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Preface

When God created the world, He created one and only one creature whom He stamped with His image. And He gave that creature a job: fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it (Genesis 1).

That creature—and his God-given helper—fell into sin (Genesis 3). The rule they were supposed to exercise over creation was flipped on its head; Adam and Eve were instead dominated by the serpent and his lies.

But God never erased His original mandate. The filling and the subduing and even the dominating are still supposed to happen. Mankind is supposed to rule God's world as His representatives, made in His image.

The fall has dirtied and marred that image, and has frustrated that rule. But one of the reasons we know God has not given up His original purpose for mankind is that the Bible tells us the end of the story of history. One day, Christ will fully and finally take up the rule that Adam failed so badly in. The end of the story of the Bible—told not just in Revelation but even in Old Testament books like Isaiah—is a renewed and restored earth ruled over by human kings, all submitted to a divine King.

But how do we get there from here? Do we have to wait till Jesus returns and conquers all the territory that is rightfully His? Yes, we do, but there is work to do in the middle. Christ is conquering territory even now. Perhaps you are part of it. He is conquering individual human hearts and bringing them under His rule. The fall has twisted people so badly—how else will people rule God's world as His representatives? We need to be conquered.

But we also get to take part in the conquering. That's what the Great Commission is. That's what evangelism is: it's announcing to the world that Jesus reigns, that God, our rightful ruler, commands all men everywhere to repent.

When you tell someone about Jesus' death and resurrection for sin, you are taking part in something huge, the biggest thing happening in the world right now. You are participating in God's plan to redeem His fallen creation.



Introduction

The small group of plainly dressed men watched politely as one of their number stepped behind the rough wooden pulpit. He announced the topic of his sermon in that simple, calm manner he always used when preaching. The title, “An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen,” piqued the audience’s interest. It implied that William thought Christian people should be taking it upon themselves to teach the heathen about God!

That truly was a surprising message from a preacher in William’s day. Good Christian people of that period believed that God would convert the “heathen” whenever He pleased. Did the Bible not teach as much? While pouring much time and thought into studying his Bible, William had realized that God says *Christians* are to tell unsaved people about Christ without waiting for a special sign or event. God has issued standing orders to all His people to tell the heathen about Jesus Christ.

William, whose last name was Carey, became the first figure in a tide of British missionaries that spread around the world during the next 150 years. Why was telling unsaved people about Christ such a novel thought until William’s sermon? People in earlier centuries had shared the gospel freely. The problem in William Carey’s eighteenth-century England was that virtually everyone called himself a Christian. Everyone knew what a Christian was. If you would have asked a woman on the street if she were trusting Jesus Christ for salvation, she would have certainly replied “yes,” and probably been irritated that you even asked.

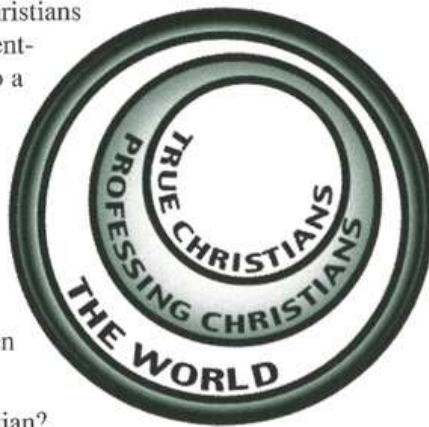
It is not that the British were all truly saved the Bible way; on the contrary, many did not really understand the gospel. They called themselves Christian whether or not they were genuinely saved.

In a society of nominal Christians, the true Christians find it difficult to keep telling others about Christ. The gospel seems like old news. It is much easier to carry on the routine Christian life without deliberately evangelizing unsaved people.

But no one even claimed to be a Christian in India, the place where Carey wanted to evangelize the lost. By studying his Bible,

William Carey realized God wants His people to take the gospel to the heathen—people who have never heard it. God’s will for English Christians had been the same in the years before Carey lived, but few had understood and obeyed it as Carey did.

Are the people in your area Christians, nominal Christians, or heathens? True Christians are rarely a majority. What percentage of teenagers and adults go to a church, any church, on Sunday mornings? How many of those churches teach the gospel as the Bible teaches it? Most of the people in your neighborhood and town are probably a mixture of nominal Christians and heathens who would not even claim Christianity.



So why bother being a Christian? After all, if it is not popular to be a *real* Christian, why even go to the trouble? Real Christians obey the Bible, and the Bible says Christians are supposed to tell other people how to become Christians. All those people in your town are happy remaining as they are. They do not need you to tell them how to be happy or go to heaven. You will do them more good by just showing what a good person you are and by having a positive influence on society.

Right?


If no one has ever said those words to you, just wait; someone will. Most nominal Christians believe those ideas are true. naturally, nominal Christians call themselves real Christians. They think reasoning and common sense show that Christians have no business trying to evangelize those who do not want to be evangelized. Consequently, they slide unknowingly toward the kind of culture in which William Carey lived in England, a culture in which everyone assumes everyone else either is a Christian or would become one if he cared to.

