

## Essential Truths III: Working With God

# 3

## The Great Commission

So far in this module we have been looking at the basis for all ministry – the birthright that we have in Christ. This birthright colors how we view our lives and the world around us. It is because of this birthright that you have been sent into this world – commissioned with a very specific purpose.

In **John 15:16**, Jesus declares:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and *appointed you to go and bear fruit* – fruit that will last...”

All ministry is based upon the fact that we have been sent by Jesus. We have been commissioned by him to fulfill the purpose of God in our generation.

### Read John 20:21

Your commission for ministry is defined by Christ’s own commission for ministry. Just as the Lord Jesus was sent into this world, so you too have been sent.

### Read John 17:18

Your commission cannot be separated from the commission of Christ himself.

### Read Luke 10:16

In fact, so closely tied are the commission that you have and the commission that Christ has, Jesus says that rejection of you equals rejection of Christ himself. Because of this close identification of your commission with Christ’s commission, let’s take a closer look at the commission that Christ himself received. If we have been sent in the

The Birthright

Taking the Baton

**The Great Commission**

The Body of Christ

The Ministry of Every Believer

Joining the Work of God

The Tree of Life

Ministry of Reconciliation

Filled with the Spirit

Ministry to the Body

Sent into the Harvest

Speaking the Word of God

A Lifestyle Gospel

Salt of the Earth

Enforcing the Victory

Signs and Wonders

A New Kind of Leadership

Establishing a Daily Church

Making Disciples

The New Wine

The Goal of Ministry

same way that Jesus was sent, then it is vital for us to understand how Jesus was sent into the world.

## **The Commission of Christ**

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### **Read Luke 4:43**

The Lord Jesus was always very clear on the commission he had received from his Father. In fact, everything that Jesus did was defined by that commission. This commission was singular and focused.

As we read the Gospel accounts, we find that the disciples “followed” Jesus (**Mark 1:17-18**). They did not have their own agenda. Their agenda was set by Christ himself. Christ’s commission was their own commission.

The prophets of the Old Testament predicted the nature of the commission of the Messiah. Many prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, but one passage in particular defines the commission that Christ received from his Father.

### **Read Luke 4:17-21**

This commission included both a description of the anointing upon the Lord Jesus, and the actual ministry itself:

- To preach the good news to the poor
- To proclaim freedom for the prisoners
- To proclaim recovery of sight for the blind
- To release the oppressed
- To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor

When Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,” this was in part what he was referring to. The commission that Jesus had received he was now passing on to us. Christ’s commission equals our commission.

### **Read John 12:44-45**

God’s intention is that people will see in us the one who sent us, just as they did in Jesus. This is the nature of a commission – a person is sent to represent the sender. In Biblical culture, this makes the sender and the messenger who is sent “one” in message and purpose.

## **Understanding the Commission**

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During his time of ministry on the earth, Christ gave two specific commissions to his disciples:

### ***The Limited Commission***

#### **Read Matthew 10:5-16**

The instructions that Jesus gave to his disciples were very specific:

- Go only to the “lost sheep” of Israel, and not to the Gentiles or Samaritans.
- Preach this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near.”
- Heal the sick
- Raise the dead
- Cleanse those with leprosy
- Drive out demons

This commission is defined by Christ’s pre-Cross mandate (read **Matthew 15:24**). It was a time-limited and space-limited commission, ending at the Cross (note **Luke 22:35-36**).

## ***The Great Commission***

### **Read Matthew 28:18-20**

Notice the universal nature of this commission:

- All authority
- All nations
- Everything
- Always

This commission is often called “the Great Commission,” because it supercedes the limited commission Jesus had previously given. Unlike the earlier commission, this one has no time or space restrictions, because the commission of Jesus himself has become unbounded. Our commission is now defined by Christ’s post-Cross mandate (**Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Acts 26:23**).

For the purposes of our study, the word “commission” has two basic meanings:

- The authority given to the sent one to act on behalf of the sender
- The charter or mandate within which a sent one acts on behalf of the sender

The Great Commission of **Matthew 28:18-20** provides both the authority and the mandate. This is your charter for ministry. No matter what the description of your ministry, it will fall within the parameters of this charter. Are you called as a pastor? Your pastoral ministry is defined by the Great Commission. Are you called as a counsellor? Your counselling ministry is defined by the Great Commission. Are you called as an intercessor? Your intercessory ministry is defined by the Great Commission.

