

Rooted: Core Truths, Teacher's Guide

Week 8: The Mission of the Church

Matthew 28:18–20

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson sets out the mission Christ gave to His church. In Matthew 28:18–20, the risen Jesus grounds the commission in His own absolute authority (“all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”), commands His followers to “make disciples of all nations” by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all He commanded, and promises His abiding presence to the end of the age. A great deal is at stake doctrinally and practically. The teacher should help students see that the mission is not an optional program for the especially zealous but the central, defining task of the church; that making disciples is more than securing decisions, involving evangelism, baptism, and lifelong teaching unto obedience; that baptism is woven into the commission itself, consistent with the plan of salvation this study has traced; and that the scope is universal, all nations, leaving no room for narrowness or favoritism. The passage also affirms the deity and lordship of Christ and the Trinitarian name into which disciples are baptized.

This doctrine is also profoundly formative. Many believers have quietly outsourced the mission to missionaries and preachers, settling into a private, self-contained faith. Others are paralyzed by fear of rejection or a sense of inadequacy. Still others embrace evangelism while neglecting the harder, slower work of teaching obedience, or pursue their own discipleship no further than the point of conversion. The commission speaks to all of this. It calls every disciple into the mission, steadies them with the authority and presence of Christ, and reminds them that the goal is not mere converts but obedient, growing disciples, themselves included. The teacher's task is to let this passage do its forming work, moving students from spectators to participants in the mission and from stalled converts to maturing, reproducing disciples.

So aim at both targets. Send students home with a clear understanding of the church's mission, what it is, who it is for, and how it is carried out, and able to see baptism and lifelong teaching as integral to it. And send them home stirred to take part, with a specific person in view and the fear of inadequacy answered by the authority and presence of Christ. The disciple we are forming is one who has received the marching orders of the risen Lord as their own, and who gives themselves, in ordinary ways, to making disciples until He comes.

Question 1

Student Question:

Before giving any command, Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v. 18). Why does Jesus begin the commission with His own authority, and how does the

absolute authority of the risen Christ serve as the foundation for everything the church is sent to do?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin where Jesus begins, with His authority. Before He commands anything, He declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The teacher should help students see that this is not an aside but the foundation of the entire commission. The word “therefore” in the next sentence ties them together: because all authority is His, therefore go. The mission rests not on the strength, eloquence, or worthiness of those sent, but on the authority of the One who sends them.

Draw out what this authority means. The risen Christ claims universal and supreme authority, over heaven and earth, over every nation and power and person. This is a claim only God can rightly make, and it affirms again the deity and lordship of Jesus that this study began with. The crucified one has been raised and exalted, and all authority has been placed in His hands. The church goes out not as a band of volunteers promoting a cause, but as ambassadors of the King who reigns over all.

Show how His authority steadies fearful disciples. The eleven on the mountain were shaky, and some doubted, yet the mission was given to them. What qualified them was not their own confidence but His authority. The same is true for us. When we feel inadequate to share our faith or to disciple others, the answer is not to work up more self-confidence but to remember whose authority stands behind us. We are not asking people to consider our opinions; we are announcing the claims of the Lord of heaven and earth.

Bring it home. Because Christ holds all authority, the church can go boldly to all nations, confident that the One who sends is also the One who rules over every place they will go and every heart they will meet. The teacher can help students feel that the mission is not a long shot promoted by the weak, but the certain advance of the kingdom of the King who already reigns.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ’s authority as the foundation of the commission (the “therefore”)
- The risen Christ’s claim to universal, supreme authority as a divine claim
- The church going out as ambassadors of the reigning King, not promoters of a cause
- Christ’s authority, not our confidence, as what qualifies and steadies us

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Jesus begin the commission with His own authority?
- How does the authority of the risen Christ change the way we view the mission?
- How does His authority steady you when you feel inadequate to share your faith?

Question 2

Student Question:

We all live, in practice, under some authority, whether the expectations of others, our own desires, or the pressures of the culture. In what areas of your life have you not yet fully submitted to the authority of the risen Christ? What would change this week if you truly lived under His lordship in those areas?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the authority of Christ inward. If Jesus truly holds all authority in heaven and on earth, then He holds authority over every part of our lives, and the honest question is where we have not yet submitted to it. The aim is to expose, gently, the areas we have kept under our own management rather than His.

