

Matthew 28:19 Commentary

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."; ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: poreutheutes (APPMPN - "imperative sense") oun **matheteusate** (2PAAM) panta ta ethne baptizontes (PAPMPN - "imperative sense") autous eis to. onoma tou patros kai tou huiou kai tou hagiou pneumatou

KJV - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

ESV - 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,

KJV - Go ye therefore, and **teach** all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

NET - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

NIV - 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,

NJB - Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

NLT - Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

YLT - having gone, then, disciple all the nations, (baptizing them -- to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: poreutheutes (APPMPN) oun matheteusate (2PAAM) panta ta ethne baptizontes (PAPMPN) autous eis to. onoma tou patros kai tou huiou kai tou hagiou pneumatou:

- **therefore:** Ps 22:27,28 98:2,3 Isa 42:1-4 49:6 52:10 66:18,19 Mk 16:15,16 Lu 24:47,48 Ac 1:8 13:46,47 28:28 Ro 10:18 Col 1:23) (**baptizing:** Ac 2:38,39,41 8:12-16,36-38 9:18 10:47,48 16:15-33 19:3-5 1Co 1:13-16 15:29 1Pe 3:21)(**name:** Mt 3:16,17 Ge 1:26 Nu 6:24-27 Isa 48:16 1Co 12:4-6 2Co 13:14 Eph 2:18 1Jn 5:7 Rev 1:4-6)
- See also Matthew 28:19 Commentary

THE GREAT COMMISSION

or

THE GREAT CONFUSION

Robby Gallaty has a chapter in his book on discipleship in which he asks whether the **Great Commission** has become the **Great Confusion**. He quotes **Dr. Dwight Pentecost** who made the statement that "The **subject of Discipleship** is frequently discussed today. Men are called to become disciples without any definition of the concept, and without any clarification of the requirements the Lord makes of those who are His disciples. Hence no intelligent decision can be made concerning this important question." ([Growing Up- How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples](#)) - recommended resource if you are committed to obey Jesus and fulfill His command to make disciples!

J D Greear, author of the provocatively titled book [Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart- How to Know for Sure You Are Saved](#) writes "Christ did not come to make **Christians**; He came to make **disciples**. Discipleship is not one of the church's various ministries. It is not something that the paid staff do. Discipleship is who we – as the church – are at our very core... a more Biblical approach to evangelism."

Matthew 28:18-20 could be outlined:

- v18 = Jesus' **Claim**,
- v19 = Jesus' **Command**,
- v20 = Jesus' **Comfort**.

Chris Adsit, Executive Director, Disciplemakers International, writes "Scientists and theologians agree: everything that is alive grows and reproduces. How is it, then, that so many Christians are not growing and not reproducing spiritually?... the two are mutually dependent - those who grow reproduce, and those who reproduce grow... (the modern church needs to equip members) to produce growing reproducers, and thereby grow Christ's church."

Therefore - Since I have all supernatural authority, do what I am commanding not in your natural strength but My supernatural power (manifests in the Acts of the Spirit, cp Acts 1:8). An impossible task is Him-possible! We are to be faithful, but only by the indwelling Spirit of Christ can we be fruitful.

Kistemaker on therefore - Briefly it means: Go, a. because your Lord has so ordered; b. because he has promised to impart all the needed strength; and c. because he is worthy of the homage, faith, and obedience of all men. (Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew)

J Ligon Duncan on Mt 28:18-20 beginning with the context - "Notice Jesus' word in Mt 28:18 is juxtaposed with the disciple's unbelief. What has Matthew just told you at the end of Mt 28:17? That there were still some doubting disciples. What is the very next thing that he does? He shows you Jesus coming and... speaking His word. What is Matthew telling you? He is telling you that it is the word of Jesus that produces belief and worship and ministry. It is the word of Jesus that drives away doubt... These are the last words that Matthew records of Jesus in His gospel. And so they are the abiding directive that He wants us to have on our minds... (The Great Commission) is first and foremost about discipleship. It tells us about the priority of discipleship, that is the primacy of discipleship in the mission of the church, and it also tells us about the practice of discipleship. That is, how you're supposed to do it... the goal of missions is not simply to get people to profess faith in Christ, it's to make people who are disciples of Christ. You see one of our problems in evangelism and missions is we stop short of the goal that Christ has given in the great commission. We're satisfied when somebody makes a profession of faith. Jesus is not. He wants disciples, not just people who make professions of faith. Disciples of Christ. Why? Because missions is a means to an end. What's our great end in life? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. To worship Him. You can only worship God if you're a disciple. And, therefore, because we want everybody to worship God and everybody to be caught up in the eternal worship of heaven forever and ever, we want them to be disciples. And so we go to the ends of the earth to disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ." ([Matthew 28:16-20 The Great Commission](#))

The old **King James Version** is a bit misleading because it translates the "**Go**" as if it were a command, and secondly translates the command to **make disciples** as a participle (verb ending in "-ing") and thirdly it mistranslates the verb **matheteuo** as "**teaching**." In fairness, the **New KJV** offers a more accurate translation - "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." But most translations are still lacking because they render "Go" as if it were a command and as a result the evangelical world has often placed more emphasis on going than on making disciples!

J Ligon Duncan on therefore - Why's the therefore there? Wherefore the therefore? Why is it there? For two reasons. First of all, you do this in light of the fact that I'm worthy of worship. What had the disciples just done? They had just worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't go to the ends of the earth to ask people to bow the knee and to devote themselves in discipleship with somebody who's not God. Jesus says, "I'm worthy of worship. Therefore, you go." But he also says, "I've been given all authority, therefore, you go." If I've been given all authority, then My word is it and, therefore, you go. In light of those realities, you go.

John Walvoord - In keeping with the theme of Matthew's gospel, presenting Jesus as the King who was rejected but who will return to reign in majesty and power, these words were the final orders of the King concerning what should go on in His absence. He began by reaffirming His power or authority, both in heaven and in earth. On the basis of this authority, they, as His representatives, were to teach all nations. ([The Resurrection and Final Words of Jesus](#))

In order to make disciples, men and women must be regenerated and while God's Spirit alone accomplishes that supernatural birth, we still have a role to play in the drama of redemption by speaking the Gospel to others. The oft used saying "Go to the world and preach the Gospel. If necessary use words" (probably falsely attributed to Francis of Assisi) is not Biblical. How will they hear without someone preaching? (Read Ro 10:13-15, 17) And so empowered by the Spirit, Who gives boldness to speak, we unashamedly speak the Gospel.

Mark Dever summarizes the essence of the Gospel we should proclaim - The one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life and

died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepts Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God. ([The Gospel and Personal Evangelism](#)) (I would add that 1Cor 15:3-5 is also a great summary.)

It is significant that all four Gospels record Jesus' charge to share the Gospel, so that in addition to Mt 28:18-20, we read...

Go (aorist passive participle) into all the world and **proclaim** (kerusso = aorist active imperative) the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15).

Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed (kerusso = aorist passive infinitive) in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you (John 20:21).

Go therefore - You have to **go** before you can **make**! This begs the question "Am I going?" Am I taking the Gospel intentionally into the "highways and byways"? Into my school, my place of employment, my secular social gatherings, etc? Recall that before His resurrection Jesus had instructed His disciples "**do not go**" (in the way of the Gentiles) (Mt 10:5). But now He calls them (and us) to "**Go**" without any "asterisks" or qualifiers.

