

Last words of a parting friend are always full of meaning and those of our Lord JC are no exception. Every gospel writer closes his account of our Lord's earthly ministry with His commission to the disciples to be witnesses in all the world. The Book of Acts begins with the familiar form of the commission in 1:8, and this frequent repetition underscores the importance of this last command of our Lord

We have come today to dedicate a building. What is a building? Brick, stone, wood, furnishings. It is the evidence of careful planning, sacrificial giving, hard work, and its completion is rightly an occasion for rejoicing and praise to God. A Xn ed building is a place to carry on the instructional program of the church. It is the scene of ~~scorez~~ the activity of scores of children and y.p. It is the altar where life-changing decisions are made. It houses the remembrances of friendships made and good fun enjoyed. This building is more than material. It is a ministry. It is the means of carrying out this last and great commission of our Lord. Therefore I am bold to suggest that it is to this purpose--the fulfilling of the great commission--that we dedicate this lovely facility this afternoon.

What specifically is the Great Commission, and just where does a building like this fit into its program?

It is probably Matt's account of the commission which is most familiar; at least it is the longest and most detailed. Therefore I wish to direct your attention to it for these few moments.

It is very simply constructed. There is a single command. That single command is not Go. It is not Baptize. It is not teach. The single imperative in the commission is Make Disciples (this is the word translated teach in v. 19) but it literally means make disciples). Everything else in these verses revolves around this single command.

Reduced to

in its simplest form this great commission is: make disciples.

~~The method~~ This is the meaning of the commission. The method by which this is to be done is also clearly stated. The single command is surrounded by 3 participles--going, baptizing, teaching. Disciples are made by going, bap, teaching. Now, going is not necessarily a command to set sail for foreign shores. It is more in the nature of a statement of fact, for every Christian in this world has gone somewhere. The commission is to be obeyed wherever you find yourself going. If you live in HH that's where it is to be fulfilled. When you find yourself going to work, or church, or somewhere with friends, the commission is to be obeyed in all these

places too. It is as plain as this: there is no place in the world where the believer is not to fulfill the commission. It is not Go then do something. It is: you are somewhere, do something there. Going is wherever you are. The disciples who heard this from the lips of the Lord went first to Jerus, then by reason of persecution they were forced to scatter and some went as far as Antioch. In this instance their going was not by command or vision but of sheer necessity. When P and Barnabas set off on the 1st miss journey they went to the most natural place in the world--Bar's home in Cyprus. Going, I repeat, is where you are. In a certain sense the first part of the method for carrying out this commission is automatically fulfilled.

But disciples are not made automatically by simply going. There must be a faithful and persistent sowing of the Seed of the Word. Some will be hardened but some will receive the message sown, and these in turn will want to testify to the fact that they have received Christ as their Savior by being baptized. Baptizing ~~is~~ presupposes sowing, receiving, and then testifying in baptism. This tells the world that the first step to discipleship has been taken by the new convert, it signifies that the gospel--

that X died, was buried, and rose--so~~v~~ vividly portrayed by the ordinance of baptism, has been believed, and that with the reception of the Savior has come a ~~forsaking~~ forgiving and forsaking of the past and an entrance into newness of life. Baptism is not to be considered lightly, for it is the line of demarkation between professed and true discipleship.

But there is a third step in making disciples. The great commission is never fulfilled by evangelism only. Disciples are not only those who have heard and received the Word, but they are those who are being taught the Word continually. Actually this is the primary meaning of the word disciple. A disciple is a learner. This is more than a follower, for one can follow without learning, but one cannot learn without also following. Baptized people need to be taught. This is the reason we dedicate ^{to the carrying out of the commission} this ~~educational~~ building so important to the educational program of this church. If teaching is such an imp^t part of any church's ministry and of the great commission, then we may well ask some questions about teaching. First, what is to be taught. The text is clear and definite--all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And these things are contained in the written Word of God. This is the content of our teaching. What a contrast to the words of

of John Dewey: We are uncertain as to where we are going and where we want to go, and why we are doing what we do." We know what we are to teach--God's truth. We know why we should teach it--it is the only ultimate truth; and we know how we're to teach it--in the power of the illuminating work of the HS. All things whatsoever I have commanded you. This means the facts of the life of X. This means the example of the life of Christ. This means the meaning of the life of X. Let there always be a healthy balance between facts and application. Facts without application is frigid formalism and application without facts is mysticism. P expressed this balance in his educational commission recorded in 2 Tim 2:2--the same commit thou to faithful men. The life must be changed along with the instruction of the mind. The facts of the life of X, for instance, will point up among other things the humility of X (Matt 11:28-30), and the self-discipline of X (Heb 5:8).^{Teaching them to keep them} But for us who live on this side of the cross the content of the teaching also includes the doctrine of the risen X as given thru His apostles. It means the doctrine of the epistles and it means the good practice which follows sound doctrine. It means giving our students what they need, not necessarily what they want. This is the content of our teaching ministry--doctrinal practice and practical doctrine.

The 2nd ques. is: How long is this curriculum?

The length of this course in discipleship is life-long. The participle is present--teaching, not having taught. Education is generally divided into 2 categories--that which is incidental and informal, and that which is intentional and systematic. Both should continue for a lifetime. ^{The fact that there is informal teaching} This is why it is so absolutely important that teachers in this SS be dedicated Xns. There is no one quicker than a child to catch any hypocrisy or area of unyieldedness, and any such unyieldedness will make you a failure as a teacher of truth. Teacher, you teach every time you come in contact with a student in any circumstance, and even that which he hears about you is instructive to him. This will affect him all of his life. Likewise, the formal instruction ~~zone~~ should be lifelong. First the beginners, primaries, and so on thru H\$school and then--may I say it?--PCB. But it is true that the Bible College for many completes that period of special emphasis on formal training and prepares for life service. And I may say

too that the Bible College is helped immeasurably by the good S.S., and the S.S. and local church needs the ministry of the Bible College for its young people. The course of study is progressive and continuous and culminates in lives dedicated to the service of our Lord.

Finally, who is to do this teaching? The commission was spoken to the disciples. It is disciples who make other disciples. *The Commission in 1 & 2 Chron*
Again, this is why it is of primary importance that the leaders and teachers of this church and SS be themselves wholly dedicated Xns. And what better time than at the dedication of a building to examine your own personal dedication. How is your own progress in discipleship? Will you let God use you just as much as I'm sure you want Him to use this bldg? It is only thru dedicated workers that the commission can be carried out. Will you be a hindrance or a help?

This is the Great Commission. By going, baptizing, and teaching make disciples. May our Lord who gave the command be pleased to use this new building and you in ~~the~~ carrying out more effectively His program for the church. Let us commission this bldg to the Great Commission, and let us dedicate ourselves to be more faithful and zealous disciples of the one who loved us and gave Himself for us.

& Jesus came & spoke unto them saying
All power is given unto me in heaven & in earth

Go ye therefore & teach all nations
Baptize them in the name of the F & of the Son
& of the H G

Teaching them to observe all things
whosoever I have commanded you
& lo I am with you always
even unto the end of the world.