

Following Jesus on Mission

September 7, 2025

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Matthew 4:23; 28:16-20; Mark 8:34

Session Outline

1. The Command of Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20)
2. Living Like Jesus (Matthew 4:23)
3. Following Jesus (Mark 8:34)

Theological Theme

We are *all* called to share the gospel.

Call to Action

Who is God calling you to pursue a gospel conversation with this week?
How will you respond?



Leader Guide

Following Jesus on Mission

Introduction

If your childhood or youth intersected the colorful culture of the 1990s, and you grew up in the church crowd, you may recall purchasing a simple woven WWJD bracelet for a couple of bucks. They came in all different colors, with an abbreviation meant to make us give a second thought to our actions and think: What would Jesus do?

WWJD bracelets were worn by many church-going kids, teens, and adults in the 1990s and early 2000s, though their popularity even reached beyond on the church. But they aren't just reminiscent of days gone by, they have even made a resurgence in recent years.

Whether you think WWJD bracelets are one of many corny fashion trends from the 90s or a useful life and evangelism tool, we can all agree asking ourselves the question they pose has value: What would Jesus do in my situation?

As we seek to live like Jesus would, this is a question we should consider and answer. In our study today, we are going to explore this idea of living like Jesus would by looking at what Scripture records Jesus doing and reflecting on what it means to take up our crosses and follow Him.



How did Jesus live His life on earth? What are some words you would use to describe Him?



Why is it important for us to seek to become more like Jesus daily and not only have right beliefs about Him?

Session Summary

In the Great Commission, Jesus issued a command to His followers to go and teach everyone what it means to follow Him. The Great Commission is just as relevant for us today as it was for Jesus's followers immediately after His resurrection. Faithfully living out the Great Commission doesn't necessarily mean we must move to a foreign country and become a vocational missionary. We can and should faithfully follow Jesus's command right where God has placed us—in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

As believers, our goal is to live like Christ. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to shape us to be more Christlike every day. This happens over time, and as we grow to be more Christ-like, we will obediently share the gospel message with others. Just as Jesus shared the good news of the gospel in His ministry, we are called to share Jesus with those He has placed in our lives. This requires us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and obediently follow Him.

1. The Command of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)

- ❓ What is familiar to you about this passage? What stands out as you reread it?
- ❓ What was Jesus's instruction in this passage? How does this apply to us today?

This passage is commonly known as the Great Commission. Jesus, as our authority, issued a command for all His followers. It is important for us to recognize this is a real command that we as believers are supposed to take real action on. This call is not only meant for those who have answered the call to vocational ministry or those whose spiritual gift is evangelism.

The Great Commission is meant for all followers of Jesus.

Let's look carefully at what Jesus called us to do here. In verse 18, He started by saying that "*all* authority has been given" (emphasis added) to Him, and in this authority, He issued a command: "Therefore go" (NIV). But what does that mean, exactly?

"Going" in verse 19 doesn't require us to pick up and move across the world to be missionaries in a foreign country, **but it does require us to take action.**

Some have interpreted this to say, "as you are going," share the gospel. All Christians can, and should, do this in our everyday lives. God placed you in your neighborhood, in your job, with your kids' sports team or play group, at your gym, in your grocery store, and in your city on purpose, for a purpose. The Great Commission is a real command with daily implications for our lives.

We are to go and teach everyone what it means to follow Jesus.

Jesus spoke of the church and said: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14a). We don't have to go far to find dark places where Jesus is needed, but it takes courage to live as a light there. When we teach people about Jesus, we light these dark places up.

The Gospel Summed Up

Verses 16–20 summarize all the major themes of the gospel—Christ's divine sovereignty and authority, the nature of discipleship, the universal scope of Christian faith, the importance of doing the will of God, and the promise of Christ's presence with His followers in everything they may experience. Verse 19 has understandably come to be known as the Great Commission. Believers' task in life in essence is to duplicate themselves in others, leading men and women in every part of the world to faith, baptism, and obedience to all of Christ's commands. But the final word of the book properly returns our focus to Christ rather than keeping it on ourselves. Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful.

