

“Kingdom People” – Week 29

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Disciples Make Disciples.”

Each of the gospels records the resurrection and its aftermath, but to complete our Kingdom People series, we will end with Matthew 28:16-20, which is often called the Great Commission. For three years, Jesus has had His disciples alongside Him, traveling together, and they have observed miracles, the dead raised, and now they are standing on a mountainside with Jesus Christ, a resurrected Savior. They went from hiding to hopeful. At one point, they were questioning their next steps without Jesus, but here in this moment they are given an authoritative command and instructions on what to do next, as are we as Christians today. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ, and because of this, all disciples of Jesus are to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe (to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard) all that Jesus has commanded (His word). The term “disciple(s)” appears over 70 times in the book of Matthew and over 260 times in the Gospel accounts. This conversation about being a disciple is important to us today because it was, and is, important to Jesus. Matthew 22:36-40 gives us the Great Commandment, ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” The Great Commandment tells us our purpose in life, to love the Lord, to ultimately give glory to Him, and to love others. The Great Commission tells us how to live that purpose out, by going and making disciples and teaching what Christ has commanded in His word. By claiming to be Christians we are claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ, disciples. If we follow Jesus, then we are also sent by Jesus to go and to make more disciples. This command has been given by Jesus with all authority. If that were the only reason it was given that would be enough, however, we don’t carry out this command on authority alone. We carry it out because He first loved us and because we love Him. Discipleship is not just a command to carry out, but is ultimately an act of love. Christ laid down His life and we are called to do the same in the lives of others through discipleship. To make disciples is not optional...there is no plan B regarding this and the command from Jesus Christ. The only question we each must answer is...“Who are you discipling?”

Scripture - Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Key Terms – “Disciple”

Disciple: Mathēteuō (math-ay-tee-yoo-o) - Strong’s: to become a pupil; to enroll as a scholar; a student. Thayer’s: to be a disciple of one is to follow his precepts and instructions.

Rich Fork Discipleship 101 definition: A student/follower of Jesus, who applies what they are learning from Christ to their own lives, and teaches others to do the same; disciples who make disciples.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 27:17; Matthew 22:36-40; Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 6:39-40; Acts 1:8; Roman 10:14-15; Colossians 1:28-29; 2 Timothy 1:6-14 & 2:1-2

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

If we were to rewind in our series Kingdom People, we would find the moments surrounding the birth and earliest days of Jesus Christ within the first two chapters. In chapter three, Jesus approaches a man named John for his baptism. In chapter four, we see that Satan tempts Jesus, and Jesus resists the temptation and refutes the devil. By the end of chapter four, we read: Matthew 4:17

Matthew 4:17 - "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." From this point forward there is a pattern that we see from Jesus throughout the rest of the book of Matthew, and in the other Gospel accounts, regarding His disciples. Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him and promises to make them "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

Jesus doesn't disciple from a distance. It is up close, personal, and life on life. The crowds heard the message and the incredible authoritative teaching of Jesus, but the disciples of Jesus experienced the heart moments with Jesus, the 12-to-1 moments, and the 3-to-1 moments with Jesus (Peter, James, John).

Disciples are not made at a distance. Jesus modeled this for us in the New Testament. The disciples watched Jesus up close, heard His teachings, and were challenged with His instructions, yet still wrestled with obedience.

Jesus intentionally trained his disciples. And not only did He teach them deeper truths more often, He also intentionally spent three years with this group of men.

Jesus intentionally lived in the presence of His disciples. Again, He wasn't at a distance from them, but lived life with them regularly and taught them as they walked through everyday life. Ultimately, He lived out what is known as the "shema" to His Disciples (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). "4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Jesus sent his disciples to make more disciples. This took place in His ministry when He was with them, but more importantly it is charged to them (and to us today as disciples) in what is known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20 - our passage for this week).

Matthew 28:16-20 was not a message preached to the masses, but to those closest to Jesus. These were the eleven (minus Judas Iscariot) who watched the miraculous feedings, heard the powerful teachings, and witnessed the religious leaders threatening Jesus. They were the eleven who saw Jesus leave the crowds and pray, weep when a friend died, and these were the ones who slept instead of praying with Jesus during a critical moment in his ministry. We also know that in this moment some doubted (vs. 17). The word doubted is not the word that we would use for unbelief, rather they were struggling to comprehend what they were witnessing!

Key Thoughts

These eleven had been discipled by Jesus and now they are being told:

- Authority is imparted to them by Jesus Christ
 - All authority in heaven and earth (vs. 18)
- The mission had been communicated by Jesus Christ.
 - Go therefore and make disciples (disciples make disciples) - (vs. 19)
- The measure of disciple-making was directed.
 - Baptize (vs. 19)
 - Teach the commands of Jesus (vs. 20)
 - Reproducing disciples (this was not a message for one generation, but for the future believers, including us.)
- The promise was given by Jesus Christ.
 - He is with them for eternity. (vs. 20)

Jesus was intentional in His training, calling, and living with His disciples and launching them into the world. Why do we repeat this message often? Because these verses, particularly, vs. 18-20, are at the heart of why we exist on this earth - to make disciples and give glory to God by doing so.

