

January 27, 2013 by Steve Brandon



Pass It On

Matthew 28:18-20

This morning, we will be looking in Matthew 28. Next week, we shall return to our exposition of the gospel of Mark. We will be in Mark 13, talking about the Abomination of Desolation. But, this morning, with the opportunities to present our finances and the rejoicing that goes along with the good news, I didn't think that it would be good to dig into that text this morning. Instead, I have a few things on my heart that I want to share with you.

These thoughts come from various things that I have heard recently. I think that it will be good for us to hear. I think that it will be helpful to your own ministry.

I want to take you away to summer time. I want to take you away to camp, someplace. We are all there. It's been a day of fun, playing on the beach and taking a long hike in the woods. Perhaps, there was a game of softball or tennis. We have all enjoyed our bar-b-que chicken and corn on the cob for dinner. It's now evening, with just a slight bit of chill in the air. The sun has set and we've started a nice campfire. The kids have had their s'mores. The fire is mostly coals at this point. Ryan pulls out his guitar and we all begin to sing, ...

It only takes a spark to get a fire going,
And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing;
That's how it is with God's Love,
Once you've experienced it,
Your spread the love to everyone
You want to pass it on.

What a wonderous time is spring,
When all the trees are budding
The birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming;
That's how it is with God's love,
Once you've experienced it.
You want to sing, it's fresh like spring,
You want to pass it on.

I wish for you my friend
This happiness that I've found;
You can depend on God
It matters not where you're bound,
I'll shout it from the mountain top,
I want the world to know
The Lord of love has come to me
I want to pass it on. [U](#)

How many of you have sung this song by the campfire? I think that I have sung this song way too many times. It's a bit schmaltzy (if that's the right word for it). However, the message is a good one. When you have experienced the love of God, you want to pass it on. When you have come to know Jesus Christ, you won't be able to keep it in. It's good news that the world needs to know. You will pass it on.

This is the title of my message this morning, "Pass It On!" This was the heart of the early disciples. Perhaps you remember when Peter and John were arrested for preaching to the people about Jesus. They were brought before the religious authorities who "commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). Peter and John replied, ...

Acts 4:19-20

"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Their experience with Jesus was so strong that they couldn't keep it in, even under threat of punishment. Indeed, a short time later, they were arrested again for preaching in the streets. The religious leaders flogged them (Acts 4:20). And once again, they commanded them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:20).

It didn't silence them. Instead, we know that "every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). This is how it works when you are saved. When you come to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9). When you come to believe in the Lord, you will pass it on.

Recently, I remember sharing the gospel with someone. One of his questions for me was this, "Steve, if I believe, will I have to preach? Will I have to talk to others about this?" The answer, of course, is, "Yes." But, I didn't tell him, "Yes." I told him that when you come to believe that the God of the universe loves you; when you come to believe that Jesus came and died for you; when you believe that all of your transgressions are forgiven at the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:13); when you really believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the impact upon your life will be so great that you won't be able to be quiet. If it's real, it will come out of you.

Now, it doesn't mean that you have to go out on the street and stand on a soapbox and call everyone in the public square to repent. That's a matter of gifting and calling. But, it does mean that you will tell others of the hope within you as the time comes.

When we believe, we will speak. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:13, "[It] is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke.' We also believe, therefore we also speak." Do you see the connection? We believe, therefore we also speak. The necessary consequence of believing is speaking.

Perhaps the time will come when you are persecuted for your faith. And your response demonstrates that you answer to a higher calling. Those around you are confused, and so they ask you. You had better be prepared to speak. Peter says, ...

1 Peter 3:14-15

Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

This is the heart of my message this morning. I want for all of you to believe. I want for all of you, then, to speak. In other words, I want for you to get it. Then, I want for you to spread it.

Let's look at the last three verses of the gospel of Matthew. This was the final message that Jesus told His disciples before leaving this earth. They tell us of our main purpose in this world. Jesus has left us here to make disciples.

I trust that you can see it here in Matthew 28. I want to begin reading in verse 18, ...

