

GO TIME

Understanding
My Part in the
Great Commission

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GO TIME

**Understanding My Part
in the Great Commission**

By Noah Huisman and Dan Ramlogan

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Introduction

Since the beginning of creation, God has commanded His followers to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth with image bearers who reflect the One who created them (Genesis 1:28). God desires to have worshippers from every tribe, tongue and nation that enjoy His grace and extend His glory to the ends of the earth (Revelation 7:9). Jesus gives the same command in Matthew 28:18–20, the Great Commission passage, to make disciples (worshippers) of all nations.

Matthew 28:18–20 ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We believe that a follower of Jesus is someone who is actively living out the Great Commission. We spend our time and energy to take the gospel to the nations and our neighbours, to see the lost come to faith, so God gets the worship He deserves. John Piper said, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is! **Missions exists because worship doesn’t.** Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more.” The ultimate goal of missions is worship! We sacrifice our time, energy and resources; evangelizing, discipling, and going to hard-to-reach places because billions of people do not worship the one true God.

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But, how does God intend to accomplish this task? The primary means God uses for getting the gospel message to the lost world is His Church. God's plan A has always been the local body of believers. Remember, Jesus' command in the Great Commission was for you and me to go. It's not just for those who like to travel or those who formally work in ministry, but it's for everyone, every day. That means it's "GO Time" church!

Chapter 1: What is the Great Commission?

A recent survey by Barna Research, a Christian research organization, showed that 51% of Christian churchgoers have never heard of the Great Commission and 25% said they have heard of it, but could not recall the meaning of the passage. These are concerning numbers, so before we get too far, let's unpack exactly what is going on in the Great Commission passage. We are going to break this passage down into three categories; the great context, the great authority, and the great mission.

THE GREAT CONTEXT

Let's start with the context behind the Great Commission passage. The context refers to the backdrop of what is happening around the passage of Scripture being studied. In this case, these are the final recorded words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. This passage takes place after Jesus' death and resurrection but before His ascension. In other words, death could not stop Jesus. The religious authorities who wanted Jesus dead could not stop Him. The Roman Empire, the largest, strongest empire in the world at the time, could not stop Jesus. Jesus was hung on a cross, put in a grave for three days, was risen from the dead and now stands in front of His disciples giving them this command. Put yourself in the shoes or maybe sandals, in this case, of the disciples. How would you be reacting? The one you gave

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up everything for, the one you thought was the Messiah, was arrested, tortured, and then crucified on a cross. All hope would have seemed lost. But then, in a resurrected body, Jesus appeared before them. He began teaching and ministering to them, preparing them for His ascension. All hope was back! Erik Raymond, a pastor and theologian in the Boston area, comments on this passage. He says, “The fact that Christ defeated the greatest enemies possible means that His mission is unstoppable.” This mission – make disciples of all nations! This context needs to inform how we read this passage. Matthew 28:18–20 are the words from an unstoppable conqueror. The victorious King Jesus commands His followers to proclaim His victory to the ends of the earth!

THE GREAT AUTHORITY

With the great context in mind, let’s look at the great authority of this passage. Jesus said, in verse 18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Here is Jesus, resurrected, standing on a mountain in Galilee. He has no money in His pocket. He has no sword on His hip. He has no army behind Him, yet He is declaring in front of His followers, the fullest possible authority one can receive. He has been given the authority of heaven and earth. Jesus is making it clear that what He is about to say is massively important. But, a good question to ask is how has Jesus been given this authority? The verse simply says the authority has been given to Him. Where is the source of this authority? The answer to this question can be found in Daniel 7:13–14, where Daniel receives a vision.

Daniel 7:13–14 ¹³“**I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, (Jesus) and he came to the ancient of days (God) and he was presented before him** ¹⁴**and to**

him was given dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed.”

