

How You Can Help Fulfill the Great Commission

by Bill Bright

The Great Commission is the greatest plan ever given to man, and every believer in Christ must become more interested in making disciples than in getting decisions.

Duration: 33:59

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Topics: "Great Commission"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of aggressive evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission. He compares the power of mass media in spreading the news of the moon landing to the power of God in reaching people with the message of the gospel. The speaker encourages Christians to develop a personal strategy for evangelism, claiming their relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow students, and business associates for Christ through prayer and presenting His claims to them. He highlights the pressing problems of the world, such as population explosion, pollution, crime, and moral decay, and asserts that the gospel holds the answers to these issues. The speaker concludes by reminding Christians of the global strategy given by Jesus in the Great Commission, urging them to go and make disciples of all nations.

Transcript

Campus Crusade for Christ International is an interdenominational Christian movement committed to helping fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord in this generation. Working as a cooperative arm of the Church and with other Christian organizations, our purpose is to help share the gospel throughout the world by discipling men from every nation. Here is Dr. Bill Bright, President and Founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, speaking on how to help fulfill the Great Commission.

This lecture is number seven in a series of nine transferable concepts, especially prepared to explain how to experience and share the abundant life in Christ. You may wish to share this series with your friends for individual and group study. We live today in a world of rapid and radical change.

Men's hearts are filled with fear and dread, frustration and despair. Man cannot seem to cope with his pressing problems. The population explosion, the pollution of the environment, the rising tide of crime and violence, the drug and sex-oriented youth rebellion, urban sprawl, racial tension, and widespread political,

social, and moral decay.

World leaders themselves are pessimistic, fearing that some madman will push the button and incinerate mankind. But oh, what an hour for Christians to become involved in what could well become the greatest spiritual harvest since Pentecost. This is the hour for which Christians were born, for men's hearts are open to the gospel as they seldom have been before in all of history.

And it is in the simple gospel that the basic answers to man's problems are revealed. On a mountain in Galilee, our risen Lord gave his disciples a global strategy which is known as the Great Commission. I have been given all authority in heaven and earth, he said.

Therefore, go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I've given you, and be sure of that I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Christ's Great Commission is the greatest plan ever given to man, by the greatest power ever revealed, and with the greatest promise ever recorded.

Christ's Great Commission involves not merely the eleven disciples to whom he originally gave it, but every believer in Christ. Therefore, every Christian should be vitally and continuously involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. How to help fulfill the Great Commission is the positive and practical strategy which I wish to discuss with you, answering several basic questions.

First, who? Who gave the Great Commission, and to whom was it given? Who, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, would have the audacity to say, I have been given all authority in heaven and earth? The Lord Jesus is the unique Son of God. His miraculous birth, sinless life, vicarious death, and glorious resurrection are the pivotal points of human history. Historian Philip Schaff wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon.

Without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars of the centuries combined. Without the eloquence of the school, he spoke words of life such as were never spoken before, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet. Without writing a single line, he has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, works of art, learned volumes, and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern time.

Born in a manger, crucified as a malefactor, he controls the destinies of the civilized world and rules a spiritual empire that encircles the globe. Christ changes men and nations. Wherever his message has gone, men have been transformed.

The great missionary statesman, Dr. Samuel Swamer, said, The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ not only converts individuals, but changes society. Christ's ability to change men is based solely on the fact of who he is. To the Colossians, Paul wrote, Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God.

He existed before God made anything at all, and in fact, Christ himself is the creator who made everything in heaven and earth. In him lie hidden all the mighty untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ there is all of God in a human body, so you have everything when you have Christ.

He is the highest ruler with authority over every other power. Now to whom was the Great Commission given? It was given to the eleven disciples, but it was also given to all believers in Christ throughout the

centuries. Shortly after Jesus gave the Great Commission, the disciples, in obedience to his command, began to preach the dynamic message of God's love and forgiveness in a living Christ.