In Acts 1:8+ Jesus enlarged the field to the entire world declaring "you shall receive power (**dunamis**) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses (**martus/martys** = gives us our English word **martyr**) both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Yes, the order has always been "to the Jew first" (You are sharing **Messiah** with your Jewish associates aren't you?), but then Paul added "and also to the Greek." (Ro 1:16+)

"**Go**" is a call to jettison our "holy huddles" and venture out with the Gospel into those places where our comfort level might be somewhat challenged. Paul certainly took this approach (cf Acts 17:17-31, 32) as did Apollos (Acts 18:28)

Note that while "**Go**" in the Greek is an aorist participle, the context allows for it to convey the sense of an imperative or a command (strictly speaking the only command is "make disciples")

Go (4198) (**poreuo/poreuomai** - Vine says it is derived from **poros**, a passage, a ford, Eng., pore) means primarily to go, journey, travel, proceed. To move from one place to another. Literally **Poreuomai** means to go from one place to another and thus to travel or journey (Lk 13:33). **Poreuomai** is also used to speak of the point of origin which conveys the sense of to depart (from). (Mt 25:41, Lk 13:31). **Poreuomai** can also be used with the sense of indicating a destination which conveys the sense of to go (to the destination), to proceed (toward the destination) (Acts 1:25, Acts 18:6). **Figuratively - Poreuomai** is a euphemism for going to one's death (Lk 22:22, 33). **Poreuomai** can speak of how one conducts himself (live or behave) (Lk 1:6). **Poreuomai** can mean to go on a mission (Mt 2:20, Mt 8:9). "Won't he leave the 99 on the hillside and **go** and search for the stray (Mt 18:12).

One can "**follow**" or "**go after**" bad things such as one's own **lusts** (epithumia) - "**Following after** their own lusts" (Jude 1:16, 18, 2Pe 3:3), "**indulge** (follow or go after) the flesh (**sarx**)" (2Pe 2:10), "**having pursued** (perfect tense) a course of sensuality, lusts" (1Pe 4:3)

First use of **Poreuomai** by Herod commanding the wise men to "**Go** and search carefully for the child" (Mt 2:8) An angel told Joseph to "**go** to the land of Israel" (Mt 2:20) Of a commander telling his soldiers "**go** and he **goes**" (Mt 8:9). "**Go** and learn what this means..." (Mt 9:13). "**Go** to the lost sheep" (Mt 10:6). "As you **go**, announce this: the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Mt 10:7). "**Go** and report to John what you hear and see" (Mt 11:4) "Jesus **passed** through the grain fields on the Sabbath." (Mt 12:1) "Then the Pharisees **went** and plotted how to trap Him by what He said." (Mt 22:15) "Then He will also say to those on the left, **Depart** (present imperative) from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!" (Mt 25:41) "The 11 disciples **traveled** to Galilee" (Mt 28:16) On Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem "As He was **going**, they were spreading their coats on the road." (Lk 19:36)

Luke has the most uses of **Poreuomai** (51x in 48v out of a total of 146 verses in NT) with the first use speaking of a righteous walk - "They were both righteous in the sight of God, **walking** blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord." (Lk 1:6) "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they **go on** their **way** (speaks of their conduct, behavior) they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity." (Lk 8:14) "Nevertheless I must **journey** on today and tomorrow and the next day..." (Lk 13:33) "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone **goes** to them from the dead, they will repent!'" (Lk 16:30) The verb **poreuomai** in Luke often suggests divine direction, "to go in a led direction" (Luke 4:42; 7:6, 11; 9:51, 52, 56, 57; 13:33; 17:11; 22:22, 29; 24:28)

"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and **going on** in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase." (Acts 9:31) Speaking of the conduct of nations = "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to **go** their own ways." (Acts 14:16) Paul speaking of going on his mission = "From now on I will **go** to the Gentiles." (Acts 18:6, cf Acts 22:21)

Mark 16:15 "And He said to them, '**Go** into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." (Jn 14:2) Jesus was speaking of His death, burial, resurrection and ascension - "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." (Jn 16:7) Jesus spoke of His death "I am leaving the world again and **going** to the Father." (Jn 16:28)

W E Vine writes that **Poreuomai** "is always used in the Middle Voice in the N.T. (poreuomai) and the Sept., and is the most frequent verb signifying to go; it is more distinctly used to indicate procedure or course than the verb eimi, to go (not found in the N.T.). It is often rendered "go thy (your) way," in Oriental usage the customary dismissal, marking the close of a case in court. Hence, in ordinary parlance, marking the end of a conversation, etc., e.g., Luke 7:22; 17:19; John 4:50; Acts 9:15; 24:25; cp. Da. 12:9; in Ro. 15:24 (1st part), R.V., "go" (A.V., "take my journey"); in Acts 9:3 and 26:13, "journeyed"... This verb is to be distinguished from others signifying to go. It is best rendered, as often as possible, to go on one's way

Mounce summary of **Poreuomai** - to go, pass from one place to another, Mt 17:27; 18:12; to go away, depart, Mt 24:1; 25:41; Jn 14:2, 3; trop. to go away, depart, from life, to die, Lk 22:22; to go, pass on one's way, journey, travel, Mt 2:8, 9; Lk 1:39; 2:41; to go after (poreuomai hopiso), to become a follower or partisan, Lk 21:8; or, to pursue after, be devoted to, 2 Pet. 2:10; from the Hebrew, to go or proceed in any way or course of life, live in any manner, Lk 1:6; 8:14; Acts 9:31 (Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words)

Thayer summary of **Poreuomai** - to lead over, carry over, transfer.

(1) to pursue the journey on which one has entered, to continue on one's journey Acts 8:39; ,

To depart from, Mt 24:1, 25:41; Luke 4:42; Mt 19:15; Lk 13:31;

To go, depart, to some place: Matthew 2:20; Matthew 17:27; Mark 16:12; Luke 1:39; Luke 2:41; Luke 22:39; Luke 24:13; John 7:35; John 8:1; Acts 1:11,25; Acts 20:1; Romans 15:24; James 4:13, etc.;

(2) Hebraism, metaphorically, to depart from life: Luke 22:22; Ps 39:14.

(3) Misc:

To follow one, become his adherent: Luke 21:8 (Jdg 2:12; 1Ki 11:10);

To seek (cf. English *run after*) anything = 2Pe 2:10.

To walk in one's own ways, to follow one's moral preferences, Acts 14:16

To imitate one, to follow his ways, Jude 1:11, Acts 9:31;

To lead a life subject to cares, Luke 8:14

(3) to follow one, that is: become his adherent ("gone the way of Cain" - Jude 1:11);

(4) to lead or order one's life = 1Pe 4:3; Lk 1:6 2Per 3:3; Jude 1:16,18;

BDAG summary of **Poreuomai** - (1). to move over an area, generally with a point of departure or destination specified, go, proceed, travel, win indication of the point of departure: depart from someone (Mt 25:41, Lk 4:42, 13:31, Mt 19:15. With indication of place to which (Isa 22:15). To go to, in, into - Mt 2:20, 17:27, Mk 16:12, Lk 1:39, 4:42, 9:56) (2). to conduct oneself = live, walk - (Pr 28:6, 1Pe 4:3, Lk 1:6, Ps 119:1) (3). go to one's death (Lk 22:33)

Moulton and Milligan - Poreuo originally meant ";cut forward"; a way, is in late Greek always used intransitively ";advance," ";progress"; : ";on this account I hope to be quickly **promoted**, if the gods will,";

Friberg's (Analytical Lexicon) summary of **poreuomai** - go, journey, travel, proceed;

(1) literally;

(a) of going from one place to another go, travel (Lk 13.33);

(b) with an indication of the point of origin depart (from) (Mt 25.41; Lk 13.31);

(c) with an indication of destination go (to), proceed (toward) (Acts 1.25; 18.6);

(2) figuratively;

