cultural dominance but instead one of gospel reconciliation.

Have a volunteer read Acts 1:1-8.

What similarities and differences do you notice between this passage and the Great Commission in Matthew 28?

On a scale of 1-10 (1 = never, 10=constantly), how often you think about the Holy Spirit?

When you think of the Holy Spirit, do you often think of Him in terms of the mission of Jesus? Why or why not?

We aren't just witnesses; we're empowered witnesses. We aren't just participating in the advance of a kingdom; we're doing so under the authority of a King.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What will you do this week to keep the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in mind?

What encouragement does it give you, knowing that Jesus is with you on His mission?

Are there specific people in your life needing to be taught or baptized? How will you be intentional about making disciples?

PRAYER

Pray and ask the Lord to focus each person on the mission given to you by God. Ask Him to keep you free of distractions and ask for His kingdom to come.

Visit LifeWay.com to purchase the study guide for more in-depth personal and group study.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 28:18-20

28:18. Matthew noted that Jesus came near or approached. Here was no case of mistaken identity. The disciples could look Jesus in the eye and see that this One was the same Person whom Pilate had arrested. They could hear the voice clearly and know it was the voice they had listened to for several years. Jesus' claim made the need for decision even clearer: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." The kingdom Jesus talked about (4:17) had been established. The King had received authority to reign. This kingdom far exceeded the size of the Roman Empire. Only God could make such a declaration. Only One who ruled in heaven as well as on earth could claim such power.

28:19-20. On the basis of His authority, Jesus issued the Great Commission. Disciples had to accept the authority if they were to accept the commission. The commission is intricately formulated in the Greek. Stated somewhat literally as translated from the Greek language, the Great Commission reads as follows: "Therefore, having gone, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep (or to persistently obey) as much as I commanded you. And look here, I am with you all the days, until the completion (or perfection) of the age." The introductory "therefore" connects the Great Commission to Jesus' authority established in verse 18. The phrase "having gone" assumes obedience to the Commission. This phrase is not so much a call to go as it is a command to do certain things on the way. Disciples who recognize Christ's authority have one major task. The only imperative verb form in these verses formulates that task. Disciples under Christ's authority disciple the nations. That is, they share the gospel and help believers grow in Christ. Building the

church by discipling the nations expands the disciple's journey. It sends them to the nations. Here is the universal nature of the gospel made explicit and clear. Disciples under Christ's authority must leave their comfort zones and the people with whom they feel at home. They must expand their horizons to incorporate every nation of people on earth. The church must devise plans and strategies to use the talents, gifts, energies, and resources of every one of its members. Every member must be on the move, discipling the nations.

In addition to going, discipling involves two other actions. The first is baptizing, which is to occur only after a person has acknowledged Jesus, the risen Savior, as his or her personal Savior. Baptism incorporates the new believer officially into the church. Baptism is also one means of making a public confession of faith. Baptism pictures or symbolizes what Jesus did and what the new Christian is doing. Jesus died for our sins. He was buried in the tomb. God raised Him from death to life. Baptism also pictures the believer's having died to sin and being raised to a new life in Christ, a life that is eternal through the ages.

The second action in discipling is teaching. This instruction reaches back to the earthly ministry of Jesus. It takes every parable, every sermon, every word Jesus said and teaches them to the church. It seeks to develop Christlike individuals. The teaching ministry begins with the New Testament accounts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. It expands to the rest of the New Testament and then incorporates the Old Testament as the foundation of who God is and what God planned long before He sent Jesus to fulfill Old Testament prophecies. This entire Word of God is the curriculum each disciple is charged to teach to new believers.

Acts 1:1-8

1:1-3. During the forty days that separated the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus further taught the disciples, preparing them to lead the early church. This is the only New Testament reference to these post-resurrection days. You will probably find it helpful to read at least the last chapter of Luke to get a feel for how Luke makes the transition into this second letter to Theophilus. To lead, they first had to be convinced that death had turned to life. During this time He gave many convincing proofs that He was alive and spoke about the kingdom of God.

What did Jesus say during these question sessions? From everything we know, He used the Old Testament to emphasize that He was the Messiah Israel expected. Now He would turn the reins of responsibility over to the apostles and other believers. Jesus' life on earth was finished, but His work had only begun; the disciples now assumed the responsibility to carry on Jesus' work. We should never forget the full title of this book—"Acts of the Apostles"—though many have suggested it could more properly be titled "The Continuing Acts of Jesus Christ through the Apostles."

Luke uses the phrase kingdom of God throughout Acts as a summary for God's work in the world. We should not confuse it with references either in the Old Testament or in other New Testament books. Jesus' teaching did not center on prophecy alone but on the ongoing role of the King on earth through His people.

1:4-5. What would these disciples do after the Lord left them? The first command was to wait. They were not to engage in ministry until they had been empowered by the gift God promised. Believers are somewhat divided on the terminology baptized with the Holy Spirit. Certainly Luke had in view that as the New Testament church got under way, Spirit baptism placed believers into that group of believers the New Testament calls the body of Christ. Throughout the Book of Acts, we will see different reactions when people receive the Holy Spirit, so we should not conclude that any one particular pattern is the only way God deals with us. The coming of the Holy Spirit took place ten days after Jesus' ascension, at which time the believers experienced the same power in which Jesus carried out His ministry.

1:6-7. The disciples' question revived their political goals, an ideal they could never quite stifle. Throughout the Gospels they wanted Jesus to throw off the iron hand of Rome, tell the nation He was their Messiah, and set up the kingdom. Surely now that He had risen from the dead and instructed his troops, it was time for the rebellion to begin. The Lord's answer offers a warning Christians have not heeded very well for almost two thousand years: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority (v. 7). The fact of that return is absolute. The time was not revealed to Jesus' own disciples at the time of the ascension, and it will never be known by any human until the Lord comes again, regardless of what someone may claim. We can't criticize the disciples too much, however, because the Old Testament links Spirit baptism with the coming kingdom (see Isa. 32:15-20; Ezek. 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1). The Lord did not deny the kingdom is coming but only warned the disciples that God's schedule is none of their business.

1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a threefold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42-8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4-12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25-28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern. Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people, since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of "professional ministry." Every believer should be a "world Christian," able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.