

Matthew 28:18-20, Go! Go Week 2025, 4/27/25

C101 Reminder

If you were 15-45 at the turn of the millennium, you remember the original social media place to be- **MySpace**. Founded in 2003 by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe. It's hard to fathom now, but by 2006, MySpace was the most visited website in the U.S., even surpassing Google. It had 100+ million users. But as they grew they began chasing money through getting lots of advertisers on the platform, loading it with banners and pop-ups which slowed down the site and made for a frustrating user experience, they started adding more and more features- MySpace tried to be everything — music platform, media hub, blog, social network — but didn't do any one thing *really* well. Less than a decade after their launch they had to lay off 500 employees, the company is basically an internet graveyard now. The Former CEO admitted, "We forgot the mission. We tried to do too many things at once... We lost focus." They drifted from making the main thing the main thing. MySpace is a cautionary tale about mission drift.

Mission drift is the tendency to lose focus, to functionally make other things the main thing more than the mission, maybe even good and important things but not the main thing. Mission drift can happen in your marriage and family when you wake up one day and say, how did we get here?

Mission drift can and has certainly happened in Jesus' church. It happens when a church makes fellowship, preferences, and comfort among its members more important than the mission, inevitably it will turn into a Christian Country Club for insiders and lose its power to reach people. It happens when a church makes cultural relevance more important than the mission, and it can start to drift into changing its theological and moral beliefs to match the shifting-sands of the culture. When churches get away from their mission, within a few decades much like MySpace they drift into impotence, ineffectiveness, possibly even death.

This is why it's so critical for us to have the mission of the church so clear in our collective minds and hearts. Today we want to learn two lessons about the **Mission of the Church- What it is? And how do we make it the main thing?** What is the mission of the church? Well it comes directly from our commander and chief, the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. After his crucifixion and resurrection which we celebrated last week, and just before his ascension to heaven, Jesus gave us our marching orders, which the church calls the Great Commission. Matthew 28, the very last words of Matthew's gospel. **18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

19 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,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The main verb in Jesus' command is "Make Disciples." What does that mean? A disciple in Jewish culture followed their teacher (rabbi) to learn both the rabbi's teachings and his life. It was said that the highest compliment you could give a disciple was to say, "The dust of your rabbi is all over you."¹ You were following his path so closely that whatever your rabbi stepped in splashed up on you! A disciple did not merely want to know what his master knew, but do what his master did.

Notice, however, that the mission is not to make disciples of us. It's not to make disciples of Pastor Nate, or one of our great teachers here like Don Kugelberg, or your favorite podcaster... It's disciples of Jesus! He's the only way, truth, and life worthy of us to follow so closely that we get his dust all over us.

As we begin to see the church live out this mission of making disciples in the book of Acts, the verb "make disciples" is used to describe both **evangelism**—that is, helping someone come to know Jesus, as well as what we might call **discipleship training**, helping them in the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus—which takes a lifetime.

Here's the super important implication not to miss. Christians are by the nature of our calling by our Master Jesus, disciples who are on the mission of making disciples in one way or another. A non-reproducing Christian is a contradiction. Like hot ice. In Jesus' first calling of his disciples he said, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of people." Which means if you're really following Jesus, he's making you into that.

It means that every church, by the nature of our calling, is on a mission to be a disciple making church through evangelism and training. A church that isn't reproducing disciples, that's just a country club, or a place to entertain people, or a place to help people feel better about themselves is a contradiction.

Robert Coleman in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* the goal of the The Great Commission it is "to 'make disciples' —to build men and women like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ

that they not only followed Jesus themselves, but led others to follow him, too.

The criteria upon which any church should measure its success is not how many new names

are added to the roll nor how much the budget is increased, but rather

how many Christians are actively winning souls and training them to win the multitudes."

This is where we get our BVC Mission- **To introduce people to Jesus Christ and help them follow him.** (Have the congregation repeat it). Everything we do as a church, in our ministries and

¹ Ray Vander Laan quoted by J.D. Greear

programs, what we do on a Sunday and when we scatter in small groups, our On THE MOVE building renovation project, everything strives to accomplish this mission Jesus has given us here in the Brandywine Valley. Our discipleship classes, ministries, programs are either ministries designed to win souls, a training ground to send disciples out...or both. We are calling that process Resilient Discipleship, and as we move into the fall you will hear more about our development of Resilient Discipleship at Brandywine.

So, what is the mission- making disciples of Jesus. **And how do we make it the main thing?** As we've seen, discipleship starts with evangelism- introducing people to Jesus Christ. And to learn how to do that, we need to look at the times the church historically has done this best, where the gospel exploded and changed the culture and the world, to see what we can learn- let me just briefly focus on two of the most significant eras of the church- the church of the first 3 centuries, and the church of the Great Awakening of the 18th and 19th century.

