



Ed Miller
June 21, 2015

MATTHEW 28:19-20

It's a great time. It's a happy time.

We just heard mention as well and hopefully you got a chance in the email you got from Scott with his video, some of you went and followed the link that talked about all the Muslims that are converting to Christianity. It's absolutely astounding.

It's very hush-hush because in many Muslim countries to convert to Christianity is death penalty. Death penalty. Or at best you're cast out. You're cast out of your family, you're shunned, you're completely cast out. That's significant stuff. So these converts and their church there, they're underground. So people don't even know how many, but people are estimating that between two and seven million Muslims converted to Christianity in the past twenty years. Two to seven million!

We need to pray for them because they are facing persecution like crazy. We need to pray for Christians around the world as well who are facing a lot of persecution and violence from lots of radical people out there. Lots of radical people. All different kinds of terrorist groups and such around the world today.

So we celebrate these wonderful things like Father's Day, but in the midst of it we know that there's great challenges in our world today. That's just one of the many challenges we're facing. The family is under attack today in many ways. Lots of challenges.

I'd like to just lead us in prayer. I'm going to pray for Muslims and I'm going to pray for Christians facing persecution as well. Let's pray.

[PRAYER] Lord, we rejoice in your love for us and we rejoice in the good news of the gospel. We rejoice in families and in the family of Christ gathered here. We thank you for all the fathers here and the mothers. We thank you for the investment in the lives of others. We're very blessed still in so many ways, yet we live in a world that's full of challenges. There are many Christian brothers and sisters, those that we call brothers and sisters around the world who are facing persecution and violence that we can't even imagine. We just can't even fathom it. We ask that you would strengthen them, that you would send your Spirit upon them. Those who are converts from Islam face some of the strongest challenges. We ask that you would lift them up, make them strong to stand for you. We pray for all Muslims, that they would see their need for you. It's interesting that in a lot of these conversion stories folks are converted by studying the Koran and learning about Jesus, about you, in the Koran. It's amazing. Use whatever means you choose, Lord, bring people to yourself. Use us as your instruments. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well I called up Pastor Scott in the middle of the week and I said, “Pastor Scott, I don’t think the Lord wants me to preach on James today. I think He wants me to do something else.” We talked about it and Pastor Scott said, “I think you’re right.” So we’re doing a different sermon.

I’m preaching this morning from Matthew 28:19-20, most commonly known as The Great Commission. It just happens to be one of my favorite passages of scripture. I probably have about five sermons on this subject. I won’t do them all today. I promise. We’ll just do one and I’ll keep it to our normal allotted time. Short passage, but I’m going to dive in, dig deeply into this passage.

Matthew 28:19-20 and this is the NIV version. It’s actually starting at the last part of verse 18. *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

This is one of those passages like John 3:16. Almost everybody knows this passage. We call it The Great Commission. It’s one of the strongest biblical mandates that there is for Christians for the role of a Christian, for the role of the church. This is a mandate. These are our marching orders.

The term Christian is one of that we use a lot today and unfortunately that word’s lost a lot of its significance and meaning. In the early days of the church they didn’t call themselves Christians right away. They were followers of the way or disciples of Jesus. One or other were two common terms. Then we got this term ‘Christian’ which means follower of Jesus or little Jesus. So it’s a good term.

But today it has more of a cultural meaning. When you fill out a form and you have to fill out your religious affiliation, you put Christian or something like that or Baptist or whatever. Or you put Catholic or you put Muslim or you don’t put anything. But you put Christian and you put Christian because you were raised in a Christian home, you went to a Christian church. Most likely reasons. But that does not mean that is all there is to say, does it, about what it means to be a Christian.

So I like the idea of the followers of the way or disciples of Jesus. It’s a great term. That’s what Jesus does here for us. Gives us a definition of this term ‘followers of the way.’ Let’s talk about that.

I like that word *disciple*, that we’re followers, because it conveys this idea of being an apprentice to somebody. We don’t do as much with that idea of apprenticing today, but it’s a great term. I really love the term apprentice. An apprentice is someone that comes alongside of somebody else and watches them, learns from them, gets advice from them, gets feedback from them, gets taught by them, gets things demonstrated for them. It’s a fabulous term. I wish we used it more in our day-to-day. Apprenticeship. Coming alongside of somebody.

