

Matthew 28 (20) – Living the Jesus Life

When we talk about living the Jesus life, we have to make one thing clear. Only Jesus can perfectly live the Jesus life. You can never be good enough for God on your own. You need Jesus. You must repent of your idea that you can earn your way to salvation. And you must accept by faith that Jesus lived the life you can't, that perfect sinless life, in order to credit you with his righteousness. On the cross, God treated Jesus as if he lived your life, so that God could treat you as if you lived Jesus' life.

You are a sinner. You need a savior. Jesus is that one and only savior. To repent toward God and place your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins is the only way to get saved by God's grace from God's wrath against sin. Becoming a Christian is the beginning of the Jesus life.

So, once again, only Jesus could have lived the life that was always and only fully pleasing to God, a life without sin. Therefore, when we talk about living the Jesus life, we don't mean living a perfect life. We mean living with Jesus at the center of your life, with all of your life orbiting him, revolving around being his disciple. Living the Jesus life means you're living your life for Jesus. In all your ups and downs and all arounds. It's not about simply accepting him one time for your salvation. It's about living for him because of your salvation. It's not about your perfection, it's about his perfection. It's about living with a purpose, the purpose of Jesus.

Now, with that being said, how is it that you learn to live the Jesus life? And that brings us to our text. Jesus told his disciples to go and make more disciples. He told them to go anywhere and everywhere and baptize people in the name of God and into the ways of God. And we know that Jesus wasn't just talking about water baptism. He was talking about a complete discipleship process. Jesus said to teach those new disciples all of what he taught the first disciples. And the proclamation of Jesus, and the process of discipleship, what is known as The Great Commission, continues today. And if you are a Christian, you are a part of it.

We learn to live the Jesus life by being baptized into it, immersed into it, by being taught to do it. And that is the point I want to focus on today. When Jesus says, “*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*”, this is more than just telling others what he said. Teaching is by proposition and study, yes, but it is more than that. It isn’t just facts and figures and the faith. It is a faith lived out. Teaching is education, but education is not simply being taught what the teacher knows, but learning what the teacher lives. The disciples were to make disciples by teaching them, not just by telling people what Jesus said, but by living as an example of how Jesus said to live.

Education comes in forms other than classroom or sermon instruction. Lessons learned in the school of life, through experience and example. When Jesus gave The Great Commission, the picture he was drawing was about converts getting baptized, and then experiencing for themselves the Jesus Life in every sphere of life. Those who teach, who make disciples, must do so by teaching the Bible, but also by applying the Bible to the experiences of others, and by living as an example. If you are teaching well, you are teaching, not simply because you know stuff, but because you live stuff.

Jesus said *teaching them to observe*. This word *observe* means to guard, to keep a watch on something. *Teaching them to observe* isn’t just about telling people what to believe and what to do and not to do. It is about giving and living too. Giving disciples the training and the tools for their own life experiences. And living the Jesus life among them, so that they witness the way a disciple should live in various situations, with various decisions, with success and with failure. They learn and experience how you live for Jesus, how you deny yourself, take up your cross, repent, be obedient, have faith, stay faithful, fight sin, and follow him.

In this process, sometimes your role is evangelizing someone, or maybe even baptizing them in water. But while that may be your only role in someone else’s process, that isn’t the end of their process. Disciples have to be disciplined. And Jesus didn’t say “teach them the bare minimum and then let them entertain themselves”. He said teach them, by word and deed, to

observe, to watch, to learn, to live, ALL that I have commanded you. Away with those who try and teach that grace is a license to sin.

The gift of salvation is free, but the cost of discipleship is high. We aren't teaching people success in life; we are teaching them the Jesus life. The cost is that you have to go the way of God's word, and you don't get to go the way of the world. You have to follow Jesus; you don't get to follow the culture. You can't go two directions at the same time.

You might have heard that The Great Commission becomes The Great Omission when we focus on evangelism without also focusing on discipleship. We tell people how to get saved by Jesus, but then we fail to tell them, to teach them, how to live for Jesus. And that is true, we must evangelize, but also disciple those who have been evangelized. We don't stop with baptism. We teach them to observe what Jesus commanded, by teaching the Bible to them. But we also teach them by applying the Bible to their own experiences. And we teach them by living as an example.

We teach people to observe what Jesus taught. It all starts with evangelism, proclaiming Christ and making converts to Christ. We then baptize converts in water in the name of God, and then we baptize them into the ways of God. We teach the baptized converts how to follow Christ. This is teaching the Jesus life by education, experience, and example.