What’s going on here? This is a vision that occurred 500 years before Jesus’ earthly ministry. The vision Daniel receives shows where Jesus gets His authority. The Ancient of Days gives the Son of Man His authority. God the Father gives God the Son the authority directly. The authority given to Jesus in this passage includes dominion, glory, and a kingdom. And what Jesus receives will not fade away. It will never end. What Jesus gets in this passage, He keeps for eternity. On top of this, every nation on earth is given to Him. Every peoples, nation and language will serve Him! With Daniel 7 in mind, when Jesus says in Matthew 28:18, “All authori-

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ty in heaven and earth has been given to me”, we know this authority was given to Him by the Father. Jesus is standing in front of His disciples and declaring His total and absolute authority. But how often do we forget that Jesus has been given all authority? Examine your own life. What area(s) of your life do you need to give up and submit to Jesus’ authority? We must recognize that Jesus has authority over governments, prime

ministers, our families, our children, economies, war, disease, nature, and life and death itself. Jesus has authority over everything! From the smallest detail to the largest event. With the authority proven in His resurrected body, Jesus stands before His disciples and reminds them of just who He

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is; the resurrected Messiah, who has been given complete authority by the Father! That's *great authority*!

THE GREAT MISSION

With the foundation of the context and authority behind the Great Commission text set, Jesus now provides the Great Mission for His disciples. The risen Jesus, who has received all authority from the Father, now tells His disciples in verse 19, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." In an English-translated Bible, there may be two commands given, "Go" and "Make disciples". However, if you were to read this passage in the original language, there is only one command and that is to "Make disciples." The main emphasis of Jesus' command is to make disciples of all nations! Remember, this is not a new command for God's people. God has commanded His followers to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth with image bearers who reflect Him since the beginning (Genesis 1:28). We are faithful to this command when we take seriously the task of making disciples.

But what is a disciple? What exactly has Jesus commanded us to do? In the context of when this passage was written, a disciple is a student of a religious teacher, where they are seen as a learner and a follower. In this case, a disciple is someone who follows Jesus, learns from Him and then teaches others to follow Him. They have given their lives to follow the teachings of Jesus and are fully committed to Him because He is fully committed to them. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus lays out three functions of a genuine disciple.

1. A Disciple is Sent and Sends

The first function of making disciples is that we are commanded to go! This does not mean we are all commanded to serve as missionaries in

a cross-cultural context, but we are all commanded to be intentional with those the Lord has placed in our lives. We are not commanded to sit on our hands and do nothing. There is action required in making disciples and that means intentionally going toward those who are lost. Romans 10:13–15 provides clarity for why “going” is an important part of making disciples.

Romans 10:13–15 ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

God’s primary means of bringing the message of the gospel to the lost world is through you – His Church. What an amazing privilege! As we go, the Lord uses the proclamation of the gospel message and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, to bring sinners to repentance. Those who then believe, call upon the only name that can save them – Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). For us, it means being bold. It means being intentional in going and sharing the life-changing message of the gospel. As Romans 1:16 states, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”. The apostle Paul was unashamed of the gospel message because he knew the power

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that lay behind it. He knew this was the only message that had the power to convict and convert the hardest heart. For most of us, this does not come naturally, but Jesus is worthy of our obedience to His command.

2. A Disciple is Baptized and Baptizes

The second function of making disciples is baptism. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19 that part of making disciples is “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It’s significant to note that something has happened between the *going* and now the *baptizing*. Namely, the person has been saved. That work is excluded from our command because that is not a job we can accomplish. We are commanded to faithfully go and proclaim the message of the gospel, but it is the saving work of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert the lost person. I hope that is a relief! We can’t save anyone, that is the work of the Lord alone. After conversion, we come alongside the new believer in preparation for baptism. To be clear, baptism does not save anyone. Baptism is an outward picture or symbol of faith that has already taken place in a person’s life. It is a picture of new life in Christ. Romans 6:3–4 describes this when it says, “³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Faith is the essential ingredient that unites us with Christ. Therefore, baptism is for those who have faith in Jesus. Baptism is an important part of being a faithful disciple because you are publicly declaring that you have counted the cost, you have died to sin, and now you desire to live in the newness of life. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are automatically brought into the universal Church, but more specifically, the local church. Therefore, when you are baptized, you are baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ and publicly identify with His church.