The reality is, we are making disciples every single day. We teach, lead, and live our lives in ways that encourage others to duplicate what we do and how we do it.

- Our children become followers of a particular team because we disciple them in that direction. (teach, lead, live)
- Those closest to us know our political opinions, our leanings toward wars, taxes, social agendas - we disciple/lead in these ways.
- Our spouses, our children, and our co-workers are becoming disciples of the media's influence through music, streaming services, and popularity because we are elevating these names and people above others. (teach, lead, live)

Disciple-making is happening all around us, through us, and to us, and unfortunately, it often leads us to follow things and/or beliefs that are unimportant and/or do not last (see list above).

For some reason, many of us view true disciple-making (teaching others to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ) as optional equipment, or a secondary plan or direction of the teachings of Jesus, but it was not, and is not.

Why, when Jesus modeled making disciples, lived to make disciples, and preached to go and make disciples, are we allowing disciple-making to feel like optional equipment in our relationship to Jesus Christ? Making disciples was not optional equipment to Jesus. It was not a "maybe" plan. It was a command and THE plan. There is no plan B here!

Key Thoughts

Why did the disciples take the stories of the life of Jesus that they experienced as eyewitnesses and write them down for future generations? Why would they risk their lives to continue communicating about a Messenger, a Messiah, and a Savior, even after being threatened, mocked, beaten, and experiencing hardship, because they trusted in Jesus? Why? Because disciple-making was modeled to them and lived in front of them by Jesus Himself! They saw that the message and hope of Jesus placed their Savior on a criminal's cross to pay for their sins, and they knew firsthand that this disciple-making calling was life or death. They had a relationship with Jesus and everything about it conveyed a sense of urgency.

When we say "life or death," we're embracing the reality that those of us who claim to have faith and hope in Jesus Christ have the answer to eternal life and a changed everyday life...

- If making disciples is a command of Jesus? And it is. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- If making disciples was modeled by Jesus? And it was.
- If making disciples was the mission of the early followers of Jesus? And it was.
- If we trust in the validity of scripture? And we do
- If we have embraced the good news of being a follower of Jesus by surrendering to Christ? And we have...

Then why are we so often making disciples of many other teachings in our lives, but not of the one truth that was commanded by Jesus? Why do we live our lives as if making disciples of Jesus is a suggestion, rather than a command? Two reasons: Relationship and urgency.

- Your relationship to Jesus Christ, empowers you to go and make disciples. Your relationship with the person determines the level of concern and action needed in the moment.
- The urgency with which you take action is led by the seriousness communicated to you about the person you love and care about and the urgency regarding what Christ has called you to.

Relationship: The Great Commission outlines...

- Jesus' Authority (WHY it matters)
- Jesus' Model (HOW it works)
- Jesus' Command (WHAT we do)

But we must remain connected to the relationship that matters the most - our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Relationally, if we are not growing deeper in love with the person and work of Jesus Christ, then why would we be compelled to share the hope of Jesus Christ with others?

If we want to grow in disciple-making, we must grow in our relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, in the work of Jesus Christ in scripture, and in how that impacts our daily lives. Kingdom People must continue to grow in their relationship with the person and work of Jesus.

Key Thoughts

Urgency: Our urgency is connected to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Relationally, we have been conditioned by the enemy that if we speak, teach, and live according to the teachings of Jesus, and it causes tension among those we love the most, then we should become silent. But this is not the model of the early believers. (2 Timothy 1:6-14)

Paul is imparting to this young minister Timothy: You have the message, you have the promises, you have the power, you have me as an example, so don't neglect the example that has been placed in you to share. We must continue to grow in boldness and our passion for the people God has placed into our lives.

Disciple making is not limited to a certain age group, it's not for certain people who have a lot of information, it is not limited to the years we call our active years, and it is not a command from Jesus to begin doing once you turn 18.

The command to "Go and Make Disciples" is one of authority, proximity, purpose, and prayer. "God has strategically placed us in the homes, jobs, churches, neighborhoods, and countries in which we live. He has given us divine connections and influence with people who can bless us and help further the Kingdom of God. We must step out in faith and make our voices heard for the Lord, knowing He will protect and deliver us."

Reflect & Respond

Who has discipled you in your walk with Jesus Christ? What impact did it have on you; on your family? What did it look like?

If you looked at your life and what you are most passionate about, what would you say you are most likely discipling the people around you to follow in? Is it Jesus Christ and His teachings or is it something else?

Read the definition of discipleship on page one of this guide. How are you doing at following? At learning? At applying what you are learning to your life? At teaching others to do the same?

- If you follow Jesus, you are sent by Jesus (you are a disciple). The only question is - Who are you discipling?
- Identify 1-3 people - Who has God already placed in your life that you could be discipling or mentoring. Evaluate what you are discipling them to be, the direction you are leading them.
 - Share your GRACE story with them - How did you Give your life to Christ? How do you spend Real time with God? How are you Acting in obedience? How are you Committed to community? How are you Engaging your world?
 - Pray, read and study scripture together. Help them know how you spend real time with Jesus and His word. Walk in obedience to the word, live in community, and engage the world around you together.
 - Invite them into your life to do life together intentionally and on purpose regarding the call to follow Christ, study His word, pray, and teach others to do the same. Disciple them!