The Great Commission is about discipleship. And discipleship is about teaching. And teaching is about education and experience and example. It is in the Old Testament, too. Psalm 37:37 says – *Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace.* Ezra 7:9-10 says – *the good hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

Education and experience and example. The Apostle Paul used this method. In 1 Corinthians 4:16, he said – *I urge you, then, be imitators of me.* In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he said – *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

Philippians 3:17 says – *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* And Philippians 4:9 says – *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7, Paul says – *You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.* And 1 Thessalonians 2:10-14 says – *You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.* 2 Thessalonians 3:7 says – *For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you.*

In 1 Timothy 4:12, 13, 15, and 16 Paul told Timothy to give *the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* And to *devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* He said to *practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.* And to *keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.* In 2 Timothy 3:10-11, Paul said to Timothy – *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings.*

Hebrews 6:12 says – *so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* And Hebrews 13:7 says – *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.*

There are many more scriptures that demonstrate how discipleship, in other words, living the Jesus life, is a matter of education, experience, and example. You learn it and live it and that teaches others to learn it and live it. Education is about teaching the Bible, YES! But education is about more than *learning* what the Bible teaches you, but *living* what the Bible teaches you. Renewing your mind is not just about learning, it's about living.

Discipleship is truth transferred through relationship. This is most easily seen and done with the little, growing disciples you have in your own home. Children learn what you live. And disciples learn how to live by learning how you live. They learn to find their identity in Christ. And in Christ alone, instead of identifying themselves by some sinful lifestyle. They learn the biblical way of wisdom, how to live faithfully, and how to understand themselves, and the world, and their place in it. Instead of depending on the world for it, they are learning to depend on God and his word for it.

You are educating people with your life! You are teaching people how to follow Jesus. With your actions, with your beliefs, with your choices, with your reactions, with your ongoing repentance. This crushes the false idea that your pet sin isn't hurting anybody. Wrong; it is hurting you, your witness, your power, and that means you are hurting other people, too.

Your life isn't going to be perfect, but it can teach people about following Jesus in the good and the bad. It's about faith. About overcoming temptation. Even when you struggle, your life can teach that struggling is a sign that the Holy Spirit is convicting you and changing you. You can learn to be a disciple maker by learning to suffer well and to struggle well. And then your life will teach others how to suffer well and how to struggle well. Disciples need to know how disciples still sin but can still grow. It's not about how much you know. It's about who you know. I know Jesus. How about you?

Is Jesus the focus of your life, even when the rest of your life is out of focus? Does your life demonstrate what it means to cling to Jesus when your life is hard and not happy? In the ups and downs and all arounds of life, do you

keep turning to Jesus for your life? That's what you need to be, and what people need to see. That is how you can help others live the Jesus life.

Disciples are people. And people have problems, and pain, and everything else. They need to see what your lived out faith looks like. How you deal with life when you are forced out of your comfort zone. How you deal with stress when people are purposefully trying to stress you. How you deal with setback and loss and failure and misery. How you handle success. How you handle rejection. How you get back up when you've fallen down. How you handle all of life with your life. Your Jesus life.

Now hold on a minute. Let's not take Jesus out of this equation. You see, it's not that Jesus expects you to handle all of these things perfectly well so as to set a perfect example for others. No, only Jesus is undefeated. Sometimes God will allow you to be defeated. But it is for God's glory and your good. It reminds you of something. It shows the world something. It proclaims the Gospel, the aim of The Great Commission. We get defeated so that our defeat can shed light on Jesus' victory. His victory for us. His victory over us. Sometimes it feels like I am failing as a disciple. But my Jesus is never failing me! None of my defeats can defeat my champion! Jesus is my eternal life!

People say that God will never give you more than you can handle. But that isn't true. God will give you more than you can handle so you can hand it over to him. You learn to put yourself in his hands. And trust him, even when it feels like he is squeezing you. And you praise his name, whatever may come. Sometimes there is no answer but to look to your one true answer. Jesus Christ, the source of my life. All else may fail, and I may fail, but Jesus is not going to fail, and he is not going to fail me. I can win it all or lose it all, but Jesus is still my all in all. Psalm 73:26 says – *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Living the Jesus life is about being a disciple and making disciples, in all the ups and downs and all arounds of life. Because your life is a living witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Your life is part of The Great Commission!