

**The Mission of the Church**  
**Matthew 28:18-20**  
**Part 4**

On the November ballot we will have the opportunity to vote on Proposition 8, a proposed constitutional amendment designed to overturn the present practice of granting marriage licenses to same sex couples in the State of California.

Will this ballot initiative pass? Since Proposition 8 reflects the biblical and traditional definition of marriage we might think that it would have a very good chance of passing, but this is not the case at all. In fact, it would appear that there is a good chance that Proposition 8 will not pass.

So how would the Lord have us to respond to this situation? Understanding how the Lord would have us to respond to the prospect of Proposition 8 not passing requires that we know three different things.

First of all, the church needs to know the real problem that we are facing in respect to the world. And what is the real problem that we are facing? The real problem facing the church today is that the world is spiritually dead and under the control of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Let me read for you **Ephesians 2:1-2** and see if this is not so. **“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”** So, what is the real problem facing the church today? The real problem facing the church today is that the world is spiritually dead and under the control of Satan. And it is this reality that explains why the world thinks as it thinks and acts as it acts.

So how are those who are of the world going to be delivered from this horrific spiritual state? Will they be delivered from their messed up thinking and unrighteous actions by petitions, protests, or the casting of ballots? No! None of those things will deliver them.

So if secular means, such as petitions, protests, and the casting of ballots is not the solution to the problem, what is? This question leads us to the second thing we need to know. And what is this second thing? We need to know God's solution for the real problem that we are facing in this world. And what is God's solution?

God's solution for the world's spiritual deadness and satanic control is the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

Let me read for you **Romans 1:16**. **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”** The gospel of Christ is God's solution and apart from the gospel there is no other solution. For it is only through the gospel of Christ that those who are spiritually dead can come alive and those who are under the control of Satan can be set free.

Understanding these two basic truths led us to the third thing we need to know. And what was this third thing we need to know if we are going to know how the Lord would have us to respond to the possible defeat of Proposition 8?

We need to know why we are here. And what was the answer to this question? We are here to make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20). In other words, we could say that we are here in this world for the purpose of reproduction, not biological reproduction but spiritual reproduction.

So how do we know this? This should be very clear to us based on the words of Christ to His disciples, in **Matthew 28:16-20**, at the end of His post-resurrection ministry just days before His ascension when He told them to **“make disciples of all nations.”**

This is the reason why we are here and this is the only reason we are here. We are not here to be plumbers, teachers, engineers, mothers, fathers or a best friend. We may, in fact, be all of these things but that is not the reason the Lord has left us in this world. Our sole purpose, our only purpose is this. We here are here to make disciples; or in other words, we are here for the purpose of spiritual reproduction.

So how important is this work? Consider this: if we by the grace of God fulfill this work we will indeed see those who are spiritually dead and under the control of Satan being set free from their horrific spiritual condition through the gospel of Christ, which is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes. And if we do not fulfill this work then those who are spiritually dead and under the control of Satan will not be set free from their horrific spiritual condition and will therefore remain as they are, meaning that they in time will ultimately experience eternal destruction.

So in light of this I would hope that each of us here this morning who are professing followers of Christ would want to do this work of making disciples, or in other words being fruitful and multiplying spiritual children well.

So the question we began to ask last week was this: If we are going to be an effective disciple maker, what must characterize our lives? In order to answer this question we went back to the text that contained Christ's original command to His followers, **“to make disciples of all nations,”** in **Matthew 28:16-20.**

So, what was the first thing we saw that must characterize our lives based on these verses? If we are going to be an effective disciple maker we must be characterized by the right attitude (Matthew 28:16-17). In other words, if we want to make disciples, or if we want to be involved in spiritual reproduction, we must approach this work with the right attitude.

And I believe that we see this right attitude in **Matthew 28:16-17.** **“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. (17) When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.”** So based on these two verses what is the attitude that must be present in every effective disciple maker?

Those who want to be an effective disciple maker must be wholeheartedly available to Christ. Not only had these disciples, which most likely numbered over 500 based on **1 Corinthians 15:6**, chosen to make themselves available at the mountain that Christ had designated during His post-resurrection ministry, but it is also clear that once Christ did in fact appear and came close enough to them that all their initial doubts about His true identity had been removed, they **“worshiped Him.”** In other words,

they became wholeheartedly available to Him and for the work that He was about to give them.