That's what Jesus is talking about here. He's talking about people that apprentice under Him, sit under His feet, learn from Him.

Well in this passage, the apostles were on their way to meet Jesus. They were going to Galilee. They had a prearranged location set where they were going to meet Him. Some were skeptical, the Bible says before the passage we read. They weren't quite sure what to make of this. Was this really Jesus? Is He really God's Son? Well the verse says in spite of that He went on and gave this message that we just read. He charged them with these words – *Therefore go and make disciples.*

I want you to listen to a different version. I often don't do this, but this is not really a version of the Bible. This is from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. It's a contemporary interpretation, but I love this. Listen to how this passage comes across.

“God authorized and commanded me to commission you,” is what he says. I love it. *“Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”* I love it.

Let's talk about three things out of that this morning. Three points. First point is *far and near*. Being a disciple of Jesus is about being far and near, it's about a way of life, and it's about training and instruction.

Let's start with *far and near*. This passage is very often used as a support for overseas missions or any kind of mission work. We're to go to the far reaches of the world and share the gospel with others and call people to be disciples of Jesus, to train them. It is that. It is that. It is a commission to go to all of the world.

Again, I like what Eugene Peterson says. He says *near and far*. So we are to go out to the whole world and there are Christians all over the world sharing about Jesus, teaching about this way of life, leading people to Christ.

But it's also about near. Sometimes I think we forget the near part. It's about being a Christian where we go. In fact another way of interpreting this idea of go and make disciples is in you're going to make disciples. Wherever God calls you to go we're supposed to make disciples. We're supposed to train others in this way of life.

So it doesn't matter whether we're going to work, going on vacation, going to a baseball tournament. Wherever we're going, we're commissioned to be agents of transformation, God's people out in the world training others. That's what we're commissioned to do. So it's near or far.

I'm just going to stop and say one word about far for a minute. Because you could interpret what I said about as saying, “Well I don't even have to think about going anywhere else in the world as a missionary.” I'm going to tell you why if you've never been on a missions trip, if you've

never gone to another part of the world with a particular intent of being a disciple of Jesus and helping others, you should consider doing it.

Many of you know that most of my life I worked for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. I worked with college students. One of the primary discipleship things we taught all of our students was sometime during your four years in college you've got to go on a missions trip.

Here's the reason. Going overseas and getting out of this country just opens up all kinds of possibilities in your life. First of all, you see the world totally differently. You see how other parts of the world live. Especially if you go to a place that's more on the poor end. You just see a lot of different things. You see the Christian faith in a different light. You see Christians living out their faith in a very different context. That's very helpful.

Also, you get out of your comfort zone. You know we can be very fairly comfortable. We have a lot of challenges. I'm not saying life's easy here. It's not. But we get a certain comfort level, we have a certain ease that they don't have in other parts of the world. When you get out of that comfort zone you have to trust Jesus in a whole new bunch of ways. Because now you can't rely on what your normal pattern is. You have to rely on Him and learn how things are done in a completely different way.

It just so happens that Scott Turansky and I are leading a team to Brazil in December. We would love to have a great contingent of this church going with us. We don't even know what we're going to do yet. Those who are part of this church are missionaries there in Brazil (the Smiths). They aren't here that often because they're in Brazil, but occasionally they do come back. We're going to go and work with them in Brazil. It's the day after Christmas through the end of the year. That may be a good time for you? It may not. Think about it, pray about it. It's a beautiful thing. I've had the privilege of going a number of different parts of the world on missions trips and God has always used it. Consider joining us.

The near part. Let's talk about the near part just a little bit more. We probably all have situations or places that God has put us. Where we have an idea. You know we are God's witnesses there. We're in that place. We are supposed to represent a particular way of life in that place.

What is that way of life? When you kind of narrow it all down, what was Jesus talking about when He talked about the way of life of a Christian. What is it?

I think sometimes we think it's going to church. Not bad. Worshiping, praying – great stuff. Good stuff. Certain other rituals or piety that we do – good stuff. Going to Christian concerts – good stuff. Nothing wrong.