The gospel of Jesus is news that is meant to be shared. “Gospel” means good news. It is the very best news we could ever receive or give. Think about the last really good news in your life or your family’s life. Maybe it was a new home, a new baby or grandbaby, or a child who graduated from college with honors. When you learned this good news, did you want to share it? That is normally our first inclination, right? We want to tell others. This is also the right response to the gospel message. The gospel is the best news anyone has ever received, and we need to share it.

This passage notes of the disciples: “some doubted” (v. 16). These men had been traveling with Jesus and had seen first-hand the miracles of His ministry, been told in advance what would happen to Him (Matthew 16:21), were currently witnessing a resurrected Jesus, but some still doubted.

Doubt is a normal response many of us can relate to. Have you ever felt that way about telling others about Jesus? Have you ever doubted that you were good enough, doubted you could say the right words, doubted you had the time, or doubted knew how to share the gospel? Thankfully, even when we have doubts, God can still work in and through us. Our job is simply to tell others about Jesus. It’s the Lord’s job to transform hearts. God doesn’t need us to have all the answers or all the right words, He just wants us to be obedient. He calls us to participate!



Application: How are you currently seeking to live out the Great Commission?

2. Living Like Jesus (Matthew 4:23)



We are studying what Jesus said but also how He lived. How does this verse show Jesus living out what He called His followers to do?



Jesus is God and we are not, so we don’t have divine power in ourselves to do everything He did here. How might these actions translate to our daily lives and regular obedience to Christ?

This verse concisely sums up Jesus’s mission and ministry:

Jesus was on a mission to teach correct interpretation of Scripture, and make sure the people understood God’s heart, so He was “**teaching in their synagogues.**” Everywhere He went, Jesus taught the truth. His teachings show people understand how to live. His teachings help us know God better and offer us the gift of life.


How do we emulate this today? We teach the truth, too. For some of us, that means teaching in Sunday morning groups, small groups, youth group, or children's ministry. This could also mean speaking the truth in your workplace or in your neighborhood. Are we telling people about Jesus and the goodness He has brought into our lives? Are we sharing what the Holy Spirit is teaching us through God's Word?

Teaching is an important part of making disciples, and we don't need a special degree to do it. We can teach others what we are learning. We are called to live alongside other believers and to grow and learn in community. As we do, we are to proclaim these truths to others also.


Jesus was **"preaching the good news of the kingdom"** (v. 23). Note this is listed separately from teaching in the synagogues. Jesus both taught the people and preached the good news. When we are living like Jesus, we are also teaching and sharing the gospel. We share, learn, and grow in community with other believers, and we also share the good news, just like Jesus did.


Are we sharing the gospel message with the people God has placed in our lives? If everyone in your circle already knows Jesus, maybe God is calling you to expand your circle. Remember, we are called to take action and tell people about Jesus.

Jesus was also **"healing every disease and sickness among the people."** Jesus saw needs He could meet, and then He met them. It isn't possible to help everyone, but we all can help someone. When we do, not only is God glorified, but helping meet needs also opens the doors for gospel conversations.

 Application: How are we as a group currently seeking to live like Jesus? How can we grow in this?

3. Follow Jesus (Mark 8:34)

 What does it look like to deny ourselves in daily living?

 How did Jesus live as the primary example and leader of denying Himself for godliness throughout His life and ministry?

We live in a "you do you" culture. Everyone is encouraged to do and believe what seems right to them. Our society says: If you want to, you should do it. Follow your heart.

Jesus says something drastically different: “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34b). The call of discipleship goes against what is expected and accepted in our culture.

