

Evangelism and Making Disciples

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the whole purpose of God and making disciples of all nations, rather than just preaching the gospel and accumulating a pile of bricks.

Duration: 51:04

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:18, Mark 16:15, Luke 14:25, Acts 2:38, Acts 20:27-28

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker compares the process of making a table to the process of making disciples in Christianity. He emphasizes that many Christians today focus on evangelism and preaching the gospel, but fail to complete the process by making disciples. The speaker highlights the shallowness and emptiness of modern-day evangelism, where people are not transformed into learners and followers of Christ. He also points out the importance of love and unity among believers, as Jesus said that all men will know his disciples by their love for one another. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need to obey the commission in Matthew 28, which involves not only preaching the gospel but also teaching discipleship.

Transcript

In our last study, we were seeing how the Apostle Paul preserved the church in Ephesus. And one of the things I want you to notice here in Acts chapter 20 is that he told those elders after spending three years with them, verse 27, Acts 20, 27, I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. If you think of the whole purpose of God like a big circle that contains everything that is in God's purpose for man, generally speaking, what we hear preached in a lot of Christian churches and in Christendom today is only part of that circle.

And we can ask ourselves, why don't they preach the whole thing? Because somebody will get offended, or somebody may leave if they hear that. And so we have gradually the whole purpose of God, this whole circle being reduced, it becomes a semicircle, and sometimes quarter of a circle, we say the bare minimum, just get a person saved, his sins forgiven, and let's unite with all those who believe one-fourth of this circle, and let's work together. Now, God has not made a mistake in declaring what his whole purpose is, and it's when we proclaim the whole purpose of God that we get a total Christian.

And if you proclaim only one-fourth of it, what you are going to produce is quarter Christians, people who are not really fully what the Lord wants them to be. But they have an outward appearance of talking about

Jesus and come to the meetings, but they are not what God wants them to be. And when you try to build them together, to try and build a fellowship, the body of Christ, we find it's impossible.

They will only be a congregation of people who will like to sit and listen to good messages, but not grow up into spiritual maturity themselves. There are lots of people sitting in many, many Christian churches across the world today who have been apparently Christians for twenty, thirty years, but they have never become mature, because the whole purpose of God was not preached to them, only the bare minimum. It's something like a person being admitted in a hospital and the doctor just treating that person for the bare minimum that he can get out of bed and go away, instead of treating him completely, that he can go out as a vibrant, healthy person.

When Jesus gave a commission to his disciples before he went up to heaven, there were two commissions that he gave, and we can look at both of them. The first one is Mark 16, and verses 15 to 18. We can say this is a commission to evangelism, that is, to go into all the world, Mark 16,15.

And here you are only told to preach the gospel to every creature, that means to every human being across the world, preach the gospel. Your responsibility is over when you have preached the gospel. If you read carefully, what did Jesus say? Go to every part of the world, preach the gospel, tell them the good news, and after that it's up to them.

The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned. That's not your responsibility. You have fulfilled your responsibility when you preach the gospel.

It's up to them whether they believe and are baptized, or they disbelieve and are condemned. And then, to support this gospel preaching, Jesus said in verses 17 and 18, there will be some supernatural signs that will accompany not every believer, but all believers put together. Demons will be cast out, they will speak with new tongues, they will not be hurt by serpents and they will not be hurt by poison, and they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.

So this is one commission, and we see it being fulfilled today, particularly where people go out into unreached areas, even in India. These supernatural signs still accompany the preaching of the gospel. I have seen these healing crusades that are conducted mostly by western preachers in different cities, and in most of these crusades, what you call miracles are not miracles.

A lot of people are fooled. The real miracles are taking place not in these big crusades. They are taking place where people go to unreached areas and are preaching the gospel to those who have never heard, unknown people whose names you and I don't know.

They are going out into villages in India where people have never heard the gospel, and they are laying hands on the sick, and they are being healed in the name of Jesus. Demons are being cast out in the name of Jesus, and people are being converted. So, this is being fulfilled even after twenty centuries after Jesus said, but it is basically a proclamation of the gospel, and some believe, and some don't believe.