3. A Disciple Is Taught and Teaches

The third function for making disciples that we see in Matthew 28:18–20 is that of teaching. Jesus said we make disciples by, “Teaching them to observe all that I’ve commanded you.” This is no small task, but one that followers of Jesus Christ will continue to do for their entire lives. We grow as disciples by being taught, but we also come around others and teach them all that we have learned. The Lord has designed His disciples to grow through what we call God Time, Gather Time, and Group Time. It starts with our own abiding in Christ – God Time. Setting aside time each day to study and meditate on God’s Word. Like John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” We must prioritize time in God’s Word if we want to grow in spiritual maturity, but also if we desire to be fruitful in making other disciples. Second, we must gather weekly (Gather Time) to sit under the preaching of God’s Word. We are commanded not to neglect this essential aspect of the Christian life because the Lord has uniquely set up His church so we may grow together. Third, we commit to gathering together for fellowship outside of the weekly Sunday service. We are designed to be in community with other believers. Group Time provides an opportunity for you to grow in your walk with the Lord and creates an outlet for you to disciple others.

Chapter 2: Why is Go Time Important?

THE NUMBERS

The Lord Jesus has commissioned His followers to make disciples, image bearers, worshippers of all nations. This is an amazing command, and privilege, that has been entrusted to every believer. We must realize the time and place in which we live. We have access and opportunities to reach more people, at greater levels, in greater ways than ever before in history. Through transportation and technology advancements, improved levels of education around the world, and an increasing number of countries adopting English, we live in a period that provides endless opportunities for Go Time. Meanwhile, there is still a massive need all around the world. 86% of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists have never met a Christian. Below are the estimated numbers of followers of four major religions in the world.

Islam | 2 Billion Followers Worldwide

Hinduism | 1.2 Billion Followers Worldwide

Buddhism | 500 Million Followers Worldwide

Animism | 700 Million Followers Worldwide

**Numbers are estimates based on research done by the Joshua Project.*

These numbers reflect billions of people who have been deceived by Satan, may never have heard the message of Jesus Christ, and who direct their worship to another “god”. We do not all need to travel to the nations to meet

people from these other religions. The nations have come to us and are now our neighbours. Another alarming number is that there are over 7,000 unreached people groups in the world today. These are people groups where there are no known believers or not enough to have a sustainable evangelistic impact within the community. Unreached people groups make up over 3.4 billion people! That means there are 3.4 billion people who have no or limited access to the gospel. This makes up over 42% of the world's population. Michael Oh says, "God's people should have a holy dissatisfaction with the worshiplessness of the world, a holy dissatisfaction that more than two billion people in the world have little or no access to the gospel of Jesus – and do not worship or hallow the blessed and worthy name of the God who created them." As followers of Christ Jesus, we should have a dissatisfaction with the worshiplessness of the world. These numbers should propel us to share the life-changing message of the gospel with the nations and our neighbours.

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THE COMMANDS

Another reason why we must care about Go Time is because of the commands we read in Scripture. Matthew 28:18–20 is the foundation for how we understand Go Time, but other commands help give shape to how we live this out.

John 20:21 **Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."**

This text demonstrates the importance of Go Time in a Christian life. Jesus grounds the importance after His own experience of being sent by

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the Father. We are not commanded to be stationary but are commanded to go! Luke 24:33 provides helpful context for this verse, as it shows how Jesus was not strictly talking to the twelve disciples, but this commission was for all followers of Jesus Christ. We are all commanded to go!

1 John 3:16–17 ¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

This passage continues to bring clarity on what it means to live out Go Time. As followers of Christ, we have been given a specific message, the gospel, which the rest of the world cannot offer. However, what John is emphasizing in this passage is that a genuine follower of Christ will live out this message in what they say, but also in how they live. The message (truth) of Jesus is central to the command to go, but it must be coupled with caring (deed) for those around us. Love is what compels us to go.

