

THE GREAT COMMISSION

What Now?

Matthew 28:16–20

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

As the end of the conference drew near, the decision makers discussed, “What now?” When William Carey realized these decision makers favored the wide road with a smooth path, he grabbed Andrew Fuller’s arm crying out, “Is nothing again going to be done?”

William Carey wanted a missionary society that supported international workers who would make disciples among people who had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Eventually, his vision materialized, and he became one of those workers, going to India. For more than 40 years, without returning home, he translated the Bible, preached the gospel, and made disciples. We now know William Carey (1761–1834) as the father of modern missions.

The global vision that compelled Carey comes from the words Jesus spoke in Matthew 28:16–20—the passage we’ll study today. As Christians, we’re indebted to those who’ve proclaimed Jesus’ message before us and summoned by our Lord to continue in that worthy endeavor so others, too, may enjoy Christ.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You may want to ask a friend or your church small group to join you in this four-part series for the next few weeks. Glean each other’s insights in this study and encourage one another as you carry out Jesus’ Great Commission. You could also participate with Chuck Swindoll here at Insight for Living Ministries in *Vision 195*—our mission to reach all 195 countries with the message of God’s majesty.

In case you’re wondering what Bible translation Chuck likes to use, he prefers the New Living Translation as well as the New American Standard Bible. If you want to add resources to your library, you may want *The Swindoll Study Bible* which is a wonderful aid for mining the gold of Scripture and using it in your life. If you don’t have a Bible atlas or dictionary, we recommend the *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible* and the *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*.

Quotable

*The plan Jesus set
in motion, before
He ascended back
into heaven, is
the only plan that
will work.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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It's always important to pray before reading God's Word. Since we'll focus on Jesus' global mission, read Psalm 67:2–3 below, and write it as a prayer in your own words while also requesting God's aid in this study.

*May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.*

May the nations praise you, O God.

Yes, may all the nations praise you.



Observation: Reading Closely

Chuck details his Bible study method in his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*. It's the same method we use in these studies to help you prepare your own spiritual meals—a vital skill for all Christians.

We begin with observation—discovering what the Bible says by reading it slowly and paying attention to the words the author uses. It's simple. The only difficulty comes from its principal requirement: patience. We can't hurry observation.

Read Matthew 28:16–20, and note questions you may have about the text or anything that stands out to you. In observation, we ask interpretive questions, but we don't answer them until step two.



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According to Matthew 28:17, the eleven disciples responded in what two ways to Jesus?

_____ and _____

According to 28:18, how much authority has been given to Jesus? _____

According to 28:19, to what nations did Jesus send His disciples? _____

According to 28:20, which of Jesus' commands are His disciples to obey? _____

According to 28:20, how long will Jesus be with His people? _____

Did you catch the “therefore” in 28:19? In observation, we note the logical connection of statements—especially when we see connectives like “therefore.” So how does the “therefore” connect verse 28:19 with verse 28:18?



Interpretation: Gaining Clarity

Once we've observed what the text says, we then seek to understand what it means. The second step for studying the Bible is interpretation. In this step, we want to see through the author's eyes as best we can—and this requires some rigorous study. We do this to avoid importing our own definitions into the author's words and imposing our own opinions into the author's meaning.

The Setting—Matthew 28:16–17

First, we examine the setting of our passage. Begin by looking up *Galilee* (Matthew 28:16) in your Bible dictionary and atlas. Note anything interesting you find. Why do you think Jesus wanted to meet His disciples there instead of in Jerusalem where they were? Look at Matthew 28:10.



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Matthew 28:16–20

Imagine seeing the resurrected Jesus on that mountain in Galilee. His new, immortal body appeared in such an awesome state—perhaps in dazzling white like at His transfiguration—that the disciples who recognized Jesus worshiped Him and those who didn't recognize Jesus doubted it was Him. What a sight that must have been!

