

Bill Bright: The Great Commission

This command known as the Great Commission motivated the apostles to turn the first-century world upside down and changed the course of history. And it applies to us as well as to them.

It is not wishful thinking to suggest that our 20-century world can be changed in the same sense that the first century-world was turned upside down. When individuals are changed in sufficient number, homes and communities will be changed. Cities, states and nations of the world will feel the impact of the transformed lives of the men and women who have been introduced to Jesus Christ.

When John Wesley and his colleagues were raised up of God to preach the Good News of Christ in England, they were confronted with a skeptical clergy and an immoral and spiritually decadent people. Yet within the lifetime of Wesley and many of his co-workers, England was so transformed by the power of God that many historians recorded the dramatic changes. William Green referred to England as one great sanctuary—a land of worship. Out of the great spiritual awakening in which hundreds of thousands of lives were transformed by the living Christ, England experienced a new spiritual birth.

I believe our nation can experience today the same transforming grace of God that England experienced in Wesley's time, if Christians take the command of our Lord seriously.

But we must stop "playing church" while our world is aflame. We are like men who are straightening pictures on the walls of a burning house. We are dealing with peripheral issues while it is the hearts of men that need to be changed. The problems

of evil that are threatening to engulf humanity can be solved only in Jesus Christ, and He has commanded His disciples to go and tell His message everywhere.

There are three good reasons why we must go.

First, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has commanded us to go.

Second, men are lost without Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me."

That sounds narrow, doesn't it? But it is what Jesus said. Men are spiritually lost and helpless without Christ. The Bible says of Jesus, ... "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The third reason why we should go is that the Holy Spirit has created a great hunger for Christ in the hearts of multitudes. Millions of people are waiting to receive Christ. Many Christians hesitate to believe this. But the Word of God and my experience have proved it to be true.

Some years ago I had the remarkable opportunity to substitute for the vice president of the United States at a speaking engagement which he was unable to fill because of an international emergency. I was invited to speak to a large student convention, attended by the top leaders of 133 colleges and universities. I spoke on the subject "Qualities of Leadership," using Jesus, the greatest leader the world has ever known, as my example.

When I finished, there was a standing ovation—not you may be sure, for the speaker, but for the One about whom I spoke. Scores of these students stood in line for almost an hour to express their appreciation, and many of them indicated their interest in knowing Christ personally. Several received Christ as their Savior as a result. Yes, men are hungry for God.

Yet, if you are typical of the majority of Christians today, you probably have never introduced anyone to Christ. You would like to do so, however, and you know in your heart that this is what God has called you to do. What is the problem?

It is largely twofold. First, the average Christian does not know how to live a victorious, vital Spirit-controlled life; and second, the average Christian does not know how to effectively communicate his faith in Christ to others.

I would like to share with you a scriptural formula that can change your life. I can assure you that, if you follow this formula, you will experience an abundant life and will be fruitful for God in a way that you have never before known.

First, be sure that you are committed to Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. Millions of people who are active in the church are not sure that they are Christians. There are also thousands of guilt-ridden, carnal Christians who have become so frustrated and off-course that God cannot use them. In each case, there is a lack of faith or trust in God. Basically, the average Christian does not believe that God will do what He promises to do.

Second, pray in faith that God will guide you in developing your personal strategy. Ask God for an effective strategy to reach your immediate area of influence for Christ. You do not have to design your own strategy—you are simply discovering the plan that God has already designed!

Jesus was a perfect example. While on earth He discussed every major decision and turning point in His life with His heavenly Father. And remember, as you pray, expect God to provide both the strategy and the wisdom to implement it. Expectant faith pleases God.

Third, outline the plan God reveals in answer to your prayers. Make lists of specific people and groups in your life and develop a strategy to reach each one. Begin with your family.

Remember that in your home—more than in any other place—your life will be your testimony. Trust God continually to fill you with His Spirit, so that your actions will bear witness to what Jesus has done in your life.

Plan how you can reach the people with whom you work. Seek out those you know are Christians, and ask them to join with you in evangelizing your office. In your church, make yourself available to your pastor.

Fourth, learn everything you can about how to accomplish your personal strategy. Take advantage of the training and materials available to learn the techniques of winning men to Christ, building them in the faith and sending them to the world with the Good News of God's love and forgiveness.

May I encourage you to write out your own personal strategy today. List people with whom God has impressed on your mind and heart to share Christ. This is spiritual addition. For spiritual multiplication, list people you would like to train how to experience and share the abundant life in Christ with others.

Finally—and this is an absolute must—give your attention to aggressive evangelism! Take the initiative in helping to fulfill the Great Commission where you live. Claim your relatives, friends, neighbors and business associates for Christ in prayer. Then, present His claims to them. Tell them of God's love and forgiveness, available through Jesus Christ. Give them opportunity to receive Him. Share your faith as a way of life—talk about Christ with everyone you meet.

Do you believe that if you follow this scriptural formula you will consistently have the privilege of introducing others to Christ through your witness? I can assure you that following it will enable you and every Christian to be fruitful for God as a way of life. This life on earth offers no other adventure that can compare to that of sharing Christ with others and

building disciples for Christ and disciplers of men.