

## Small Group Leaders Notes

### Matthew 28:16-20

#### Context

- **Matthew's Gospel** - It can be very easy to read 'The Great Commission' in isolation and forget the context of Matthew's gospel in which it is situated. Jesus has been powerfully raised from the dead and now he gives his people his marching orders before he ascends into heaven. The disciples are to go and make disciples of all nations by baptising and 'teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' This is a vital phrase in the context of Matthew's gospel because Matthew's gospel is full of Jesus' teaching. Matthew structures his gospel around 5 major teaching blocks (chs 5-7, ch10, ch13, ch18 and chs24-25.) When we see this we see that Matthew's gospel is about making disciples. Matthew is giving us Jesus' teaching so that we can go and make disciples and also grow as disciples ourselves. In this sense the big application of Matthew's gospel is found here in 28:16-20 - go and make disciples. If we really do believe that Jesus is the risen Messiah who has been given all authority and power then we will go and make disciples for him.
- **The Whole Bible** - We must read these verses in the context of Genesis 12:1-3. God promised Abram that through him and his descendants God would bless the whole world. Now through Jesus God's blessing and rule is going to all nations as his people go and make disciples. The blessing promised to Abraham is found as we become disciples of Jesus, bowing the knee in repentance and faith.

Big Idea - Disciples are learners of Christ who obey him not just believe in him!

#### **Applications**

- **Us as Disciples** - Jesus defines discipleship for us. A disciple is someone who has been baptised (a symbol of our genuine repentance and faith in Christ) who then receives Jesus teaching and obeys it! As disciples of Jesus we are not just to believe that he died and rose for us. We are then to obey what he tells us to do. This passage challenges us to look seriously at our obedience. Are we people who are hungry for Jesus' teaching and then eager to put it into practice. In the words of Matthew 7:24-27, 'are we those who are actively building our house on the rock?' In 28:16-20 Jesus commands us to go and make disciples? Are we obeying this command of Jesus? We might not be overseas missionaries but are we actively seeking to go and make disciples where God has placed us?
- **Us as Disciple Makers** - Some argue that this command was just for the apostles but I don't think this is true because they are referred to as disciples in 28:16. Jesus gives his disciples the command to go and make disciples and so if we are disciples then this command is for us. Our role in making disciples of all nations will be different to them (we're not apostolic eyewitnesses of the resurrection) but we are to be actively involved as we go and speak to people. Very often our approach to making disciples has been a 'come and see' approach where we invite people to church or a course of an event and then hand them over to the preacher/speaker to do the work of making disciples. There is undoubtedly a place for this, but here Jesus is commanding us to 'Go' not just invite. We are to go to people where they are with the gospel. As more and more people live and work in different places it is not possible to invite a colleague from work to church because they often live in a different town or city. We cannot therefore rely on inviting them to church. We need to be trained and equipped to go and make disciples where

we meet them. It is this idea of personally going to make disciples that we will focus on in this study.

### Questions

**Starter - Give everyone a copy of the table and ask them to fill in the 5 columns with the names of non-Christians who they know in each sphere of life.**

*Reassure people that it is ok if they have more names in one column and fewer names in other columns. We all live very different lives depending on our age and stage of life and whether we're working. Someone who is retired may know a lot more people in their neighbourhood whereas someone who is working will know more people in their workplace. People don't have to share the names or show people their table though you may want to ask people how they found this exercise and if anything stands out to them?*

**1. Have a look at Matthew 28:19-20 and Matthew 16:24-25. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? What's involved? How can we become a disciple of Jesus? How can we grow as disciples of Jesus? What does it look like to be growing as a disciple of Jesus?**

*You don't have to ask all these questions because many of them overlap but you can use as many of them as you need to help people get into the passages. The big thing that we want our groups to see that a disciple is someone who has been baptised (you may need to tease out that this is a symbol of repentance) and that they are learning to obey Jesus' teaching. A disciple isn't just a believer, a disciple is a learner. Matthew 16:24-25 helps us to see that this learning Jesus will involve denying ourselves and even making painful sacrifices so as to put Jesus first and obey his teaching.*

**2. Jesus tells us to go and make disciples of all nations. What encouragements does he give us in these verses?**

*The encouragements come in v16 and v20 sandwiching the command to go and make disciples. Firstly Jesus is the risen King who has been given all authority over everyone everywhere. That means that wherever we go and whoever we speak to ultimately belongs to Jesus. We are to go and tell everyone everywhere about Jesus because he is the rightful King of everyone everywhere. The second great encouragement in these verses comes in v20 when he reassures us that he is always with us and will never leave us. Jesus has given us his Spirit to help us so no matter where we go or who we speak to we are not alone!*

**3. Look at Acts 18:26-27. What do these verses tell us about God? How does he use his power and authority? Think about the people you know, how does this change the way you think about them?**

*We're going to this passage because we want to see how God uses his power and authority for mission. God has ordained where and when everyone lives so that people will come to know him! That is an amazing thought! It is not by chance that you live and work where you do and with the people you do. It's not random that your neighbours are your neighbours. God has placed them there so that they will come to know him. That means that we are the most important person that our non-Christians friends, colleagues, neighbours and family know because we know Jesus! When we begin to grasp that God orders where we live and work and who we spend time with so that they will become Christians it really does begin to transform how we think about day to day life. Spend a fair*

*bit of time on this helping the group to think about this in their situation. You could do this by breaking into smaller groups.*

**4. Have a look at 2 Corinthians 4:1-6. Who is involved in making disciples? What's God's job? What's our job?**

*Here we want to see that our job is to preach Christ but it's God's job to open blind eyes. We can't do that, it takes a miracle like creation to open someone's eyes but wonderfully God does this as ordinary people like us speak about Jesus. If God could do a miracle of opening our blind eyes then he can open anyone's blind eyes. We need to see this so that we are clear on what we are to do. We can't make someone a Christian, only God can do that, but we are to speak about Jesus and share the gospel with them and then pray desperately for God to open their eyes.*

**5. In pairs or smaller groups. Think about one sphere of life (work, home, neighbour etc.) What could you do to be more intentional about making disciples in that context?**

*Everyone's situation will be different so everyone will come up with different things which is fine. Encourage the group not just to think about inviting someone to church or an event. Encourage the group to think about how they can move towards actually speaking to people about Jesus themselves. Perhaps they could be intentional about getting to know new people at work or on their street? Perhaps they need to make more time to spend with friends or family? Perhaps a first step would be to let people know that we are Christians. We can all get better at asking good questions? For example after a weekend take a genuine interest in what other people did at the weekend and when they then ask us about our weekend be prepared to talk about church? Perhaps you could invite Christian and non-Christian friends to the same thing (e.g. a meal or going to watch sport.)*

*The aim in all this is to get us thinking practically about the small steps that we can be taking to help move others slowly towards becoming disciples of Christ.*

### Personal Mission Field

Family	Leisure	Neighbourhood	Work	Church

*For each sphere of your life fill in a list of non-Christian contacts that you have.  
Don't worry about whether you have more or less contacts than other people.  
Don't worry if you have lots of contacts in one sphere of life and hardly any in another  
sphere of life.*