But those who believe need to be baptized. Now the other commission is in Matthew 28. In Matthew 28, we read of another commission, and I want you to notice a slight difference here.

Here Jesus said, all authority, verse 18, has been given to me in heaven and earth. And this time he didn't say, go and just preach. There in Mark 16, your responsibility is over when you have preached, and whether they believe or don't believe is up to them.

But here, your responsibility does not cease until you have made disciples. He didn't say, go and preach discipleship, and whether they become disciples or not, that's up to them. He didn't say it like that.

That's in Mark 16. Go and preach the gospel. Those who believe, those who don't believe.

But here he said, go into every nation and make disciples. A disciple is basically a learner and a follower of Jesus. Jesus said, learn from me, Matthew 11, 29.

He also said, follow me many times. Take up your cross, Luke 9, 23, and follow me. If anyone wants to follow me, let's take up the cross daily.

That is a disciple. In other words, you must make a man or a woman, one who wants to learn from Jesus, not just learn from you. You may initially help him, but he must ultimately become a disciple of Jesus, not a disciple of you.

One who is able to stand on his own feet. In the beginning, naturally, like little babies, mothers have to feed them, care for them. And in the beginning, it's natural that they look up to you a little bit.

But your whole aim, just like a mother's aim, is to get the child to stand on its own feet, to feed itself. In the same way, our aim is to get a person to learn directly from Jesus and to follow him. Then he has become a disciple.

If he is perpetually dependent on you, even after five or ten years, he has not become a disciple. He is just a listener to you. Make disciples.

And again, baptism is emphasized. In both commissions, you'll find water baptism is emphasized. Now, today, a lot of people say, what is water baptism? It's a small thing.

It doesn't matter whether you get baptized as a child or get baptized afterwards. But notice, Jesus didn't have all these ideas of human cleverness that you find in a lot of Christians today. Human cleverness has led more people away from the word of God than anything else.

We try to use our human brains instead of simply submitting to what Jesus said. There, Jesus said, you must believe, then be baptized, not before you believe. To get baptized before you are born again is like putting the cart in front of the horse.

Nothing moves. Believe and then be baptized. Here also, make disciples and then baptize them.

For anyone who understands English or understands their own mother tongue, it is so clear. But a person who is stubborn and will not give up their traditions, nothing will be clear. Even after a hundred years, it will not be clear.

But for a person who comes with a simple open mind, it is clear as crystal. You believe, and after that, you are baptized. You become a disciple, and after that, you are baptized.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Very clear. Even about that, there is a lot of argument in different places.

What should we baptize? The name of Jesus or something like that. The word of God is clear for those who want to obey what Jesus said. Many people go to the Acts of the Apostles and see what did they do.

Well, in the Acts of the Apostles, a lot of things happened. Paul quarreled with Barnabas. So what is the doctrine you get from that? Or Paul shaved his head once.

You see, Acts of the Apostles is a history record. You cannot get doctrine from there. If you want doctrine, go to the Epistles.

Go to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. Do not try to get doctrine out of Acts of the Apostles, because you will go wrong. Otherwise, you have to pick out some things and reject other things according to your convenience.

The Acts of the Apostles is a history. It is an accurate, inspired history. But it tells us everything.

It tells us Paul circumcised Timothy. What doctrine do you get from that? And this is how many people have got doctrines about in what name to baptize, everybody speaking in tongues and things like that. They all get it out of the Acts of the Apostles.

Some people say you must sell all your property. They get it out of the Acts of the Apostles. You get a lot of wrong doctrines in Christianity, because they have gone to Acts of the Apostles for doctrine, when it is a historical record, which has right things and wrong things that the Apostles did.

And that is not the place to get doctrine. If it is a doctrine, a fundamental doctrine, it will definitely be written in the teaching of Jesus or in the Epistles which are inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is where I go for my doctrine.