Acts 1:6–8 ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus is not giving His disciples a command, rather He is making a statement. He said, "You will be my witnesses". Jesus is not making a

recommendation for His disciples to be His witnesses; He said they *will* be witnesses. This is a function of every true believer in Christ. But notice, this witnessing is dependent on the Holy Spirit filling the life of the believer. To be effective witnesses, we must be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE GLORY OF GOD

The primary reason for Go Time is the glory of God. God is passionate about receiving glory and worship from all the peoples of the world. God loves us and cares for us and He knows that as He is glorified through us, we in return will receive overflowing joy, hope and peace. As we read earlier, “Missions exist because worship doesn’t”. The reason why we go to the nations and our neighbours to evangelize and disciple is because God deserves and desires to be worshipped. Here are a few verses that can help us think about this.

Psalm 96:3 **Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!**

Isaiah 43:6–7 ⁶**“I will say to the north, Give up, and
to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from
afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,
⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created
for my glory, whom I formed and made.”**

Psalm 22:27 **All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the
nations shall worship before you.**

God’s glory is the main reason why we care and take Go Time seriously. God has created us in His very image, and He has people from every

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part of the world that belong to Him. Christianity is not private, or tribal, or national or an ethnic privilege. It is for all the people of the world. And that's why we go and proclaim His name.

Revelation 5:9–10 ⁹ **And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”**

The Lord Jesus ransomed a people, by His blood, from every tribe, language, and nation. He made them a kingdom and priests! If we are going to be effective and obedient to our command to go, we must understand correctly God's heart for the nations. Again, worship is the fuel of the Great Commission. The desire that God is worshipped by the nations and our neighbours is fueled by the joy of our own worship to God. John Piper says, “You can't commend what you don't cherish. You can't proclaim what you don't prize.”

People must be told about Jesus because there is no salvation and no worship where the gospel of Jesus is not heard and believed. Acts 4:12 says, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” There will be no salvation and no true worship among people who have not heard the gospel. The Great Commission, evangelizing, discipling, going and telling people about Jesus is essential for salvation.

Chapter 3: How Do You Participate in Go Time?

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At Hope, we believe we are all commanded to go! The Great Commission is not a suggestion for some, but a command for all. However, there are different ways that we can be obedient in going. First, there is a going to those the Lord has placed around you. It's intentionally going to your neighbours, co-workers, unbelieving friends or family members; it's being intentional with making relationships, whether at the gym, at your local restaurant or coffee shop or any other establishment you frequently visit. The point is about going toward those who do not believe in Jesus. It is being intentional with making relationships and being bold to share your faith. Second, we can be obedient in "going" by serving alongside other ministries as avenues for evangelism. This could be serving alongside one of our compassion partners or another ministry that cares for the physical, but also spiritual needs of people. It could be travelling abroad and serving alongside one of our church partners to encourage, support, and strengthen them in their ministry. Third, there is a great need for some to give of their lives for long-term cross-cultural ministry. Those who will engage in church planting or church strengthening efforts in parts of the world where the church is weak or non-existent. If you have questions about long-term cross-cultural ministry, please email Missions@HopeOakville.ca. The Lord has entrusted the

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message of the gospel to His church and has designed His church to be the primary means of bringing the gospel to the lost world.

SUPPORTER

We've all heard the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child" but it also takes a village to send and support the work of ministry. There are countless opportunities to participate in Go Time by supporting ministries or individuals who are committed to bringing the gospel to the nations and our neighbours. Locally, the primary way we can support the work of Go Time is by supporting the local church. God has designed His church to be the primary means of displaying the gospel to the lost world. Specifically, supporting other ministries through our compassion partners are ways you can support the efforts of Go Time in our church. For more information on areas to support, please email Compassion@HopeOakville.ca. Additionally, there are opportunities to support individuals who have been commissioned by the church to plant or strengthen other churches cross-culturally. These individuals or families are heavily reliant upon financial support to continue their ministry. In addition, they benefit greatly from those who will be committed to support them by sending letters, care packages and emails, as well as participating in Zoom calls, to provide comfort and encouragement.