Is that what it really is though? If you narrow it down, what do you narrow it down to? Well I narrow it down to two things. The disciples asked Jesus, "What are the greatest of the commandments?" What did He say? Two things. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind. Love your neighbor as yourself."*

I say if the way of life of being a Christian is about loving God with all our heart, that includes worship and prayer and joining with the brothers and sisters here. Loving others. You know, it's a really radical thing. We're not talking about just being nice to people. We're talking about love. Love. Loving other people. Significant thing.

John 13:34-35 – one of my other favorite passages. *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Love is not just being nice. Love is being nice, but love is being hard with some people sometimes, telling them truth that needs to be told. Sometimes it's kicking somebody in the butt when they need it. Sometimes it's saying a gentle, encouraging word when someone's down, when someone's hurting. All kinds of things about love, but love, you know that is the ultimate apologetic is what Jesus is saying.

The ultimate defense of the Christian faith is do we love each other. Because that's how people are going to know that we're Christians. If we love each other.

I love this church. This church is really trying to take this whole thing seriously. We're trying to take Jesus home, and that means loving each other, caring for each other. We're going to keep working on that. We're going to go on this missions trip. We're going to learn what it means to love each other like crazy. I hope you can join us.

Love one another. Love God. To nail it all down I'd say in simple ways that's what it means, that's the life of a Christian. That is the way of life. Our world is not like that. People are nice. There's a lot of nice people out there. But when it comes down to it, most people are thinking about themselves first.

Get in a conversation with people. They most love to tell their story. It's unusual for a person to actually ask someone else to tell their story or follows up on what's going on in their life. That's the kind of love we need. We need to be the ones who are always asking other people. That doesn't mean we don't talk about our stuff. We certainly do. Certainly share our life too. But asking other people what's going on in their life, how they're doing, what's exciting and wonderful and what's challenging in their life, that's other-directed. It's cross-cultural. It's counter-cultural. It's against what this world is doing for the most part. Most everybody is out for number one and only thinking about themselves. Or maybe after they've thought about themselves they have a little bit left over to give to somebody else. Maybe. Maybe. Other-directed. That is the way of life.

And the third point. Jesus is trying to get across being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, a follower of the way. As we're going near and far we need to be training and instructing people in His teachings. Training and instructing.

Most of my time in InterVarsity, and I use it to this day, I was blessed to have heard a teaching, someone who had studied Jesus' life and came up with a really short acronym for what it means

to train other people. The beauty of this is it applies to whether you're training somebody to play baseball, golf, be a teacher, be a Christian, anything. And it works.

It's called T.D.O.E.E. T-D-O-E-E. Who's heard of T.D.O.E.E? Ah that's really sad. I can't believe it doesn't get used more out there in the world. It's just the best. Here you go. Write it down. Take out the pen. T.D.O.E.E.

T – teach. Jesus did this, didn't He? One of the first things He always did was He taught. Now teaching doesn't just mean verbal teaching. We teach with our life. We're all kinds of different learners out there.

I'm a tactile learner. Some are verbal learners. Some learn through the written word. Some learn through experience and doing. Lots of different types of learners. Any of you guys in education know there's a lot of different learning modes and styles. Teaching is not just didactic. Teaching is done in many ways. I coach baseball. I have to show kids how to do a lot of things. So it's not just that.

That leads us into the second one. *D* – demonstrate. You want to teach somebody something, you can tell them how to do it. If you don't show them how to do it, a lot of those people that aren't very didactic learners aren't going to get it. Experiential tactile learners, like myself, need to see it. We've got to see it. Visual tactile learners, we've got to see it, got to do it.

It doesn't apply across the board, but for the most part boys are not didactic learners. They're not. They don't get the words. You've got to demonstrate things. They've got to do things.

Side note: oh my goodness, parents, parents, parents, parents of athletes. Oh my goodness it's rough. A lot of parents don't know that boys don't learn this way. They're just constantly yelling instructions at their kids. Yelling, yelling. Coaches are yelling instructions. The poor kids' brains, the little boy's brain is just going [sound effect]. It's short-circuiting. He doesn't have the slightest idea what to do with all that information. All he wants is somebody to show him how to do it. That's all he wants. Just show me, be gentle with me, and I'll get it. Hang in there with me. So we teach, we demonstrate.

Third thing – *O*. Then the person who's teaching or training or instructing, we observe. So we do it and then we watch somebody else to do and we give them feedback.