In the Acts of the Apostles, I find a record that inspires me, challenges me, how they suffered and sacrificed for the name of the Lord. So here it says, baptize them in the name of the Father's Holy Spirit, and then after that, what should you do? It says in verse 20, you have to teach them to do every single thing I commanded you. Now how long do you think it takes to teach people everything that Jesus did is different from teaching people to do everything that Jesus did? Let me repeat that.

To teach people what Jesus did, that does not take long. You go through a Bible study of all the Gospels and you are finished. But to teach people to do everything that Jesus did, that takes time.

What are some of the things that Jesus taught? To teach people to do everything that Jesus commanded. To teach them to do everything that Jesus commanded, as opposed to just teaching them what Jesus commanded. There is a difference.

Jesus, I can go through the list. Jesus commanded you not to lust with your eyes, not to get angry, to speak the truth, and always let your yes be yes and your no, no, don't do your righteousness and your prayers and fastings before men, don't judge others, and take up his yoke and learn from him and take up the cross every day and bless those who curse you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, do good to those who hate you, and we go through the list and say, okay, I finished. In one week I finished teaching people everything that Jesus commanded.

But not a single person there may have started doing what Jesus commanded. Jesus did not say, teach them what I have commanded, he said, teach them to do what I have commanded, which means by example and by encouragement. I have to lead them into that life, and that's where it takes time.

And then, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. So these two commissions, we can say, Mark 16 is a commission basically to do evangelism, and Matthew 28 is a commission to make disciples. Now when you look out at the Christian world today, and you ask yourself, how many people are doing evangelism or emphasizing evangelism, and how many people are making disciples, it should be, I would think, 50-50, but it is not.

I think 99% of people are occupied with evangelism, because it's easier. Just preach, those who believe, baptize, over. And less than 1%, I think, are in the business of making disciples, because that's a more laborious task, and you can't show so many statistics.

There are more statistics available in evangelism than in making disciples. So, if you look at this as a big log of wood, with two ends, Mark 16 is one end, and Matthew 28 is the other end of the log of wood, which we have to carry as a church. Now, if you see 100 people carrying a log of wood, and 99 people are at one end of the log, and one person at the other end of the log, if you've got a little bit of sense, which end of the log will you go and help? Well, fast and pray and find out, if you're not sure.

For me, I don't need to fast and pray. I know the answer immediately. You know which end needs help.

Of course, let me add this as a qualifying thing, that if your calling is to be an evangelist, that's one thing. But if people have pressurized you into being an evangelist, that's quite different. A lot of people doing evangelism today have not been called to be evangelists.

They are pressurized by other evangelists to be evangelists. To me, that is as foolish as me pressurizing all of you to start teaching like I do. I don't want to make everybody into teachers.

I don't want to make everybody into prophets or apostles. It's not possible. Everybody must be a witness, but everybody is not an evangelist.

Please remember that. There's a lot of difference between being a witness and an evangelist. Everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, you shall have power to be my witnesses.

And that applies to men, women, children, everybody. A witness is one who says, you know, a witness in a court, he just says what he has seen and heard. That is a witness.

And a witness is one who testifies to the circle in which God has placed him. That means his relatives, neighbors, people in his office, and the people he meets regularly. He's a witness to them, to the milkman, to different people whom he meets regularly, to the person he buys vegetables from.

A witness maybe gives a tract, maybe testifies to what Jesus has done for him. Every single believer must be a witness. But an evangelist is something else.

An evangelist is a special calling. We read in Ephesians in chapter four about what the Lord has given to the Church. Please read very carefully.

Sometimes we have got to get a lot of wrong ideas out of our head, and the only way to get rid of those wrong ideas is by reading Scripture. Because we have got a lot of wrong concepts. The Lord Jesus, when he ascended to heaven, verse 11, he gave some, not everybody, some as apostles.

Everybody understands that. If I say everybody is not an apostle, you say, sure, I agree, some are apostles. Some are prophets, and also everybody agrees.

