

The Great Commission

By Pastor Greg
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Matthew 28:19-20

Bunkertown COB

Last week, as we drove to Camp Eder, we passed a church with a sign advertising their 11 o'clock Casual Service. Usually these things quickly vanish from my mind, especially if I pass a roadside Custard Stand. Then my mind dwells on the Ice Cream. But I couldn't seem to shake this one. And the more I thought about what this church was advertising, I began to realize that I see this more and more.

So what did this church hope to accomplish by creating and advertising an 11 o'clock casual service? Who did they hope would come? And who would be interested in such a service? I also wondered if this is what Christ had in mind when He formed the church. Did he picture a place where people could come and feel comfortable? Is church no more than something we experience on a Sunday morning?

As I picture Christ hanging on a cross, I can't imagine He suffered and died so we could afford comfortable pews. And I don't believe Jesus spent 3 years teaching His disciple how to organize a pot-luck meal. I don't think Jesus envisioned His church to be a place where like-minded individuals can hang out and socialize with one another. There is more to the church than merely being a place for us to gather together.

There is a passage of scripture known as The Great Commission that helps give us insight into what Christ has called the church to do. In Matthew Jesus gives this final command. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ¹ (Matthew 28:19-20) Funny. In one place Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me", and we have no problem following this command. Why then do we think we can ignore this one?

The church is not complete until it realizes that Jesus has told us to go out and find the people with no hope, no love, no faith, and no security. Jesus told us to

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

introduce them to Him, and in Him find what their hearts have been searching for. He's told us to teach them all that we have learned. And most of all, we must train them so that one day they too go out in search of those who are lost. But the church, by and large, has merely become a place where His followers gather. We worship the Father and sing praises to the Son, but that's generally where it stops. And we are failing the Master.

With the financial situation most people are facing, think about all the opportunities we have missed to give hope to the hopeless. Where is the church when the fatherless child loses faith? Where is the church when a home begins to fall apart? Where is the church as the jobless lose all earthly security? Planning potluck meals, fundraises, and arguing over furniture within the building.

In order to truly follow Christ's command here, money in an offering plate will not suffice. More than a check to the blanket fund is necessary. It means we need to go out. We need to go out and stand face to face, eye to eye with the unchurched. It means we go out among the sick and help them find healing through Jesus Christ.

I agree that it's important to gather like this and worship our God together. I also agree that it is vastly important to do the things that build a sense of family. But we must not stop there. Just as we don't build hospitals so doctors have a place to hang out, neither did Christ form the church so that Christians have a place to meet. You expect to find sick people in a hospital. They come so that they might find healing. The same must be said about the church.

Christ has given us the command to Go, to Teach, and to make Followers. He has told us to leave the comfort of the building and walk among those who do not believe. He has told us to invite them to Come and See. He has told us to introduce them to Him. He has told us to help them become His followers. He has told us to teach them and train them so that they too will become workers for Christ.

According to John's gospel, the first disciples to follow Jesus were John and Andrew. Once they knew Jesus to be the long awaited Messiah, they didn't start talking about styles or times of worship. They didn't start a building campaign.

Instead, they ran to tell others. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹ Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). ⁴² Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. ² (John 1:40-42) Later on, Philip meets Jesus. He was so enthused that he ran to find his friend Nathanael. ⁴⁵ Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied. ³ (John 1:45-46) I love that simple phrase, "Come and See".

But now that we know the command, do we have the heart? Do we have the passion and drive necessary to be the church Christ has commanded.

Oscar Shindler was a member of the Nazi party during world War two. In Poland, he hired Jews to work in his manufacturing plant. And according to documented eye witness accounts, he saved over 1,100 Jews from being slaughtered. Yet in spite of this, he held deep regret and sorrow that there was more he could have done.

This is the kind of remorse and sorrow I will feel the day I stand before the Father in Heaven. I do not fear facing God because of my sin, but I'm sure I will stand before Him regretting that there was more I could have done so that one or two more people could have been saved.

I long for the day when I see the church demonstrate the same kind of passion and the same level of concern for the unsaved as it does for styles or times of worship. I long for the day when we become just as concerned for a person's eternal soul as we do over the placement of furniture within the church. I long for that day, but will it come?

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.