Wherever they went, riot and revival followed. Rome trembled, tottered, and finally tumbled, and the gospel triumphed. But the men who proclaimed the message of forgiveness through the living Christ with such boldness and blessing were the same men who before Pentecost had denied and deserted the Lord.

After Pentecost, however, they went out to proclaim the gospel at the cost of their lives, and every single one of the apostles died a martyr's death except John, who died in exile after being boiled in oil. Obviously, our Lord had changed these craven cowards into courageous crusaders by his Holy Spirit. Somehow we've gotten the idea that the early Christians were different from us, that they possessed a quality of life to which we cannot attain.

But the people to whom Jesus gave this Great Commission were common, ordinary, working people plagued with the same weaknesses that we have. The only difference between them and us is the two outstanding things that happened to them. First, they had come to have complete confidence in a resurrected Lord triumphant over death, one who lived within them and was coming again to reign on this earth.

Second, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Today, if Christians were as completely committed to our resurrected and returning Lord and were controlled and empowered by his Spirit, we would turn our world upside down and we would experience as they experienced a 20th century spiritual revolution. Do you really want to help change the world in which you live? You can by helping to fulfill our Lord's command to take the good news of the gospel to all men everywhere.

Now let us consider the question, what? What is the Great Commission? For many years I've signed my letters, yours for fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation. Considering the magnitude of the task, with a world population of almost four billion people in 210 countries and protectorates, plus more than 4,000 tribes, there are those who ridicule the possibility of the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation. I've been reminded repeatedly that the Great Commission has not been fulfilled since the first century, if then, and is not likely to be fulfilled in our generation either.

But to those who ridicule any serious systematic attempt to fulfill the Great Commission, I would merely cite two modern-day man-made programs that demonstrate the plausibility and the possibility of Christians reaching the entire world for Christ in our generation. For example, the United States Space Program designed and executed a plan to put man on the moon within nine years from the drawing board stage. Mass media was able to present this message to more than one-fourth of the world's population who saw the first two men land on the moon.

I would ask you, is God four times more powerful than the men who through mass media were able to present this news to the world? Further, it is estimated that one-eighth of the world's population views a popular television series each week. I would ask you, is God eight times more powerful than the producers of that program? Part of the pessimism related to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation is the result of spiritual ignorance concerning what is actually involved. Now let us consider exactly what do we mean by the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation.

In the 28th chapter of Matthew, the Lord Jesus Christ gave the command, Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. In John and Mark and other passages, we are admonished to share the gospel

with everyone. This does not mean that every person will hear the gospel in our generation, for there are some who because of physical and mental difficulties or other deficiencies will not be able to hear or comprehend the gospel.

But it does mean that we should seek to make a prayerful, intelligent presentation of the gospel to every living person who is capable of comprehending and leave the results to God. It does not mean that the majority who hear the gospel will become Christians, but it does mean that they will at least have a chance to hear and believe. For many, one presentation of the gospel is all that is necessary.

As Paul reported concerning the Christians in chapter 1, verse 6, the same good news that came to you is going out all over the world and changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard it and understood about God's great kindness to sinners. When Christ gave the command to go and make disciples of all nations, he was saying, in essence, we are to make enough disciples so that they will be able to communicate the gospel to every living person in every community, every city, every state or province, and in each of the nations, so that everybody will have an opportunity to hear the good news. Christ never commissioned us to Christianize all nations.

He called us to evangelize and disciple them. Our responsibility is to preach and teach, to share Christ's dynamic gospel. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to make our witness effective.

With the responsibility, however, Christ also gave us everything necessary for success, for he promised to go with us. Almost 200 years ago, when William Carey, the father of modern missions, began his pioneer ministry, only 25 percent of the nations of the earth had heard the gospel. Today, every nation in the world is receiving the gospel.

But even though there is a witness for Christ in every nation, the Great Commission is not fulfilled, and it will remain unfulfilled until there are sufficient disciples in every nation to totally saturate that nation with the gospel. We must become more interested in making disciples than we are in getting decisions, more interested in spiritual multiplication than we are in spiritual addition. Most Christians have never taken this command of our Lord seriously.