But when it comes to some as evangelists, a lot of people don't agree. They say, no, everybody must be an evangelist. I say, well, then you are fighting with the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit says he has made only some as evangelists. How in the world can you make everybody an evangelist when the Holy Spirit is only going to make some of them into evangelists? It is as foolish as trying to make everybody an apostle or everybody a prophet. Just as foolish.

But it is because people don't distinguish between being a witness and being an evangelist that they think, oh, everybody must be an evangelist, because Jesus said, you shall all be my witnesses. There is a lot of difference. A witness may never leave his hometown.

He may never speak in a meeting. All his life, he may be just a witness in that circle in which he is. But an evangelist has got a more open ministry, he may go somewhere, he may travel, he may move to another town or country.

Some evangelists and some pastors, that also everybody understands, only some can be pastors or shepherds, the right word is shepherd, and teachers. Some are teachers. But notice another thing here, whatever one of these five gifts to the church God may make us into, the purpose of all five is, verse 12, finally to build up the body of Christ.

The apostle must build the body of Christ, the prophet must build the body of Christ, the evangelist must build the body of Christ, the shepherd must build the body of Christ, and the teacher must build the body of Christ. But what is happening today? You know what the body of Christ is? You think of a human body, where there are different parts, fingers, eyes, toes, different gifts, but all related to one another, working together, functioning together, that's what a local church should be. A local church is not meant to be a congregation.

A congregation is a whole lot of people sitting there. You know the difference between a building and a pile of stones or bricks? You can have 10,000 bricks and it's just a pile of bricks. When they are fitted together, they become a building, and there's a lot of difference between a pile of bricks and a building.

If you leave a pile of bricks on the roadside in most places in India, in a few years it will all disappear. Somebody will come and steal a little bit for their house and ultimately after a few years everything disappears. This is how people say that somebody stole a member of my congregation and took them to their congregation.

I've never said that at any time, because I build a building and nobody comes and steals one brick from up there, which is fitted in there. It's impossible. It's these people who don't build a building but put a pile of bricks.

They're always complaining, somebody stole their brick and took them to their building and somebody... Don't waste your time accumulating a pile of bricks, otherwise you'll always have this complaint. Build a building. In the same way in the body of Christ.

Nobody can come one night while I'm sleeping and steal my little finger. It's not possible. But if you go to an anatomy laboratory in a medical college where they have all the human body parts all cut and kept, there are fingers and legs and eyes and ears all over the place, one day you may find one eye missing or one hand is missing.

These are not a body, they are just members put together like that and most churches are like that. They are not fitted together. And what do a lot of evangelists do in evangelism? They go, tell people to accept Christ and they've got their own evangelistic organization and then they don't know anything about what happens to those people after that.

He comes for his five-day crusade and gets photographed and all that and then doesn't know where these people have gone. Has he built the body of Christ? And yet it says here, every evangelist must build the body of Christ. Has he built those people into a local church? No.

Very often he tells them, maybe they are born again, but he tells them to go back to those dead churches where they don't even preach about being born again and then he ultimately loses whatever he got. He's probably not even properly converted. So many people who raise their hands in big meetings, they are not really converted.

I remember in one place where they did a follow-up after some big preacher came and there was a lot of decision cards signed and somebody did the follow-up and the person who did the follow-up told me this, it was in some part of North India. He said when he went around and discovered, hardly any of them were following the Lord, all these decision cards. And when he asked, why did you come forward then? Some people said, we wanted to see this great preacher a little closer.

We were at the back of the congregation, so we came forward to see him at closer quarters. These are the reasons why people come forward. But his name is taken down and published in America as one more convert.

This is the type of nonsense that's going on in India and there are a lot of believers, because they want part of that commission from that American evangelist, they are ready to organize the crusade here and say they are doing evangelism. Don't waste your time with all this. That is not even the evangelism of Mark 16.

But if you do engage in the evangelism of Mark 16, it must lead on to the making disciples that's mentioned in Matthew 28. You got to make that man a learner and a follower. If he is not a learner or a follower, then you have not made him into a disciple.