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I want for you to notice how extensive Jesus' words were. In these three verses, Jesus mentions the word, "all" four times. First of all, we see it in verse 18, "All authority has been given to Me." This is the foundation of our mission. We go as one backed with the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. We don't go out and make disciples because it's something that we thought would be a good idea. We don't go out and make disciples because we think that it might be a strategic thing to do. No, we are doing this because the order comes from the top -- from Jesus, Himself. He has the authority. We are following His orders.

Second, we see "all" mentioned in verse 19. "Make disciples of all nations." This defines our mission field. It's broad. In fact, it has no bounds. Jesus calls us to go everywhere on the planet with the message of the gospel. There isn't a single soul alive today that we can say, "Nope, Jesus' mission doesn't apply to him", whether it be your neighbor next door or the animist in Africa. Our mission field is "all nations."

Third, we see "all" mentioned in verse 20. "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded." This is the content of our call. This has primary reference, of course, to the four gospels, where we have the words of Jesus recorded. And yet, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. And Jesus told his disciples of more revelation to come (John 14, 16). So, you can easily extend this to the entirety of the Bible. This means that we come to the nations armed with our Bibles. This means that we need to spread, "the entire counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). There isn't anything in the Word of God not worthy to spread.

Fourth, we see "all" mentioned in verse 20 (in a slightly different form). "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." This is the promise that we have of the presence of Jesus in this work. As we go out to make disciples, we aren't alone. Jesus is with us, guiding us and directing us. Jesus is with us, strengthening us and encouraging us. Oh, let us rest on this promise.

So, what is our mission? I trust that you can see the command right there in verse 19, "Make disciples of all the nations." This was final message that Jesus told His disciples. Make disciples. The other verbs all surround and support this idea. You "go" as verse 19 says. You "baptize" as verse 19 says. You "teach" as verse 20 says. This is how you make disciples. You go and win them to Christ. Then, upon their conversion, you baptize them in water as a symbol of their cleansing. Then, you teach them what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Or, to couch it in terms of my message this morning, you Pass It On.

Now, certainly, this command was given to the eleven disciples. You can see it there in verse 16, "the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus. That is the twelve, minus Judas, who betrayed Jesus and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5). But, this responsibility would soon spread. It would spread, for these 11 were incapable of carrying out this command. There was no way for them to reach "the nations" by themselves in their lifetime. But, as they made disciples, the responsibility would spread to these disciples, who were to make disciples.

This is Paul's idea in 2 Timothy 2:2. Some of the last words that he ever told Timothy were these: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others." The idea is that Timothy would take what Paul taught and turn around and teach it to others. His aim in teaching others was that they would pass it on further still. In fact, this is explicitly mentioned by Paul -- "entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others." In other words, impart your words to those who

will be able to pass it on.

This is the aim and goal of our church. This is the aim and goal of every church. It is the aim of the church to be a body of disciple-makers. We want to be a body of disciples that do the work of making disciples. I want to see each and every one of you engaged in this process at one level or another.

In Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul describes the church. He said that the leaders equip. He said that the saints serve. Some are spreading the word. Some are supporting the spreading of the word. And all do their part to the building up of the body of Christ. Listen to Paul's words, ...

Ephesians 4:11-16

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Now, certainly, within the body of Christ, there are different roles that each of us play. Much of it has to do with giftedness. Not all are gifted in the same way. I'm a pastor of the church. By God's grace, I have been freed up to serve all of you full time. And God is graciously supplying all of our needs to see that accomplished. Phil and Darryn are fellow pastors of the church. They, however, have full-time jobs. They give to the church what they can. And they give much.

Ray is a deacon. He puts in countless hours serving the church behind the scenes. Ryan leads our music. Yvonne, Maggie, Amy, SR, Mikko, Arah, Neala, and others help with the music. We have countless ladies who help with the serving of food. We have many who serve in the nursery and in children's church which are led by Nancy and Toby.

And in one way or another, many of you help to build up the body here at Rock Valley Bible Church. And I'm thankful for all the work that you do. I'm thankful for the way that the Lord is working in our midst through all of you. I can easily echo Paul's prayer in 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." I'm thankful to God for all that many of you do.

