

session 1 study guide

the great commission

starter

MAD BIBLELIBS: Get together with four or five people. Have one person in the group ask the others to provide the appropriate type of word for each blank in the following paragraphs. Make sure that the person does not read the sentence—just have him or her ask for the word. When all of the blanks have been filled in, read each paragraph aloud.

jonah

It came to pass that Jonah, a (adjective) _____ man, was asked by the Lord to go to (place) _____ and to tell all the people there that they should turn from their evil (nouns) _____. But Jonah, because he was (adjective) _____, refused to go and instead decided to travel by (mode of transportation) _____ to (place) _____. However, while Jonah was asleep under the (noun) _____, the Lord caused the sea to be (adjective) _____, and the (noun) _____ decided to throw Jonah into the (liquid) _____. As Jonah (verb) _____ for his life, he was swallowed by a giant (animal) _____. Jonah begged the Lord for forgiveness and was then given a second (noun) _____. He was thrown up on the (noun) _____ and, with a (facial expression) _____ across his face, he went on to do as he was told.

noah

Many years ago, the Lord looked upon the people of the earth and saw that they were very (adjective) _____. So the Lord decided to send a great (noun) _____ that would cover the entire (noun) _____. Now, Noah was a (adjective) _____ man, and

the Lord said to him, “Noah, go build yourself a (noun) _____. Go out and gather up both male and female of every living (noun) _____ and put them inside the (noun) _____.” So Noah did as God instructed. And when he was (adjective) _____, the (liquid) _____ began to fall from the (noun) _____. All of the (adjective) _____ people began to cry out, (exclamation) “_____,” but it did them no good. (Number)_____ days later, the (weather pattern) _____ stopped. Noah sent a (animal) _____ out of the window to see if the ground was (adjective) _____. It flew back with a (noun) _____, and the Lord sent a (adjective) _____ rainbow to let Noah know that never again would He destroy the world with a (noun)_____.

message

After Jesus’ resurrection, He met with His disciples in Galilee and gave them a final command that has since become known as the “Great Commission.” This commission represented the task that Jesus wanted them to accomplish during their time on earth, as His work was now finished and He would soon be ascending to heaven. Each part of the Great Commission had great significance to the disciples—just as it has great significance for us, His disciples today. Jesus’ words are recorded in Matthew 28:18-20:

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.

Let’s take a look at each section of this final command to discover why it is so significant for us today.

1. First, in Matthew 28:18, Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Notice that Jesus did not take His authority from anyone—it was given to Him because it was rightfully His. Based on this verse, what authority does Jesus have?

2. How does having this authority affect the meaning of Jesus' words?

3. In verse 19, Jesus says to “go and make disciples of all nations.” The word “go” is both a command and an encouragement to take action on our faith. What is a “disciple”? Who were Jesus' disciples?

4. How would we “make disciples”?

5. Where are we to go? Who are we supposed to invite to become disciples?

6. Jesus then says to baptize these disciples “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Given this, what is a person saying when he or she makes the decision to become baptized?

7. What is the significance of saying, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” before being baptized?

8. Why is baptism an important part of becoming a disciple?

9. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says to teach these disciples “to obey everything I have commanded you.” Given this, what is our job when we witness to others about Christ?

10. How can a person know what Jesus wants them to do?

11. Jesus concludes by stating, “And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” How does the fact that Jesus is always with His followers help them to accomplish the job of making other disciples?

12. What does this verse tell you about Jesus’ relationship with His disciples?

dig

Jesus' final words to His disciples are recorded in Acts 1. After giving them the Great Commission, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them and guide them as they went out to do His will on the earth. In Acts 1:6-11 we read the following:

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

1. In this passage, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come to live in each believer after He ascended to heaven. How would the Holy Spirit help the disciples carry out the Great Commission?

2. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus uses the words "make disciples," while in Acts 1:8 He uses the words "be my witnesses" to describe what He wants them to do. How do these phrases describe the job that Jesus gives to His followers?

