

Producing Reproducing Disciples

by Roy Sommerville

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making disciples who are committed to living a life of obedience to Jesus Christ, and provides a clear outline of how to do so through conversion, obedience, and empowerment.

Duration: 36:57

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8, 2 Timothy 2:2

Topics: "Reproducing Disciples"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' core instructions for discipleship. These instructions are conversion, making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded. The speaker highlights that when we follow these instructions, things always work out. He also emphasizes that making biblical disciples is crucial for a worshiping church, a church that grows in maturity, and a church that is passionate about reaching the lost.

Transcript

This morning, I'd like to have us look at a very, very significant strategic passage in the Bible. There's a little outline in your program if you want to pull it out and follow along. And it's in Matthew chapter 28, and I'm just going to focus on a couple of words, more or less, in this passage.

And with the time we have left, I want us to talk about that. Adriana described for you how she became a follower of Christ, and I want to have us think about that for a few moments this morning. Let me just read for you just a part of one verse to get us started here in verse 19 of Matthew 28.

And here's what it says, "Go, therefore, and make disciples." And it's those last two words that I want to focus the bulk of what I want to say this morning on, make disciples. And I've given you seven sort of outline words there to fill in, and really, all of them, it's a very, very simple outline, and each of them is sort of an observation about those two words. It's a command, make disciples.

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to understand that. It's a command, make disciples. So let me make some observations about this command.

Number one, it's a very simple command, make disciples. It's not complicated. I didn't say it's easy.

I did say it's simple, simple to understand. I can remember the first time I discovered this passage very, very early in my Christian walk. I remember thinking when I saw that, make disciples, I thought, Ford

makes cars.

Apple makes iPhones and lots of other things that start with an I. Kerr's next door makes jelly beans. I worked in the shipyard, Harland and Wolfe Shipyard back in Belfast. Harland and Wolfe made ships.

Then when I came to Canada, I worked in a tool and die shop, and we made dies. And so I remember thinking when I saw this, oh, the church is in the manufacturing business. Make disciples.

So it's a very simple command, very easy to understand. Then secondly, it's an obligatory command. In other words, it's a compulsory command.

You might want to use that word instead of obligatory. R. Jocelyn tells me off for using words that are too big that even I probably don't understand what I'm saying, but it's a compulsory command. In other words, it's not a suggestion.

Any of you ever see the movie, A Few Good Men? I'm always a bit reluctant to use movie illustrations for fear that some of you may not have appreciated that particular movie, but Jack Nicholson was a colonel in that movie. There was a very dramatic interchange between Tom Cruise, the lawyer, and Jack Nicholson, the colonel. It all came down to the subject matter of an order.

Tom Cruise and his character bellowed at Jack Nicholson, the colonel, as the colonel said in the courtroom witness box. He said, did you give the order? That's the famous line in the movie. Did you issue the order? He asked that question five, six, seven times.

It became a defining scene in the movie. Did you issue the order? Because, of course, if Nicholson did issue the order, it would have to be carried out with no question, because when a colonel issues an order, it will always be carried out without question. It's never a suggestion.

Here, very clearly, our commander-in-chief has given this obligatory command, make disciples. So it's a compulsory command. Then thirdly, it's a comprehensive command.

In fact, it's all-encompassing. Its fulfillment encompasses everything the church is called to do. In other words, if the church properly understands these two words, the church fulfills everything that the New Testament commands the church to fulfill.

Make disciples. It's a comprehensive command. I remember when we were kids at Christmas time, my dad would take out the 500 Christmas lights and wrap them all around the tree, and then he would plug it in.

Of course, you know what happened when he plugged it in? Didn't light. Then he would have to take all the lights back off the tree again. I guess only in Ireland do we put the lights on the tree before checking whether they're going to light.

So he would take the lights all back off again, and then he would lay them out in a long line, and he would have it plugged in at the end, and none of the lights would work. Do you remember what? Well, you don't remember what my dad did, but do you know what my dad had to do? What did he have to do? He had to go, Gary. He had to check every single one of those 500 bulbs.

