

Gospel Conversations: The Three Circles

Session 1

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Matthew 28:16-20

Session Outline

1. The King's Command (Matthew 28:16-18)
2. A Vision for Expansion (Matthew 28:19-20)
3. A Method for Sharing (Matthew 28:19)

Theological Theme

Christians play an integral part of the plan of redemption and should recognize that they are under the authority and command of their King who has instructed them to proclaim the truth about Him to others.



Leader Guide

Gospel Conversations: The Three Circles

Introduction

- ❓ Have you ever shot a bow or a gun? What was it like? If you've experienced both, what are some differences between shooting a bow and shooting a gun?
- ❓ What sort of precautions did you take so the gun wouldn't accidentally fire? What precautions did you take so the bow wouldn't accidentally shoot?

Arrows are shot on purpose. It is possible for a gun to fire inadvertently. The slip of a finger can cause an accidental shooting, but have you ever heard of someone accidentally shooting an arrow? What if you came across a man in the woods who was dressed from head to toe in camouflage seated high up in a tree. As you approached, he pressed his finger to his lips to warn you to be quiet. He then lifted his bow toward a brushy area straight ahead, drew back the arrow, and, after a few seconds, let it fly.

What would you assume about the hunter and the arrow? You would assume that he was taking aim at something and shooting with a purpose. If he were to tell you he wasn't aiming at anything in particular but was simply shooting an arrow for the fun of it, that wouldn't make any sense. Why would a man wake up early, dress in camouflage, and sit up in a tree for hours to send out an arrow with no specific purpose? Neither does God let fly aimless arrows. When Christ said, "I ... send you" (John 20:21), He had a particular target in mind and a specific mission to accomplish.

Session Summary

The kingdom of God is advanced by the power of the gospel and the Spirit working in and through God's people. The gospel reaches the ears of the world through the words of the church. God's chosen method of gospel transmission has always been and will always be His people. Churches should be marked by their testimony about Jesus to their neighbors, community, and beyond.

Most gospel conversations happen in relationship with others. The Three Circles is a great tool to have in your evangelism tool belt so that when opportunities come, you can clearly explain God's design, the brokenness of the world, and the hope of the gospel. The Great Commission is clear that followers of Jesus are to go as disciples who make disciples, but multiplication can be challenging. How do we address challenging culture issues and have crucial conversations with family and friends? The answer is to always turn to God and His Word for wisdom and guidance.

1. The King's Command (Matthew 28:16-18)

Most people think about the Ten Commandments when they consider biblical mandates. But another significant commandment is found in Matthew 28. Jesus gave the Great Commission as part of His last instructions to His disciples. But commands only carry as much weight as the authority of the commander.

God is our greatest authority. His authority is expressed in the commands He has made clear in His Word. The authority of God overrules all other authorities in our lives. The church confesses with Peter and the apostles, "We must obey God rather than people" (Acts 5:29). This means we live to serve God's purposes, not the purposes of any person, even ourselves.



What basic command did Jesus give in these verses? What does this indicate about God's purpose for His people?

Jesus called His followers to make disciples of all nations. In other words, the mission of the church and every individual believer is to take part in Jesus's global plan to save people out of every tribe, tongue, and nation. The command of Jesus has a clear purpose in view—that God would be worshiped and glorified forever (see Revelation 7:9-10).


We were created to worship God and bring Him honor and glory. Those who follow Jesus today will be standing around the throne tomorrow. Those who trust in Jesus don't share the gospel because they are trying to grow a church or advance a ministry program. Rather, it is to prepare souls to stand before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, with palm branches, crying out, "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10).

All Authority

Before issuing his commission, Jesus laid the foundation for the success of their future ministry: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. This was critically important. Without the Messiah's authority, the mission of the disciples and our mission today would be doomed to failure. The reader of Matthew's Gospel should know well by now the nature and power of the Messiah's authority.


There are two parts to the general command to go and make disciples. These are indicated by two key verbs—baptize and teach. The mission of the church is to make disciples by baptizing people as Jesus commanded and teaching them about Jesus so that they will grow to be more like Him.

When Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize, He was pointing to the miracle of salvation that only God can do in a person's heart. Jesus said a person's salvation should be followed by baptism. He was not saying a church should baptize as many people as possible regardless of their spiritual state. When Jesus called us to teach others, He meant that we are to observe the Scriptures and help others grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

 Do you know what it means to be justified? What about sanctified? What is the difference between these two terms?

Justification refers to the moment in time when God rescues someone from their sin through the finished work of Christ on the cross. We can't justify someone; only God can do that. So, what is our responsibility? Romans 1:16 says, that the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Our part in the miraculous work of justification is simply this: faithfully preach, teach, proclaim, and share the biblical gospel.

Sanctification is the way God changes a person to be conformed to the image of Christ. Like justification, this is a miracle, but God uses ordinary methods to accomplish it. God uses the preaching and teaching of His Word as the primary tools of sanctification. People have a part to play in this process. Our role in God's work of sanctification is to faithfully teach the whole Bible to others. When we are following Jesus, we do not have the freedom or right to teach our own ideas, traditions, or views. We teach the Word of Christ.

 Application: Do you submit to Jesus as your King? How does your obedience to His command show that? If you've never made that commitment, how might you need to respond to Him today?

2. A Vision for Expansion (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Great Commission is astounding because of how big it is. Jesus commanded His disciples to tell the whole world about Him. Paul wrote, "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Romans 10:14-15).

Jesus said He was sending the disciples as the Father had sent Him (John 20:21). He sent them out with authority, and they were responsible to obey His command. But how were they to do it? Where should they begin? In Acts 1:8, Jesus gave His disciples direction regarding the expansion of His message.

- ❓ What does Acts 1:8 teach us about how the mission of God will be accomplished? How does this involve you?

The call to make disciples of all nations is overwhelming and may seem unattainable. Furthermore, it often feels difficult to even share the gospel with our own family members, schoolmates, and co-workers. What are we to do? Jesus promised His disciples a Helper would come to them once He ascended into heaven (John 14:16-18). Then, in Acts 1:8 He said His disciples would receive power through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives Christians power to be witnesses about Jesus Christ. Some may interpret this to mean believers will have the ability to perform miracles. But that isn't the idea at all. The power to be a witness about Jesus Christ does not have to do with miracles. Witnesses are people who tell what they've seen and experienced. The Holy Spirit gives boldness to speak the gospel in all circumstances, no matter how difficult (Acts 3:12; 4:7, 33).

- ❓ If you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives you power and boldness to fulfill the Great Commission, but where should you start? If you aren't yet following Jesus, where do you feel like you need God to work in your life?

Making disciples of all nations starts right where we are. Jesus explained in Acts 1:8 that the gospel would spread in a logically geographical way. The disciples would be His witnesses starting in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth.

We may get bogged down wondering where God wants us to serve Him and share the gospel. When we do this, we fail to realize that we have been placed in our current location for a purpose. We forget that our service starts in our "Jerusalem." God has a mission for every one who follows Him and that mission, at least for now, is to serve faithfully in the exact city, school, job, neighborhood, and family in which we find ourselves.

- ❓ Application: Who do you interact with on a regular basis that needs to hear a clear presentation of the gospel message? How can you meet that need?


The Three Circles

To learn more about the 3 Circles method of sharing the gospel, download the Life on Mission app on your smart phone or device.

3. A Method for Sharing (Matthew 28:19)

There are many ways we can share the gospel with other people. One helpful way to do this is by using the tool called the Three Circles. The aspects of the Three Circles include God's Design, Brokenness, and the Gospel. This method includes drawing these three circles and showing the way they are connected.


In God's original design, all of life was a moving and beautiful experience. God designed the world to reflect His glory. The Bible tells us all that everything God made was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). All we see in the world is meant to lead us realize who God is and what He designed the world to be but because the world is also fallen and marred by sin we do not yet see the world as God originally designed it to be.

