The Great Commission
Matthew 28:16-20

Pastor Ron Prosise
September 12, 2010
Shepherd’s Community Church

Availability (16)

(John 17:4; Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 14; 3:21; Luke 19:10; John 20:21; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 15:6)

Adoration (17-18a)

(2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Psalm 42:5; Hebrews 12:2)

Authority (18b)

(John 14:21; Matthew 16:18; Romans 10:9)

Action (19-20a)

(John 8:31; 15:10; Matthew 4:19; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Assurance (20b)

(2 Corinthians 3:4-6; John 15:5; Matthew 25:21)

This question was asked at Grace Community Church and answered by Pastor John MacArthur (GC 70-17, “Bible Questions and Answers”):

“You have always taught here that the purpose of the church is to equip the saints, yet recently you stated that the main purpose of the church is to reach the lost, and if that is true, then why don't we have more emphasis on evangelism?”

Answer: “That’s an excellent question. The edification of the church, the building up of the saints is so they can be more effective in evangelism. The edification of the saints is not the end, it's the means to the end.

Now, evangelism doesn't occur in a vacuum. Effective evangelism occurs out of a transformed life. It's back to that same old idea that if I'm going to make the transforming power of Jesus Christ convincing, I've got to demonstrate how He transformed my life, right? So the most effective evangelistic weapon apart from just simply speaking the gospel, the most effective evangelistic tool that we have is a transformed life. That is our testimony. So the purpose of the church then is to edify the believer to build him up toward Christ likeness so that he manifests the product that he's going to promote. Nothing is more ineffective in Christian evangelism than somebody proclaiming the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ and living as if Christ couldn’t transform anybody, or hadn’t transformed him.

So, we are built up in the faith so that our testimony is strong and that there's credibility in the gospel that we preach that Jesus Christ indeed can change a life. Now, let me tell you something else, sometimes we overestimate what is necessary in the specifics of the proclamation and sometimes we think, “Well I've never known how to share the gospel until I finally learned this little formula” when the fact of the matter is that's not true. First of all, your transformed life, your mature Christian walk, the evidence of God at work in your life, your spiritual attitudes, your love for people, your genuine devotion to Jesus Christ into the life of the church lays a tremendous groundwork with the people that know you. And the simplest word such as “Jesus Christ died for me and He changed my life and He can change your life,” is a proclamation of the gospel. It's a starting proclamation.

I think it's one of the sad realities in the church that everybody doesn't know how to present the gospel clearly and fully, but it's also one of the sad realities of the church that we sometimes underestimate the capability that we do have. It may take us a little longer to get to the point but if you're in Christ and you know Christ then you know how you came to know Christ. You may not be able to say it as well as if your transformed life, your mature Christian walk, the evidence of God at work in your life, your spiritual attitudes, your genuine devotion to Jesus Christ into the life of the church lays a tremendous groundwork with the people that know you. And the simplest word such as “Jesus Christ died for me and He changed my life and He can change your life,” is a proclamation of the gospel. It's a starting proclamation.

Rather the whole of the New Testament unfolds the sweeping reality of redemption through Jesus Christ. And we who are saved know why we're saved and you don't want to underestimate your ability to articulate that. You may not have it as refined as you would like, but listen carefully, it is not necessarily the refinement or the formula that God uses, it is the truth that He uses. Somebody may go out and give a very simple and maybe not chronologically organized presentation of the gospel, but it hits the good soil, the person’s converted. So don't underestimate that.”