Help students name the competing authorities. In practice, we live under many: the expectations of others, the pull of our own desires and comfort, the assumptions of the culture, financial pressures, long-standing habits. We may confess Christ as Lord while large areas of life still answer to these other authorities. The commission's opening words press the question: is the One with all authority actually Lord of my time, my money, my relationships, my speech, my private life?

Move toward one concrete area of surrender. Submitting to Christ's authority is not abstract; it shows up in specific decisions to obey Him where we have been doing as we please. Ask each student to identify one area not yet fully under His lordship, and one step they will take this week to live there as a subject of the King who holds all authority. Connect this to the mission: those who live under Christ's authority become credible and willing participants in extending it to others.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ's universal authority as authority over every area of our lives
- Competing authorities we often serve (others' expectations, desire, culture, habit)
- Confessing Christ as Lord while withholding areas from His rule
- Submission to Christ as concrete obedience in specific areas

Discussion Prompts

- What competing authorities most often rule your daily decisions?
- Where have you not yet fully submitted to the authority of Christ?
- What is one step toward living under His lordship in that area this week?

Question 3**Student Question:**

Jesus commands His followers to “make disciples of all nations” (v. 19). What is a disciple, how is making disciples different from simply gaining converts or decisions, and what does it mean that the mission is to “all nations” without exception?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question gets at the heart of the mission: “make disciples of all nations.” The teacher should help students see that the central command of the commission is to make disciples. In the original, “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” all serve that one main verb. The goal is not merely to spread information, gather crowds, or secure decisions, but to make disciples, genuine, lifelong followers of Jesus.

Define what a disciple is. A disciple is a learner and follower, one who attaches their whole life to a master. A disciple of Jesus is not someone who has merely agreed to a set of facts or prayed a prayer, but someone who follows Him, learns from Him, and increasingly orders their life around Him. This is why the commission cannot be reduced to getting people to make a one-time decision. Making a convert can be a moment; making a disciple is the beginning of a life. The early church did not count decisions; it made and gathered disciples who continued in the apostles’ teaching.

Stress the scope: “all nations.” The mission knows no ethnic, cultural, or national boundary. The gospel that began with eleven Galileans is for every people on earth. This guards against any narrowness that would keep the good news within our own kind, and it affirms that every person, of every nation and background, is one for whom Christ died and one whom He desires as a disciple. The teacher can let this stretch the students’ vision beyond people like themselves.

Bring it home. Because the goal is disciples and not mere decisions, our part in the mission is not finished when someone professes faith; it includes helping them become a follower who keeps learning and obeying. And because the scope is all nations, no person we meet is outside the reach of the mission. The teacher can help students see the people around them, of every sort, as potential disciples of Jesus.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Make disciples” as the central command, with go, baptize, and teach serving it
- A disciple as a lifelong follower and learner, not merely a convert or a decision
- The difference between counting decisions and making disciples
- The universal scope of the mission: all nations, without boundary

Discussion Prompts

- What is a disciple, and how is that more than a convert?
- Why is making disciples a life, not just a moment?
- How does “all nations” stretch your vision of who the gospel is for?

Question 4

Student Question:

The mission is carried out by ordinary disciples reaching the people around them. Who are the specific people in your life, a neighbor, coworker, friend, or family member, that God may be calling you to reach or to help grow in Christ? What is one step you could take toward them this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question makes the mission personal and concrete. The commission is carried out not mainly through grand programs but through ordinary disciples reaching the actual people in their lives. The aim here is to move students from thinking about the mission in the abstract to identifying specific people God has placed within their reach.

Help students see their God-given mission field. Every believer already stands in a web of relationships, neighbors, coworkers, friends, family members, fellow parents, that no missionary overseas can reach as they can. God, in His providence, has placed each student among particular people. The question is not whether they have a mission field but whether they have noticed it. Encourage students to think of specific names rather than vague categories.