It always amazed me why Christmas lights were set up that way, and it was always the very last bulb on the line that was the faulty one. I don't know why my dad never checked that one first, because that was

always the... What's that, Gary? That's right. That's right.

But it would get all the way to the end, and then he would check that last one, and then whenever he fixed that faulty bulb, again, I'm asking you if you remember what... Of course. What happened? They all lit. Making disciples is a bit like that.

Get this right, and everything works, because this is a comprehensive command. Notice Jesus does not say, do worship. He does not say, do evangelism.

He does not say, do service. He does not say, do Bible studies. He does not say, do fellowship.

He does not even say, here's the number one task, glorify God. He says, make disciples. You make biblical disciples, and you will glorify the heavenly Father.

Make biblical disciples, you will have a worshiping church. You make biblical disciples, you will have people feeding on the Bible and growing to maturity. You make biblical disciples, and you will have a church full of people whose hearts break over the condition of a lost and broken world.

You will have people praying for their lost friends and sharing their faith with lost friends. Jesus is saying this is a comprehensive command. It embraces everything.

Make disciples. Then, fourthly, notice that it's a qualitative command. It's a qualitative command.

In other words, Jesus is not saying, go out and make just any old disciples. I mean, you understand that Jesus' disciples were not the only kind of disciples around in that culture. In fact, everybody had disciples.

The rabbis had disciples. They were called rabbinical disciples. Scholars, every scholar had disciples.

Every philosopher had disciples. Socrates had disciples. Jesus is not talking about make Socratic disciples or make rabbinic disciples or make scholarly disciples.

He's talking about a very, very, very, very specific quality of disciple. He's talking about Christ-following disciples. Notice he doesn't say make Christians.

He says make disciples. The word Christian in our day is such a vague term. President Obama, a couple of months ago, informed the world that America is not now, if it ever was, a Christian nation.

When I heard that, quite frankly, I said, whatever. Whatever. What is a Christian nation? A nation that used to close all of its shops on a Sunday? Is that what makes a Christian nation? The word Christian is such a broad term.

Nations are called Christian nations. What does that mean? Cities are called Christian cities. Jesus did not use the word Christian.

He used the word disciple, make disciples. In any event, the word Christian in the New Testament did mean disciple in the sense of which Jesus is using it here. That's very easily demonstrated in Acts chapter 11 verse 26.

It says, in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. So Christian and disciple in the New Testament meant the same thing. That's not true today.

People of all kinds of different understandings of what the word Christian means today. The Bible, New Testament, makes disciple and Christian synonymous. But the Bible does favor the name disciple over Christian.

The word Christian only appears three times in the New Testament. In fact, one of those three times, it's used by a pagan about Christians. So it might be that it was actually the pagan world that used the word Christian more than the Christian community.

The word Christian meant little Christs, and it could be that it was actually even a derisive term in the early church where the world would look at them and say, look at all those little Christs. But nevertheless, the New Testament does use the word Christian three times. On the other hand, the New Testament uses the word disciple 250 times.

So the New Testament definitely favors the word disciple. So when Jesus says, make disciples, he's not referring to just any old disciple. He's talking about a quality of disciple.

And he has spent three years defining what a quality disciple means, what a follower of Christ means. Jesus on many, many occasions describes and defines what he means by a follower of Jesus Christ, by a disciple of Jesus Christ. And look, 9 chapter verse 23, for example, Jesus says, unless a person denies himself, takes up his cross daily, and not meant to die daily, because that's what a cross meant.

In other words, to die to himself daily, he cannot be my disciple. Probably the most defining verse that defines a disciple of Jesus would be in Luke 14 verse 33, where he says, unless you renounce your old life, you cannot be my disciple. It's a very, very particular quality of disciple that Jesus is talking about when he says, make disciples.

We sing a little song. We don't sing it around here very often anymore, but I remember when I first got saved, we used to sing this little song all the time. I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.

The cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back, no turning back. Though none go with me, yet I will follow. That's pretty good theology.

That's the kind of disciple Jesus is talking about, make disciples. Jesus wasn't talking about disciples the way Obama was talking about a Christian nation. A world difference between those two words.

