

The Great Commission

MEMORY VERSE: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

“The gospel commission is the great missionary charter of Christ’s kingdom. The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

Suggested Reading: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 124, 125, 294–298. (At the bottom of this page)

1. MEETING IN GALILEE

Sun, Dec 7

a. Responding to Christ’s invitation, where did the disciples go? Matthew 28:10, 16. How many were at this meeting? 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Matthew 28:10

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Matthew 28:16

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

1 Corinthians 15:6

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

“The commission had been given to the twelve when Christ met with them in the upper chamber; but it was now to be given to a larger number. At the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, all the believers who could be called together were assembled. . . .

“At the time appointed, about five hundred believers were collected in little knots on the mountainside, eager to learn all that could be learned from those who had seen Christ since His resurrection. From group to group the disciples passed, telling all they had seen and heard of Jesus, and reasoning from the Scriptures as He had done with them. Thomas recounted the story of his unbelief, and told how his doubts had been swept away. Suddenly Jesus stood among them. No one could tell whence or how He came. Many who were present had never before seen Him; but in His hands and feet they beheld the marks of the crucifixion; His countenance was as the face of God, and when they saw Him, they worshiped Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 818, 819.

2. A COMMAND THAT BRINGS JOY

Mon, Dec 8

a. What command is to have great impact? Matthew 28:19, 20 (first part).

Matthew 28:19, 20

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.

“The disciples had worshiped [Jesus] before He spoke, but His words, falling from lips that had been closed in death, thrilled them with peculiar power. He was now the risen Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 819.

“Standing but a step from His heavenly throne, Christ gave the commission to His disciples. ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,’ He said. ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.’ ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ Mark 16:15. Again and again the words were repeated, that the disciples might grasp their significance. Upon all the inhabitants of the earth, high and low, rich and poor, was the light of heaven to shine in clear, strong rays. The disciples were to be colaborers with their Redeemer in the work of saving the world.”—*Ibid.*, p. 818.

b. What assurance is included in Christ's command? Mark 16:16.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

“Christ's words on the mountainside were the announcement that His sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The conditions of the atonement had been fulfilled; the work for which He came to this world had been accomplished. He was on His way to the throne of God, to be honored by angels, principalities, and powers. He had entered upon His mediatorial work. Clothed with boundless authority, He gave His commission to the disciples.”—*Ibid.*, p. 819.

c. With what words did the apostle Peter confirm this basic truth, and what was the result? Acts 4:12.

Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

“Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, was the theme of every discourse. His name—the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved—was by them exalted. As they proclaimed the completeness of Christ, the risen Saviour, their words moved hearts, and men and women were won to the gospel. Multitudes who had reviled the Saviour's name and despised His power now confessed themselves disciples of the Crucified.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 594.

3. “ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME”

Tue, Dec 9

a. What do the words of Christ, “All power is given unto me” mean? Matthew 28:18.

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

“That power is not diminished by the lapse of years, nor exhausted by the ceaseless activity of His overflowing grace. To all who believe on Him He is still a living Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 319.

“When we are securely anchored in Christ, we have a power that no human being can take from us. Why is this? Because we are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, partakers of the nature of Him who came to this earth clothed with the habiliments of humanity, that He might stand at the head of the human race and develop a character that was without spot or stain of sin.

“Why are many of us so weak and inefficient? It is because we look to self, studying our own temperaments and wondering how we can make a place for ourselves, our individuality, and our peculiarities, in the place of studying Christ and His character.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 187.

b. How do we receive strength from Christ? Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

“The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character.

“By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it

means to live 'by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 391.

4. GOING FORTH

Wed, Dec 10

a. What is implied in the words, "Go" and "teach"? Matthew 28:19 (first part).

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"We are called upon to lift our eyes to the 'regions beyond.' Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

b. What promise did Jesus attach to the missionary commission—and what does this mean for us? Matthew 28:20 (last part).

Matthew 28:20

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.

"It is in doing Christ's work that the church has the promise of His presence."—*Ibid.*, p. 825.

"He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe, but know that My presence will be there. Labor in faith and confidence, for the time will never come when I will forsake you.

"The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to

whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be coworkers with Christ.”—*Ibid.*, p. 822.

“Are you colaborers with Christ? Can you not for His sake endure suffering, sacrifice, and trial? There is opportunity for doing good to the souls of the youth and the erring. If you see one whose words or attitude shows that he is separated from God, do not blame him. It is not your work to condemn him, but come close to his side to give him help.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 125.

5. SHARING THE GOSPEL

Thu, Dec 11

a. What is the Bible definition of the gospel? Romans 1:16, 17.

Romans 1:16, 17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

“Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: ‘This is My child. I reprove him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life insurance policy—eternal life—because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins. He is even My beloved son.’ Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness, stands faultless before God.

