

“Famous Last Words”
Matthew 28:16-20

Series: More – Find Your Personal Calling and Live Life to the Fullest Measure
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The Great Commission:

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:16-20

Back in 2008, I was a member of a Tuesday morning growth group that met here at Woodside. We would get together at 6:30, break bread and then study God’s Word until 8:00. Sometime around 2009 Doug suggested that we take the group out of the Woodside building and move it to a public place, like Einstein’s Bagel Shop near Kohl’s. Because I look up to Doug as a mentor, I immediately gave him my total support...Not. I am not always the biggest supporter of change. Some of you may have noticed that Michelle and I always sit in the same seats here at service. You know, those two over there in the second row. The empty ones. So, in this case I focused directly on all the potential problems this brought with it. It would be too loud. We wouldn’t be able to watch videos. There would be too many distractions. And Doug’s replies to my objections were, “Let’s try it.”

And we did. Einstein’s opened early enough that we could continue to meet at the same time. And I soon realized that I was correct. It was often noisy. We couldn’t effectively watch any videos together, and there were many distractions. But we also discovered that the noise wasn’t all the time – we could work around it. We found that it was easy enough to watch the videos on our own before Tuesday morning. And as for the distractions, we learned to get used to them and accommodate for them. Distractions such as an Einstein employee like Mary Ellen DiMaria who, after getting to know us from our weekly visits, eventually came to Christ and joined Woodside. Distractions like Johnathan Blake, whom I spoke of a couple of months ago. He introduced himself to the current Einstein’s Tuesday morning group and shared that he needed prayer in fighting his alcohol abuse. The guys in that group contacted me and with the help of various others Johnathan agreed to get help. He went through detox and a recovery treatment and is currently living in a recovery house in Levittown while he looks for a web design job. Two weeks ago, he gave his life to Jesus. These distractions may have never happened if we hadn’t taken our study out into a public place.

This is week two of our current sermon series is titled, “More – Find your personal calling and live life to the fullest measure”. Through this series we are going to look at who we are created to BE, what are we made to DO and where are we called to GO. For each one of these we have a Primary/Core calling, which we all share, as well as Secondary/Unique callings, that are personalized for each one of us. Last week Doug shared about our Core calling of Who

are you created to BE – Be a Disciple of Jesus. This week we'll talk about what are we made to DO.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” - Matthew 28:19

We've all heard the phrase, Famous Last Words. Well if these are the last words that Jesus spoke to the disciples, it must have been pretty important.

During much of his ministry, Jesus often spoke through stories, or parables. Sometimes, although not always, these stories were difficult to understand. But here, in this last communication, he makes it simple. He tells us what to do and how to do it. And to top it off, he provides comfort to us by giving us some promises to help strengthen us. The first is that Jesus was:

Simple and Direct - “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” Matthew 28:19a

Those are some simple instructions that he gives. He's not giving dimensions and instructions for a church building. He is telling us to make disciples. He isn't instructing us in the proper ways to build and format your worship team. He's telling us to go and make disciples. He's not providing us with meal plans, mission trip agendas and vacation bible school programs. He's telling us to go and make disciples.

He wants us to share our faith to help others get to know him. We can do this in our relationships with people. And don't be scared by the inclusion of “all nations” in the verse. While you may be called at some point to go some place different, there is plenty of work to be done right where you are. Family, friends, co-workers, neighbors. Each of those groups in your life most likely includes some people that don't have that relationship with Jesus yet. This is one of the reasons we don't isolate ourselves and only associate with other disciples, believers. How can we possibly make new disciples if we are not interacting with people who don't know Jesus?

He Gives Instructions “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
Matthew 28:19b-20.

Baptism (defined) - (in the Christian Church) the religious rite of sprinkling water onto a person's forehead or of immersion in water, symbolizing purification or regeneration and admission to the Christian Church.

Simply put it is the act of becoming a Christian. We do this by worshipping God, focusing on Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to take over our life. And the original disciples took this to heart.