Jesus says, you want to be my disciple? You need to count the cost. Comes at a high cost. Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

When you bow the knee to me, you may experience relational conflict in your life and in your family. Your parents might object to your commitment to Christ. Your brother, your sister might object to your commitment to Christ.

If you follow me, you need to count the cost up front. Jesus said, if you are going to be my disciple, you need to follow my commandments. If you love me, John 14, 21, you will keep my commandments.

A disciple of Jesus Christ is a very particular disciple. It's not a Christian in the sense in which our culture understands the word Christian. The old way of life is gone.

Philippians chapter 2 says, we now have the absolute attitudes of Jesus Christ in our life. Somebody made the observation that disciples of Jesus are hip, H-I-P. They have humility, integrity, and purity.

I like that. When Jesus said, make disciples, it wasn't you decide what kind of disciple you want to be. There was a very, very specific quality to the kinds of disciples that Jesus had in mind.

The kind of disciple that Jesus had in mind was a person that Jesus promised, if you become my disciple, I promise I'll give you joy, unspeakable and full of glory. I'll fill your life with a profound joy. I'll also give you an inner peace that the world knows nothing about.

I'll also fill your life with fruitfulness. John 15, the Father's passion for our lives as disciples of Christ is that we bear fruit, and fruit that will last. That's the mark of a disciple.

Jesus says, if you've got a thirsty soul that is dissatisfied and parched, and you're longing for something, I'll give you living water that will quench that thirsty soul. I'll give you forgiveness. I'll give you purpose.

I'll give you the promise of heaven forever, and you never, ever need to fear death ever again, because I am the resurrection and the life, and whoever believes in me, though we die physically, will live again. That's the quality of discipleship that Jesus is talking about. Make disciples.

Number five, it's a reproductive command. It's a reproductive command. Now, I'm sure you're all familiar with reproduction.

When I was a kid, 10 or 11 years of age, our next door neighbor gave me a gerbil, and that was my education on the world of reproduction, because two weeks after she gave me that gerbil, that gerbil reproduced 15 babies, and my mother went hysterical when she saw these 15 baby gerbils, and I grew those baby gerbils to adulthood, which came very, very quickly, and before you know it, you know what those 15 baby gerbils did? They reproduced, and now we had armies of gerbils. Reproduction is a very simple concept. You all understand what reproduction means.

This is the kind of discipleship Jesus is talking about. Make reproductive disciples. It couldn't be anything else.

Had to be reproductive disciples. Consider this. Look back at verse 16.

Can somebody tell me how many disciples Jesus told this to? How many disciples did Jesus tell go into all the world and make disciples? How many? Eleven of them. That tells you that this had to mean reproduction. Figure this with me.

Track the math. If 11 disciples produced disciples that are not reproducing, even if those 11 disciples led one person to Christ every day for the rest of their life, where on earth would they ever get the time to be able to disciple all of those baby Christians? It's impossible. Mathematically, it's impossible, but beyond that, if it's not reproductive discipleship that Jesus has in mind, that would mean that when the 11 original disciples died, what would happen to discipleship? What would happen to make disciples if it's not reproductive? What happens when the original 11 die? Discipleship dies.

It has to mean reproductive because only reproductive discipleship can jump discipleship to the second generation. Furthermore, if it's not reproductive discipleship, none of you would have ever heard the gospel. It's because discipleship is reproductive that it got from that first generation of 11 disciples down

2,000 years to the day that somebody cared enough about you to share Christ with you and the gospel with you, and you bowed knee to Christ because of the action of reproductive discipleship.

You can't get biblical discipleship any other way than reproductive discipleship. You can only get reproductive discipleship if you have qualitative discipleship. The reason why the church is failing at reproductive discipleship is because it is failing at qualitative discipleship.

We are not producing biblical disciples, and that's why discipleship is not, by and large, in the North American church, is not reproducing. But it's very clear. Simple command.

Make disciples. Make reproductive disciples. Oh, my.

My time's gone. Number six, it's an explained command because all of this causes you to think, but yes, Roy, but how? Yes, but how? Yes, but how? Jesus explains it. It's a very simple command with very, very, very simple set of instructions.