So important is this commission that the timing of the return of the Lord Jesus is predicated upon its fulfillment.

### **Read Matthew 24:14**

## **The Strategy of the Gospel**

The focus of the Great Commission is the Gospel. It is the Gospel that shapes the commission you have received and also the strategy of how that commission is to be fulfilled. There is a clear two-part strategy to the Gospel:

## ***A come strategy***

### **Read Matthew 4:19**

The first part of the Gospel strategy is to *come*:

- Come near to God (**James 4:8; Revelation 3:20; Mark 6:31**)
- Come to the spring of living water (**Revelation 22:17; Jeremiah 2:13**)
- Come and follow Jesus (**John 12:26; Mark 1:16-18**)
- Come and be trained (**Luke 6:40; Matthew 11:28-30**)
- Come together in fellowship (**Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 14:26**)

The purpose of this “come strategy” is to equip the believer for ministry (**Ephesians 4:12,15-16**). As we come together regularly, the Holy Spirit works to cause the Gospel to become an integrated part of the believer’s life.

## ***A go strategy***

### **Read Romans 10:13-15**

The second part of the Gospel strategy is to *go*:

- Go out as workers in the harvest field (**Luke 10:1-3**)
- Go into the highways and byways (**Luke 14:21-23**)
- Go into all the world (**Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 15:20**)
- Go and bear fruit (**John 15:16**)
- Go and make disciples of all nations (**Matthew 28:19**)

The “go strategy” involves the taking of the Gospel out to where the people are – not waiting for them to come to you.

It is important for us to see these two parts of the Gospel strategy clearly. If we do not, we might get the come-go strategies reversed. We end up having a come strategy for evangelism (“Come to church and be saved!”) and a go strategy for training (“Go to that place to be trained!”). The Biblical pattern is to have a come strategy for training and a go strategy for evangelism.

### **Read Romans 16:25-26**

### **Read John 17:20-22**

### **Read Colossians 1:3-6**

One part of the Gospel strategy will not work without the other:

- In *coming*, God establishes us in His Gospel
- In *going*, we take that Gospel out to other lives

### **Read John 10:36**

Here we see Jesus describing the come-go strategy of his commission as being “set apart” and “sent.” You can never be sent unless you have first been set apart. Only then will you effectively express:

- The words of the sender (**John 14:24; 5:30**)
- The actions of the sender (**John 5:19**)

## Under Authority

### Read again Matthew 28:18

The preamble of the Great Commission establishes the authority upon which we have been commissioned. Jesus declared:

“...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go...”

The Great Commission is backed by the full authority of God’s throne. But to be effective in that commission, we need to come under the authority of God. This means obedience – going, coming and doing as we are commanded.

### Read Matthew 8:9

The centurion had a clear understanding of what both authority and obedience meant. To him, this authority was expressed in three types of command:

- Going
- Coming
- Doing

As part of the Great Commission, we too need to be *coming* to Lord, *going* where he sends us, and *doing* the things he commands – not just for big decisions, but on an every day basis.

## The Message of the Gospel

### Read Mark 1:14-15

### Read Matthew 4:17

The Gospel is described in many ways throughout the Bible. It is called:

- The Gospel of grace (**Acts 20:24**)
- The Gospel of salvation (**Ephesians 1:13**)
- The Gospel of peace (**Ephesians 6:15**)
- The Gospel of the glory of Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:4**)
- The Gospel of the kingdom (**Matthew 24:14**)

As we discovered in **Module 102**, the word *gospel* means “good news.” The good news of God’s kingdom is based upon three solid facts:

- Satan has been defeated (**Matthew 12:24-29; Colossians 2:15**)
- God’s judgment has been satisfied on the Cross (**Ephesians 1:7**).
- A new life – now and in eternity – has been opened up in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:25**).

### Read Acts 26:17-18

### Read Colossians 1:13

The commission you have received involves both the communication of the *message* of the Gospel and the impartation of the *power* of the Gospel to people.

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## Separated for the Gospel

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### Read Romans 1:1

Paul summed up his whole ministry as being “set apart for the gospel of God.” To be “set apart” means to be “dedicated for special use” (**Acts 13:2**). As we respond to the Great Commission, our lives are set apart for the purposes of God. Then, like Paul in **Acts 20:24**, we can say:

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”