But, this morning, I want to push you to think about this process of making disciples. Now, we don't normally use this word, "disciple," unless we are referring to the twelve disciples that Jesus had. And yet, there were more than twelve disciples. Anyone who followed Jesus was rightly called, a disciple (John 6:60, 66). And when it comes to the New Testament, the word, "disciple," was used in much the same way that we use the term, "Christian." It simply designates those who follow Christ.

In Acts, chapter 6, Luke writes, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables" (Acts 6:1-2).

When Paul was persecuting Christians, Luke writes of how he was, "... breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). And when he repented of his sin and believe on Christ, those in Jerusalem were fearful. Listen to how Luke records it for us: "When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). In fact, it was some years after this in Antioch, when the disciples were first called, "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

The word, "disciple," simply means, "learner" or "follower." Jesus used the verb in his famous call to the weary, ...

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and *learn* from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

This is what we are called to do as a church. We are called to make learners of Jesus. The burden of my message this morning is to encourage you in this process at some level. I want to encourage you to have a word-centered approach to your service toward others. I want to encourage you to let the word of God be central in your service to others.

Some of my burden comes from an interview that I recently heard with Francis Chan. He was the founding pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, a church that grew to several thousand. He is the author of several best-selling books, including Crazy Love and Forgotten God. A few years ago, he stepped down from the church to pursue other avenues of ministry. Currently, he's living in the inner city of San Francisco, spending lots of time with unbelievers, sharing the gospel with them. One of the things that he related in this interview was how there are many people he has met who used to go to church. But, now, their lives are messed up, into drugs and other things.

He said that the reality is that they never really experienced God. So, they became bored with religion, thinking that the church had nothing to offer them. Francis Chan pinned down one of the reasons this was so. He said that they were never asked to go and make disciples. He said, "It is when you are on the front line, making disciples that you experience God, experience Jesus. Jesus said, 'I will be with you always,' but He said that in the context of making disciples. We want to experience Him in the sanctuary or wherever else, ... and that will happen. But,

talk about real crazy, supernatural, God coming through -- it's as you are out making disciples." [\[2\]](#)

His point was this: when you are engaged in the process of making disciples, you will experience God. Jesus promises it. Look at verse 20, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." There is a connection between making disciples and the presence of God.

I know that this has been my experience. The thing that excites me most is seeing people come to faith through my words. The thing that excites me most is seeing people grow in their relationship with Christ through my efforts. That's why I'm a pastor. I want to see these things firsthand. I want to see people bud in their faith. I want to see people grow in their faith. I want to know the nearness of Jesus. And I want for you to know the nearness of Jesus in this way as well.

And I believe that there is that same feeling inside of each and every one of you, who trust in Christ. You want to be used of God in the spiritual lives of others. And I'm here this morning to say, go for it. I'm here this morning to encourage you in the process.

I know, firsthand, of how helpful it is for my soul to be giving out what God teaches me. That is the blessing of preaching each week. I'm accountable each and every week to stand up here before you and have something to say -- something that I have gleaned from the Scriptures this past week. And it keeps me going! I'm thankful to the Lord for the opportunity that it is for me.

I have talked with one of our men on a number of occasions about preaching at the nursing home. He has said, "There's nothing like knowing that you are going to preach to get you into the Bible to study it." There are several men here who have taken up the challenge to go and minister to the residents at Crimson Pointe. I'm thankful for the way that it presses these men in their walk with God. I talked with Andy this morning about this very thing. I am sure his week was sweet in the Scriptures as he prepared to preach this morning.

And so, I encourage you this morning to be engaged in a ministry in which you are giving out what you are taking in.

I ask you, are you engaged in the discipleship process? Are you discipling anybody? Are you being disciplined by anybody? You should be. You should have relationships in your life that are designed to help you grow spiritually.

Could it be that one of the main reasons why so many children who grow up in church leave the church when they are older is because they were never involved in giving out what they know? They were never engaged in "passing it on!"

I know of one man who was converted when he was asked to lead a Bible study one evening. It forced him into the word. It forced him to think about whether the things in his life were true or not.