I have to confess to you that I'm not great with instructions. We bought an Ikea cupboard a couple of years ago, and I brought it into the house, and Belinda was planning to help me to put this Ikea cupboard together. I have to confess to you, my way of doing things is very, very different than Belinda's way of doing things.

When I get an Ikea cupboard, it's all in pieces, right? I open up the box, and the first thing I do is I look for the biggest piece of wood in the box, and I try to figure out what piece of the cupboard that is. Then I figure out it's probably the base, so I set that over there, and then I look for the next couple of pieces because I figure they're probably the sides. I find the sides, at least what I think of the sides, and then I set those up roughly in the place where the sides of a cupboard would go.

Then I look for the top of the cupboard, and I pull out what I figure is the top, and then I set that on top of the base because that's going to be lifted up to make the cupboard. Then I look for the back, and then I look for the bolts, and I say, oh, yeah, there's a over here, here, here, and there. Then after about a half an hour, I'm totally confused, and I'm absolutely convinced that they have not put the right pieces of the Ikea cupboard inside that box.

I'm equally convinced that they have not drilled the right holes, and they have not given me the right size of bolts. I'm really ready to pack it all back up and take it back to Ikea. You know what Belinda's doing all this time? She's curled up in a corner reading the instructions like a book.

I mean, she's ready to go there for a couple of hours with a fire on, a nice cozy night just reading the instruction pamphlet like a book. She reads the welcome to Ikea. She reads that first page.

She reads sort of the introduction to how Ikea first got started in Canada. She reads all of that. I mean, she studies it.

She starts to memorize the instruction book. She wants to photocopy it and give me a copy of it. She wants to do little group studies to study the instruction book.

And then eventually says, she looks at me, and she'll say, you ready to do it right? And I've got no other choice but to follow her lead. And the amazing thing is is when I do what she tells me to do, I hate to admit this, but it always works out, always works out. Funny how that is when you follow the instructions.

Now, Jesus gives some very, very simple instructions on how to do this. They're what I call the core instructions, the core of discipleship, C-O-R-E. Here they are.

Number one, conversion. Conversion. Look what Jesus says as part of the instruction manual.

Go into all the world, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So there's the first instruction. Conversions.

Do evangelism. Share the gospel. Discipleship without evangelism is like a Ford motor plant that has no car body shells on the assembly line.

Do evangelism. People will be converted when you do evangelism. And notice, we don't do the converting.

We don't save anybody. All we do is strategically and as wisely as possible learn how to share this wonderful news that we have in the gospel and in scripture to as many people as possible. That's conversions.

Then secondly, Jesus says, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. So the O of CORE is obedience. Teach them to observe.

Teach them to obey. Very, very simple. Teach, obey.

Teach, obey. Teach, obey. Teach, obey.

There's the instruction. Just go into the world, do evangelism, and as people come to Christ, teach them to obey. Teach, obey.

Teach, obey. Very, very simple. Then they are? You're going to love this.

Repeat the first two steps. You ever hear those, you ever see that little sign? There's two rules around this place. Rule number one, the boss is always right.

Rule number two, in the event that the boss is wrong, see rule number one. Jesus says, there's two rules. Do evangelism and teach to obey.

And then repeat those two over and over and over again. You just keep repeating them. Day in, day out, conversion, obedience.

Conversion, obedience. Conversion, obedience. See, evangelism without teaching never produces reproductive discipleship.

Teaching without evangelism never produces reproductive discipleship. Only the convergence of those two in one life produces reproductive discipleship. Evangelism and teach and obey.

Teach and obey. Teach and obey. Conversions, obedience.

Conversions, obedience. Conversions, obedience. And then the E, quite simply, is empowerment.

Jesus lets us know, you can't do this. I mean, this is a supernatural work. You can't do this.

All you can do is be obedient to follow the instructions, but you can't produce the results. Look what Jesus says. What verse is that? 18.

Jesus said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. You go under my authority because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. There is no other person in human history who ever had the authority to tell his mother when he would be born except Jesus Christ.

