

A Heart to Make Disciples

The church in America is in decline. At the heart of this problem, good Christian people are lost as to what to do. These next twelve weeks are dedicated to what we believe will be a life-changing journey to restoring God's priorities to our lives. The church was built to win.

Day 1

What Does Winning Look Like?

When Jim Putman met with the people who wanted to plant a church in Idaho, it caused him to think about what a *successful* church would look like. Consequently, when he agreed to help start a new church, he asked the group he met with two questions: (1) If Christianity were a team sport and the church were Christ's team, what would winning be? (2) What is the church supposed to be and do to win?

Several people answered that the church wins as we worship together or when it grows in attendance and people become believers. A few said that we win when we are a family who cares for one another. Jim went on to ask what a church would have to do to accomplish all these goals. Some felt it would need inspiring weekend services with dynamic preaching and great music. Others thought the church should train people in pastoral care in order to meet the needs of hurting people.

1. Before you move ahead, write down your answers to these same questions.

- In relation to Christianity and the church, what is winning?
- What is the church supposed to be and do to win?

The varying answers people gave caused Jim to turn to the Bible for a solution. The church needed a clear game plan or it would be divided from the start. Jesus' last command in Matthew 28:18-20 makes the church's mission clear: The church is called to reach the world for Jesus one person at a time. In other words, every Christian is commanded to participate in the mission to make disciples. This mission became Real Life Ministries' purpose.

That was ten years ago. Since then our church has grown to more than eight thousand people, and discipleship is happening in every ministry. Oh, we have made many mistakes and we still have a lot to learn, but God is leading and blessing our obedience to His command to make disciples.

2. Read Matthew 28:18-20 in the margin and circle the words in which Jesus is telling us to do something.

Did you circle the words *go*, *make disciples*, *baptizing*, and

teaching?

In the Bible's original language, *make disciples* is the key phrase in these verses because the words *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching* support the command to make disciples.

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)

3. In these verses, Jesus commanded us to go into the world and _____ of every nation.

4. The three other action words show us what is entailed in obeying that command. To make disciples, we must be _____, _____, and _____.

Go back and review how you answered the two questions at the beginning of this lesson. Compare what you wrote with the command above.

5. Check the box below that fits best at this point:

- "Yes! I knew it. I am off to a good start because I knew that the church is supposed to make disciples."
- "No, I missed it. No one has ever explained the church's purpose to me like this before."
- "Well, I had it right, but I said it in a different way."
- "I disagree! I had a different answer, and I still think I am right."

Your answers throughout this training manual will shape the discussions in your small group each week. Be sure not to skip over any of them. This process is designed to help you understand and remember the lesson.

6. In your own words, write what part the church plays in making disciples.

7. What is your personal role in helping the church make disciples?

8. Spend some time meditating on Matthew 28:18-20. Begin memorizing it phrase by phrase. You will be asked to write it from memory later. Using these verses, explain to someone today why the church should focus on making disciples. Write the name(s) of the person(s) you told or plan to tell.

Review

- God designed the church to reach the world for Christ by making disciples.
- Making disciples was Jesus' original command.