Deny yourself. Jesus calls us to follow Him at all costs, and make no mistake, it will cost us to follow Him—though following Jesus is worth more than anything we will give up. It is often more comfortable to keep our faith to ourselves, but Jesus calls us to a higher standard: deny yourself. We won’t always be comfortable. In fact, following Jesus will be quite uncomfortable at times, but it is worth it. We aren’t called to live as comfortably as we can, we are called to proclaim and honor Jesus.

Take up your cross. Jesus’s original audience knew well what the cross meant: hardship and suffering. Jesus said following Him is to embrace a life of suffering.

When we tell others about Jesus, it won’t always be easy: We will face hardship. In Matthew 10:22, Jesus said we should expect rejection. Not everyone will like or appreciate the good news we bring, but we are in good company. Jesus taught that if people rejected Him, the Son of God, we could count on the fact that they will reject us, His disciples, too. The Bible teaches that we will struggle, but Jesus is worth it: “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world” (John 16:33).

Follow Jesus. We are called to be unapologetic and unashamed followers (and proclaimers) of Jesus. We are called to live as He did! He wants us to follow Him, and part of following Him means sharing the gospel with those He has placed in our lives.

Jesus lived a life of obedience to the Father. When we live obediently like He did, we will share the gospel with those He has placed in our path.




Application: Where do you currently need to deny yourself to follow Jesus? How will you respond?


Conclusion


Not only is the Great Commission a key part of Brentwood Baptist Church’s five-year vision, but it is also the calling for the historical and global church of Jesus.

While this is a familiar passage for many of us, we don’t always take time to consider exactly what Jesus is telling us in this passage. Let’s look in Matthew’s gospel and break it down.

 After each snippet of the Great Commission below, discuss what you think this means for you in 2025.

- “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth”
- “Go”
- “make disciples”
- “of all nations”
- “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
- “teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you”
- “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

 How can we as a group support and encourage one another in faithfully following Jesus in daily life?

 Take a moment to reflect on your current priorities. What do you make time for? What do you value? Is there anything in your priorities that needs to be rearranged to better prioritize Jesus? What small steps could you begin to take to move out of your comfort zone to share the gospel?

Prayer of Response

Ask that God would help you live out the Great Commission in your daily lives. Ask that He would point out a person that He wants you to invite to church or share the gospel with, and that He would open the door for you to have that conversation with them. Pray for the people in your lives that don't know Jesus, that they might be fertile soil to receive the good news and receive salvation.

Memory Verse

“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, 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

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Matthew* by David Platt
- *Be Loyal* by Warren Wiersbe
- *The Gospel of Matthew* by R. T. France

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



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.

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 4:23

Jesus's ministry in the synagogues shows that he initially focused his ministry on the Jewish population of Galilee, but this focus then widened to include Gentiles from there and beyond. The good news of the kingdom, the primary topic of Jesus's preaching, was that the long-awaited Christ, the human ruler through whom God would establish his reign on earth, had come at last. This was the message proclaimed by John the Baptist (3:2), preached by Jesus (4:17), and emphasized by Matthew through his mention of Jesus's Davidic lineage, the account of his miraculous birth, and his record of the visit of the magi. Jesus healed every disease and sickness among the people. The adjective "every" shows that no type of ailment was beyond Jesus's power to heal. In the Greek text, the adjective "every" is repeated, placing emphasis on Jesus's unlimited power to heal (9:35).¹

Matthew 28:16-20

28:16–17 On the significance of the disciples' worship, see note at 28:8–10. 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 (see note at 4:8–9).

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.²

Mark 8:34

The kind of Messiah Jesus was had implications for anyone who wanted to be his follower. An incorrect understanding of Jesus's messiahship leads to an incorrect understanding of discipleship. Deny himself is found only here and in the parallels (Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23). It refers to a denial of self-centered interests. To take up a cross refers to the fact that crucifixion victims were made to carry the crossbeam to the site of their execution.³

References

1. Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1505.
2. Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1553.
3. Ross H. McLaren, “Mark,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1574.