The Great Commission—Matthew 28:18–20a

With unadorned words, Jesus opened His mouth once more and taught His disciples. He began with a statement—not a command. It is this declaration in 28:18 that Matthew developed throughout his entire gospel. With a passive verb, explosive meaning emerges: Jesus is of God. Jesus' listeners caught only glimpses of Jesus' authority, but none could quite grasp it. The inconceivable happened in Matthew 28. What was that event, and how did it prove Jesus' authority?

Rephrase Jesus' statement "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth" in your own words. Doing this increases our understanding because we must know what the text means before we can restate it.

According to Matthew 28:18–20a, how do we make disciples and what does a disciple do?

Matthew intended his readers to use Jesus' teaching recorded in this book to make disciples in all nations. What a thought! We can read the very words written by a man who knew Jesus personally almost two thousand years ago. What a privilege to study God's Word!





Correlation: Comparing Passages of Scripture

Correlation follows interpretation in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method. We correlate a biblical passage by comparing its meaning with the meaning of other biblical passages. Sometimes correlation is essential to interpretation, which is the case with our passage.

Jesus told His disciples to baptize new disciples. Matthew also mentioned baptism at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 3). What he said there will help us understand the significance of baptism in 28:19 because the meaning is more explicit. So peruse Matthew 3.

According to Matthew 3:1–2, 6, what did people do before they were baptized and what did they seek?

Now that we understand Matthew's theological explanation of baptism, what is baptism's significance in Matthew 28:19? When new disciples are baptized, what should they do and under whose authority do they pledge themselves?

By the way, did you notice who Jesus met with? Not the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin nor the military generals representing the hard fist of Rome. Jesus "told his disciples" (28:18). Yes, He met with normal folks like you and me to carry out His only plan to redeem the world.



The Divine Assurance—Matthew 28:20b

Did you notice Jesus' words of comfort? How does Jesus' assurance in Matthew 28:20b allow His disciples to carry out His command described in Matthew 28:19?

Just think—the God of the universe cares about us, gives us purpose in life, reveals to us His plan for the world, and equips us with His presence to do what He commands.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me.¹

Application: Living Powerfully

We leave our Bible study incomplete without applying it to our lives. The Bible, combined with God's Spirit, is power. We're weak, but with His power, we're strong.

In Matthew 28:16–20, Jesus spoke a simple, clear plan to ordinary people like you and me. As Chuck observed, Jesus' brief statement displays that He is intense about the mission but relaxed regarding the method. Take a bit of time to reflect and write down how you have participated in Jesus' Great Commission.

If you feel like you are lodged in a spiritual rut, consider changing your normal routine of how you engage in the Great Commission.



If you want to change it up, pray for clarity and wisdom as to how God would have you move forward in a new way in His Great Commission. If He's made it clear, then pray for courage to do what He's revealed. Write down the one thing you know to do this week, or perhaps even today, to further His plan of making disciples—whether you do it every week or you've never done it before.

God will always guide you as you share in new ways the glorious news of His Son, Jesus. Remember Paul's words in Colossians?

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. (Colossians 4:2–3)

It is this prayer we're praying for you. May God give you opportunities to speak out His mysterious, glorious plan of Christ to those who desperately need good news.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for making Your plan simple and clear and for using me to further Your purposes. I pray for a renewed sense of that purpose, greater enthusiasm in it, and an extra measure of urgency for accomplishing Your Great Commission. I know many have not heard, so please use me as You will for Your Son's glory. It's in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

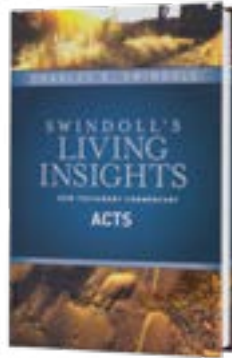
ENDNOTE

1. Samuel Trevor Francis, "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus," in *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (Nashville: Word Music/Integrity Music, 1997), hymn 352.





Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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