No. You have only made him accept Christ and you think that he is a Christian, but he is not really a Christian. He is not a disciple of Jesus.

So I want you to think of this very seriously. Now let's turn to Luke's Gospel, chapter 14. Luke's Gospel, chapter 14.

We read here about Jesus speaking to this great multitude and telling them how they can be disciples. You know, it says here in Luke 14.25, a great multitude followed after Jesus. Now generally speaking, when an evangelist sees a great multitude following after him, he will say things that will help to increase the size of that multitude.

Because there is a great lust for numbers and to have a greater following in all great preachers. But see how different Jesus was. He saw this great multitude following him and he turned around and said in Luke 14.25 onwards, some of the hardest words that he ever spoke to anyone.

Imagine when you have a great multitude following you, for a preacher to get up and say things that will not increase the size of that multitude, but decrease it. He looked at this great multitude and he said, as it were, I am not impressed by all of you people. I know that most of you have no interest in becoming disciples.

So I am not deceived that a great multitude is saying, oh Jesus, he is great and we want to follow him. He says, if you come to me and you don't hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and your own life, you cannot be my disciple. Now if you are going to obey the commission in Matthew 28, which must follow on from Mark 16.

You see, the purpose of the commission in Mark 16 is to lay the groundwork for the commission in Matthew 28. In other words, when somebody goes and preaches the gospel and somebody believes and is baptized, that is only the beginning. The work is completed when the person has been made into a disciple and taught discipleship.

It should not be that he remains like that one who believes and says, I am going to heaven when I die. No, a believer must be made into a disciple. In the early days, it says in Acts 11.26, the disciples were called Christians.

Who were the Christians in the early days? The disciples. They made disciples and the disciples were called Christians. Who are called Christians today? Anyone born into a Christian family.

It is so different today. But not in the early days. The disciples were called Christians.

And so, wherever you see people who are just saying, I have accepted the Lord, my sins are forgiven. You need to check whether the person has become a disciple. Otherwise the work is not complete.

You know that Jesus said on the cross when he died, it is finished. It is not only that the work of salvation was finished, throughout his life he never did a half job. If his mother told him to go to the well in Nazareth and draw a bucket of water and bring it, I am sure Jesus never brought a half bucket.

I don't believe that. I believe he brought a full bucket back to his mother. That was his way of life.

There were no half jobs with him. If he was a carpenter and somebody asked him to make a table, do you think Jesus just made four legs and went and took the four legs and said, here you are? No. Now four legs are part of the table, but it is not a whole table.

On top of the four legs he made a table top, completed it and said it is finished, and then took it and gave it. The same principle applies here. We can say, to use the same illustration, when a person has just accepted Christ, he is just like the four legs.

What about the top? Has he been made a disciple? Has the job been completed? Now what we see in Christendom today is like carpenter shops where people are only making the legs and hardly any tables are complete. Multitudes of legs. I say, what about at least finishing a few tables? What about making some of these into complete tables, make them to disciples and then we can, I am not against legs, but I say, where it is supposed to make tables, we have to say it is finished.

And that is where we find the shallowness and emptiness of modern day evangelism. People are not made into disciples, they are not learners, they are not followers. They are just statistics.

So many people accepted the Lord, so many people raised their hands, so many people signed decision cards. It does not mean anything. Put them together and what do they do? They fight and quarrel with each other all the time.

And yet Jesus said, when you become disciples, Jesus said, all men, John 13, 34 and 35, will know you are my disciples. How? By the fact that you love one another. Why is it that so many believers cannot love one another? Even husbands and wives cannot love one another.

Do you know the reason? I will tell you the reason from that verse. They are not disciples. If they were disciples, they would love one another.

All men, he said, will know you are my disciples by the fact that you love one another. If we could measure a church, church growth, not by numbers, but by love, the results will be very different. But when people talk about church growth, they are only talking about numbers.

The church had started out with ten people who do not love one another, and now it has become hundred people who do not love one another, and maybe it will become a thousand people who do not love one another. What sort of church is that? It is growing, but it is not a church of disciples. It is far better to produce one church of five people who love one another who are disciples.

