

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The third series of 5 Bible studies is about the church. The topics are: “The cultural task of the church”, “The missionary task of the church”, “The evangelistic task of the church”, “The goals of the church” and “The leadership of the church”. Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE IS OCCUPIED WITH THE MISSIONARY TASK OF THE CHURCH.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Matthew 28:18-20. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

(T) Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (S) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (T) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(S) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(T) An important truth for me is the relationship between Matthew 28 verse 18 and verse 19. In verse 18, Jesus claims that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. This means that there is no authority or power that is greater than his anywhere in the universe. This also means that he has authority and power over all other authorities and powers in the universe. The devil has been bound and cannot stop the people from the nations to turn to Christ. All the governments in the world cannot stop the people from the nations to turn to Christ. That is why Jesus can also give to us Christians the greatest task in the world, and that is to go and make disciples of all nations. I may think that this task is too big or too difficult. That may be true if I depended only on myself to do it. If I would only depend on myself to go and make disciples, then it would be an impossible task. However, if I depend on Jesus Christ and his power to go and make disciples, then the task is possible. This is a wonderful truth for me, that Jesus Christ never gives me a task without giving me the ability to accomplish it. When Jesus Christ gives me a task, then he also gives me the grace, power and wisdom to accomplish the task. He does this, because all authority has been given to him.

(S) An important truth for me is the relationship between Matthew 28 verse 19 and verse 20. In verse 19, Jesus Christ commands me to do the greatest task in the world. He commands me to go and make disciples of all nations. This is the missionary task of the church. But he does not send me out on this mission alone. In verse 20 he promises to go with me on my mission. He promises that he will be with me every day until the end of this age. A wonderful truth for me is that Jesus Christ never gives me a task to accomplish all alone without him being present. When Jesus Christ gives me a task, then he also promises to go along with me as I accomplish my task. He does this, because he has been resurrected from the dead and is alive.

(T) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. Why was there never a time when Jesus Christ did not have all authority?

(S) *Before his incarnation*, Jesus Christ had all authority, because he created all things and sustains all things by his powerful spoken word (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:3). *During his incarnation*, Jesus Christ had all authority, because he possessed the Spirit without limit (John 3:34). But he restrained himself from exercising his unlimited divine power. He emptied himself of the glory he had with God the Father before his incarnation and took on the weak human nature (John 17:5; Philippians 2:6-8). Nevertheless, he still exercised limited authority over the forces of nature, demons, sickness, death and his enemies. *After his resurrection and ascension*, he is given all power and the right to exercise it as a gift or as a reward for his accomplished work of salvation. In Daniel 7:13-14 we read, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power. All peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” And in Philippians 2:9-11 we read, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him

the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” It is from then on that he begins to save people from every nation, tribe and language! *At his Second Coming*, described in Matthew chapters 13, 24 and 25, the unlimited exercise of his authority over every human being will become visible to everyone in the universe, especially through the resurrection of all the dead, the judgement of all people and the renewal of the earth.

2nd Question. Which verb in these verses is the main verb and how do the other verbs relate to it?

(T) The command of Jesus Christ is “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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.” The word “*therefore*” is important. It connects the claim of Jesus Christ in verse 18 with his command in verse 19. His claim of sovereignty is to let us know that his command can be fulfilled. Because he has all authority and power in the world, the command to go and make disciples can also be fulfilled in the world. Without his authority and presence, nothing would have been possible. But now, with his authority and presence everything he commands us becomes possible and will surely happen! There are five verbs in this command: “go”, “make disciples”, “baptise”, “teach” and “obey”. The main verb is “make disciples”. This verb in the original language shows that it is a command and that the command is continuously applicable! Christians must continue to make disciples to the end of this age! The other four verbs “go”, “baptise” and “teach to obey” in the original language are dependent on the main verb and also have the force of commands. Christians make disciples, not by waiting until people come to them, but by taking the initiative and *going* out to where the people in the world live. Christians make disciples by preaching the gospel and baptising the new believers. And Christians continue to make disciples by teaching the new believers both knowledge and obedience to all Christ’s commandments and teachings in the Bible. To make disciples therefore involves a definite approach, which includes initiative and effort.

3rd Question. What exactly is a ‘disciple’ of Christ?

(S) A ‘disciple’ is more than a convert. A disciple is a *follower and learner* of Jesus Christ. His mind, heart and will have been won for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself ascribed *specific characteristics* to his disciples like, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you show yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:7-8). As a summary, a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ who learns from Jesus Christ as he follows. He has specific characteristics that show that his mind, heart and will belong to Jesus Christ. “To make disciples” therefore means to make people in all these nations followers and learners of Jesus Christ. It means to help them to have the specific characteristics, which Jesus taught his disciples should have.

4th Question. To which nations must the disciples go and preach the gospel?

