

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY NINETEEN

Challenged by Jesus on the Mountain

Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–15; Acts 1:6–8

The goal of the Great Commission is to make disciples. It's reaching people with the gospel and then staying with them as they grow in the faith.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FORTY days. That was all the time the disciples had between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension to see their risen Savior. It was a narrow but precious window of time.

No one knew how Jesus came and went. His glorified body was unconstrained by time or space or physical barriers. When He appeared to His disciples in a locked room, all John could say was, "Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!" (John 20:19).

He appeared so casually that people often didn't recognize Him at first. Mary Magdalene thought He was the gardener. The two men on the road to Emmaus viewed Him as a fellow traveler. To the seven disciples on the Sea of Galilee, He was a curious stranger calling from the shore.

When Jesus appeared, He acted normally. He sat at a table, ate a meal, and conversed. But He was intentional. He took time to restore the fallen and encourage the doubting. He also delivered vital instructions, which He issued in two mountaintop meetings.

On a mountain in Galilee, Jesus gave His marching orders for His disciples until He returns—the Great Commission. On the Mount of Olives, He explained how they would receive power to fulfill their mission. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll examine both mountaintop moments when Jesus' gave parting words before His ascension.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Pray for insight to understand Jesus' commands and for strength to fulfill His mission.

Father, I treasure every word Jesus spoke. May His truth penetrate my heart and direct my steps. Give me the courage to follow His commands. Help me to know my role in spreading His message and fulfilling the Great Commission. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus commissioned His disciples to their ministry in the same region He began His ministry, Galilee. Matthew didn't pinpoint the location; he only stated,

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him—but some of them doubted! (Matthew 28:16–17).

On this mountain, Jesus appeared in His new, immortal body, and yet, He still bore the scars from His sacrifice for our sins. No wonder the disciples worshiped Him . . . *and yet some doubted*. Perhaps they were uncertain how they could carry on without the Master. Jesus strengthened His weak-kneed disciples with words that have launched countless fearful but willing disciples to boldly proclaim His name.



Observation: The Great Commission

Read *Matthew 28:18–20* slowly and thoughtfully, highlighting key words and central phrases. Notice the words that repeat.

How much authority has been given to Jesus?

To what nations did Jesus send His disciples?

Which of Jesus' commands are His disciples to obey?



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How long will Jesus be with His people?

How does the connecting word, “therefore,” link *Matthew 28:19* with *28:18*? On what foundational truth was Jesus’ command to “make disciples” based?

What is the central command in *28:19*—the goal of the Great Commission?

How did Jesus say to accomplish that goal in *28:19–20*?

What is the objective? To make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are subordinate to the main command, “make disciples.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Jesus' Plan to Reach All Nations

Each component of this passage aids our interpretation. Even the setting is meaningful.

“The mountain”—Matthew 28:16–17

In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll suggests a possible site as Mount Arbel. This vantage point would have given the disciples a panoramic view of the Galilee region and the international highways that linked Israel to the world.¹

What did Jesus communicate to His disciples through this setting?

Review the prophecy about Galilee at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in *Matthew 4:12–17*. Do you see any interpretive connections between the launch of Jesus' ministry and His commissioning of His disciples?

“All Authority in Heaven and on Earth”—Matthew 28:18

Matthew developed the theme of Christ's authority throughout his gospel (7:29; 9:6; 16:1–4; 21:23–27), culminating in Jesus' authority over death in His resurrection.



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What did Jesus mean by, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18)? Try restating His declaration in your own words to draw out its meaning.

“Make Disciples”—Matthew 28:19

Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples, not just converts. What does *disciple* mean? What characteristics distinguish a disciple? Pastor Chuck’s commentary can help with the answer. For an online resource, read the article, “*What is the difference between a Christian and a disciple?*” at gotquestions.org.

The goal is not just winning souls. Jesus looked these men in the eyes and, with scars on His hands and His feet, He said, “Make disciples.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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“Go . . . Baptizing . . . Teaching”—Matthew 28:18–19

Making disciples requires going, baptizing, and teaching. Let’s take a closer look at these three concepts.

Go has the force of a command. It can mean go to “all the nations.” It can also mean “in our going” as we live our daily lives. When we go, what good news do we communicate?