Jesus spent his life making a church of eleven people who loved one another, and with those eleven people he turned the world upside down. They were not just believers who were running after money and trying to make a name for themselves. They were disciples.

They had forsaken everything. They had hated father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and to become his disciples. Now what does this word hate mean? The Bible says whoever hates his brother is a murderer.

Hatred is the first step to murder. If you hate a person and you allow that hatred to develop, it can lead to murder. It leads to a killing.

And when Jesus used the word hate here, he was meaning that this human attachment to my father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children must be cut. It must be slain. It has to be slain, because that human attachment can lead me astray from the will of God.

There are thousands of believers who never became disciples, who have gone astray from God's will because they loved either their father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or wife, or children, with that human attachment which was never cut. Now when the human attachment is cut, we are united to the Lord. It has to be cut.

To me, you know, it's like when a baby is born, there is a thing called the umbilical cord. And you know what has to be done to that umbilical cord? It has to be cut. Even though it was from that umbilical cord that that baby lived for nine months, all its life came from that umbilical cord, just like all that you have come from your parents.

And the Lord says, cut it. Doesn't it sound very harsh? Supposing a doctor says, Oh, this umbilical cord has supplied food and everything to this baby for nine months, we don't want to cut it, leave it like that. What's going to happen? What's going to happen to the poor mother with the baby hanging around it, walking around all the time? But there is no foolish doctor like that.

They say it's true, nine months it supplied food and all that, but we've got to cut it because it's got to grow on its own now. And the Lord says, cut that umbilical cord attachment. And when it is cut, what will happen? Won't you care for your parents anymore? Listen, this is the best part of it.

When you give up your human love for your parents, Jesus will replace it with a divine love, and that's far better. Don't you think Jesus cared for his mother? Mary had four other sons and two other daughters, but Jesus was the eldest, and with all that agony when he was hanging on the cross, he was thinking of his mother, taking care of her as an eldest son, to provide a home for her. There is a good example of a son who cared for his mother, but he did not let her interfere in his life and ministry.

When she came and said something in Kena, he said, woman, what have I got to do with you? Please don't interfere in my ministry. Another time when he was popular and they wanted to come and meet him, he said, who is my mother, brother, sister? These who hear the word of God and do it. So there was a balance in Jesus' life.

He cared, he honored, but he did not let them influence what his father told him to do. If he had a human love for them, he would have just done what they told him. A lot of Christians don't understand this distinction between a human love and a divine love.

What Jesus is saying is, hate, kill, cut off that human love, and when it is killed it will be replaced with a divine love and you will be able to love your father and mother in a much better way. You will be able to love your wife and children in a much better way. You will be able to love your brothers and sisters in a much better way and they will never be able to hinder you from following the Lord and doing the will of God in your life.

That is the number one condition of discipleship. You know how in our country we have such a tremendous attachment to our families. It is good to respect our families.

Tremendous attachment to the denomination from which you came. Because in that denomination are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You have got to cut off even your human attachment to that denomination.

There is an umbilical cord to that denomination because your father was there, your grandfather was there, your great-grandfather was there. And the Lord says, You will never be able to follow me if you don't cut off this umbilical cord. And then you have got to ask the Lord whether the Lord wants you to stay in that denomination or move out of it.

You don't have to ask me, ask the Lord. But if you don't cut off that umbilical cord, you will never be a disciple. You will stick in a denomination because your great-grandfather lived there.

But in every other area, we are willing to do differently from our great-grandfather. When you are sick, you don't say, My great-grandfather never went to hospital, so I don't go. My great-grandfather did not get a college degree, so I don't go.

And my great-grandfather did not have running water in his house, so I don't have that. We never say that. It's only when it comes to my church, Oh, my great-grandfather was there.

You see how crazy we are. My great-grandfather believed that the sun goes around the earth. I don't believe it.