(T) ‘A nation’ in the Bible is not the same as today. Today a nation can be very big and include people from different languages and cultures within its borders. Today we hardly differentiate between ‘a nation’ and ‘a country’. But in the Bible the word ‘nation’ means a group of people that are held together by certain customs, which give them a sense of oneness. The people of this group feel a common affinity for one another and share a common way of life. A nation is usually characterised by a common language, origin and history. Or a nation is characterised by a common occupation and economic status, like farmers or factory workers or restaurant workers or university students. Or a nation is characterised by a common geography and religion. A ‘nation’ is therefore a people-group that has certain common characteristics. Today, every country has many different ‘nations’ or ‘people-groups’ living within its borders. And Jesus Christ says that his disciples must go to every one of these nations or people-groups and make them disciples of Jesus Christ. They must not just go to different countries, but to all these different groups of people in every country and make them disciples.

5th Question. Why should Christians be baptised?

(S) Christians should be baptised, because Jesus Christ commanded it. The words “baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” is a command. People, who have heard the gospel and believed it, should be baptised. To be ready for baptism requires repentance and receiving the gospel message (Acts 2:38-41). Baptism in the Bible is an outward ceremony using water, which symbolises the inward work of the Holy Spirit. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he crucifies his old sinful nature and sinful way of life and receives the Holy Spirit into his heart and life. This is called ‘rebirth’ in the Bible. When a new Christian believes in Jesus Christ, he proclaims that he has broken with the sinful world and has been brought into union with the living and holy God of the Bible. Jesus Christ instituted baptism as *an outward sign* of his inward work of salvation in believers and as *an outward seal* that gives inward assurance of the reality of his work of salvation. Baptism into “the one name of God the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” means that the new believer has been brought into a vital relationship with the God of the Bible. Baptism is a sign and seal that God the Father adopted the new believer into his family, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, redeemed him and that the Spirit of God indwells and sanctifies him.

6th Question. How should the disciples teach new Christians?

(T) The disciples of Jesus Christ must teach the new Christians all the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ. Because the teachings of Jesus Christ gets their true meaning in the context of the history of the whole

Bible, the disciples must teach the truth of the whole Bible to people. In Acts 20:27, Paul says, "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God." The disciples of Jesus Christ must also teach the new Christians to obey all the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ! The Great Commission is therefore not only theoretical, but also very practical! True followers of Jesus Christ are characterised by *obeying* the teachings of Jesus Christ. The truth they have learned must be practised. It must be appropriated by their mind, heart and will, so that they remain in the truth. According to Matthew 7:21,24 and Philippians 4:9, knowledge and obedience are inseparable!

7th Question. Does Jesus Christ want every Christian to become a disciple of him?

(S) Yes. Jesus Christ expects every Christian to believe in him, to follow him, to learn from him and to develop the characteristics of a disciple. In short, Jesus Christ expects every Christian to change and to keep on changing more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ!

8th Question. Do all Christians in the world become disciples of Jesus Christ?

(T) No. Already during the lifetime of Jesus, many so-called disciples stopped to follow him, because they thought that his teachings were too hard (John 6:66). Not everyone who says to Jesus "Lord, Lord" will enter into the kingdom of God, because they do *not do* what God the Father says (Matthew 7:21). And in the parable of the wedding banquet, not everyone who enters the banquet hall will qualify to stay. Those who have not clothed themselves with Jesus Christ will be thrown out! (Matthew 22:11-14; Romans 13:14).

9th Question. Should all Christians be involved in making disciples?

(S) Yes. In Matthew 28, Jesus gives this command to his first eleven disciples. They have to go and make disciples of all the nations. They make disciples by teaching them to obey all the commands of Jesus Christ. One of these commands is to go and make disciples of all the nations! Therefore, the command to make disciples of all the nations is a command to all Christians in the world! Every Christian should become a disciple of Jesus Christ and every Christian should help other Christians to become disciples of Jesus Christ!

10th Question. What does Jesus Christ promise to those who make disciples?

(T) Jesus Christ says, "Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age". A better translation for the word "surely" is the word "remember" and for the word "always" is "all the days". Jesus Christ urges his disciples to *remember* his promise every day. Jesus promises to be with his disciples "day in and day out". The emphasis is on one day following the other. Each day will have its own trials and troubles, but also the assurance that Jesus Christ himself will *in that day* be with his disciples! This will continue until his Second Coming, when he will bring this age to an end and inaugurate the age of the new heaven and the new earth. Jesus Christ promises his disciples that as they obey his command to go and make disciples in all the nations he himself will be with them every day of their work. He will be with them with all his love, wisdom and power. With the love of Jesus Christ, the disciples can love people who are destroyed by hatred. With the wisdom of Jesus Christ, the disciples can make wise and practical decisions in the midst of a complex world. With the power of Jesus Christ, the disciples can overcome the evil of this world and the forces of demons.

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

(T) I want to take the initiative and go to people in my city and country, who have never heard the gospel. I want to preach and teach the gospel to them and make them disciples of Jesus Christ.

(S) I want to teach Christians to obey the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ. I want to take them out to preach and teach the gospel to people that have never heard the gospel before.

(T) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Matthew 28:18-20.

Dear Father in heaven, I pray that you will make all the Christians of my church obedient Christians. Stimulate every Christian to go and make disciples of other people living in their neighbourhood. Stimulate some Christians to go to other places and other nations to make them disciples of Jesus Christ.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, let me experience your power and your presence every time I go out to preach and teach the gospel to other people.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Which people in your neighbourhood or people in your country have not yet heard the gospel? Consider how you can make them disciples of Christ.

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from Acts 5:12-42. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".