No other person in human history has ever had the authority to decide when he would die at the hands of other people except Jesus Christ. All authority in heaven on earth has been placed in the hands of Jesus Christ, and he passes that authority on to every disciple and says, I give you the authority to do this work, make disciples. This is not a strategy written on the back of an envelope.

This is not some strategy made up by church growth guys. This is not a strategy that some pastor goes about to fill his ego. This is a strategy that comes with the authority backing it of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And he says, with that authority, you go and fulfill that mandate, make disciples. That's empowerment. Can't do this alone.

At the end of it, in fact, Jesus bookends that point. At the very end in verse 20, he says, after he says, teaching them to observe all I've commanded you, he says, behold, I will be with you to the end of the age. My presence will go with you as you do this because you can't do this alone.

This is a supernatural work. All you can do is be obedient. All you can do is say, Father, what does it mean to make disciples? I want to be obedient.

I want to know what this means. I want to do it. I know I have no choice because it's the defining mark of a follower of Jesus Christ, make disciples.

Theologians call this the great commission because it is the commission to the church and to every Christian, make disciples. So we really have no choice. But Jesus says, you can only do it under my power.

Try to do this for flesh reasons, it'll never work. But you do it because you've been given the authority under the Lord Jesus Christ to do it. Well, there is a different story.

And then number seven, it's a doable command. It's a doable command. Make disciples.

I wonder if the reason why so many churches don't do this is because they've lost hope that it's doable. But it must be doable because if Jesus Christ, our commander in chief, gave us an express, direct, clear command, and it's not doable, then all of scripture is suspect. And the word and the character of Jesus Christ is suspect.

I must believe that it's doable. Otherwise, he would not have asked me to do it. So let me wrap it up with a couple of comments.

There's two groups here this morning. The first group are disciples of Jesus Christ. And if you're in that category, then this command is for you.

Jesus is telling you, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, make reproductive disciples. This command is for you. The second group that is here this morning in a crowd this size, undoubtedly, there are some here this morning who are not disciples of Jesus Christ, in which case this command is not for you.

It's about you. Jesus is instructing us to make disciples of you if you're in that second category. So I just want to speak to you for just a moment.

I am delighted that you're here today. If you are in that second category of not being a disciple of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ brought you here today because He loves you, and He wanted you to hear this message today, that He has been calling out your name through the ages, and He's calling you into a relationship with Him, and He's inviting you to trust Christ, to believe in Christ, to make a decision to follow Christ. You can do that in an instant.

Before you leave here this morning, you can make a decision. Father, I want to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. I want to become a follower of Christ.

I want to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. And that's where it begins. Second observation I want to make about this, or perhaps not an observation, but a suggestion.

Would you be willing to pray and ponder? Pray and ponder. Pray and ponder. And here's what I'd like to suggest that you ponder.

What if, what if Jesus Christ turned Queensway Baptist Church to a person into reproductive, qualitative disciples of Jesus Christ? What would happen in this community? Just look at all the heads. What would happen if every single person sitting here today pondered the what if? Is it really possible that I could become a reproductive disciple of Jesus Christ? Well, that, of course, begs the question. All I've done here is touch the tip of the iceberg, because I know that this raises all sorts of questions and all sorts of fears and all sorts of barriers.

But I hope I've given you enough this morning to show you that this is possible. This is possible at Queensway Baptist Church. We're sort of trying to map this out as we go forward, trying to, you know, sort of help answer those questions on the way forward.

Here's one idea. Would you be willing to get yourself equipped? In a couple of weeks' time, we're going to do a witnessing workshop that sort of takes some of these ideas that we've talked about this morning, but that witnessing workshop is designed to help you with some of this, to help answer some of those questions that this has conjured up for you. How, how do I become a reproductive disciple? I would encourage you to try to come on that night, Friday night and Saturday morning, if you're available.

Let's just pray. Karen, I think we'll just pray. We've gone a little bit over time.

Let me just pray and dismiss us. Father, I pray that Your Spirit would continue to plow these truths into our hearts over this, the rest of today and in the days ahead. Father, I pray.

Oh, Lord, I just pray that Your Spirit would work in all of our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25101.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/roy-sommerville/producing-reproducing-disciples/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net