T, D, Observe. Evaluate is the first *E*. *E* is evaluate. So we give them feedback.

Third *E* is encourage. In our parent training program that we do we call it the positive conclusion. It's kind of what this is. It's a positive conclusion. Encouragement says, "Go do it. You can do it. I believe in you."

One of the roles of a coach is to say, "I believe in you." One of the roles of a dad to children is to say, "I believe in you." All the correction and training, other things need to happen, but ultimately... I'm going to speak to dads now. Dads, our kids need to hear that we believe in

them. That we bless them and we know they're going to do it, whatever we're talking about teaching them to do. Critical factor.

So T-D-O-E-E. Or TDOEE as some people call it. TDOEE it will work at work for you if you have people you train. Teach, demonstrate, observe, evaluate, and encourage. Excellent.

It came from the life of Jesus. This is how Jesus did it with His disciples. He spent a ton of time with them. He taught them. He demonstrated all kinds of things, miracles and all kinds of things, for them. And remember He sent them out on their own? He observed them and brought them back. He evaluated with them and then He encouraged them. He gave them the best encouragement possible. He gave them the Holy Spirit. He's given us that kind of encouragement as well. He's given us the Holy Spirit. Fantastic.

Alright. Let me just say a few words that are a bit more on the practical side. Teaching. A few ideas, a few things you might want to consider.

Pastor Scott has this wonderful self-guided Bible study that's meant to grab some of the basic ideas of Christian discipleship or the way. Anybody using this right now? It's a self-guided Bible study. Fantastic. Great. It's a great thing to do. I'm often trying to think and find ways to do Bible study because one of the ways we get the teaching of Jesus, the way of life, is by studying the scriptures. There's no way around the fact that we need to study the scriptures.

If you're interested in some kind of a self-guided Bible study it's got something like six lessons or something like that. It's not real long. But you'll interact with Pastor Scott about it too. He'll be giving you feedback. You have to share some questions with him, things like that. Share some responses and he'll give you feedback. It's a great thing to do.

So teaching is important. Studying the Bible, studying the life of Jesus. We need to be under God's word so we can understand this way of life. We understand it first and foremost in the scriptures.

This life is so much about relationships, isn't it? Unfortunately I think when we talk about discipleship or we talk about The Great Commission we think about the various things that Jesus taught His disciples in this way of life. A lot of it is relationships, isn't it? I mean Christian discipleship is about the school of relationships. So much of our life is spent relating to people. Family, church, work, recreations, sports, all these different spheres of our life, a lot of it's relating to people.

As you know, out there there are a lot of people that don't do real well in relating to people. Well we should be the best. We should be the best. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and neighbor as yourself.* We should be some of the best people that there are.

Part of the reason I thought the Lord wanted me to preach this sermon is because we are about ready to launch in the National Center for Biblical Parenting a new initiative. We are going to be challenging churches across the world to become what are called parent training centers.

This mandate, this charge in Matthew 28 includes helping people apply the scriptures to their roles and relationships in life. The key relationships are relationships in the family. One of the things I love about this particular initiative is it's very theologically driven. That's just the first theology. The first piece of theology is that discipleship is about the family. Strengthening relationships in the family, the family of God and in our nuclear families as well.

Churches for the most part we hear around the country don't really do very well. They run children's programs, they run youth programs, but the parents are kind of on their own for the most part. It's changing and a lot of churches are realizing parents are some of the most important people in the world. It's a tough job out there being a parent. Just think about that for a minute, if you are a parent or you aren't, what a tough job it is to be a parent.

We are so heavy into regulations in this world today. So heavy into bureaucracy and paperwork. But there's nothing for being a parent (unless you're going to be a foster parent or an adoptive parent, then you've got to go through the whole rigmarole).

But this is not a knock on parents; this is just reality. It's us, man. That's it. A lot of us just all we're using is what we had. Our family of origin, which maybe was good, maybe was bad, maybe was a mixed blessing, which was the case. We learn, we see what we saw there, we learn things to do. We decided strongly on certain things we weren't going to do as parents. But that's it. Occasionally people read a few books, a few things here and there. But it's a darn difficult job. It's training young human beings to become adult human beings. It's hard.

