



GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 13

CONVERSATION STARTER

What has been the most meaningful scene from Matthew's Gospel for you? Why?

THE GREAT COMMISSION: AS YOU GO...

Matthew 28:16-20

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

In Jesus' day, for a disciple to hear the words "go and make disciples" would've been a sort of graduation or commissioning ceremony. This was the moment you longed for as a disciple, the moment your rabbi believed you were ready to become a rabbi yourself. Indeed, these followers of Jesus have served him, listened to him, loved him, betrayed him, deserted him, reunited with him, worshiped him, and reshaped their entire worldview in light of him. Now, they were ready to go out into the world, to live their lives as part of Jesus' never-ending, life-giving, earth-shaking kingdom.

But, while they go, and as we go with them, we're called to remember Jesus is King, the bearer of *all* authority on earth and in heaven. In other words, we are no longer fit to be the kings and queens of our own lives. And what does our king demand of us? To give our lives away! We're called to "go."

It's easy for us to read "go" and think that what Jesus wants us to do is travel far away to become a missionary of the Gospel. And while this is not a bad thing, it's not what Jesus is saying. The Greek word under "go" would be more aptly translated "as you go." Jesus is saying, *as you go*, make disciples of all kinds of people.

As you go to work.

As you go to school.

As you go about raising your kids.

As you go about loving your spouse and your family.

As you go about your daily errands and checklists.

The Great Commission is less about where you are called to go and more about how you are called to live where you're already going. We are called to be people of The Way, who make disciples out of every kind of people we come in contact with—no one is to be left out. How do we do that?

First, through baptism. NT Wright explains how “part of the meaning of baptism is to commit us, through plunging into water, to dying with Jesus and coming to share his new life.” Baptism marks how we're ushered into the new kingdom family of God—we get to share in the communal love of Father, Son, and Spirit! How are you inviting people into this family of faith? Next comes teaching. Remember, a disciple is someone who knows what their rabbi knows, does the kinds of things their rabbi does, all to become like their rabbi. Part of following Jesus, especially in the beginning, is a reshaping of our worldview and imagination, our longings and desires. As we follow Jesus, we learn a new upside-down way of being in the world, a way of radical forgiveness, mercy, and justice. At some point in our faith journey, we reach the stage of apprenticeship where we're called to share that way with others, to *show them how it's done*, so to speak.

One of the most haunting quotes from Dallas Willard is this: “The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, **is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples**—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.”

This is the invitation of Jesus. To come and follow him. To become students of his Way, to allow him to reshape us into his image, and to bring others along for the ride. And that's not even the best part!

Matthew ends his Gospel message where it began. At his birth, Jesus was called “Emmanuel”—*God with us*. The Creator of the Universe put on flesh; he lived, loved, suffered, and died all to dwell with those he created. And here at the end, after his death and resurrection, standing on the mountaintop surrounded by those he loves, Jesus utters the greatest promise we could be given.

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

No matter who you are, what you're going through, what your life has been like, where you live, or what you do for a living, the promise of God is that you are not alone. Jesus is *with you*. And in this life, in the here and now, we can be *with him, too*.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How has this week's reading added color to what you think about Jesus?
3. What does it look like for us to practically accept the mission of the Great Commission—to make disciples *as we go* about our daily lives?
4. Where do you experience Jesus' presence most often? How can you arrange your life around finding time to *be with Jesus*, knowing Jesus already promises to *be with us*?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

For generations, [the Dayenu](#) has been uttered around the Passover table as a way to thank God for the ways He rescued and restored His people, for God's faithfulness throughout the story of their people. Dayenu is Hebrew for "it would have been enough." This week, we're encouraging you to see yourself as part of the larger story of God's people and offer your own words of gratitude in response. Below is a Christian version of the Dayenu. Start by offering these words to God; You can do this on your own, with your Small Group, or around your dinner table as a family. Then, when you finish, add a verse of your own expressing gratitude for the ways God has rescued and restored *you*.

Most Holy God, maker of heaven and earth, so bountiful is your steadfast love, that just a little of your glory is more than enough.

If you had just poured out your love in creation, **It would have been enough.**

If you had revealed yourself through creation, but not made covenant with us, **It would have been enough.**

If you had made covenant with us and not entered into relationship with us, **It would have been enough.**

If you had just been in relationship with us and not fussed over us when we Strayed, **It would have been enough.**

If you had called us to accountability when we strayed and not delivered us from Bondage, **It would have been enough.**

If you had delivered us from slavery and not led us into a land of freedom, **It would have been enough.**

If you had led us into a land of freedom and not sent holy men and women to teach us your Way, **It would have been enough.**

If you had sent us prophets to speak of your love and not sent us a Savior, **It would have been enough.**

If you had sent us a Savior and not taken humanity unto yourself, **It would have been enough.**

If you had taken humanity unto yourself but not given us resurrection victory, **It would have been enough.**

If you had conquered the power of sin but not given us the gift of Holy Spirit, **It would have been enough.**

If you had conferred Holy Spirit but not called us to participate in your work of redeeming and blessing the world. **It would have been enough.**

But as it is, most gracious God, you have more than abundantly lavished your goodness upon us. In Christ Jesus you revealed the fullness of your love. His whole life, death, and resurrection testify to the depth of your compassion. Therefore, we bless you, we thank you, and we praise you, for you alone are worthy of our worship. To you and to the Christ and to the Holy Spirit be all glory, honor, and dominion, now and forevermore. **Amen.**