(a) euphemistically and idiomatically poreuesthai (eis thanaton) literally go (to one's death), i.e. die, leave this life (Lk 22.22, 33);

(b) of behavior, conduct oneself, live, behave (Lk 1.6);

(c) imperative poreuou, poreutheti as a command involving a sense of mission go (Mt 2.20; 8.9); Hebraistically, the participle followed by an imperative has a similar imperatival sense (Mt 9.13);

(d) with opiso (back, behind) in the sense of seeking a close relation with someone or something go or follow after, act in the same way (Lk 21.8; 2 Pe 2.10)

Poreuomai - 153x in 146v - accompany*(1), am on my way(1), depart(1), departed(1), departure(1), following(3), go(69), go on their way(1), go away(1), goes(7), going(15), going away(2), gone(3), indulge(1), journey(1), journeying(2), leave(1), proceed(1), proceeded(2), pursued a course(1), sets(1), started(3), traveling(3), walking(1), way(6), went(22), went His way(1), went on their way(1), went their way(1). Matt 2:8f, 20; 8:9; 9:13; 10:6f; 11:4, 7; 12:1, 45; 17:27; 18:12; 19:15; 21:2, 6; 22:9, 15; 24:1; 25:9, 16, 41; 26:14; 27:66; 28:7, 11, 16, 19; Mark 16:10, 12, 15; Luke 1:6, 39; 2:3, 41; 4:30, 42; 5:24; 7:6, 8, 11, 22, 50; 8:14, 48; 9:12f, 51ff, 56f; 10:37f; 11:5, 26; 13:31ff; 14:10, 19, 31; 15:4, 15, 18; 16:30; 17:11, 14, 19; 19:12, 28, 36; 21:8; 22:8, 22, 33, 39; 24:13, 28; John 4:50; 7:35, 53; 8:1, 11; 10:4; 11:11; 14:2f, 12, 28; 16:7, 28; 20:17; Acts 1:10f, 25; 5:20, 41; 8:26f, 36, 39; 9:3, 11, 15, 31; 10:20; 12:17; 14:16; 16:7, 16, 36; 17:14; 18:6; 19:21; 20:1, 22; 21:5; 22:5f, 10, 21; 23:23; 24:25; 25:12, 20; 26:12f; 27:3; 28:26; Rom 15:24f; 1 Cor 10:27; 16:4, 6; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 4:10; Jas 4:13; 1 Pet 3:19, 22; 4:3; 2 Pet 2:10; 3:3; Jude 1:11, 16, 18

Poreuomai is used over 1045 times in the Septuagint. Here are representative uses: To enter = Ge 11:31; to go through = Dt 1:19; to come, to proceed from (of borders) = Jos 16:8; to go forth, to flow (of water) = Ge 2:14; to go, to crawl (of serpent) = Ge 3:14; to grow, to develop, to spread (of branches) = Hos 14:7; to advance (of shadow) = 2Ki 20:9; to walk after, to seek, follow after = Jdg 2:12; to walk, to conduct oneself = Pr 28:6; to go about in a certain state and manner = Mic 1:8; to pass away and cease to exist = Hos 6:4; to walk (uprightly) = Mic 2:7 **Poreuomai** - 1017x in 996v in the Septuagint -

Gen. 2:14; 3:14; 8:3,5; 9:23; 11:31; 12:4f,9; 13:3; 16:8; 21:19; 22:2f,6,8,13,19; 24:4f,8,10,38f,42,58,61f,65; 25:22,32; 26:1,26; 27:5,9,13f; 28:5,7,9f,15,20; 29:1; 30:14; 31:30; 32:18; 33:12; 35:3,22; 36:6; 37:12,14,17,25,30; 41:55; 42:38; 43:2,5,8; 45:24,28; Exod. 2:8; 3:11,18f; 4:12,18,21,27,29; 5:3,7f,11,17f,23; 8:23f; 10:8f,11,26; 12:32; 14:19,29; 15:19,22; 16:4; 17:5; 18:20; 23:23; 33:1,15; Lev. 11:20f,27,42; 18:3f; 19:16; 20:23; 26:3,21,23f,27f,40f; Num. 10:30,32; 13:26; 14:14,38; 16:25; 20:17; 21:22; 22:7,12ff,21ff,35,39; 23:3,15; 24:1; 32:6,39,41f; 33:8; Deut. 1:19,31,33; 4:3; 5:33; 6:7,14; 8:6,19; 10:12; 11:19,22,28; 13:3,5f,14; 14:25; 19:9; 20:5ff; 26:2,17; 28:9,14; 29:17f,25; 30:16; 31:14; Jos. 1:9,16; 2:1,5,22; 3:3f,6; 4:18; 6:9; 8:7,9,11; 9:11; 14:10; 15:4; 16:8; 17:7; 18:8f; 19:8,48f,51; 22:5f,9; 23:16; 24:17,28; Jdg. 1:3,10,17,26; 2:12,17,19,22; 3:13,17; 4:8f,24; 5:6,10; 6:14,21; 7:4,7; 8:1,29; 9:1,4,6ff,11,13,21,49f,55; 10:14; 11:5,8,11,13,16,18,37f,40; 12:1; 13:11; 14:3,9; 15:4; 16:1; 17:8ff; 18:2,5ff,9,14,17,24,26; 19:2f,5,7ff,14,17f,27f; 21:10,20f,23; Ruth 1:1,7f,11,16,18f,21; 2:2f,8f,11,22; 3:10; 1 Sam. 1:14,17ff; 2:26; 3:6,8f,21; 6:9,12; 7:16; 8:3,5; 9:3,6f,9f; 10:2,14,26; 11:14f; 12:14; 13:3,17,19,26; 15:3,12,18,20; 16:2; 17:32f,36f,39,45,48; 18:27; 19:18,22f; 20:11,22,28,40,42; 22:5; 23:2f,5,13,16,22f,28; 24:3; 25:42; 26:19; 27:2; 28:7,22; 29:7,10; 30:9,16,27f; 7:17,19; 9:21; 10:5,16; 11:4,14,17; 17:3f,12; 18:3,5,12,14; 20:32,36f; 21:6,12f,20; 22:3,5; 25:7,11,13; 28:2; 30:6; 34:2,21f,31; 35:20; Ezr. 4:23; 5:8,15; 7:13; 10:6; Neh. 2:16; 6:17; 8:10; 9:12,19; 10:30; 12:32,38; Est. 4:10,13; Ps. 1:1; 14:2; 22:4; 25:1,11; 31:8; 37:7; 41:10; 42:2; 54:15; 77:10,39; 80:13f; 83:8,12; 85:11; 88:16,31; 100:6; 104:41; 106:7; 118:1,3,4,5; 121:1; 125:6; 127:1; 130:1; 137:7; 138:7; 141:4; 142:8; 18:1f,6,8,11,14,16,18,21,45; 19:4,8,15,21; 20:26f; 21:38; 22:6,13,43,53; 2 Ki. 1:2ff,6; 2:1,6,11,16,18,25; 3:7,9; 4:23ff,30,35; 5:5,10,12,25f; 6:2ff; 7:8,15; 8:2,9,18,27f; 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Make disciples is a command in the **aorist imperative**, which is a brisk command, an order, a charge to do this now and don't delay. It can even convey a sense of urgency. There are some 762 aorist imperative commands in the NT and my contention is that we cannot carry out **EVEN ONE** in our *natural* strength. We need *supernatural* enablement. Every commandment is an opportunity to renounce self-reliance and rely wholly on the Holy Spirit's enabling power to accomplish supernaturally what cannot be accomplished naturally (cp Jn 15:5, 2Cor 3:5-6).