In his landmark book *Destroyer of the Gods*, Larry Hurtado points out what made the first three centuries so effective. A few conclusions- **A clear message- Jesus is Lord** (not Caesar), unwavering, even if it cost them their lives, and **A life of servanthood**- putting others as more important than themselves. They prioritize building loving, trustworthy relationships with people in their community. Serving people in need that others neglected, praying for others with genuine concern, showing hospitality even to strangers, taking in orphans and abandoned children and caring for widows. When the great epidemics hit the urban areas of the Greco-Roman world, everyone fled the cities, the Christians stayed and took care of the sick and the poor and old, sometimes to their own detriment. Emperor Julian the Apostate in the 4th century complained that Christians were putting pagan Romans to shame by their charitable acts. He wrote: **"These impious Christians not only feed their own poor, but ours also; welcoming them into their love."**

Whilst the pagan priests neglect the poor, the hated Christians devote themselves to works of charity." This is what I call demonstration and declaration. And as they demonstrated the gospel through loving deeds of service, they declared the truth of the gospel that Jesus is Lord.

During the Great Awakening of the 18th and 19th centuries, in the backdrop of the moral decadence and social decay of Europe, the gospel reawakened through the ministry of people like George Whitefield who served the poor coal miners in Kingswood, England that the establishment neglected, and fed them on the hillsides. As hundreds began coming, he preached the gospel, and as the story goes, they listened, and the Spirit of God moved powerfully, tears streamed down their cheeks, leaving visible white streaks on their faces covered with black coal dust. When Whitefield came to the American Colonies in the mid 1700s, he and the church awakened in early America. The church started orphanages and fed the poor, started hospitals and centers of education for those who didn't have access everywhere they went.

One of the great missionaries of the Great Awakening, David Livingstone, said **"The Gospel does not ask for bare belief — it demands the loving heart, the helping hand, the lifted burden."**

We should not be surprised because disciples do what Jesus did. Notice how Jesus describes his ministry: *Luke 4 ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹

Notice the declaration of the good news was accompanied by the demonstration of loving deeds. And this is the pattern everywhere Jesus went. He preached and taught, but he also brought physical relief to the sick, he served the poor, he spent time among people who were the most under-resourced showing mercy and giving freedom. He preached on the mountain but also fed the 5000. *"But the pattern of the kingdom that was revealed through those signs must continue in the church.*

We cannot be faithful to the words of Jesus if our deeds do not reflect the compassion of his ministry.

Kingdom evangelism is therefore holistic as it transmits by word and deed the promise of Christ for body and soul." -Jonathan Edwards

The truth of the Gospel is declared. And the credibility of the Gospel is demonstrated through loving deeds. This is our methodology as a church. This is what **Go Week** is all about. It's a catalyst event to instill these core discipleship values in our church. Because Jesus has not saved us to sit and soak as Christians, but to send us as disciples who make disciples. Let us remind you what we are doing this week and why we are doing it. **[Video]**. Go Week in 2023, we had about 200 people go out, this year we are so far at _____.

1. Awana/VBS/Students/Young Adults
2. Brandywine Partner organizations: ESL, No Sew Blankets, Broken Beginnings, Urban Promise, Sunday Breakfast Mission, Foster Well
3. Outdoor Community projects: Brandywine Zoo, Newlin Grist Mill, Brandywine Creek State Park, Chester Heights Camp Meeting, Burton-Brown
4. Community Non-Profits: Ronald McDonald House, Hygiene Packing Kits, Food Bank, Cornerstone Adult Community Center, Good Neighbors Home Repair.
5. Other: anything we didn't mention, special project with your small group or family, etc.

And it's not too late! You can sign up today! **[Go Week Slide]** So as we GO this week. Let me give you some practical encouragements for Go Week.

1. God sees. Some of you might feel like no one is seeing, or wonder if you are making any difference as you serve this week. Ultimately know that God sees. Everything we do is ultimately for an audience of one. Leave the results to Him.

2. You are making an impact. You are restocking vital supplies for our ministry partners, you are accomplishing much needed cleaning/renovation projects that lean staff and volunteer teams can't get to. Through serving people, you are lifting people up that many overlook, demonstrating that they are seen and loved by us and by God. You giving a much needed shot of encouragement in the arm of the volunteer and staff teams that are at these locations each day.

3. Serve with the mindset of Christ. We do not say, "Look at us, we are doing these good things." We don't go expecting to be the center of attention, or to have everything go exactly the way we want. We are there to be servants. *Philippians 2 **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

4. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel. There are people that will be serving alongside us who may not know the gospel. Get to know them, ask them about their spiritual background. Let them know why you are doing what you are doing, tell them how you came to Christ, ask them to come to church, or a church event with you.

5. Be open to what the Spirit has next. Don't go with a check off the box perspective. *Ephesians 2:10 **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*** Pay attention to who God has you serving next to, maybe it is a relationship he wants you to pursue for discipleship, community. Or it's the organization you are with that he wants you to begin serving at more regularly. Or maybe it's not the organization, but the Spirit inspires you to help with a particular need.

Henry Blackaby once said, **"Watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work."**

Me~ when I was 18 I would have said the mission of my life, where I tap real meaning was...What else will fill you with joy and peace and deep meaning other than doing the Lord's work. Cars, boats, beach houses, vacations, a fat portfolio, climbing the ladder, having all the latest fashion...none of it can hold a candle to being on mission with God!

So, may we never drift from the Mission of introducing people to Jesus Christ and helping them follow him. Let's pray for Go Week.