We have been playing a church while our world is in flames. We are like men and women who are straightening pictures on the walls of a burning building. We have been dealing with peripheral issues.

It is the hearts of men that need to be changed. The problems of evil in the world that threaten to engulf humanity can only be solved in Christ. But the only way Christ has of getting his message out is through his people, whom he has clearly commanded to go and tell the good news everywhere.

The next question is why. Why should we be so completely devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of his Great Commission? There are at least three good reasons. First, because Christ has commanded us to go.

Second, because men are lost without Christ. And third, because men everywhere are hungry for God. First, we must go because Christ has commanded us to go.

Athletes must obey the rules set down by their coach. Employees must obey the regulations of their employer. Soldiers must obey the orders of their commanding officer.

And Christians must obey the commands of their Lord. Our Lord has issued an order, a command, go. And no true believer can take our Lord's command lightly from the time we awaken each morning until we go to bed at night.

If we take our Lord seriously, we must dedicate ourselves, time, talent, and treasure to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Not out of a sense of legalistic duty, but out of a sense of loving debt, a sense of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. We want to obey him.

He has said go. And that is the only reason we need. Second, we must obey our Lord's command because men are lost without Christ.

Jesus said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. That may sound narrow, but that is what Jesus said.

For many years I've asked people all over the world if they have found God. Apart from those who've met Christ in a personal vital encounter, the answer is generally expressed in such terms as, I'm looking for God. I hope to find him, but I haven't found him yet.

No one will ever find God until he receives Christ. The word of God is emphatically clear on this point. We read in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, there is salvation in no one else.

Under all heaven, there is no other name for men to call upon to save them. Do you really believe that men without Christ are lost? A young man counseling with a famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, asked, Mr. Moody, do you think my parents really believe that I am lost? My father is the school superintendent of our church, but he has never talked to me about Christ. My mother teaches a Sunday school class, but she has never talked to me about Christ.

Do you really think they believe that I'm lost? Has it ever occurred to you that some of your family and friends, your neighbors and associates who do not know Christ, are spiritually lost according to the clear teaching of Christ himself? Third, we must obey our Lord's command to go, because men everywhere are hungry for God. Man's hunger for God has been demonstrated convincingly to me in thousands of ways since the beginning of the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ many years ago. As part of our training program at Arrowhead Springs and elsewhere around the world, we spend several hours each week in actual person-to-person evangelism in local communities, at the beaches, in public gatherings.

Hundreds often pray to receive Christ in a single afternoon. During one three-day Easter holiday in Mexico, for example, through the witness of 155 nationals and 25 of our Latin American staff, at least 17,000 people heard that they could have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and 1,245 of them prayed to receive Christ. Campus Crusade staff in India prayed that 5,000 students would receive Christ in a single year, and God answered with over 5,000 new believers.

During a period of approximately six months, four Campus Crusade athletic teams, two singing groups, and Andre Cole, a member of our staff, a magician's magician, presented the claims of Christ to 351,887 students in 629 appearances. More than 50,000 indicated that they had prayed to receive Christ as their Savior. The average Christian has been conditioned to think negatively about the non-Christian's response to the gospel.

This attitude prevails especially when seeking to reach students, intellectuals, and top executives or community leaders. Yet properly approached, the leaders are usually the easiest to reach for Christ. Yes,

men are hungry for God everywhere because the Spirit of God has created this hunger in their hearts and has prepared them to receive the message of God's love in Christ.

Now we come to the final question. How? Perhaps you're saying, I want to obey our Lord Jesus Christ by helping to fulfill the Great Commission, but where do I begin? How can the task be accomplished? This great task can be accomplished only as millions of Christians develop a personal strategy that ties in directly to Christ's global strategy. One Christian with a personal strategy focusing all of his efforts, his time, his talent, and treasure can magnify and multiply his fruitfulness beyond measure.