Now those of you who are raising teenagers, triple hard. For the teenagers and the parents, both, it is tough. I remember being a teenager a long time ago. That's a tough period of life. That was really difficult. It is maybe three times as hard now as it was when I was a teenager. It's a rough world out there.

Do you know there didn't used to be anything called teenagers? It's a fairly recent development. It used to be you were a child and somewhere around age thirteen, fourteen you were kind of commissioned into the real adult world and then you started working on the farm or whatever.

Now there's some really good things about not having thirteen to fourteen year olds working their butts off on the farm. Good things about that. But what we now have is this period of time, this teenager period of time where teenagers are kind of in limbo. You're in limbo. You don't have a real purpose in life. You're not an adult yet. You're just in this limbo. You're studying in school. Okay cool.

But what we really need as people is purpose in life. Teenagerhood in the sense sets things up and says I'm in between. I'm in between, I'm not a child anymore, but I'm not really allowed to be an adult yet either. Well that's something we want to change here as well. You know children, teenagers are people first. People. Real people. Not someday we'll be people. People. We want to treat you like that. It means you've got gifts. It means you have abilities. It means you can lead. One of the first teenagers is going to preach a sermon up here instead of me. Interesting. (Pastor Scott, you didn't hear that. No.)

Relationships are key, aren't they? And the family is just so vital and crucial. You're going to be hearing more about this. This is going to be a really exciting thing, churches as parent training centers. The biblical mandate here in Matthew says that it applies to every area of the way of life. Part of the way of life involves our relationships in our families, at work, and other places. We'll be talking a lot more about that as we come.

The final practical application – I think we need to apply this way of life and the teachings of Jesus into how we handle the critical issues of the world. There are a lot of critical issues in the world. The family is going to be increasingly under attack. The definition, the nature of the family is going to be really changing.

Oh man. How's a Christian to respond to this? What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to respond? Our world is becoming increasingly dangerous. You can have a conversation with Don, you can have a conversation with Fred Thompson, other folks here about our world. It's going to be scary in the years ahead. It's already scary. It's going to get scarier. Racism is still with us. It's still here. Terrorism is just getting worse. It's going to be rough. I don't say that to make you feel bad. That's just somewhat of a reality check.

As Christians what do we do about these things? How do we respond to ISIS? What do we do? How do we respond to this kind of terrorism? Terrorism is happening all throughout Africa, all throughout Europe, all throughout the Middle East, and it's going to be happening more and more here. How do we respond?

As Christians we need to be praying and thinking about that. Too often the church is caught napping. These are tough questions. They are very difficult questions. But we're caught napping, so we don't have an answer. So it takes us ten years to figure out how to respond once a crisis hits. It shouldn't be that way.

The way of life, the teachings of Jesus apply to the things we hear about in the news. I'm not saying it's easy. I'm not even taking a conservative bent at all here. I'm just saying we need to wrestle with these things. We need to think about what our role is in the world today. It's tough.

Probably the hardest thing of all is that we are becoming more and more of a relativistic society. Nothing is inherently true. Everything is only true if it works for you or if you like it. That's rough for those of us who believe that there is something that is absolutely true.

I've shared again about my colleagues at InterVarsity on campus. InterVarsity campus groups are being forced off campus. Forced off campus now. They're going underground. Just like these Muslim converts they're going underground. Not all a bad thing. But still, that's what's happening in our world today. More and more Christians are going to be marginalized and we're going to be facing great challenges. We need the help of the Lord. We'll be talking more about that in the weeks ahead as well.

The Great Commission. Jesus charged His disciples to go, and they're going near and far to share about the way of life of Jesus. To mark that by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in Jesus,

in God, and in the Holy Spirit and to train and equip one another is to follow in the ways of Jesus. That is a pretty big, big job, isn't it? Pretty big task.

Let's pray together and I'll just ask you to reflect. Maybe the Lord has spoken to you in some way. If He has, just think about that, pray about that for a moment and then I'll close.

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you that we have your teaching, we have your word, we have your example. We have your Spirit filling us and we have each other as the body of Christ. We're not alone. I'm just so grateful for that, Lord. We're not alone. We have one another. Lord, help us to really rest on each other and learn from each other and challenge one another, to take this charge and to go forward. In your name we pray all these things, amen.