Address what holds us back, briefly and kindly. Usually it is fear, of awkwardness, rejection, or not knowing what to say. The remedy is not a sales technique but love, prayer, and the steady authority and presence of Christ, who promised to be with us. Often the first step is small: a genuine relationship, an invitation, a willingness to speak honestly about our faith when the moment comes. Ask each student to name one specific person and one concrete step toward them this week, whether that is praying for them by name, inviting them, or beginning an honest conversation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The mission carried out through ordinary disciples reaching the people around them
- Each believer's God-given mission field in their existing relationships
- Naming specific people rather than thinking in vague categories
- Fear as the common obstacle, answered by love, prayer, and Christ's presence

Discussion Prompts

- Who are the specific people God has placed within your reach?
- What has been holding you back from reaching or discipling them?
- What is one concrete step toward one of those people this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus includes baptizing new disciples “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” as part of the commission itself (v. 19). Why is baptism built right into the making of disciples, and what does this teach us about how a person becomes a disciple of Jesus?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question draws attention to a striking feature of the commission: Jesus builds baptism right into the making of disciples. He says to make disciples, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The teacher should help students see that baptism is not an optional ceremony added later, nor a side issue, but part of how Jesus Himself defines the making of a disciple.

Connect this to what the study has already learned. In Romans 6 and elsewhere, baptism is the point at which a believer is united with Christ in His death and resurrection, sins are washed away, and one is added to the body. Here in the commission, the risen Lord places baptism at the very entrance of discipleship. When the apostles carried out this commission in Acts, this is exactly what they did: they preached Christ, called for faith and repentance, and baptized those who received the word (Acts 2:38, 41). Becoming a disciple, in the New Testament, includes being baptized into Christ. This is fully consistent with salvation by grace through a faith that obeys, which this study has emphasized throughout.

Note the Trinitarian name. Disciples are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” To be baptized into that name is to be brought into a new relationship with the one God in three persons, to belong to Him. This both affirms the truth of the one God in Father, Son, and Spirit and underscores the seriousness and richness of what happens in baptism: the disciple is claimed by and committed to the triune God.

Bring it home. Because baptism is part of the commission, faithfully sharing the gospel includes leading people to be baptized into Christ, not merely to make a profession. And because it marks the entrance into discipleship, baptism is the beginning of a following life, not the finish line. The teacher can help students hold together the urgency of baptizing new believers and the necessity of then teaching them to follow Christ for a lifetime.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism built into the making of disciples by Christ Himself (v. 19)
- Baptism as the entrance into discipleship, consistent with the plan of salvation (Acts 2:38, 41)
- The apostles carrying out the commission by preaching, calling for faith and repentance, and baptizing
- Baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as belonging to the triune God
- Baptism as the beginning of a following life, not the finish line

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Jesus include baptism in the commission to make disciples?
- What does this teach about how a person becomes a disciple of Jesus?
- What does it mean to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Question 6

Student Question:

Making disciples is not only something we do for others; each of us is also called to keep growing as a disciple. Where in your own walk have you stopped growing, settling for where you are rather than pressing on? What would it look like to take your own discipleship more seriously this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question reminds students that the call to make disciples includes the call to keep being one. It is possible to be busy helping others while quietly stalling in our own walk, or to assume that because we were converted years ago, our growth is finished. The aim here is to turn the spotlight on the student's own discipleship.

Help students recognize a stalled walk. Discipleship is meant to be a lifelong following, learning, and growing. Yet many believers reach a comfortable plateau and stop pressing on: prayer becomes routine, the word goes unread, old sins go unchallenged, and there is little expectation of further change. A disciple who has stopped following is a contradiction. Jesus did not call us to a moment of conversion followed by decades of coasting, but to take up our cross daily and follow Him.

Move toward renewed pursuit. Ask students where their growth has stalled and what one area Jesus is calling them to take seriously again, whether reviving a neglected practice, addressing a long-tolerated sin, or seeking out teaching and accountability. Encourage them that we cannot give others what we are not pursuing ourselves; growing disciples are best made by growing disciples. The student's own ongoing discipleship is not separate from the mission but part of it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The call to make disciples as inseparable from continuing to be one
- Discipleship as lifelong following and growth, not a finished event
- The danger of plateauing and coasting after conversion
- Pursuing our own growth as part of, not separate from, the mission

Discussion Prompts

- Where has your own growth as a disciple stalled?