I love to ask people the question "What is the most common designation of born again individuals in the book of Acts, the early church?" Virtually no one (including pastors and teachers) has ever given me the correct answer! The answer as you may have surmised from the topic under discussion is "**disciples**" not **believers** and not **Christians**.

Disciple in the book of Acts (Acts 6:1-2, 7 11:26 14:20, 21-22 15:10) virtually always refers to a saved person. The name **Christian** occurs only 3 times in the Bible - Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet. 4:16. The name **believer** or **believers** is found 3x in Acts (Acts 5:14, 10:45, 16:1) and 12x in 11v in the entire NT (Acts 5:14; 10:45; 16:1; 2Co 6:15; Gal. 3:9; 1Th. 1:7; 2:10; 1Ti 4:10; 5:16; 6:2 = 2x; 1Pe 1:21)

Greg Ogden on who is a disciple? - A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.

Rengstorf writes, "**Mathetes** always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as mathetes and which in its particularity leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power."

Mathetes = 261x in 245v (Note: These are uses in the Nestle-Aland - the Textus Receptus has 252 occurrences of mathetes) - NAS Usage: disciple(26), disciples(233), disciples'(1), pupil(1).

Matthew 5:1; 8:21, 23; 9:10-11, 14, 19, 37; 10:1, 24-25, 42; 11:1-2; 12:1-2, 49; 13:10, 36; 14:12, 15, 19, 22, 26; 15:2, 12, 23, 32-33, 36; 16:5, 13, 20-21, 24; 17:6, 10, 13, 16, 19; 18:1; 19:10, 13, 23, 25; 20:17; 21:1, 6, 20; 22:16; 23:1; 24:1, 3; 26:1, 8, 17-19, 26, 35f, 40, 45, 56; 27:64; 28:7-8, 13, 16;

Mark 2:15-16, 18, 23; 3:7, 9; 4:34; 5:31; 6:1, 29, 35, 41, 45; 7:2, 5, 17; 8:1, 4, 6, 10, 27, 33f; 9:14, 18, 28, 31; 10:10, 13, 23-24, 46; 11:1, 14; 12:43; 13:1; 14:12-14, 16, 32; 16:7; Lk. 5:30, 33; 6:1, 13, 17, 20, 40; 7:11, 18; 8:9, 22; 9:14, 16, 18, 40, 43, 54; 10:23; 11:1; 12:1, 22; 14:26f, 33; 16:1; 17:1, 22; 18:15; 19:29, 37, 39; 20:45; 22:11, 39, 45;

John 1:35, 37; 2:2, 11-12, 17, 22; 3:22, 25; 4:1-2, 8, 27, 31, 33; 6:3, 8, 12, 16, 22, 24, 60-61, 66; 7:3; 8:31; 9:2, 27-28; 11:7-8, 12, 54; 12:4, 16; 13:5, 22-23, 35; 15:8; 16:17, 29; 18:1-2, 15-17, 19, 25; 19:26f, 38; 20:2-4, 8, 10, 18-20, 25-26, 30; 21:1-2, 4, 7-8, 12, 14, 20, 23-24

Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 25-26, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 16:1; 18:23, 27; 19:1, 9, 30; 20:1, 30; 21:4, 16

The salty expositor **Vance Havner** phrased it this way "Salvation is free. The gift of God is eternal life. It is not cheap for it cost God His Son and the Son His life, but it is free. However, when we become believers we become disciples and that will cost everything we have... our Lord was after disciples, not mere "joiners."

The highly respected Bible expositor **James Montgomery Boice** (now with the Lord) writes "I once was asked to do a series of messages on Christian discipleship, and the first question I dealt with was this: "Is discipleship necessary?" I began by explaining the way the question needs to be interpreted. It should not mean, "Is discipleship necessary if we are to be obedient to Jesus?" That is obvious. Nor should it mean, "Is discipleship necessary in order to live a full and happy Christian life?" That should be obvious, too. What the question should mean (and the sense in which I treated it) is, "Is discipleship necessary for one to be a true Christian? Can you be a saved person without it?" The answer I gave, the answer that should be given by any true Bible expositor, is, "**Yes, it is necessary! It is mandatory to follow after Christ to be a Christian.**" Comment: Note Boice's use of the phrase "**follow after**" - at the church I now attend I have been struck with the fact that all of the pastoral staff routinely refer to believers as "Christ followers."

This school is for those who are actively serving the Lord in our fellowship community and have committed to regular attendance to bible studies and church activities with a desire to see what future God has designed for them. The purpose of this class is to train up solid servants and ministry assistants for the church. It is training for a life of discipleship.

Bob Deffinbaugh explains that "Christianity is more than a decision to trust in Christ as Savior. It is not enough to invite men to believe in Christ as Savior. In the Gospels, our Lord invited men to follow Him, not just to believe on Him. Christianity is more than a moment-in-time conversion; it is the radical transformation or conversion which leads to a whole new way of life. It implies the forsaking of our former way of life, and our commitment to live as God requires, by His grace. In other words, discipleship is used because it compresses conversion and Christian living, salvation and sanctification, into one term. Conversion to Christ, in the

Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, was inconceivable without a commitment to follow Him in life. That is why our Lord persistently challenged would-be followers to count the cost, as well as the rewards." ([What Happened to Discipleship in the Epistles?](#))

Bill Hull answers the question of **who should be a disciple?** - The idea that only mature people are disciples and all other Christians are immature converts appears nowhere in the New Testament. God expects every believer to be a mature, reproducing disciple. Therefore any leader can confidently stand before the church and call every believer to discipleship. In fact, nothing less will please God. There is no greater proof of being a disciple than discipleship to Christ in daily life. Following Christ is the natural expression of new life at work in a convert-disciple. Each believer should remain in Christ by means of the Word and prayer, bear fruit that includes evangelism, and walk in obedience. Then he or she will bring glory to God, experience joy, and love others. Every Christian is to be a disciple. Every disciple is called to make disciples... the **three Ds** of disciple making: deliver them, develop them, and deploy them. Through the power of Christ we are delivered from sin; by the discipling process we are developed into mature believers; and finally God deploys us into the harvest field to reach others... If we have not taught obedience and encouraged it through accountability, we have not disciplined. (BORROW [The Disciple Making Church](#))

"DISCIPLESHIP" VERSES IN THE EPISTLES

Although the terms **disciples** or the phrase **make disciples** are not used in the NT after the book of Acts, clearly the concept of discipleship is taught in the epistles. Here are passages that illustrate the truth that believers are all called to be "**learners.**" Many of these passages call us to walk like Jesus walked, which is not surprising for He is the ultimate One after Whom we should model our lives. He is the Rabbi and we are His followers and should learn to imitate Him, enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. For discussion of this important topic see [Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

You therefore, my son, **be strong** (same command in Eph 6:10) in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2Ti 2:1-2)

But you **followed** (**parakoloutheo** = accompanied him side by side, followed him closely, attended to his belief and behavior carefully. Same verb in 1Ti 4:6 = followed "sound doctrine") my **teaching** (**sound doctrine is key in discipling**), **conduct** (next - **sound behavior** that backs up what one says they believe!), purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus (a great description of a disciple of Christ) will be persecuted (This is part of the disciple's "job description" we would rather not hear! Notice that it is a guaranteed promise from God!). (2Ti 3:10, 11+, 2Ti 3:12+)

Comment on **followed** (**parakoloutheo**) - In a sense Timothy was investigating Paul's teaching to see whether Paul's life matched his lips and to watch how he endured persecutions and sufferings. The verb pictures Timothy always at Paul's side, attending Paul wherever he went. Thayer adds that the verb means to "conform one's self to" so that ultimately a disciple is to become like his mentor. The root verb **akoloutheō** means to be an akolouthos, a follower, or companion (akoloutheo = from the prefix a, here expressing "union, likeness," and keleuthos, "a way;" hence, "one going in the same way") and is used of discipleship by Jesus in Mk 8:34; 9:38; 10:21.