-  How would you introduce a discussion about God's design in a conversation? What could you point to in nature or in daily life to direct the conversation toward God and His design?

Conversations often start with brokenness—hardship, pain, and suffering. Our relationships with people earn us the right to speak to them about who God is and His design for the world and for our lives. All people experience various levels of brokenness, both personally and in the world around us. Despite our best efforts, we do not do the right thing as often as we would like. Additionally, we look at the news or outside our window and see the effects of sin in sickness, poverty, violence and more. Both of these conditions point us towards our need for a Savior.

All people are born with a sin nature that separates them from God. Telling someone they are not right with God when they think they are can be a difficult conversation, but it is necessary in sharing the gospel. The gospel is not necessary if we do not have a problem with sin.

When realizing we and our world are broken with sin, we desperately need good news. The good news of the gospel is though we are broken sinners, God did not leave us that way. He sent Jesus to live a perfect life, die in our place to bear God's punishment against sin, and rise on the third day in victory over sin and death.

-  How might you introduce the gospel in a conversation with a friend who has experienced brokenness?

Once we recognize God’s design for the world in our lives, our own brokenness and sin, and the good news of the gospel, we are called to repent of our sin and believe in Jesus. To repent means to do a 180-degree turn in the other direction. Whereas our lives used to be guided by sin and lived by our own desires, we leave that behind to believe in God. To believe means to trust in the work of God on the cross on your behalf. The message of the gospel is to repent and believe.

- Application: How have you personally been changed by the power of the gospel? How have you seen the gospel change others? If you’ve never responded to the gospel message, how is God speaking to you about that today?

Conclusion

Jesus told His followers to go and tell others about him throughout the whole world. The Three Circles is one helpful method we can use to be obedient to Jesus and spread His message to others.

- How seriously do you take the Great Commission? What evidence does your life give of this?
- What are some tools you know for having gospel conversations, such as the Three Circles?
- Who is God prompting you to have a gospel conversation with this week? How will you respond?

Prayer of Response

Begin your time of prayer giving thanks to God for His saving work on your behalf. Pray for the grace to go forward in obedience with a proper understanding of Jesus’s power and presence as you seek to obey the Great Commission. Pray that you would be emboldened by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel at every opportunity.

Additional Resources

- *Turning Everyday Conversations Into Gospel Conversations* by Jimmy Scroggins, Steve Wright, Leslee Bennett
- *Tell Someone* by Greg Laurie
- *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Call to Action:

Download the 3 Circles App and practice presenting it to friends and family.

Group Emphasis or Project:

Begin next week's group time with a time of sharing about gospel conversations that group members may have had throughout the week.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Gospel Focused in a Screen-Time World

Main Passages

- Psalm 101:1-4; Ephesians 5:5-16

Session Outline

1. Walking in Darkness (Ephesians 5:5-6)
2. Out of Darkness (Ephesians 5:7-8a)
3. Into the Light (Ephesians 5:8b-16)

Memorize

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Matthew 28:19-20

Historical Context of Matthew

Purpose

Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in order to preserve written eyewitness testimony about the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes certain theological truths. First, Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited King of God's people. Second, Jesus is the new Abraham, the founder of a new spiritual Israel consisting of all people who choose to follow him. This new Israel will consist of both Jews and Gentiles. Third, Jesus is the new Moses, the deliverer and instructor of God's people. Fourth, Jesus is the Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God who fulfills the promises of the OT.

Author

The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection. Many early church fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaenus, and Origen) acknowledged Matthew as the author. Papias also contended that Matthew first wrote in Hebrew, implying that this Gospel was later translated into Greek.

Setting

Determining the date of composition of Matthew's Gospel depends largely on the relationship of the Gospels to one another. Most scholars believe that Matthew utilized Mark's Gospel in writing his own gospel. If this is correct, Matthew's Gospel must postdate Mark's. However, the date of Mark's Gospel is also shrouded in mystery. Irenaeus (ca AD 180) seems to claim that Mark wrote his Gospel after Peter's death in the mid-60s. However, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote only twenty years after Irenaeus, claimed that Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter was still alive. Given the ambiguity of the historical evidence, a decision must be based on other factors.