Let me explain what a personal strategy is all about. A personal strategy is a deliberate plan of action by an individual to accomplish a specific goal. Since the goal of every sincere believer should be to help fulfill the Great Commission, his personal plan should include evangelizing and discipling, or addition and multiplication.

When you personally introduce another person to Christ, that is spiritual addition. But when you disciple the new Christian and help him to win, disciple, and send out others who will do the same to still others, that is spiritual multiplication. The Apostle Paul specifically commended this principle to Timothy, his son in the faith, as stated in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 2. And he said this, the things which you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Beginning with only two persons and using this simple continuous cycle of discipling and spiritual multiplication, we could evangelize the entire world in only 32 subsequent steps. For two multiplied by itself 32 times equals the population of the world. Developing a personal strategy enables us to move forward in obedience to our Lord's command and to concentrate our energies on our primary calling of helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

Paul emphasized this in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 4. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Unless individual Christians develop a personal strategy, the fulfillment of the Great Commission will remain an unrealized dream. It all boils down to this easy equation.

Goal minus plan minus action equals dream. Goal plus plan plus action equals reality. But you may wonder how to develop a personal strategy.

Let us make some simple scriptural suggestions. First, commit yourself completely to Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Word exhorts us in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service or worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. When you surrender your life to God, you can trust Him as your loving Heavenly Father. There is no experience in life that compares with seeking first the kingdom of God, keeping Christ in control of our lives, doing what He calls us to do, and being instruments through whom He changes lives.

That is life at its highest and best. Second, pray in faith that God will guide you in developing your personal strategy. Ask God for effective strategy to reach your immediate area of influence for Christ.

Jesus is your perfect example. While on earth, he discussed every major decision and every turning point in his ministry with his Heavenly Father. As you pray, expect God to provide both the strategy and the

wisdom and strength to implement it.

Third, make a definite outline of the strategy God reveals in answer to your prayers. Make lists of specific people with whom you should share Christ. Consider specific groups in your life and develop a plan to reach them.

Use a calendar to develop specific appointments. Begin with your family. Remember that in your home, more than any other place, your life will be your testimony.

Plan how you can reach the people with whom you study and work. Seek out other Christians and ask them to join you in evangelizing your campus or your office. In your church, make yourself available to your pastor.

Encourage other members of your church to develop their own personal strategies. Invite your neighbors for an evangelistic coffee or tea or dessert or start a neighborhood evangelistic Bible study. Pray for the people to whom you plan to speak.

Then go to them. Share your faith as a way of life, talking about Christ as your dearest friend and the most important person in your life. As others receive Christ, begin to disciple them.

Involve them in the cycle of spiritual multiplication. Invite them to join you in an effort to saturate your entire community with the message of Christ. Utilize the mass media, radio, television, newspapers, magazines to reach every person possible with the good news.

Allow Christ to expand your faith as he reveals his strategy to you. Fourth, learn everything you can about how to accomplish your personal strategy. Thousands of students, laymen, and pastors take advantage of the training and materials available through this ministry to learn the basic techniques of winning men to Christ, building them in the faith, and sending them to the world with the message of God's love and forgiveness in Christ.

Leadership training institutes for college and high school students and lay and pastors institutes for evangelism for laymen and women and pastors offer both basic and advanced courses year-round. Through these training sessions and other audio-visual aids, you can learn of the worldwide strategy that has been implemented since the very beginning of this ministry. Working with other Christian organizations and local churches, our objectives in this ministry are to help saturate every country and tribe with the gospel, to help present Christ to every student of all high school and colleges in America, and also to the military and their dependents on bases around the world, to recruit and train leaders for all the 50 states, 224 metropolitan areas, 176,000 political precincts, and 700,000 neighborhoods of 100 families each average.

To accomplish these objectives, it is our desire to help train pastors and lay leaders for 33,000 way-of-life churches. It is our prayerful purpose to follow the same basic strategy in every country of the world. Not only will you be excited to see what has already been accomplished, but you will also be encouraged to improve and expand your own personal strategy.