Parakoloutheo was actually a technical term used by philosophers to describe the relationship of a disciple to his teacher (studying with him in close quarters, carefully noting his life with a view to reproducing, etc). is used literally, as in "**dog one's steps,**" and metaphorically meaning "**attend minutely to, follow with the mind.**" It includes the idea of following a teaching with focused attention so as to make the teaching part of one's being. Timothy conformed to Paul's teaching and conduct by paying special attention to his mentor. Paul is reminding Timothy "You were right by my side from the beginning."

William Barclay adds that **parakoloutheo** "means to follow a person physically, to stick by him through thick and thin, to be by his side in fair weather and in foul. It means to follow a person mentally, to attend diligently to his teaching, and fully to understand the meaning and the significance of what he says. It means to follow a person spiritually, not only to understand what he says, but also to carry out his ideas, and to be the kind of person that he wishes us to be." ([The Daily Study Bible Online](#))

Brethren, **join** (**present imperative** = command calling for this to be our lifestyle) in following my example (literally "become

followers together") and **observe** (**present imperative** = command) those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Phil 3:17+)

You (saints at Thessalonica) also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1Th 1:6+)

(Jesus to His disciples) "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." (Jn 13:15+)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps (1Pe 2:21+)

Henry Morris - Following His steps, we should "walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6), even to the cross if that should be His will. We should also love as He loved (John 13:35) and think as He thought (Philippians 2:5).

The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1John 2:6+)

My children (Judaizers were infiltrating their ranks), with whom I am again in **labor** until Christ is formed in you. (Gal 4:19+)

Comment: Note the verb "is formed" which is **morphoo** which means to change into another form. This Greek word is the root word of our English word **metamorphosis**, which in biology denotes the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly. So the change Paul has in mind here is not a superficial alteration for show but a vital change that reflects one's new life in Christ. As an aside the Greek morphoo was originally used of artists who shaped material into an image, exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing in the disciple's life as they behold the Word and behave according to the Word (2Cor 3:18+).

And we proclaim Him (Christ), admonishing (**present tense** = continually) every man and teaching (**present tense** = continually) every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Col 1:28-29+)

Comment: Paul gives a clear purpose statement - He desired that those he impacted would be growing in Christ-likeness ("complete in Christ").

I exhort (**present tense** = continually) **you therefore** (**term of conclusion** = forces us to look back at the previous passages ~ a great aid to enable us to practice the powerful discipline of Biblical [not mystical] **Meditation**), **be** (**present imperative** = command calling for this to be our lifestyle, not just an occasional occurrence! Has discipleship become your lifestyle or are you an "episodic" [at irregular intervals] disciple?) **imitators (mimetes) of me.** (1Cor 4:16+)

Comment: Webster says that to **imitate** means to follow as a pattern, model, or example; to be or appear like. The 1828 Webster's (I highly recommend this edition as the definitions are very "bibliocentric") even says in the definition of imitate that "We should seek the best models to imitate, and in morals and piety, it is our duty to imitate the example of our Savior." One who mimes acts a part with mimic gesture and action usually without words. One application is that as disciples of Christ we should let our actions speak louder than our words! How are you doing?

Teachers based their whole educational procedure on imitation, as students imitated the behavior of teachers. Slowly the idea developed that people should imitate the gods, a concept Plato taught his disciples. The basic meaning of mimetes is seen in a mime. An English woman went to France to study under the famous mime artist, Marcel Marceau. All day he taught his students how to make the movements of mime, and each evening they went to see him perform. Their performances were marked indelibly by the style of the master. This is an excellent picture of a Christian who imitates the Lord by exposure to Him. As an African chief once said "A good example is the tallest kind of preaching." Jonathan Edwards was so concerned about the example which he set which others might imitate, that he framed the resolve to "never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life."

Deffinbaugh explains that "First of all, **making disciples** necessitated '**going**.' This commission nullified the previous instruction of our Lord to go only to the Jews (cf. Matthew 10:5-6). Now they were to proclaim the grace of God in the gospel to all nations. Judaism had previously (and reluctantly) granted Gentiles to come the way of the proselyte. Now Jewish believers were to go to the Gentiles with the good news. Going did not come easily to these racially biased men. The racial separatism which once was thought to be a measure of spirituality was now shown to be a hindrance to it (cf. Ephesians 2:20). If the first participle, '**going**' emphasized the need for an invitation to discipleship, the second participle, '**baptizing**,' draws our attention to the initiation of men into the life of discipleship. "... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19b). Those who believe in 'baptismal regeneration' (the doctrine which says that we must be baptized in order to be saved) would be quick to leap on this

verse to prove their point. Unfortunately, those of us who reject this erroneous doctrine neglect this verse in order to avoid any semblance of their error. **Baptism** in the New Testament is a *rite of initiation*. It does not save anyone, for it is a work of man. It is not the cause, but the *result of salvation*. It does not contribute in any way to one's salvation; it is a public confession of it. Furthermore, this command is not addressed to the would-be convert; it is given to those who already are **disciples**, and indeed, men who are apostles. It speaks of the responsibility of the church toward new converts. It implies the proclamation of the gospel of salvation through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for sinners. It implies a genuine faith and conversion to Christ. But it also includes a public profession of faith and a public renouncement of the old way of life and an entrance into a new lifestyle. Baptism summarizes all that is involved in the initiation of a person into the Christian faith. The third participle, **'teaching,'** capsulizes the continual obligation of the church to instruct the new convert in the way of the Lord. Conversion is the introduction of a person to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Teaching cultivates this relationship by assisting and encouraging the convert to know Him in a deeper and more intimate way. This process of getting to know Him is life-long (cf. Philippians 3:10), and instruction in the Scriptures is an essential element in this process. **'Making disciples,'** then, does not refer to some formal structured program intended only for the super-spiritual or an elite company of the committed. **It is God's imperative for every Christian.** It involves the initiation and the instruction of every believer into an ever deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. It seeks to make every person a follower of Christ. ([What Happened to Discipleship in the Epistles?](#))

Robby Gallaty on **make disciples** - This solemn charge is generally referred to as the "Great Commission." In Gospel Centered Discipleship, author Jonathan Dodson labels it the "Gospel Commission" and highlights its three important aspects:

- Go—this is the missional (missionary) aspect. Every believer is to participate in taking the gospel to others.
- Baptize—this is the relational (family) aspect. Every believer should instruct all who believe upon Christ to announce their relationship with Him and His people through the symbolic act of baptism.
- Teach—this is the rational (learner) aspect. Every believer is to teach others about Jesus and how to follow Him. (Quoted by Robby Gallaty)

Gallaty asks **"So what is disciple-making?** We could say that it is intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ."... Disciple-making was a priority for Jesus and His disciples, and it should be a priority for us now. Bill Hull, a leader in personally obeying the Great Commission, has sounded the clarion call for discipleship over the past twenty years. He rightly insists that understanding "what a disciple is and what a disciple does are top priorities for the church." (The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ) He notes that many churches are carelessly guilty of throwing "*the word disciple around freely, but too often with no definition. Perhaps the most common term used by believers in our day is the word Christian. But do you know how many times Christian appears in the Bible? Only three times (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). In its two occurrences in Acts, which present the history of the term, it is used in a derogatory fashion. In fact, Christian was likely coined as a term of derision. Those who despised Christ displayed their disgust for His followers by calling them "Christians."* It wasn't until years after Christ's ascension that the term was used in a positive light. On the other hand, the term **"disciple"** appears 269 times in the New Testament, with 238 of those occurring in the four Gospels (the root word is used 281 times in the New Testament and 250 times in the Gospels alone). Why is this so important? The answer is because Christ did not come to make Christians; He came to make disciples. Immediately before leaving this world to return to heaven, He commanded us—His disciples—to carry on that work in His absence. But before a person can make disciples, he or she must first be a disciple.

