

One of the fundamental truths of sports is to keep your eye on the ball. Regardless of how good your eye - hand coordination is or how much ability you have, if you don't keep your eye on the ball you will not succeed. In baseball, if you don't keep your eye on the ball, you either commit a fielding error or you strike out. In football, you drop the pass. In golf, you shank the drive. In sports, staying focused without distraction is crucial. If you fail in this regard, nothing else really matters.

Now what is true in sports is also true in life. You've got to keep your eye on the ball. Now the ball in life is your purpose, the reason for which you're here and unless you keep your eye on the ball, you will not be very successful in life. *The story is told of a couple driving though the country side and they got lost. Soon they came upon an older man walking alongside the road so they stopped and asked the gentleman where they were. The older man replied, "Where are you going?" The driver answered, "We really don't know, we're just out driving around." Then the old man said, "If you don't know where you are going, then it really doesn't matter where you are does it?"* Listen - in life, if you don't know where you are going, then it doesn't matter where you are. You can't set priorities in life until you understand your purpose in life.

General Patton had a custom of gathering all his leaders together before a battle and he would ask them, "*What is your mission in this upcoming battle?*" He understood that if you don't know your mission, then there is no way to achieve victory. First and foremost, if we are going to be victorious, then we must know for what we are fighting. Now our commander, Jesus Christ our Lord was very emphatic about the mission of his spiritual army, the church. After his resurrection and just before his ascension back to heaven he delivered to those disciples what we sometimes refer to as the great commission. ***(Mat 28:18-20) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. {19} Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: {20} Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen***

Now this commission is build around that little powerful word "go." Someone has noted that "go" is 2/3 of the word "God," 1/3 of the word "gospel," and 1/2 of the word "good" and our mission revolves around our responsibility to go. Now the real problem of many today is NOT that they don't know what the mission is but rather that they are simply failing to fulfill the commission.

We are busy and involve in many good things, but are we involved in the one thing that really matters most of all. If we fail to go and take the gospel to the world, then we have failed in the most important mission of all. Jesus came into this world to seek and to save the lost and before he returned to the Father, he passed the torch to us. This is a mission that we ought to be excited about fulfilling and Jesus gives us three reasons in these verses why this is the case.

Number 1. We ought to be excited about our mission because his power energizes us to go. Look at verse 18. *{18} All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Often when you come across the word power, it comes from the word *dynamic*. This is the word from which we get our English term dynamite. It carries the idea of raw energy or raw power. So Jesus tells the disciples in *(Acts 1:8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:* or as Paul said in *(Rom 1:16) the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.* But that's not the word that he uses here. The word that Jesus used in the great commission is *exousia*, a word that could be translated as "authority." So Jesus is literally saying that all authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. It's on the basis of that authority that I issue this commission. So let us remember that when we go out with the gospel, we are going with the authority of heaven behind us.

Now when it comes to the carrying out the charge given by the great commission, we do so with both ability and authority. Some question our ability to carry out our mission, because they look at the task and say it is impossible to teach the entire world, there is no way we can ever do that because the job is just too big. But think about what that commission must have sounded like to those early disciples who heard Jesus. To them too this must have seemed an overwhelming task.

They likely thought this was physically impossible. How were they to go everywhere with the gospel. They did not have the means of transportation as we do today nor did they have the technology. How could they accomplish their commission and get the gospel into the remote isolated areas of the world?

It must have looked impossible numerically. Jesus on this occasion was speaking to a small handful of disciples. It would have been one thing if there had been a coliseum full of a million people and Jesus said I want you to go around the world and preach the gospel. But with such a small group, how in the world could they cover the earth?

It must have looked impossible financially. Some scholars have estimated that the entire wealth of the early church members combined amounted to about \$10,000 in our currency today. Just for illustration, let's assume everybody had given 10% of their net worth to the church, then there would have been an income of \$1,000 for benevolence and to take the gospel to the entire world. This commission could have easily been perceived as an impossible task by the early church.

To add to their perceptions, **it must have seemed legally impossible.** During this time it became illegal to preach the name of Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem and if you did then you could have been arrested, put in jail and possibly even killed.

It must have **seemed impossible socially** because in many areas Christians were regarded as outcast and social rejects. For the most part, nobody would listen to them.

But did you know that in spite of all those obstacles they did it and they did it quickly. Paul writes in the book of Colossians in chapter 1 verse 23 that by that time the gospel had been preached unto all the creation under heaven. In some 30 years they did the seemingly impossible.

Jesus is not unreasonable and never expects us to do the impossible. He never commands us to do anything without giving us the ability to do it. Now if they could do it in the first century with all the obstacles that they faced, then we can do it today. We have the ability.