The prayerful and practical participation of thousands, yes millions, of concerned Christians around the world will powerfully accelerate the worldwide strategy which has been continually gaining momentum through the year. Finally, give your continuing attention to aggressive evangelism. Take the initiative to help fulfill the Great Commission where you live.

Claim your relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow students, and business associates for Christ in prayer. Then present his claims to them. As you implement this personal strategy, think beyond your local goals to the worldwide goals for helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, you can proceed with complete confidence to plan your work and work your plan. In this changing and chaotic period of history, sincere thinking Christians dare not be satisfied with the status quo or business as usual. Now, whoever you are, wherever you are, if you are available, God will use you to help change this world.

Changed men in sufficient numbers equal a changed world. Only Jesus Christ can change men, and he can only do it through you and others like you, and he wants to start now. In 1903, Lenin started communism with 17 people.

By 1917, he was able to take over Russia with only 40,000 followers. Today, communism controls over one-third of the world's population, and most of the rest of the world has been greatly influenced and infiltrated. Why are they taking the world? Because of their dedication.

For example, a young communist who broke his engagement wrote this letter to his fiancée explaining his decision. He said, we communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and ridiculed and fired from our jobs and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible.

We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We have been described as fanatics.

We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, the struggle for world communism. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and my mistress, my bread and meat.

I work at it in the daytime and I dream of it at night. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both guides and drives my life. I've already been in jail because of my convictions, and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

We must not only match their commitment, we must exceed it. God is looking for disciplined soldiers of the cross, completely committed Christians through whom he can accomplish mighty exploits for his kingdom. Dr. James Stewart, one of the most famous New Testament scholars of our time, has said, if we could but show the world that being committed to Christ is no tame humdrum sheltered monotony, but the most exciting thrilling adventure the human spirit can ever know, those who've been standing outside the church and looking askance at Christ will come crowding in to pay allegiance, and we might well expect the greatest revival since Pentecost.

I believe that. And to this end, we are praying that God will raise up five million spirit-filled soldiers for the Great Commission Army, committed to help fulfill the Great Commission in this generation by the target date of 1976. Jesus said, go and make disciples in all nations.

In order to make disciples, we must be disciples, for light begets light. The man who is committed to Christ, who understands how to walk in the spirit, is going to produce, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the same kind of Christian. Jesus said, if any man wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

He also said, anyone who wants to be my follower must love me far more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers or sisters. Yes, more than his own life. Otherwise, he cannot be my disciple.

For some, such a call to discipleship may sound too hard, but there are others like the famous missionary statesman C.T. Studd, founder of the World Evangelization Crusade, who said, if Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him. In a few moments, I'm going to ask you to do something that I've asked men and women around the world to do. I'm going to ask you to stand as an expression of your commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and your availability to help fulfill the Great Commission in this generation.

In behalf of our Lord and in his name, we are asking men and women everywhere to put aside their personal ambitions, their selfish desires, their own pleasures, and to say with the Apostle Paul, I am a slave of Jesus Christ and as an expression of my love for him and deep gratitude for all that he has done for me, I will give myself, my time, my talent, my treasure to him for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. For some, this may mean sacrifice. For some, it could well mean a martyr's death.

But can you think of a greater leader than the Lord Jesus Christ whom you would follow? A greater cause than his to which you would give yourself? Do you then as an expression of your love and gratitude to Christ for all that he has done for you, and as an act of obedience to his command, want to help fulfill the Great Commission in this generation? If it is your desire to so commit yourself, may I suggest that you stand right now as an expression of your commitment to Christ and your availability to help fulfill his command, and join with me in praying the following prayer, making it your very own. Will you stand if you mean it right now? Now pray this prayer with me. Dear Father in Heaven, I stand at attention.

I make myself totally available to you. I invite you to cleanse me, to empower me, to lead me, to inspire me, to teach me so that I might bring the greatest possible glory to your name. Enable me by your Holy Spirit to contribute my maximum to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation.

I pray in the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

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