Neither do you. We have to cut off this human attachment to anything, to a family, to a denomination, to anything, to brothers, sisters, wife and children, father and mother, and then you will be a much better son, a much better daughter, a much better husband, and a much better brother and a disciple of Jesus. You won't be worse.

You will be more patient. You will be more patient than those people in the world who love their parents. You will be more patient and loving and concerned for your mother.

It was Jesus who was concerned about his mother, not his four younger brothers. So we need to understand this, that following the Lord means I cut off this umbilical cord attachment and I hear what the Lord tells me to do. I want to be a disciple.

And no human attachment to a family or denomination is going to hinder me from doing what the Lord Jesus, who gave his life for me, has called me to do. And I may find my attachment now more to others who are in the body of Christ than even to my family members who are unconverted. That happens.

It happens all the time. God gives us a new family. And secondly, the Lord says, to be a disciple, verse 27, you have to take up your cross and that applies to our self-life.

Like earlier he said, you have to hate your own self. The cross, we spoke about it the other day, where my will crosses God's will and where I have to die to my will, to my self-life, to my self-justification, to my reputation, to my honor, to my comfort. I cannot be a disciple if I am not willing to die to myself.

And when it says make disciples, you have got to make people who are willing to die to themselves every day. Now look at all the people who are converted and signed decision cards and raised their hands and all that. Can you honestly say that all those people are dying to themselves every day? They have not even been told they have to die to themselves.

They have not even been told what it means to take up the cross. There is a tremendous ignorance in Christendom today of what taking up the cross means. I remember attending a seminar once in Bangalore with a number of evangelical churches.

They had a seminar where somebody spoke on taking up the cross and after that they broke up into discussion groups and then there was a summing up at the end to find out what was the answer of all these people in their discussion groups about what it means to take up the cross. And the leader finally said after getting all the answers we have to say we don't know what it means to take up the cross. Well, at least they were honest.

They didn't know. Well, how in the world can you make disciples if you yourself don't know what it is to take up the cross? If you yourself don't know what it is to die to your reputation and your honor and your desire to speak back and your love of earthly things and to your honor and prestige and so many things like that and to your own will and to your own desire for revenge and all these things. If you don't know what it is to die if you don't know what it is to die when you are provoked how can you lead another person to discipleship? That is impossible.

What does it mean to take up the cross? In very simple words it's to reckon yourself dead. Romans 6.11 Reckon yourself dead to sin. Consider yourself to be dead.

When you are tempted consider yourself to be like a dead man. That's Romans 6.11 Because you are dead in Christ you are not imagining something that's not true. God has done it in Christ you believe it.

Just like God has forgiven your sin in Christ you believe it. In the same way God has crucified you with Christ believe it. He is not asking you to believe something which is not true.

When he asks you to believe that your sins are forgiven he says believe what is true. In the same way when he asks you to consider yourself dead he is only asking you to believe what is true. That means if I am dead lying dead here and you yell at me and get angry with me I am not going to respond if I am really dead.

But if I am only pretending to be dead then I may control myself for a little while and if it gets too much I will get up. And that's how it is with a lot of believers. They are only pretending to be dead.

They haven't died. To take up the cross means I allow myself to be slain. I die with Christ.

You cannot be a disciple without this. And we have to not only be disciples ourselves we have to lead other people into this life. And thirdly verse thirty-three Jesus said if anyone wants to be my disciple he must give up all his own possessions.

Now this is different from ten percent in the Old Testament. All. Now what does this mean? Possessions are things that I possess not what I have.

I may have things and not possess things. When I possess them they are my possessions. Jesus never said you shouldn't have anything.

He did say you shouldn't possess anything. And to use an example from the Old Testament Abraham when he was a hundred years old got a son Isaac. And that was the darling of his eyes and his heart.

He loved Isaac more than he loved Sarah. He loved Isaac more than he loved himself. He loved Isaac more than Ishmael.

He loved Isaac more than everything in the world. And ultimately he came I think to a place where he loved Isaac more than he loved God. Or he was in that danger anyway.