Upon hearing Peter say that God made Jesus Lord and Christ, the people of Jerusalem asked him what they should do.

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38.

That is one action we can do – We help people to receive that gift.

The second instruction he gives is for us to teach. ²⁰...” and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:20.

Jesus was the greatest teacher there ever was, but it wasn't to end there. The disciples were to teach others what they learned. And part of that learning is to learn to teach others. We don't need to be teaching thousands of people to be disciples by ourselves. Even Jesus didn't focus on huge crowds. He taught the 12 in such a way that they would be able to teach others, who can then teach others. As Todd Wilson wrote in his book, we are to be disciples who make disciples, who make disciples.

We're trying to do this right now with Woodside services. We are taping the worship services and putting them out on the website for people to watch. But we don't want it to end there. Virtual watch parties are starting where a group of people watch the video together, add their own prayer and worship and sometimes discuss the message. Hopefully others will do the same, and while doing so reach out to family, friends and neighbors – especially those that aren't in a relationship with Jesus right now. We are trying to reach the goal God has in mind.

He Promises to Help Us – We often question ourselves on what we should do. Do we have the right and/or the responsibility to act in a certain way? As parents we have a responsibility to raise our children. We are often given authority by people or organizations to do the things needed to get done in certain circumstances. When Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”, we know that is truth. That authority is all-encompassing, and he uses that authority to pass on, for us to use to share his message, his command to make disciples.

Sometimes things get difficult. Trying to serve while dealing with all of life's other struggles can make us feel weighed down, trampled, even alone. And yet, when serving Jesus, we know that we are not alone – because he has promised that.

“... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - Matthew 28:20.

He is with us – yesterday, today and tomorrow. And when the end of the age comes, we are comforted in knowing that we will then get the chance to be with him. And who doesn't look forward to that day.

It was Sunday morning, November 19, 2017. It was after the 9 am celebration service and a woman came up to me and said, “I understand you are going to take my daughter to Kensington.” Well I was a little confused, until she introduced herself as the mother of Lexi Bridge.

At that time Lexi was in the high school youth group at Woodside and while I had seen her before, I had never had a conversation with her until the previous night. Lexi had signed up to volunteer at the Dave Pettigrew concert. The following is an edited version of a post Lexi made on Facebook on November 18, 2018.

“One year ago today, I became a part of something I never imagined being a part of. I was the door holder for the Dave Pettigrew Concert that night. Throughout the night, I talked to multiple people who were in recovery - both men and women. I saw one guy getting coffee. The thing that stuck out to me was that he was mixing Regular Coffee with Hot Chocolate powder. I then asked him where he got that from and he said, "when I was in prison..." It was weird, but I wasn't thrown off by the fact that he used to be in prison. It was as if at that moment God was saying to me "Lexi, this is your calling. This could be the start of something great."

“At the end of the day, I asked Scott Burgess if there were any other times where I could come help out. And he told me about the Recovery Cafe in Frankford that he and Michelle started. After talking to my mom about it for a while, she let me go with them. It was an amazing experience!”

“After being a part of the ministry for only 1 year, I've found multiple brothers and sisters in Christ. The people there always tell me how much I've impacted their life either through my presence or the paintings that I do, but what some of them don't realize is how much they've done for me. The kindness and hospitality that they show not only to me, but to everyone who walks in is unbelievable. I've volunteered for many groups and organizations before, but to me, this one was different. I honestly wouldn't give up any of this for anything in the world. I continue to go to Frankford, Conquering Grounds Coffeehouse in Bensalem, and the Quarterly Luncheon at Woodside whenever I can.”

It has been such an honor for Michelle and me to disciple Lexi. And I have recently learned that she has begun to disciple others. I pray that we've done right and have taught her through conversations, our actions and mostly by our love of Jesus. And one thing that I have learned from this is that the discipling rebounds. I've learned things about sharing the gospel that I probably would never have learned if that young lady hadn't volunteered at the 2017 Pettigrew concert.

Please pray with me...