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“Am I a Convert or a Disciple?”

Matthew 28:16-20

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In the closing verses of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gave a directive to his disciples known as The Great Commission. He called Christians to make disciples of all nations. But what defines a disciple, and what demonstrates that you are one? In this message, Pastor Gary teaches about what differentiates between a convert to Christianity and a disciple of Christ. Becoming a convert can happen in a moment but becoming a disciple of Christ is a life-long process.

1. The Great Commission

- a. Pastor Gary said, “The Great Commission has been called such because we have been commissioned by Jesus to carry on his mission to the world, since he has now ascended back into heaven. [The] mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. People who are devoted, committed followers of Jesus, not just converts to Christianity, but disciples of Christ, and there is a difference.”

2. What defines a disciple of Christ?

- a. Pastor Gary said, “When people have a conversion experience and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, they need to understand that it’s not just praying a prayer to Jesus – it’s living [their] life for Jesus that makes [them] a disciple of Jesus. ... Let me be clear about this. I do believe that Scripture teaches when a person prays a prayer, makes a personal profession, invites Christ into their [life], surrendering to Jesus, asking [Jesus] to forgive them of their sins, confessing with their mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ that is all that is necessary to be saved. It is faith alone; in Christ alone. ... We must not complicate this. When someone prays and commits and confesses Christ as Savior... that person is saved in that moment. ... There is a difference between being saved, which can happen in a moment, and being a disciple of Christ, which happens over a lifetime. ... Becoming a disciple of Christ

begins with a decision to accept Christ..."

- i. **Romans 10:9-13** - *"[If] you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'* "
- b. Know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior
 - i. **Matthew 28:19** - *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, "The surrendering of your life to the Lordship of Jesus is when you come into personal relationship and then you **know him**. ... There's a big difference between knowing about Jesus and **knowing Jesus**. There are a lot of people who know about Jesus, but they don't know him. You don't really know him until you surrender your life to him. ... (Emphasis added)
 - iii. **John 10:14-15** - *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."*
 - iv. God is not only knowable, he is able to be known.
- c. Show your faith through water baptism
 - i. **Matthew 28:19** - *"... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, "I want to emphasize that water baptism does not save you. There is nothing additional that needs to happen to make you saved other than faith alone in Christ alone. ... Baptism is an external work that demonstrates an internal work. ... Jesus tells us that we should be baptized and as part of The Great Commission we should baptize people who come to faith in Jesus. ... Water baptism [identifies] with the finished work of Christ. Just as Jesus died and was buried and rose again from the dead, water baptism was instituted in Scripture for the New Testament Church, so that we can identify, when we go under the water, with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; it's the death and burial of our old lives. And rising up out of the water is identifying with his resurrection... It's symbolic. [Baptism] doesn't save you."
- d. Grow in your faith by learning and doing what Jesus commands
 - i. **Matthew 28:20**- *"[Teaching] them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."*

- ii. Pastor Gary said, “Being a disciple means that you are in a constant state of learning and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ – obeying what [Jesus] said in his Word, even when it is not comfortable or convenient. [The] purpose of the Bible is to shape us. We don’t try to modernize the Bible... to suit culture. The Bible was intended to shape the culture, starting with [every disciple].”
3. What demonstrates that you are a disciple of Christ?
- a. Live like Jesus lived
 - i. **John 8:31–32** – *“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ ”*
 - b. Love like Jesus loved
 - i. **John 13:34–35** – *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said, “We are not to love when we feel like it. We are to love like Jesus loves, and when I think of how Jesus loves three things come to mind: 1) unconditionally, 2) sacrificially, and 3) eternally.
 - 1. Unconditionally
 - a. Jesus’ love is not performance based.
 - b. Jesus loves us even on our worst days.
 - c. Jesus doesn’t stop loving us even when we disappoint him.
 - d. Jesus wants us to love others like he loves.
 - 2. Sacrificially
 - a. Jesus doesn’t love us based on what we can do for him.
 - b. **John 15:13** – *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”*
 - c. Love in a way that serves and sacrifices for others.
 - 3. Eternally
 - a. Jesus doesn’t become weary of us!
 - b. **Jeremiah 31:3** – *“... ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love...’ ”*
 - c. Love is more than a feeling; it’s a decision, and that’s how Jesus wants us to love.
 - c. Look like Jesus looked
 - i. **John 15:8** – *“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*
 - ii. Christians are to bear fruit like Paul described in his letter to the Christians in Galatia.
 - 1. **Galatians 5:22–23a** – *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-*

control.”

- a. Pastor Gary said, “How about if we just start [with this list]! How are you doing [with] that list? ... [Happiness] is very circumstantial because it comes and goes based on the circumstances. Joy is relational, so it’s constant.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 28:16–20](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s definition of the Great Commission. (See #1 above)
3. What are some of the ways you’ve been involved in following Jesus’ command to make disciples?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments concerning what it means to be a disciple of Christ. (See #2 above)
5. Read and discuss [Romans 10:9–13](#). (See #2a-i above)
6. Allow the people in your group to share their experience about the time they came to **personally know** Jesus. (See #2b-ii above) (Emphasis added)
7. Read and discuss [John 10:14–15](#). (See #2b-iii above)
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning the meaning and importance of baptism. (See #2c-ii above)
9. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared in each of the three points in his outline regarding the things that demonstrate that a person is a disciple of Christ. (See #3a-i and #3b-i above)
10. Spend time talking about the ways Jesus loves unconditionally, sacrificially, and eternally. (See #3b-ii above)
11. Read and discuss [Galatians 5:22 23a](#) (See #3c-ii above)
12. How is the Holy Spirit working in you to develop the fruit of the Spirit?
13. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)