And when he came to that place God said kill him. Kill him because he is becoming an idol in your life. And Abraham decided Isaac will not be my God.

The true God of heaven will be my God. And he took Isaac laid him on the altar and was just about to kill him and God said okay you passed the test. I am more important to you than Isaac.

Good. Now take him home. From that day he had Isaac in his home but he never possessed him.

See the difference? You can have many things in the world if you possess one of them you cannot be a disciple. You can have a house registered in the court in the registrar's office in your name but you cannot possess it. You say Lord it is in my name in the registrar's court but it is not mine it is yours.

My entire house top to bottom is yours you can use it as you like. You may have a scooter you may have a cycle you may have a car you may have a shirt. Say Lord I don't possess any of these things.

It is yours. One day if you tell me to give one of these things to a more needy person I will give it because it is not mine. If my home has to be used for the Lord's work sure it is yours.

That is the meaning of having but not possessing. You can have money in your bank account maybe a hundred thousand rupees fine. There is no limit provided it is not yours.

Say Lord it is not mine it is yours. You want me to use it for your glory? Any day. Now you can say well people can keep millions and say it is not mine it is all God's.

Yeah I know there are a lot of people who play the fool with God but you will see in their life that God doesn't bless them. God knows whether you are trying to play the fool with Him or play games with Him or whether you are really sincere. That He leaves it to you.

Between you and Him is that transaction. Nobody else you may fool everybody in the world but God knows whether you have forsaken everything or not. You cannot be a disciple until you have forsaken everything.

Until you have made a list of all the things that are valuable in your life. Maybe your job maybe your house maybe your bank account maybe something else that is very valuable to you. Some ambition for the future list it down and say Lord I forsake every one of these.

None of these things are important to me. I may have them but never will I cling on to them as though they are mine. Then you are a disciple.

And it is not just you who has to be the disciple. Jesus said go and make such disciples everywhere. So first of all I become a disciple myself and then I have to make other people around me into disciples.

Otherwise I am not going to fulfill that commission in Matthew 28. Now you tell me which commission is easier to fulfill the one in Mark 16 or the one in Matthew 28? You know the answer straight away. In which commission will you get greater numbers better statistics? Now you see why most people go for Mark 16? The devil is quite happy if you stick at that so long as you don't make disciples.

Because the body of Christ is built with disciples. You can't have a local church that functions as the body of Christ if everybody is not a disciple. And in that church when they are disciples they have to be taught to do every single thing that Jesus mentions.

And in the Matthew 28 commission there is no mention of tongues or healing or casting out demons. That is all in the Mark 16. That accompanies evangelism.

Evangelism is accompanied by signs and wonders. What about discipleship? Discipleship is accompanied by obedience to every commandment of Jesus. That's what you read in Matthew 28.

There the man believes and is baptized and there are signs and wonders in that ministry. In this ministry it leads to people obeying every command of Jesus. It leads to people who know how to forgive everyone, who know how to bless those who curse them, who know how to speak the truth under all circumstances, and who know how to turn the other cheek and walk the second mile and things like that.

These are not contradictory to each other. One must follow on from the other. It's something like school and college.

One leads on to the other. A college is not against a school. It's leading people further, those who want to go further.

And discipleship leads those believers who want to go further in the Christian life to the essential thing in the Christian life. Paul proclaimed the full counsel of God, not half. We also need to proclaim the full counsel of God.

Then we can build the body of Christ. Let's pray. Some of these things may relate to you only in what you are going to do in the future.

But it's good for you to think about it even now. It's good for you to prepare yourself to fulfill everything that the Lord wants you to do. So let these truths concerning the full purpose of God be deeply established in your mind.

Don't go for numbers. Jesus never went for numbers. He told people about discipleship.

Let's do the same. Heavenly Father, help us to walk in the light of Your Word, not to use our human reason where it contradicts Your Word, but to set aside our reason and to live by faith and obey Your Word, so that in these days in our lands we can do what You want us to do. We ask in Jesus' name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4054.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/evangelism-and-making-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