Could it be that one of the main reasons why people fall away from Christ and fall away from the church is that they are never "passing it on"? People come to church and hear and experience wonderful services. But, they never "pass it on." And they become like a stagnant pool that stinks after a while. We need outlet. And nothing encourages growth, like giving away what you have.

Some of you are mature enough that you should be discipling others. If this is you, I encourage you to find someone that you can direct toward Jesus. Meet with them regularly. Talk on the phone. Show them what it means to walk with Christ.

Perhaps you are here today and feel like you don't know much at all about God and the Bible. That's OK. Find someone to help you in the process. Look for someone that you respect. Ask them if they would like to meet regularly. Learn from them. God is better at organizing these things than we are.

Now, I know that much of this happens here at Rock Valley Bible Church. This is sort of how it is in China, where smaller, grassroots groups of believers meeting together is the norm in the church. We have a web of relationships here where this takes place all the time. I know of a handful of groups that meet together to encourage each other in their walk with Christ. Men with men. Women with women. Meeting throughout the week. These sorts of groups have never been advertised. But, have developed naturally from relationships with each other. Two (or three or four) people meeting regularly to let the word of God impact their lives.

Too often we think of discipleship as a program run by the church. The pastor picks some book to study. We gather together to read and study. We learn our things, and then we go our way, thinking that our "discipleship" has now finished. Now, there's nothing wrong with this. I do this all the time. I'm currently engaged in this sort of thing right now.

But, I want to encourage you to see "discipleship" as much more organic than this. It's not so much a curriculum to go through, as it is a life to share. We are all in the process of learning to be more like Christ. We all have things to learn. We all have things to teach. So, let's be engaged in one another's lives. And let that engagement spill over into our spiritual lives.

I was so helped by someone recently who was teaching about these things. He simply encouraged Bible reading together. He said, "What if you merely get together with another person and read the Bible together." Discipleship can be this simple. And, it doesn't necessarily need to be one person who is discipling, while the other person is being disciple. When God's word is read, it can be unleashed to do its work. Both parties can be edified in the process.

It's that simple. If the fruit of my message this morning generates Bible reading groups all around the church, I would be thrilled. If this would take place in families, it would be wonderful. It's taking root in my family. When we gather for Family Worship, the Bible is a constant source of reading. It hits everyone at all ages. Husbands and wives can read the Bible together in this way. Parents can read the Bible this way with their children.

For the last year and a half, I have been reading through the Bible with SR. Every day we look for a time when we can read together. Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes together. Just working through the Bible. Along the way, we comment lightly. But, personally, I have found it to be a

great help to me, regardless of what SR is getting out of it. To be sure, I'm discipling him in the process. But, it's not like I'm giving out all the time. I'm taking in the Scripture together with him, helping occasionally with a few clarifying comments.

I have even taken this concept of just reading together, and taken it to those outside the church. I know some folks who aren't Christians. I said, "Would you like for me to come and read the Bible together with you and your family?" So, now, twice, on my way home from work, I have stopped by and read the Bible with this family. We have started in the gospel of John. Then, I have prayed for the family. I've been with them for 15 minutes maybe each time. I'm not looking to spend a bunch of time with them, interrupting their family. I'm simply looking to direct them to the word of God and unleashing it to do its work. I'm just doing with this family what I typically do with my family. I have encouraged them to continue in the gospel of John where we left off. And the next time that I come, I plan to continue right on where they are.

It's not difficult. But, it takes initiative.

I will say this, it's a very thrilling thing to do. My heart is encouraged to think that perhaps for the first time, the Bible is being read aloud in their home. Oh, may God do His work with His word! If the fruit of my message this morning is that some of you might get to know some neighbors and do something similar, I would be thrilled!

God has given so much to each of us. Let's "Pass It On."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 27, 2012 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Pass It On by Kurt Kaiser. (c) 1969 Bud John Songs, Inc. (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)

[2] Catalyst podcast #204. Found here: http://www.catalystspace.com/content/podcast/catalyst_podcast_episode_204/.