And the same thing is true for us. If we truly want to be an effective disciple maker, or if we want to be effective in the work of spiritual reproduction, then we must be all in. Or in other words, we cannot go about this work of disciple making in a half-baked way.

So if you and I are now bowed before Christ or are in fact wholeheartedly available to Him for this great work of disciple making, or to this great work of spiritual reproduction we are now ready to move on. So let us now consider a second thing that must characterize our lives if we are in fact going to be able to be an effective disciple maker. So what is this second thing?

Those who want to be an effective disciple maker must not only be characterized by a right attitude, but by right actions. And what are those right actions?

There are three specific actions that must characterize the life of an effective disciple maker based on Matthew 28:19-20. So let me read for you **Matthew 28:19-20** and see if this is not so. **“Go therefore [in light of all that I am, in light of all that I have done, and in light of all that I have been given, and do what?] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

“**Make disciples**” is the main verb in these two verses. Supporting this main verb are three different participles, “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” Therefore the three specific actions reflected by these participles are the actions that need to characterize the life of an effective disciples maker.

So hopefully as we consider these three actions we will see how truly demanding making disciples truly is. So, what is the first action?

The first action that must characterize the life of an effective disciple maker is that they are going into the world with the specific intent of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

Let me read for you the first part of **Matthew 28:19** and see if this is not so.  
**“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”**

Again we need to remember, even though the word “go” may appear to be a command by the way it is translated, it is not a command. In other words, it is not an imperative but rather the word “go” is grammatically in the Greek a participle that should be understood more as an assumption rather than as a command.

In other words, after Jesus, through His resurrection, confirmed that He in fact was the Christ the Son of the living God, who through His death had opened a door to heaven, He assumed that His followers would in fact go into the world with the specific intent of making disciples or with the specific intent of being involved in the ministry of spiritual reproduction.

And this assumption, on the part of Christ, certainly is a very reasonable assumption. How could we not go with this specific intent in light of what we have come to know to be true about Christ?

So for a moment let us consider “the birds and bees” of spiritual reproduction. How do we in fact produce a disciple? In other words, how do we produce a spiritual child?

Individuals become disciples when, after hearing the gospel message and desiring to be set free from sin and its consequences, choose as an expression of their faith to embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior. So can we say that we are committed to be an effective disciple maker without being committed to the sharing of the gospel of Christ? No! Of course not! This is how spiritual children are born.

Are you committed wholeheartedly to this work of bearing spiritual children or to this work of making disciples? Then what do you need to do? We need to share the gospel with as many people as possible.

Do you have an unsaved husband, wife, child, parent, friend, neighbor or acquaintance? If you do then, what do you need to be doing? You need to be prayerfully seeking opportunities to lovingly and sensitively sharing the gospel with them.

This work of disciple making, this work of spiritual reproduction must continually be on your mind at all times no matter where you might be. Does this apply to even to strangers? Of course it applies.

When I am with people I can honestly tell you that this is continually on my mind. I am continually probing to see if there is any spiritual receptivity at all.

Is this what you are trying to do as a way of life? Then praise God since this is exactly what Christ assumed you would be doing as one of His followers. But if it is not then something certainly will needs to change.

Sharing the gospel needs to be a part of our way of life. If it isn't and you would like help in knowing how you might be able to do this better, please fill out a Valley Bible comment card that you will find in the chair in front of you and write the word "evangelism" and we will contact you.

So, what is the first action associated with effective disciple making. The first action associated with effective disciple making is going. Go where? Going into the world. Going into the world with what purpose? Going into the world with the specific intent of making disciples or with the specific intent of sharing the gospel with as many people as we can.

If that describes you than praise God! And of course if it does not then hopefully you would be prepared to reach out and get some help. There is so much work to be done and so little time to do it.

So, what is the second action that must characterize our lives if we are going to be an effective disciple maker? But someone might say, but why does there need to be a second action? In other words, if someone does in fact positively respond to the gospel and does in fact become a disciple, why do we need further action? The answer is very simple. Let me ask you this question. Once a biological child is born are there any further actions required in order to tend to that child, or can we simply just walk away? Obviously there is further action, a whole lot of further action, and so it is spiritual children as well. So, what is the second action?

The second action that must characterize the life of an effective disciple maker is making sure that those who have become disciples of Christ are baptized (Matthew 28:19).