What does it mean to be a disciple? At the very core, a disciple is a learner, one who is set on growing and developing. In nearly every sphere of life, people learn specific skills from someone else who has developed those skills. An electrical certification is attained only after an extensive apprenticeship with a more experienced electrician. When a prospective doctor finishes medical school, she invests several years in a residency, a time of shadowing an experienced physician.

If a psychiatrist bases his practice on the teachings of Sigmund Freud, we might say he is a disciple of Freud. If a musician, following the methods of Winston Marsalis, plays jazz in the same style, we might comment that he is a disciple of Winston Marsalis. This concept of learning directly through the expertise and experience of another is the foundation of what Jesus envisioned when He used the term **"disciple."**

Illustration of the Modern Church's Abandonment of Jesus Command to Make Disciples - In 1983 a 50 year old tradition was quietly dropped by the U.S. House of Representatives. The tradition involved the annual reading of George Washington's FAREWELL ADDRESS on the occasion of his birthday. Democratic and Republican leaders decided it was useless to continue to read the lengthy address to a mostly empty chamber. "It's too bad," said a GOP aide, "but it's time for this to be consigned to the dust bin." The Calgary Herald had this note "In past years, it was almost holy writ that the address must be read. Through war and storm for half a century, a member of each chamber has been chosen to read the address." The newspaper went on to say that **"Nobody listens to Washington's farewell address."** Tragically something parallel to this has taken place in the church of Jesus

Christ! Fewer and fewer older believing men are heeding **Christ's farewell message** to intentionally make disciples of younger men. Jesus' command to His own disciples was crystal clear - **Make disciples** as you go into all the nations with the Gospel, baptizing them and teaching them to obey the Gospel. (Paraphrase of Mt 28:19-20)

Gregg Ogden writes that "We will not make disciples through methods of mass production that attempt shortcuts to maturity. Robert Coleman clarifies the challenge: "One must decide where he wants his ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he has gone." (Discipleship Essentials)

Dawson Trotman - In 1948 I was in Germany for six days. I had been put in touch with Colonel Paul Maddox, Chief of Chaplains for all of Europe, and through his recommendation to the Commanding General I got into Germany. I invited fifty German fellows to meet with me for three days, and twenty-five of them came. I talked to them every evening for three hours beginning to lay before them the Great Commission and the idea that I felt Germany not only needed to hear the Gospel, but that Germans themselves needed to obey the Great Commission by sending missionaries (to make disciples)... Then finally near the end one fellow, a little older than the rest and with almost a bitter expression on his face, got up and said, "Mr. Trotman, you in America have never had an occupation force in your land. You don't know what it is to have soldiers of another country roaming your streets. Our souls are not our own." I responded, "The disciples lived at the time Jesus Christ lived and their souls weren't their own. The Roman soldiers were in charge." Then it dawned on me in a way I had never considered before that when Jesus Christ sent the eleven out, He let a situation exist which was so bad that there could never be a worse one. No printing presses, no automobiles, no radios, no television, no telephones, no buildings, not one single church, no uniforms, nothing for the vestry ... He didn't even leave them a little emblem. He left them only a job to do, but with it He said, "**All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore** ... " What does the "**therefore**" mean? It means, "I have the power to give you the order and I have the power to back you to the hilt." He has all power in heaven and earth ... not just heaven, but in the earth; all power, not part of the power, but all power, which means power over the Romans and power over the Communists. Earlier Jesus Christ had said to this same little group, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me..** " He that what? "**believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.**" (John 14:12) **Do you believe that statement is true?** Or must you say that for a moment it makes you stop to wonder. Could it possibly be true that the Son of God would say to a human being, "**The things that I do, you shall do, and greater things than these you shall do**"? I believe with all my heart that the reason so many wonderful Christians don't accomplish more in their lives is **they don't believe Jesus meant what He said**. They have never come to the place where they **believe** that the all-powerful One who commissioned them could enable them to do these greater works. The last thing He said was, "**All power is given unto Me. I'm giving you your orders now. Go and teach all nations and see that every created being hears the Word.**" ([The Need of the Hour - Dawson Trotman](#))

Related Resources:

- Make Disciples 1
- Make Disciples 2
- Make Disciples 3
- Make Disciples 4
- Make Disciples 5
- Make Disciples 6
- Make Disciples 7
- Make Disciples 8

All nations (panta ta ethne) - Parallels Acts 1:8 (see earlier discussion under '**Go**")

As with the verb "**go**," the verb **baptizing** although in the form of an aorist participle does carry the sense of the imperative (a command).

Baptizing ([907](#))(**baptizo** from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. A study of the 77 NT uses reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism. The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. **Baptizo** was used of the act of sinking ships. **Baptizo** also meant to bathe of a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged and then stranded on the shore. Figuratively, **baptizo** pictures the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. In this sense **baptizo** means to be identified with.

James Montgomery Boice helps understand this figurative meaning of **baptizo** writing that "The clearest example that shows the

meaning of **baptizo** is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be '**dipped**' (**bapto**) into boiling water and then '**baptised**' (**baptizo**) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of **baptizing** the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our **union** and **identification** with Christ than to our water baptism... mere intellectual assent is not enough. **There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!**" (Bolding added)

So while baptism speaks of identification and union with Christ, in this context clearly Jesus has literal water baptism in mind. But even then it must be emphasized that the water baptism is but a symbol of what has already transpired at conversion when one was baptized with the Spirit (1Cor 12:13, cf Ro 8:9).

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - How often skeptics say Jesus never claimed deity. Wrong! This verse is a clear affirmation of His deity, for Jesus places Himself on a level with God the Father and God the Spirit. Why do I say that? The noun Name is singular not plural implying oneness in the Members of the Trinity.

And another thing skeptics (or [Oneness Pentecostalism](#)) say is that the word "Trinity" is never found in Scripture. But of course this statement by Jesus is clear evidence for the trinity of God, the One God Who subsists in three Persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of the three is distinguished from the others. Each possesses all the divine attributes. And yet in the mystery of mysteries the three are one. Many attempt illustrations but none are perfectly satisfactory.

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?](#)
- [Trinity by Wayne Grudem](#)

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus adds **teaching** which is vital to make disciples. **Teaching** is in the **present tense** emphasizing the vital importance that disciples who make disciples are to be continually teaching those they disciple!

Teaching (1321)(**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun **didaskalia** and the adjective **didaktikos**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. In Scripture to teach means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating obedience to the truth taught and resultant Spirit energized transformation and Christ-likeness. The essence of a disciple in fact is that he or she is a learner. The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard so that this truth affects his or her innermost being. Ultimately the purpose of didasko is to shape the will of the one taught.

To teach means to cause to know, to help one to learn, to impart knowledge or skill, or to carry out the activity of instructing by precept or by practice.

To teach is distinguished from to preach, the latter emphasizing the proclamation of the gospel to the non-Christian world. Teaching of sound doctrine is vital to stability of one's faith and spiritual growth and stability of one's faith, this vital role being clearly validated by our Lord Jesus Christ who was called Rabbi or Teacher more than any other name -- in fact the some 45 of the 58 NT uses of the Greek word for teacher (didaskalos) are used of Jesus (most of these referring to public teaching). In addition 47 of 97 occurrences of didasko are used in the Gospels to describe the activity of Jesus.