- What would it look like to take your discipleship seriously again?
- How does your own pursuit of Christ affect your ability to help others follow Him?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jesus says disciples are to be taught “to observe all that I have commanded you” (v. 20). Why does Jesus emphasize teaching obedience to all His commands, not just believing the right things or obeying the parts we prefer, and what does this say about the lifelong nature of following Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes up the third element of the commission: “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” The teacher should help students see two crucial features of this phrase. First, the goal of the teaching is observance, that is, obedience, not merely knowledge. Disciples are taught not just to know Christ’s commands but to keep them. Second, the scope is comprehensive: all that He has commanded, not a favored selection.

Stress that discipleship aims at obedience, not information alone. It is possible to fill people with biblical knowledge that never reshapes their lives. Jesus is not content with that. He commands that disciples be taught to observe, to do, to live out His commands. This fits the whole thrust of this study, which has aimed at transformation and not merely information. A well-informed disciple who does not obey has missed the point of the teaching.

Press the word “all.” Jesus claims authority over the whole of life and expects His disciples to be taught to obey everything He commanded, not only the comfortable or convenient parts. This rules out a pick-and-choose Christianity that embraces the appealing commands and quietly ignores the costly ones. Because all authority is His, no command of His is optional. The teacher can show that this comprehensive obedience is not legalism but the natural response of those who have submitted to the Lord of all.

Bring out the lifelong nature of this. Teaching disciples to observe all Christ commanded is not accomplished in a single class or a new members’ course; it is the work of a lifetime, for both the teacher and the taught. This frames the Christian life rightly: we are always learning to obey more fully, and we are meant to help others do the same. The teacher can encourage students to see ongoing growth in obedience, theirs and others’, as exactly what Jesus intended.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Teaching aimed at obedience (observance), not knowledge alone
- The comprehensive scope: all that Christ commanded, not a selection
- The rejection of a pick-and-choose Christianity
- Discipleship as the lifelong work of learning to obey Christ more fully

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Jesus emphasize obedience to all His commands, not just belief?
- What is the danger of knowledge that never becomes obedience?
- How does the word “all” confront our tendency to obey selectively?

Question 8

Student Question:

It is easy to be selective with Jesus, embracing the commands that suit us and quietly setting aside the ones that are costly or inconvenient. Where have you been picking and choosing among Christ’s commands? What is one area where He is calling you to fuller obedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the call to obey “all” that Christ commanded into a personal mirror. Almost all of us are selective with Jesus to some degree, warmly embracing the commands that fit our temperament or comfort while quietly setting aside the ones that are costly, awkward, or inconvenient. The aim is to help students see their own areas of selective obedience honestly.

Help students notice the pattern. We tend to keep the commands that come naturally to us and avoid the ones that do not. The naturally generous person gladly gives but may neglect the command to forgive; the disciplined person obeys in self-control but may ignore the call to compassion; many happily affirm doctrines while sidestepping commands about the tongue, money, purity, humility, or loving enemies. The areas we skip are often precisely the ones where Christ most wants to grow us.

Move toward one area of fuller obedience. The point is not to induce guilt over every shortcoming, but to identify one specific command students have been setting aside and to take a concrete step of obedience this week. Because we belong to the One with all authority, no command is truly optional. Ask each student to name the command they have been avoiding and one way they will begin to observe it, trusting Christ for the help to obey.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The tendency to obey Christ selectively, by temperament or convenience
- Embracing comfortable commands while avoiding costly ones
- The avoided commands as often the areas of needed growth
- Concrete steps of fuller obedience rather than general guilt

Discussion Prompts

- Which of Christ’s commands do you find easiest to obey, and which do you avoid?
- Where have you been picking and choosing among His commands?