“The sinner may err, but he is not cast off without mercy. His only hope, however, is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 74.

b. Why did the apostle Paul consider himself a debtor? Romans 1:14, 15.

Romans 1:14, 15

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. **15** So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

“In what sense was Paul debtor both to the Jew and to the Greek? To him had been given the commission, as it is given to every disciple of Christ. [Matthew 28:19, 20 quoted.] In accepting Christ, Paul accepted this commission. He realized that upon him rested the obligation of laboring for all classes of men—for Jew and Gentile, learned and unlearned, for those occupying high positions and for those in the most lowly walks of life.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1067.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Dec 12

- 1. What commission has my Lord given specifically to me, in my sphere?**
- 2. Why have I not yet received Christ’s power in its true fullness?**
- 3. What challenge and assurance is the Lord extending to me today?**
- 4. What does the name of Christ mean to His followers?**
- 5. What does it mean to “look to Christ”?**

Suggested Reading: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 124, 125, 294–298.

The parable of the straying sheep should be treasured as a motto in every household. The divine Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine, and goes out into the wilderness to seek the one that is lost. There are thickets, quagmires, and dangerous crevices in the rocks, and the Shepherd knows that if the sheep is in any of these places, a friendly hand must help it out. As He hears its bleating afar off, He encounters any and every difficulty that He may save His sheep that is lost. When He discovers the lost one, He does not greet it with reproaches. He is only glad that He has found it alive. With firm yet gentle hand He parts the briers or takes it from the mire; tenderly He lifts it to His shoulders and bears it back to the fold. The pure, sinless Redeemer bears the sinful, the unclean. (6T 124.1)

The Sin Bearer carries the befouled sheep; yet so precious is His burden that He rejoices, singing: "I have found My sheep which was lost." Luke 15:6. Let every one of you consider that your individual self has thus been borne upon Christ's shoulders. Let none entertain a masterly spirit, a self-righteous, criticizing spirit; for not one sheep would ever have entered the fold if the Shepherd had not undertaken the painful search in the desert. The fact that one sheep was lost was enough to awaken the sympathy of the Shepherd and start Him on His quest. **(6T 124.2)**

This speck of a world was the scene of the incarnation and suffering of the Son of God. Christ did not go to worlds unfallen, but He came to this world, all seared and marred with the curse. The outlook was not favorable, but most discouraging. Yet "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth." Isaiah 42:4. We must bear in mind the great joy manifested by the Shepherd at the recovery of the lost. He calls upon His neighbors: "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." Luke 15:6. And all heaven echoes the note of joy. The Father Himself joys over the rescued one with singing. What a holy ecstasy of joy is expressed in this parable! That joy it is your privilege to share. **(6T 124.3)**

Are you, who have this example before you, co-operating with Him who is seeking to save the lost? Are you colaborers with Christ? Can you not for His sake endure suffering, sacrifice, and trial? There is opportunity for doing good to the souls of the youth and the erring. If you see one whose words or attitude shows that he is separated from God, do not blame him. It is not your work to condemn him, but come close to his side to give him help. Consider the humility of Christ, and His meekness and lowliness, and work as He worked, with a heart full of sanctified tenderness. "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:1-3. **(6T 125.1)**

In order for us to work as Christ worked, self must be crucified. It is a painful death; but it is life, life to the soul. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with

him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15. **(6T 125.2)**

In the invitation to the gospel supper the Lord Jesus has specified the work to be done—the work that the churches in every locality, north, south, east, and west, should do. **(6T 294.1)**

The churches need to have their eyes anointed with the heavenly eyesalve, that they may see the many opportunities all about them to minister for God. Repeatedly God has called upon His people to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come in, that His house may be full; yet even within the shadow of our own doors are families in which we have not shown sufficient interest to lead them to think that we cared for their souls. It is this work lying nearest us that the Lord now calls upon the church to undertake. We are not to stand, saying: "Who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29. We are to remember that our neighbor is the one who most needs our sympathy and help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God. In Christ the distinctions made by the Jews as to who was their neighbor are swept away. There are no territorial lines, no artificial distinctions, no caste, no aristocracy. **(6T 294.2)**

The spirit of the good Samaritan has not been largely represented in our churches. Many in need of help have been passed by, as the priest and Levite passed by the wounded and bruised stranger who had been left to die by the wayside. The very ones who needed the power of the divine Healer to cure their wounds have been left uncared for and unnoticed. Many have acted as if it were enough to know that Satan had his trap all set for a soul, and they could go home and care not for the lost sheep. It is evident that those who manifest such a spirit have not been partakers of the divine nature, but of the attributes of the enemy of God. **(6T 294.3)**