The date of composition for Mark is best inferred from the date of Luke and Acts. The abrupt ending of Acts which left Paul under house arrest in Rome implies that Acts was written before Paul's release. Since one of the major themes of Acts is the legality of Christianity in the Roman Empire, one would have expected Luke to mention Paul's release by the emperor if it had already occurred. This evidence dates Acts to the early 60s. Luke and Acts were two volumes of a single work, as the prologues to these books demonstrate. Luke was written before Acts. Given the amount of research that Luke invested in the book and the travel that eyewitness interviews probably required, a date in the late 50s is reasonable. If Luke used Mark in writing his own Gospel, as seems likely, by implication Mark was written some time before the late 50s, perhaps the early to mid-50s. Thus, despite Matthew's dependence on Mark, Matthew may have been written any time beginning in the mid-50s once Mark was completed. The earliest historical evidence is consistent with this opinion, since Irenaeus (ca AD 180) claimed that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome (early AD 60s).

Special Features

This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

Extended Commentary

Matthew 28:16-20

28:16–17 The lingering confusion among them about Jesus’s resurrection undermines the skeptical theory that the disciples shared a hallucination of Jesus’s resurrection because they all expected him to arise.

28:18 Before the resurrection, Jesus had authority (7:29; 9:6, 8; 11:27; 21:23). However, through the resurrection, the Father granted him all authority over heaven and ... earth, an authority far greater than that which Satan had vainly promised him.

28:19 The command to extend their mission worldwide brings to a climax Matthew’s repeated theme of Gentile participation in God’s salvation. The inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus’s genealogy and the summons of the magi to worship the infant Christ foreshadowed the disciples’ mission of making disciples of all nations. Baptism marked a person’s entrance into the faith community. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is a reference to the Trinity. Matthew’s language shows that a clear understanding of Jesus’s nature and identity as God was required before baptism.

28:20 The Great Commission (vv. 19–20) is preceded by a reference to Jesus’s authority and followed by the promise of Jesus’s spiritual presence among us. Both are necessary if we are to fulfill our God-given mission.¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

Jimmy Scroggins (Turning Everyday Conversations Into Gospel Conversations)

Jimmy Scroggins serves as the Lead Pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, FL. Jimmy is married to Kristin and they are blessed with eight children – James, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaac, Stephen, Anna Kate, Mary Claire and Caleb. Jimmy earned his PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Jimmy is dedicated to building families in South Florida through a network of neighborhood churches. His vision is to see each Family Church campus on mission to help people in their community discover and pursue God’s design. The Family Church Network has a vision to plant 100 churches in South Florida.

Greg Laurie (Tell Someone)

Greg Laurie is the senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside and Irvine California. In 1990, Laurie began holding large-scale public evangelistic events called Harvest Crusades. Since that time, more than 5,242,000 people have attended Harvest Crusades events around the United States, and in Australia and New Zealand. More importantly, more than 439,900 people have registered professions of faith through these outreaches. Greg and his wife Cathe have two sons, Christopher and Jonathan, and five grandchildren.

Robert Coleman (The Master Plan of Evangelism)

Dr. Robert Coleman is the Distinguished Senior Professor of Discipleship and Evangelism at Gordon-Conwell seminary and a prolific author, having written hundreds of articles and twenty-one books, including *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, which has sold multiple million copies and is the book for which he is best known. He directed the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for eighteen years and currently serves on the Mission America Facilitation Committee and several international mission boards and is the president of Christian Outreach. From 1989-2001, he led the Institute of Evangelism in the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College and served as Dean of the Billy Graham International Schools of Evangelism. He is also a founding member of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism and a past president of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education. His personal interests include spending time with his family, including his children and grandchildren, and keeping in touch with those he has discipled.