- What is one area of fuller obedience Christ is calling you to this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Taken together, the commission gives the church its mission: under Christ's authority, to go and make disciples of all nations by bringing them to faith, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, with the promise that He is with us always. Why is this mission central to the very purpose of the church rather than an optional activity for a few, and how does Christ's authority and abiding presence give ordinary believers the confidence to take part?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the integrating question of the lesson, drawing the whole commission together and asking why the mission is central to the church's very purpose. The teacher should help students see the commission as a unified whole: under Christ's authority, the church is sent to make disciples of all nations, and the making of disciples has a definite shape, bringing people to faith in Christ, baptizing them into Him, and teaching them to obey everything He commanded, all carried out in the assurance of His abiding presence.

Establish that this is the church's central mission, not an optional activity for a few. These are among the last and weightiest words of the risen Lord, given not as a suggestion but as a command backed by all authority. The church did not choose this task; it received it. A congregation may run many good programs, but if it is not making disciples, it has drifted from the very reason Christ left it on earth. And the commission is given to the church as a whole and to disciples as such, not to a special class of professionals. The early chapters of Acts show ordinary believers, scattered by persecution, going everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Making disciples is the shared mission of every follower of Jesus, each according to their place and gifts.

Show how the commission also displays, in miniature, the gospel this whole study has unfolded. People become disciples by hearing and believing the good news, repenting, being baptized into Christ, and then being taught to live in obedience to Him for a lifetime. This is salvation by grace through a faith that obeys, and it is the pattern the church is sent to carry to all nations. The teacher can note how naturally the commission resists both a faith-only reductionism (since baptism and taught obedience are built in) and a mere-decision evangelism (since the goal is lifelong disciples).

Linger on the promise that crowns it all: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The mission would be crushing if we faced it alone, but we do not. The same Lord who holds all authority pledges His personal presence to His people as they go. This is the answer to every excuse of fear and inadequacy. We are not sent out and left to ourselves; the risen Christ

goes with us, to the end of the age. His authority commissions us, His presence accompanies us, and His promise assures us that the mission will not fail.

Bring it home with both responsibility and confidence. The responsibility: every disciple shares in this mission, and the church exists to carry it out until Christ returns. The confidence: we go in the authority and company of the One who reigns over heaven and earth. The teacher can help ordinary believers, who may feel as shaky as the eleven, hear the commission as their own and take up their part in it without fear, because the King who sends them is also the Lord who is always with them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The commission as a unified whole: make disciples by evangelizing, baptizing, and teaching obedience
- The mission as the central purpose of the church, not an optional program
- The commission given to all disciples, not only to professionals (Acts 8:4)
- The commission displaying the gospel: grace received through a faith that repents, is baptized, and obeys
- Christ's abiding presence as the answer to fear and inadequacy (v. 20)
- Christ's authority and presence giving ordinary believers confidence to take part

Discussion Prompts

- Why is making disciples central to the church's purpose rather than optional?
- How does the commission show the same gospel this study has traced?
- How do Christ's authority and abiding presence give you confidence to take part in the mission?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these verses. The risen Christ, holding all authority, has sent you to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach obedience, and He has promised to be with you to the end of the age. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth about the mission of the church that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks students to gather the whole passage and name one specific way Christ is forming them. Resist letting answers stay general. Press gently for the concrete: which truth, changing what, beginning when.

It helps to retrace the movement. The risen Christ, holding all authority, sent His people to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything He commanded,

and He promised to be with us always. Invite each student to ask which of these truths their heart most needs this week, whether it is submitting more fully to His authority, taking up their part in the mission, pursuing their own growth, obeying more completely, or resting in His promised presence.

Close by reminding students that the goal is transformation, not merely information. The commission is meant to send us, to make us participants in Christ's mission rather than spectators. Encourage each one to leave with a single truth to carry, return to, and pray over until the next gathering, and with at least one person in view whom they will begin to reach or to help grow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Scripture aimed at transformation, not merely information
- Every disciple as a participant in Christ's mission
- Making and being disciples as a lifelong calling
- Going in the authority and presence of the risen Lord

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth about the mission does your heart most need this week, and why?
- What would it look like, concretely, to live in light of that truth?
- How can this group pray for and encourage you in that one step?