What are your own feelings about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others? If you honestly have no desire to tell others what Christ has done to save them, please carefully consider your own relationship with Him. When you recognize the plain facts of what the Lord Jesus did for you to save you from your sin, you ought to at least acknowledge your debt to Him. What is more, if you have trusted the Lord to save you, you and He are now friends. As His friend, you should be steadily learning more about Him and how you can please Him.

So how does pleasing Christ relate to telling other people about Him? You say, "Because Christ is pleased when I tell people about Him. Sure, sure. I've heard that one plenty of times." But why is He so pleased when you share the gospel? God is pleased because he sees it as a sacrifice from a loving heart. If you love the Lord, it is only natural to want to tell other people about Him. The problem is that witnessing is *hard!*



William Carey pioneered the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792.



William Carey had no idea what difficulties would confront him. He knew what was right, and he knew what God specifically wanted him to do. But the price he eventually paid to be a missionary to India was higher than he could have guessed—the work was very slow, he was often sick, and his wife became mentally ill. The small group of pastors that had gathered to listen to his sermon were the first ones to give money to support Carey’s endeavor. They were very poor men. It took great sacrifice for them to send one family around the world. In India, the gospel was not a welcome message. Carey endured many hardships during his years there. Many of the Indians for whom he had given up so much to help wanted nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

Was William Carey right? Why is it necessary to put forth so much time and effort to evangelize the lost? If it were *easy*, you would happily choose to evangelize whenever the opportunity arose. But since it is contrary to your own sinful nature and offensive to every human’s inherent sin and pride, evangelizing is (and always will be) *difficult*. Going to the trouble and expense to do what is difficult shows our love for Christ much more than doing an easy task.

The question we have to answer is, “Why is it difficult to turn lost people to Christ?” In answering this question, we will learn why so many people who say they are Christians are not, why evangelism costs so much time and money, and why you find it so much easier not to tell others about Christ.

William Carey became a great missionary, one who left his home country to spread the gospel in another country. This is not a book about missionaries, but it is about the work they and all Christians must do to make other people good disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A *disciple* is a follower, a student who becomes like his master. As a Christian, you are Christ’s disciple, and your lifetime task is to make more disciples for Him. Making disciples is the best way to show Him your gratitude—and it is the greatest service you can render another human being!

Turning a Rebel into a Disciple

1

Memory Verses: Matthew 28:18-20

Introduction

This course is about the part you play as a Christian in turning a sinner into a faithful child of God. The Lord is working actively throughout the world, drawing people to trust Christ and then grow as Christians. He has you act as His messenger. The message He sends through you is the entire Bible—telling people both how to be saved (the gospel) and what to do after being saved.

Thus there are two halves to your part in turning sinners into disciples:

- telling them how to be saved
- teaching them what God expects of a saved person

Consequently, there are two errors to avoid:

- considering your responsibility completed after leading someone to the Lord
- waiting passively for people to get saved on their own and then come to you to learn about the Bible

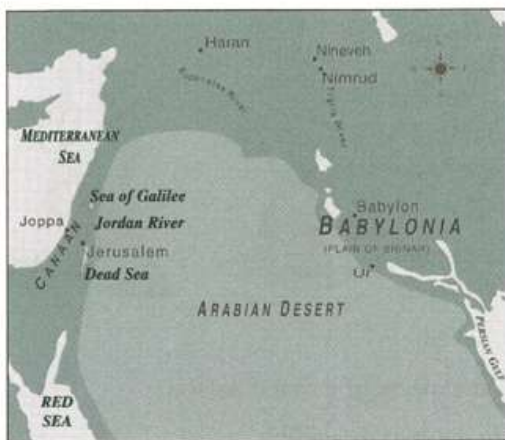
Instead, we must envision bringing unsaved people all the way from being rebels against God to being fruitful, joyful children of God. In this first chapter, we want to learn why sin makes discipleship difficult, how Christ wants us to make sinners into disciples, and what will happen to them if we do not.



What Sin Really Is

Let's look at the first chapter of Ezekiel. When you approach someone to tell him about Christ, you will be doing what God's children have done plenty of times before. Ezekiel lived in a time in which many people claimed to serve God but did not obey His Word.

Ezekiel was a Jew, one of God's chosen race. God gave the Jews a country of their own. Through repeated rebellion against God's law and rejection of His prophets, the Jews brought punishment on themselves and lost their country. God allowed another very evil nation, Babylon, to conquer and rule over the Jews.



Mesopotamia

Though in exile from the land God gave them, the Jews still would not repent of their sin but continued in rebellion against the Lord. God called Ezekiel to be yet another prophet proclaiming His warning to the people.

Read the first four verses of Ezekiel. Chapter 1 contains Ezekiel's description of

his vision of the throne of God in heaven. He saw things that sound strange to us: multifaced, winged creatures; colossal chariot wheels; and the figure of God on His throne. Ezekiel was struggling to put heavenly things into earthly words. God let him see for a few moments heavenly realities. The wheels and living creatures are God's angelic servants; their shapes and forms help display that God's presence and power are spread across the whole earth. The vision was not for Ezekiel's entertainment; it was the basis for what God was about to tell Ezekiel to do.

Put yourself in Ezekiel's sandals as he hears the Lord's command. You told the Lord years ago you would do whatever He wanted, but now that His order has come, you wonder what