Baptizing includes not only the rite of baptism, but also the spiritual meaning. According to Pastor Chuck, baptizing is “initiating people into a conscious commitment to the triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”² Why is baptism essential to discipleship?

Teaching builds on the foundation of a person’s saving faith in Christ. What do we teach, according to *Matthew 28:20*? What are some examples?



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“I am with you always”—Matthew 28:20

How does Jesus’ assurance in [Matthew 28:20](#) encourage and empower His disciples?

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!

The disciples were still wearing the same old robes they wore when they walked with Him. They still had the same dirty sandals. The same bad habits. They were just folks. The Great Commission is about folks like us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

In the upper room before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. According to [John 16:8, 13–15](#), what did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do to aid His disciples in their mission?



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Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He met His disciples one last time. The setting for this encounter was the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem, and Jesus had a final word of instruction for them. According to *Acts 1:8*, what did Jesus say about the source of their power, the job they were to do, and where they were to go?

“Jerusalem” is where you live. Start there. “Judea” is the surrounding area. “Samaria” is the place you might not choose to go, but God will still use you. Go to the whole world!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: The Great Commission, Our Mission

What principles can we apply from Christ’s Great Commission? At least four streams of application flow from His powerful words.

First, *Jesus spoke to very ordinary people who knew Him personally*. No super-spiritual saints were in the group of people who received the Great Commission. They were people just like us.

Second, *Jesus presented a plan that was brief, simple, and clear*. Anyone can grasp the action points—*make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching*. His plan is doable because we operate under His authority and in His power, not our own.

Third, *Jesus was intense about the mission but relaxed regarding the method*. Jesus used the word *all* to communicate His passion: “all authority,” “all the nations,” “all the commands I have given you” (Matthew 28:18–20). We must be “all in” regarding His mission, but Jesus didn’t specify how to go, baptize, or teach. We can adapt our ministries to be as effective as possible.

Fourth, *Jesus expected obedient action from all His followers*. Each follower of Christ *can* participate in the Great Commission, and we should. Making disciples is not optional.



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As you conclude this study, pray for clarity and wisdom about 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 to further His plan.

God will always guide you as you find new ways to share the glorious news of His Son, Jesus. May God give you opportunities to speak about His mysterious, glorious plan in Christ to those who desperately need good news.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I give You my heart, hands, and feet in Your Son's service. Give wings to the words of the gospel as I proclaim Your truth to others. Motivate me to find new ways to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission. Thank You for the reassurance of Your Son's abiding presence and the Spirit's energizing power to make Your kingdom's presence felt on earth. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 320–21. "It is quite possible that, at this gathering, the group numbered over five hundred. . . . Paul mentioned that at some point 'He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time' (1 Cor. 15:6). . . . If so, this would also mean that the Great Commission was meant not only for the small circle of eleven disciples but also for this larger group of His followers—and, by extension, for you and for me."
2. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, 321.

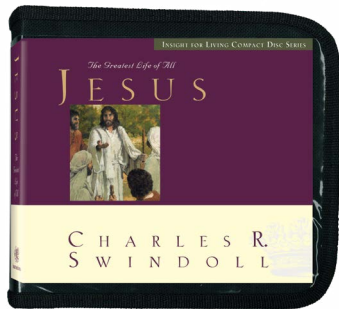


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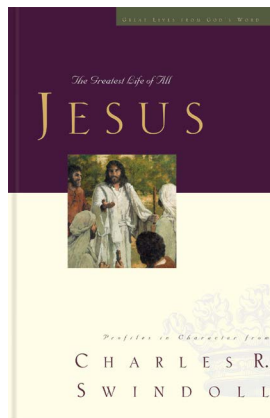
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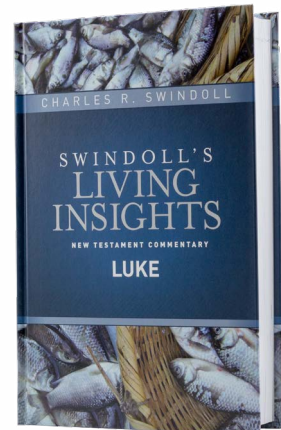
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For the 2023-2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