John MacArthur writes that **didasko** "refers to the passing on of information-often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth-contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see Acts 17:21). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated by that of Jesus, was basically expository. Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse. (MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press)

In another source **MacArthur** writes that **didasko** (and related words) "In all the various forms, the root meaning carries with it the idea of systematic teaching or systematic training. It is the word that is used to refer to a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they are able to perform. The gift of prophecy could be a one-time proclamation of Christ, but the gift of teaching is a systematic training problem to take a person from one point to another. What is the curriculum for the teacher? The Bible, the Word of God. The gift is to teach systematically the truth of God. It can be used with men—one on one, one on two, one on three, one on five thousand. It can be used with women—one on one, one on two, one on three, one on five thousand. It can be used by a lady in a little group of children. It can be used by a mother to a son. It can be used by a husband to his wife. It can be used in any conceivable way that the Spirit of God desires. It is the ability to pass on truth in a systematic progression so that someone receives it, implements it, and a change of behavior takes place. In fact, it is a gift that belongs to a lot more of us

than we realize. (MacArthur, J. Spiritual Gifts. Includes index. Chicago: Moody Press)

Finally Jesus explains the power to be able to accomplish the task of making disciples of even the remotest parts of the earth:

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

(Mt 28:20+)

How is He with us? His Spirit indwells us and fills us and empowers to obey His command. Indeed, God never commands what He does not also enable!

As **John Walvoord** reminds us **"I am with you always"** - His presence with them, captured in the statement "ye in me, and I in you" (Jn 14:20), was going to be enjoyed by believers to the end of the world, that is, the end of the present age, which would culminate in His coming for them."

GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY

Rob Morgan

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:18-19

Can you explain this Trinity stuff to me? That's the question that led to my developing the sermon series we're beginning today. We have a program of discipleship in our church in which we take new converts—new Christians—and we assign a mentor to walk with them through the discipleship materials that we use. Recently we had a young man who became a new follower of Jesus Christ. We gave him the material and he and his mentor met for their first session. But as they started, the young man said, "You know, I don't understand this doctrine about the Trinity. What's that all about? Can you explain this Trinity stuff to me?"

When I heard that I realized that although this is the deepest and most distinctive truth of Christianity, it's one I've neglected to some extent in my preaching. After all, the doctrine of the Trinity intimidating to preach about. How can you explain the inexplicable? How can you preach on the imponderable?

Well, while I was thinking about these things, I had to take a quick trip to Orlando for a meeting. On my way back from the hotel to the airport I wanted to see if I could find a way of witnessing to my taxi driver. But just as I started, I found out he was already a Christian and he started witnessing to me. He was from the Caribbean. He said he grew up in church, was converted in childhood, and was now active in his church in Orlando.

So I asked him, "Can you explain this Trinity stuff to me? What do Christians mean when they talk about the Trinity?" My young taxi driver started preaching and stabbing the air with his finger and you would have thought he was in the pulpit. He said, "There is one God and it is the Father and He had a Son, who is Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God." He kept emphasizing these sentences over and over, but it became obvious that this young man who claimed to have been a Christian all his life did not have a clear understanding of the Trinity.

"Yes," I asked him, "but is Jesus God? And if Jesus is God how can the Father be God? And what about the Holy Spirit?" I asked questions like that to challenge him. Every time I would ask a question, he'd go into his preaching mode and say: "There is one God and it is the Father and He had a Son, who is Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God." But he never came close to explaining the Trinity.

Well, this young man is not alone. I think a lot of Christians have an inadequate understanding of the subject of the Trinity. Truth be told, as I've studied the subject in preparing for these messages, I was surprised at how much I learned that I had never fully realized before.

And so for the next several weeks I'd like to preach a doctrinal series of sermons on this subject. When I say doctrinal series, that means these messages will be theological and explanatory in nature, but it does not mean that this is just an academic series of studies. One of the things that surprised me most is how the reality of the Tri-unity of God reverberates through the entire created order. I'll touch on that at the end of today's message and will discuss it more during these series of messages.

But today, to keep things simple, I have the traditional three points and a poem.

1. The Trinity is the Most Unique Aspect of Christian Truth

First, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most unique aspect of Christian truth. Dr. Henry Morris calls it “undoubtedly the most distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith.” (“The Wonderful Truth of the Trinity,” by Henry Morris at <http://www.irc.org/article/2494>.) This is the doctrine more than any other that sets Christianity apart from all other religions, faith systems, sects, cults, and philosophies.

- Judaism believes that there is one God who exists as one person or one center of consciousness—Jehovah or Yahweh.
- Islam believes that there is one God who exists as one person or one center of consciousness—Allah. One of the chief points at which Muslims attack Christianity concerns our belief in the Trinity.
- The Unitarians believe there is one God who exists as one person, which is why they are called Unitarians. (Actually, however, most of them don’t even believe that anymore).
- The Mormons believe that there are many Gods, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate Gods among these many Gods.
- The Jehovah Witnesses believe that Jehovah is God but that Jesus isn’t.
- Buddhism doesn’t believe there is a god at all, though in some ways Buddhism can be called pantheistic (believing in there is a god-force that is sort of everywhere).
- Many of the eastern religions, including Hinduism, are pantheistic or polytheistic.
- Atheism, of course, doesn’t even believe there is a god at all.

Christians are the only people in the world who believe there is one God who eternally exists in Three Persons. It is the truth that distinguishes us from everyone else in on earth. The frightening thing is that in some quarters, this great historic, biblical truth is being thrown overboard.

- There’s a growing movement within the American church known as Oneness Pentecostalism that denies the doctrine of the Trinity. They actually believe a form of modalism, which I’ll explain later.
- One of the most prominent names associated with Oneness Pentecostalism is Bishop T. D. Jakes, who is the pastor of The Potter’s House in Dallas, one of the fastest growing mega-churches in America. I remember seeing him on the cover of Time Magazine several years ago, and the caption said that he was the next Billy Graham. But from what I’ve read Bishop Jakes does not hold to the historic and biblical doctrine of the Trinity, that there is one God who eternally exists in three persons. He believes instead in a form of modalism, which, again, I’ll explain later.
- A more recent name in the news is that of Gwen Shamblin, who established the popular Weighdown Workshop and the founder of a large church down in Brentwood, Tennessee. She has also rejected the historical and biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

The Bible tells us that we must defend the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints, and the battleground today is with the historic and biblical doctrine of the Trinity, which is the one truth that makes Christianity absolutely unique among the religions and faith-systems and cults and sects of this world.

2. The Trinity is Easy to State

Second, the doctrine of the Trinity is easy to state. Here it is: There is One God who eternally exists in Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is One God who eternally exists in Three Persons, or in Three Centers of Consciousness.

Let’s look at the Biblical support for this.

First, the Bible everywhere affirms that there is one God and only one God.

- Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one—Deuteronomy 6:4. Jesus affirmed and quoted this Old Testament passage in Mark 12.
- The Lord is God and that there is no other—1 Kings 8:60
- I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from Me there is no God—Isaiah 45:5
- There is only one God—Romans 3:30
- We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one—1 Corinthians 8:4-6
- You believe that there is one God! Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder—James 1:19

Second, the Bible teaches that this one God eternally exists in three persons. I can illustrate this by looking at the very beginning and at the very ending of Jesus’ ministry as it’s recorded in the book of Matthew. The ministry of our Lord had a very definite

commencement. It was His baptism. Look at what Matthew says in chapter 3, verses 16. You've heard of John 3:16. Well, look at Matthew 3:16:

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

Notice the presence of the entire Godhead in this passage. The Son was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven, and the Spirit descended like a dove.