Someone must fulfill the commission of Christ; someone must carry on the work which He began to do on earth; and the church has been given this privilege. For this purpose it has been organized. Why, then, have not church members accepted the responsibility? There are those who have seen this great neglect; they have seen the needs of many who are in suffering and want; they have recognized in these poor souls those for whom Christ gave His life, and their hearts have been stirred with pity, every energy has been roused to action. They

have entered upon a work of organizing those who will co-operate with them in bringing the truth of the gospel before many who are now in vice and iniquity, that they may be redeemed from a life of dissipation and sin. Those who have been engaged in this Christian help work have been doing what the Lord desires to have done, and He has accepted their labors. That which has been done in this line is a work which every Seventh-day Adventist should heartily sympathize with and indorse, and take hold of earnestly. In neglecting this work which is within their own borders, in refusing to bear these burdens, the church is meeting with great loss. Had the church taken up this work as they should have done, they would have been the means of saving many souls. **(6T 295.1)**

Because of their neglect the Lord has looked with disfavor upon the church. A love of ease and selfish indulgence has been shown by many. Some who have had the privilege of knowing Bible truth have not brought it into the inner sanctuary of the soul. God holds all these accountable for the talents which they have not returned to Him in honest, faithful service in making every effort possible to seek and to save those who were lost. These slothful servants are represented as coming to the wedding supper without the wedding garment, the robe of the righteousness of Christ. They have nominally accepted the truth, but they do not practice it. Professedly circumcised, they are in reality among the uncircumcised. **(6T 295.2)**

Why do we not become enthused with the Spirit of Christ? Why are we so little moved by the pitiful cries of a suffering world? Do we consider our exalted privilege of adding a star to Christ's crown—a soul cut loose from the chains with which Satan has bound him, a soul saved in the kingdom of God? The church must realize its obligation to carry the gospel of present truth to every creature. I entreat of you to read the third and fourth chapters of Zechariah. If these chapters are understood, if they are received, a work will be done for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, a work that means to the church: "Go forward and upward." **(6T 296.1)**

Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual condition. If professed Christians had engaged in this work from the time when their names were first placed on the church books, there would not now be such widespread unbelief, such depths of iniquity, such unparalleled wickedness, as is seen in the world at the present time. If every church member

had sought to enlighten others, thousands upon thousands would today stand with God's commandment-keeping people. **(6T 296.2)**

And not only in the world do we see the result of the church's neglect to work in Christ's lines. By this neglect a condition of things has been brought into the church that has eclipsed the high and holy interests of the work of God. A spirit of criticism and bitterness has come into the church, and the spiritual discernment of many has been dimmed. Because of this the cause of Christ has suffered great loss. Heavenly intelligences have been waiting to co-operate with human agencies, but we have not discerned their presence. **(6T 296.3)**

It is now high time that we repent. All the people of God should interest themselves in the work of doing good. They should unite heart and soul in earnest endeavor to uplift and enlighten their fellow men. They should put on the wedding garment that Christ has provided, that they may be prepared to work in His lines. They should not receive the grace of God in vain. With humble, devoted reverence they should labor on the right hand and on the left, consecrating to God their entire service and all their capabilities. **(6T 297.1)**

There must be an awakening among the people of God. The entire church is to be tested. The worldly-wise man, who meditates and plans, and whose business is ever in his mind, should seek to become wise in matters of eternal interest. If he would put forth as much energy to secure the heavenly treasure and the life which measures with the life of God as he does to secure worldly gain, what could he not accomplish? **(6T 297.2)**

The unfaithful steward did not enrich himself with his master's goods; he merely wasted them. He let idleness take the place of sincere, wholehearted labor. He was unfaithful in the appropriation of his lord's goods. Unfaithful steward, do you not see that you will lose your soul if you do not co-operate with God and make the most of your talents for the Master? Your mind was given that you might understand how to work. Your eyes were given that you might be keen to discern your God-given opportunities. Your ears are to listen for the commands of God. Your knees are to bow three times a day in heartfelt prayer. Your feet are to run in the way of God's commandments. Thought, effort, talent, should be put into exercise, that you may be prepared to graduate into the school above and hear from the lips of One who has overcome all temptations in our behalf the words: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as

I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." Zechariah 3:7. If you do not co-operate with the Lord by giving yourself to Him and doing His service you will be judged unfit to be a subject of His pure, heavenly kingdom. **(6T 297.3)**

While I have been commissioned to point out the danger of swaying things too heavily in the medical missionary line to the neglect of other lines of service, this does not excuse those who have held themselves aloof from the medical missionary work. Those who have not been in sympathy with this work should now be very careful how they speak, for they are not intelligent on this subject. Whatever their position in the conference, they should be very guarded in giving utterance to sentiments that will help no one. The indifference and opposition that some have manifested in reference to this question makes it inconsistent that their words should have a large influence. They are not clear-sighted. **(6T 298.1)**