Number 2. We ought to be excited because his plan encourages us to go. Look at it there in verse 19. *{19} Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: {20} Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* Now Jesus not only explains what our mission is but he also tells us how to accomplish it. He uses a couple of words there that conveys what we need to do. First he says we are to “GO.”

People often complain today about how hard it is to get people to come to church services. They observe that people just don't come like they use to come. Now there is probably a lot of truth to that, but did you know that when you read through the scriptures, there is not a lot of emphasis on getting the lost to come. **The emphasis is on getting the saved to go.** The command is not for those who are in sin to come to the church; the command is for those in the church to go to those who are in sin. Somehow we have gotten the idea that we can put up a sign and open our doors and say come on in you lucky sinners and be saved. That kind of evangelism generally does not work because the folks on the outside don't know what they are missing and are not aware of the jeopardy that they are in. We have to go to the people. We have got to take the message and unless we do we are going to fail in our mission. If Jesus were to return today and ask us why we did not go, what would we say?

Some reason by saying that people just aren't interested. Well, we really might be surprised at just how many doors the Lord will open if we would but step through them. I like to be polite and if a lady walks up to a door with me, I open the door and hold it open till she walks through. But I don't stop and hold the door open if nobody is walking through. Why should God open doors if we are not will to step through those doors? Why should he give us opportunities if we are not willing to use those opportunities? When we start stepping through those doors, God will open more doors and when we start using the opportunities that come our way, then God will provide more opportunities. We might be surprise just how many people in our community who would really like to hear the gospel if we would but start fulfilling our responsibility to his command and GO.

Matt 28:18-19

The second part of the plan is when you go, MAKE DISCIPLES. A disciple is a follower. Disciples of Christ are followers of Jesus, those who have been converted to Christianity. So the commission is to go out and save souls. Now I realize that as a church we have the responsibility to meet the physical needs of other people. In times past, I have encouraged that we get involved in people's lives and help where we can. If they are hungry, we ought to be concerned about feeding them and if they are cold and naked then we ought to be concerned about clothing them. We can't be faithful to the Lord unless we are concerned about the physical needs of people. Matt 25 gives us a graphic picture of this responsibility. *(1 John 3:17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* We ought to love not just with the tongue but in deed and in truth. But first and foremost, we as the church have the responsibility to meet the spiritual needs of people.

Today there are a multitude of organizations in our country to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Somehow and someway that will get done. Man needs above all else salvation and there is only one group of people in this world that have been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the spiritual needs of the lost. There is only one group that has a message that can heal a soul that is sick with sin, and that group is the church. Now if we don't feed the hungry, then somebody else will. Now I'm not excusing us of our responsibility for benevolence or suggesting we neglect the needed, and if we don't care for them physically then somebody else will. But if we don't take the gospel, then nobody else will. So Jesus says go and make disciples and he tells us how. He says you BAPTIZE them. Contrary to what many people think today, baptism is part of the conversion process. It's involved in this matter of making disciples. After this commission was given, ever example of a person who became a Christian was baptized and was baptized immediately.

In Acts 2:41 tells us that some 3000 people heard and responded to Peter's first gospel sermon and were baptized. Later Philip was on that deserted road that led from Jerusalem down to Gaza and he preached to one man from Ethiopia and we learn in verse 38-39 of Acts 8 we find this man being baptized. You can turn the page to Acts 9:18 and read about Saul of Tarsus after coming face to face with the resurrected Christ and he goes into the city where he was told what to do by the preacher Ananias and he was baptized. Again one chapter late, we have Peter preaching to Cornelius, that devout Gentile and he commanded them in verse 48 to be baptized. Later Paul is in the city of Philippi and down by the river he teaches some women and they were baptized (Acts 16: 14-15) then he teaches a jailer who after tending to Paul's wounds he and all his family were immediately baptized at midnight (verse 30-33). Then in Acts 18:8 we are told that many of the Corinthians hearing believed

and were baptized. Baptism was part of the commission to make disciples.

Jesus then went on to say you baptize people INTO the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost. That word “*into*” was a word that carried the idea of making a deposit into someone else account. If you put money into my account, then from that point on it belongs to me, it’s mind. So when we are baptized into the Godhead, then we belong to the godhead. We become their possession and a new relationship is established. We become a child of God, an heir.

But there is one more thing to do. To make a disciple you go, teach, baptize but then you teach some more. Christianity is a maturing process and that requires additional teaching. Now they learn to behave like a Christian.

Number 3. We ought to be excited about this commission because Jesus promised to be with us. *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* With this assurance, how can we fail if we but just do what he has told us to do. There are something’s in life too important not to share. This is not a matter of debate or discussion, it is a matter of obedience or disobedience.

Invitation If you have looked into the Book and realize something is amiss in your life, now is the time to fix it.