3. How do you think the words of “the men dressed in white” encouraged the disciples?

4. When Peter received the Holy Spirit, He immediately followed Jesus’ command and told others how to become disciples of Jesus. Jesus entrusted the job of making disciples to people like Peter—and to people like us. Why is carrying out the Great Commission so important for all followers of Christ?

5. What would happen if we didn’t obey this command?

6. What promise have we been given as we seek to make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:20)?

7. When will the work of the Great Commission be completed (see Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:11)?

apply

If you are working through this study in a group, get together with three or four others. Read each of the following statements and list one item for each blank:

The good news is _____,
but the bad news is _____.

The good news is _____,
but the bad news is _____.

The good news is _____,
but the bad news is _____.

The good news is _____,
but the bad news is _____.

The good news is _____,
but the bad news is _____.

Share your good news/bad news responses with the group, and then consider the following questions in light of Jesus' command to make disciples:

1. How does it feel to receive good news?

2. How does it feel to receive bad news?

3. God chooses to use His followers to reach others with the good news of freedom from sin and eternal life through Jesus. Because of this, if we don't share the gospel with others, there may be some people who will not have the opportunity to become part of God's family. Read Matthew 9:35-37. How does Jesus describe the people who are waiting to hear the good news?

4. How do you tend to feel toward people who need Jesus? Does your attitude match that of Christ's? Why or why not?

5. Who are three people in your life right now that need your love, care and the opportunity to hear about belonging to Jesus Christ?

6. What fears do you have when it comes to telling others about Jesus?

7. What can we as members of our youth group do to follow the Great Commission?

reflect

When Jesus returns to this world as He promised, the time for making disciples will be over. For each person, the opportunity to become a disciple ends when his or her life ends or upon Jesus' return. Having a heart for people who haven't accepted Jesus' love and forgiveness is key to wanting to obey Jesus by making disciples.

Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) is an excellent example of someone whose heart was changed and softened when he obediently showed God's love to others. Francis, born Giovanni Francesco di Bernardone, enjoyed a rich and easy life as a young man because of his father's wealth and the permissiveness of the times. What he wanted from life was glory. But just when he was on the verge of achieving it, God met him in a dream and told him to “serve the Master, not men.”

This caused Francis to go through a time of spiritual crisis, during which time he quietly searched for something worthy of his complete devotion. One day while he was out riding, he met a leper. The leper was loathsome and repulsive in the ugliness of his disease. Nonetheless, in a decisive moment of illumination, Francis suddenly perceived in this leper the embodiment of God's beauty—a human being to be loved and cared for tenderly. He dismounted his horse, gave the leper all the money he had on him, and kissed his hand. Francis was never the same again.

When Francis learned to understand and cherish each individual person as a unique reflection of God's creative genius, a true attitude of human concern and compassion began to form within him. Through grace, Francis turned his initial revulsion at the sight of a leper into a personal triumph over judgment, bigotry and false assumptions. In turn, this impulse led to a movement of peace that would affect legions of people for centuries.

Francis of Assisi spent the rest of his life serving his Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote these famous words as a prayer to God from the heart of a man who had a deep desire to be an instrument of God's will on this earth: “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.”

1. How have you seen people—famous and ordinary—carry out the Great Commission today?

2. Read 1 Peter 3:8-9 and 13-15. What attitudes do you see in the prayer of Francis of Assisi and these verses from 1 Peter? Why is the right attitude important for those who want to follow Jesus and make disciples?

3. What challenges does the Great Commission give to you?

4. Someone once said, “Whether it’s next door or in another country, it is not an option but a command to share the good news.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

5. What is your heart’s attitude toward people who are lost? What would help your attitude be more like that of Jesus (see Matthew 9:35-37)?

6. Whose power should we rely on when sharing the good news about Jesus (see John 16:13 and Acts 2:38)?

meditation



But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long,
though I know not its measure. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts,
O Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone.

PSALM 71:14-16