Let us now go back to **Matthew 28:19** and once again read the verse but this time we will read the entire verse. **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them.”**

The word “baptize” (BAPTIZO) means to immerse or dip in water. And this is what an effective disciple maker will want to make sure that every disciple of Christ has done. He will want to make sure that once an individual responds to the gospel of Christ and becomes one of His disciples that they are they immersed or dipped in water by another disciple.

Why is this action so very important? Why is it so important for a disciple of Christ to be immersed or dipped in water by another disciple? Baptism is important because it publicly separates us out as a follower of Christ and provides us the opportunity, by our immersion into water, to visually picture our spiritual immersion into Christ (Romans 6:1-7).

But it is not just our immersion into Christ that is pictured by our baptism into water. No! It is also our immersion into the entire Godhead that is pictured. How do we know this? Let us once again go back to **Matthew 28:19** but this time we will read the entire verse. **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”**

We are not simply joined to Christ when we, in response to the gospel and as an expression of our faith, choose to embrace Christ as our Lord and Savior and become one of His disciples. No, we are actually joined to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this is why Christ chooses the words that He chose here in **Matthew 28:19**.

Is baptism important? Absolutely! And it is because of its importance that Christ so intimately links baptism with work of disciple making. So if you happen by the grace of God to have the opportunity to witness someone’s conversion, what do you immediately want to do? You will immediately want to help them to understand the importance of baptism and then to make sure that once they understand its importance that they in fact are baptized.

And now in light of what I have just said I would like to address perhaps a number of people sitting here this morning. If you have not been baptized since becoming a disciple of Christ then you must be willing to take this step. If you fail to take this step, knowing that it is God's will for you in Christ Jesus based on **Matthew 28:19**, then what are you doing? You are with your lips saying that you are a disciple of Christ but denying it by your actions. This is not good. Baptism, for a professing disciple of Christ, is not an option.

Therefore if you are one of these people who believe that you are a disciple of Christ, but you have never been baptized, then I would encourage you to take a Valley Bible comment card from the chair in front of you and fill it out making sure that you indicate that you want to be baptized. And we will help you to make this happen.

Okay, what have we learned for far? This is what we have learned if we want to consider ourselves an effective disciple maker. We must, first of all, be characterized by going, and secondly, we need to be characterized by baptizing, but we are not yet done. There is still one more thing.

The third action that must characterize the life of an effective disciple maker is making sure that those who have become disciples are taught to observe all that Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:20).

Let us once again read **Matthew 28:19** but this time we will add the first part of **Matthew 28:20**. **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”** It is not just about going or baptizing but it is also about teaching.

So is this teaching ministry important? Absolutely! In fact, it is so important that Christ intimately links our teaching ministry to the work of disciple making in a similar way as He did the baptizing ministry.

And why did Christ do this? He did this because it is through the teaching ministry, as it utilizes the Word of God, that the heart is penetrated initially through the gospel of Christ and then subsequently through the commands of Christ making it possible over time for every one of our thoughts to be



brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ according to **2 Corinthians 10:5**. And how is the Word able to do this?

It is able to do this because the Word is living and active and more shaper than any two-edged sword.

What does **Hebrews 4:12** tell us? **“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”** Praise God! The Scriptures make it possible for us not only to be born again, but the Scriptures also make it possible for every one of our thoughts to be brought into captivity to obedience to Christ!

Therefore just as when we are around the unsaved we will always be prayerfully seeking to put ourselves in a position to share with them the gospel, we will also when we are around the saved always be just as vigilant to prayerfully seek opportunities to lovingly and with sensitivity to pass along all the other teachings of Christ until those teachings are observed.

Again you might feel that you are woefully inadequate to do this work of teaching. But it is your work if you consider yourself a follower of Christ. Therefore again, as I have done before, if you like help in being better able to perform this teaching ministry, please take a Valley Bible comment card out from the chair in front of you and write on the card “teaching.” And we will seek to help you in this wonderful and necessary work.

So why have we been left in this world? We have been left in this world for one singular purpose and that is to make disciples. And what must characterize the life of an effective disciple maker? A right attitude and right actions.

In other words, we must be wholeheartedly committed to making disciples or spiritual reproduction. And what will be necessary in order for us to do this work well? We must be committed to the work of going, baptizing, and teaching.

May God give us the grace to wholeheartedly commit ourselves to the work of making disciples.