Now turn to the very end of Matthew's Gospel. The very last paragraph, just before Jesus ascended into heaven, is known as the Great Commissions. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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" (Matthew 28:18-19).

Jesus opened and concluded His ministry with the Trinity, and notice in the baptism formula that He gave us, He didn't command us to be instructed in the names (plural) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—but in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity doesn't mean that there are three Gods, or that there is one God in three roles or forms or modes. But that there is one God who eternally exists in Three Persons: God in three Persons, Blessed Trinity.

Now, this is a good place to bring up the whole subject of modalism. Very likely this is a new term for you, but just think of the word "mode." The word "mode" means "form." We talk about different modes of transportation, and we're talking about forms of transportation. Do you drive your car to work or take the train? What mode or form of transportation do you use?

Well, modalists believe that there is one God who eternally exists in one person but who reveals Himself in three different modes or roles or forms. This is a heresy that goes all the way back to the 3rd century and to a person named Sabellius, who was a priest who probably lived in Rome around the year AD 200. He taught that there was one indivisible God who does not eternally exist in Three Persons but who reveals himself in three different modes. So this heresy is called Sabellianism or modalism.

Here's one example of what a modalist might say. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself as God the Father; but in the Gospels, God revealed Himself in the form of Jesus Christ the Son. At the Day of Pentecost, God revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit. So there is one God who eternally exists as one person, but He reveals Himself in various modes or forms or pictures or relationships to meet the needs or exigencies of the times.

Now, it is very easy to slip into modalism when you try to explain the Trinity, and I myself have fallen into that trap. Someone came up to me recently—I don't remember who it was—but he said to me: "Some time ago (I hope it was a long time ago; in fact, I'm not sure it was really me but it could have been), you really helped me understand the Trinity. You said something to this effect: 'I am one human being, but I have different roles. I am a husband. I am a father. I am a pastor. In the same way, God is one God but He occupies three different roles.'"

Hopefully that person had me confused with someone else, because that explanation is classic, heretical Sabellianism or modalism. We do not have a God who has revealed Himself in three different ways; we have One God who actually exists in Three Persons, Three different centers of consciousness—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I might be a husband and a father and a pastor, but I am still one person with one center of consciousness just fulfilling different roles in life. I have not been cloned and I am not three persons. God is not just filling various roles. He is not one God in three different forms. He is actually one God who eternally exists in three persons.

Incidentally, most of the other analogies we use are modalistic, too. For example, have you ever heard someone say, "The Trinity is like water. It can exist as liquid, ice, or vapor"? Yes, but that drop of water does not exist as liquid, ice, and vapor at the same time. It may pass from one form to another, but it is not liquid, ice, and vapor simultaneously.

Now, some people say: "This is illogical. This is crazy. This doesn't make sense." But you cannot say that with intellectual credibility. The doctrine of the Trinity is not illogical. It may be wonderful and mysterious and transcendent and supernatural. But it is not illogical. That is, it does not violate the law of non-contradiction.

If we say that there was one God and three Gods at the same time and in the same relationship, those two statements would cancel

each other out, contradict each other, and be illogical. If we said that God was one person and three persons at the same time and in the same relationship—that, too, would be illogical. But to say that there is one God who eternally exists in three persons might be mysterious, but it is not self-contradicting or illogical.

So, like all of God's truth, the historic and orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity is simple and easy to state: There is one God who eternally exists in Three Persons. It is so simple to state, in fact, that over the centuries a particular illustration has been used to portray it. It's a triangle within a circle. The circle represents the unity or oneness of God, but the three corners of the triangle represent the Three Members of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Spirit is God. Yet the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. One. They are separate and distinguishable persons—one God who eternally exists in Three Persons.

As the old song says: "God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity."

3. The Trinity is Impossible to Understand

Third, this truth is easy to state but impossible to understand. And that's one of the reasons I'm convinced that it's true.

If we could comprehend the infinite and ethereal being of God and pack Him up within our soggy brains, He would not be eternal, illimitable, and transcendent. If we could remove the "mystery" of God, He would not be God after all. The theologian Wayne Grudem wrote: "It is spiritually healthy for us to acknowledge openly that God's very being is far greater than we can ever comprehend.

The theologian Luis Berkhof wrote: "The Trinity is a mystery... (We) cannot comprehend it and make it intelligible... in its essential nature."

Dr. Henry Morris says, "We cannot really comprehend this with our minds, but we can believe it and rejoice with our hearts." ("The Wonderful Truth of the Trinity," by Henry Morris at <http://www.irc.org/article/2494>.)

It fact, it is brilliant. No human being would have come up with this idea. In all the eons of human history, in the records of ancient mythologies and legends, in the formation of major religions and deviant cults, in all the philosophies that have ever been articulated—no one, no human being, has ever come up with such an idea. It is beyond human imagination. It is a revealed truth from the realms of heaven shown to us in Scripture alone.

And yet...

And yet, if we look carefully at the creation, we can see reverberations of the Trinity everywhere. The very nature of the Trinity is reflected in all reality. It's reflected in our forms and functions and attitudes and actions. It's reflected in the very nature of the cosmos and the very nature of the church.

For example, the reality of the Triune God established the pattern we see throughout all the creation as it relates to the entire actuality of unity with diversity.

What do you have in the Trinity? You have unity in diversity. There is one God, and that one God is one in nature, one in essence. God is union and God is united and God is one. Yet there is diversity within the Trinity. The Father is different from the Son, and the Son is different from Spirit, and the Spirit is different from the Father. Unity with diversity.

Now, look at the creation. The nature of God is reflected in what He has created. Last week, I was with friends in West Virginia who had a new puppy. It was a little white Maltese, and it ran around like a living cotton ball. And I thought of how similar that Maltese is to a Great Dane. They both have four legs and they both think like a dog and they both bark and they both like to take their tongues and lick your skin and they can both bite. Yet how different they are.

Look at the stars. As we peer upward into the heaven, they all look alike—tiny twinkling distant lights against the black velvet of space. And each one is alike, yet each one is different.

Look at your garden full of different vegetables or your orchard with different kinds of trees bearing fruits.

Look at human beings. Most of us have two legs and two eyes and two ears and we tend to walk upright and speak intelligible language and have various emotions; and yet how different we all are from one another.

What if we were all the same? What if we looked alike and thought alike and dressed alike and talked alike? But what does Genesis 1:26 say? “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’” That verse has very many implications, but one of them is this—unity with diversity. Just as God is One and yet Three, so we are one and yet many.

And look at the church. Let me show you what Paul has to say about this in Ephesians 4:

As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all.

There’s the unity. There is one God, and so His creation, His people, and His church is one—united, one body even as there is one God. The unity of the church reflects the very intrinsic, eternal unity of God.

But unity does not mean monotony. There is diversity:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says; “When He ascended on High, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “He ascended” mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure and fullness of Christ.

So there is one body but we have many different gifts and we are all different—yet we are one. And by the way, did you notice how the Trinity jumps out at you in this passage from Ephesians? There is one God and one Father who is over all. There is one Christ who bestows spiritual gifts on His church. And there is one Spirit who preserves the unity of the body.

Whenever you see the stars in the sky, the animals of the field, the vegetables in the garden, the people at church—realize God’s Triune nature is reflected in all of His creation. The universe is the way it is because God is the way He is. He is Three and yet One—One and yet Three. There is unity and there is diversity within the Godhead, and the creation reflects the Creator. Christianity is the only faith system in the world that understands and articulates this. It’s what makes the Christian faith unique. It’s easy to state but impossible to understand.

And that brings us to the poem:

Praise God from whom all blessing flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.