WELCOMER

In 2023, there were over one million international students that studied in Canada. Countries that have historically been closed to Christian ministry are now sending their students to Canada. Through ministries like Helping International Students, these students can learn about Christ, attend local

churches, and study the Bible in ways that aren't possible in their home countries. We have a unique opportunity to evangelize to some of the world's hardest-to-reach people groups, disciple them within the local church, and send them back to their home countries with something much greater than their degree. Along with international students, Canada receives over 100,000 refugees each year. Often, these families are arriving from countries that are difficult for missionaries to reach. We, as the church, have a beautiful opportunity to welcome these families in word and deed (1 John 3:18).

INTERCESSOR

J.O. Fraser, a missionary in China during the early twentieth century, in a letter to His congregation back in England said, "I believe it will only be known on the Last Day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. What I covet more than anything else, is earnest, believing prayer, and I write to ask you to continue in prayer for me and the work here." Similarly to Fraser, our church believes firmly in the power of prayer (Ephesians 6:8). Prayer is a powerful way to support those actively living out Go Time, whether to their neighbours or the nations. There are several avenues for you to join in praying for the gospel proclamation all around the world. First, we must not neglect our personal prayer time with the Lord. We do not need to wait for an organized gathering to pray for our neighbours and the nations. You can intentionally pray for these things at home. However, there are several ways, at our church, you can join others by attending the following:

Church-Wide Prayer Meetings

Praying Parents

Missions Prayer Gatherings*

**For more information email Missions@HopeOakville.ca.*

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MOBILIZER

A mobilizer connects God's people to God's purpose for the nations. They understand the importance of Go Time and then mobilize others to see it and live it. We all have realms of influence that the Lord has entrusted to us. If you are a Youth leader, how can you be mobilizing your youth to live out Go Time in their lives? If you are a Men's or Women's group leader, how can you be mobilizing those in your group to intentionally go out and share the gospel message? If you are a parent, how can you mobilize your children to see God's heart for the nations and instill in them a heart to make Jesus' name known among the lost? We must steward the influence the Lord has entrusted to us and use it to see others living obediently to the commands we have been given. Mobilizers play a key role in creating a Go Time culture within the church.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

You cannot do this apart from the Lord's presence and strength. Thankfully, the Lord Jesus leaves us with His great assurance in the Great Commission passage. Jesus says in verse 20, "Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age." The promise we are left with! Jesus is with us always till the end of the age. That is why it is called the Great Commission, because God is with His people, now and forever. Go Time is not just an event but a way of life that calls us to live out the Great Commission. Every believer has a role to play in making disciples, and through daily abiding in Christ, we are empowered to go to both our neighbours and the nations. May we respond like Ed Stetzer, a Christian author on missiology, who said, "Here I am, Lord; send me. Cause me to live as an agent of your mission, to partner with others to spread your gospel to the nations, because we love the nations. Cause me to proclaim the gospel of repentance as that men and women might hear it all over the globe, by the power of your Spirit. In all these things, may we be a mission-al, mission-minded, gospel-centred, Spirit-empowered church."

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RECOMMENDED CLASSES & RESOURCES

Global Missions and the Church | Hope Institute Course

Evangelism | Hope Institute Course

Understanding the Great Commission | Hope Institute Course

Go Time Training: Love Your Neighbour | Hope Event

Secret Church by Radical | An Event for the Persecuted Church

CrossCon | 18–25-Year-Old Missions Conference

Unreached of the Day Prayer App | Joshua Project

Missions Talk Podcast | 9Marks & RTIM

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Missions Affirmed by Elliott Clark

Let the Nations Be Glad by John Piper

Missions by Andy Johnson

Through the Gates of Splendor by Elisabeth Elliott

John G. Paton by John Paton

Ministries of Mercy by Timothy Keller

When Helping Hurts by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett

Look and Live by Matt Papa

Radical by David Platt

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