



The Great Expedition

May 26, 2024

Jesus came to them and said, “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.”

Matthew 28:18-20

It is easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects—education, building, missions, holding services ...the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.

C.S. Lewis

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Colossians 1:28

I want to take us back to the Great Commission itself because it's not about evangelism, *it's actually about discipleship*. Now, we must not stop sharing the good news. But here's the wonderful thing. It gets done along the way as you do discipleship. And what happens as you disciple them? Evangelism takes place *because it's done in the context of discipleship*. *We have to reframe evangelism within the context of discipleship.*

Alan Hirsch

Evangelism and discipleship (as it is commonly understood)—are really the front side and back side of the same coin. The coin is discipleship. *Evangelism is simply pre-conversion discipleship*. Evangelism and discipleship are not two things; they are one.

Bobby Harrington, *Discipleship.org*

Look how Jesus does this. Who here wants to say that the disciples in the gospels were born again right up front? If you look at what Jesus is doing, he's got a whole lot of pre-conversion disciples. In other words, he's just discipling them. They're not born again. That's what we should do. That's missional discipleship, that's the Great Commission, discipleship, just disciple the nations and in the way they get to hear the story of Jesus through your life. But don't focus on the evangelism part, focus on discipleship.

Alan Hirsch

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, *and his disciples put their faith in him.*

John 2:11

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "*Truly you are the Son of God.*"

Matthew 14:32-33

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Matthew 16:15-17

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, *you have believed*; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:26-29

Many of today's evangelism tools that clearly communicate the gospel were created in the middle of the twentieth century. This was a time and world very different from the world we live in today in the United States. It was a time and world in which many non-Christians likely fell somewhere between the T and Z on scale. They knew spiritual words like sin and salvation. They knew popular Bible stories. They most likely went to church with their family and other families in their neighborhood.

In other words, these evangelism tools were created at a time in history when many non-Christians were open and interested in learning about Jesus. However, many of the people who now cross our paths, and who don't know Jesus, more likely fall somewhere much closer to A–S (atheism or possible agnosticism).

Additionally, the work of evangelism has *shifted from singular gospel conversations to ongoing spiritual conversations* that help others move one step at a time closer to responding to the gospel and receiving Christ into their life. To use the terminology of the A to Z spiritual interest scale, we want to help others move from A to Z. In other words, those around us are now more likely to *progressively journey to faith in Christ* than they are to hear the gospel one time and place their faith in Christ. As sent ones, *God calls us to enter into their lives and help them take the next steps in their spiritual journey toward Christ.*

Heather and Ashley Holleman, Sent

We are a family moving everyday relationships into disciple-making journeys.