

Jesus Never Told Us to Get People Born Again

"What? Heresy!" I can hear the cries already.

Stay with me.

"'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus told us to make disciples. Being born again is the first step, but discipleship is a process.

Notice the command of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

"He said to them, 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned'" (Mark 16:15-16).

Jesus told us to preach the gospel. Then those who believe should be baptized.

Then signs would follow those who believe (Mark 16:17-18). The true believers are identified by these signs:

If you compare the Great Commission in both gospels above, the only similarity is in water baptism. Water baptism is the beginning of discipleship and being a follower of Jesus Christ. This Christian practice has been underestimated in the church today.

I was baptized in water the day I got saved. It made a huge difference for me. It stuck to me. It was real. I was alive from the dead. The old man died when I was immersed in the

water (symbolic I know, but there's a reason Jesus commanded it) and the new man reigned when I came up out of the water.

Water baptism is similar to the laying on of hands. It is a doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). It helps our faith. There is a reason why more people were healed under the ministry of Jesus through the laying on of hands than anything else. They had faith in it. It was easier to believe. The physical touch and relating with something people can feel and see helps them grasp it and apply their faith to it.

Water baptism is the same way. It is to be a bridge between the new birth and discipleship—a first step of observing the commands of Jesus.

Jesus commanded us to make disciples—baptizing them first and then teaching them to observe His commandments. He never told us to get people born again. He told us to preach the gospel and then baptize those who believe, and then make them disciples.

Sinners are saved and called by the preaching of the gospel. The foolishness of preaching is what God has chosen to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21). But the proof of true believing is in observing and obeying the commandments of Jesus (Mat. 28:19).

In the West we have focused on getting a confession or a prayer out of sinners, and then chalking it up as a new birth. A few years ago I did an outreach at a church where 200 names were amassed of people who prayed the sinner's prayer. Weeks later none could be found. None were a part of any of their lives and gatherings.

Microwave salvation failed miserably again.

It takes time and relationship to make disciples. It takes patience and a laying down of our lives. But what joy when you see them grow!

I have been mentoring a new believer in my home town for the last four years. He is a married man and father of two teenagers. Because of his night job he has not been able to attend any church services on a regular basis. Nonetheless, he is growing.

He reads his Bible, prays in tongues, heals the sick, casts out devils, and bears witness of the gospel every chance he gets. Yet he has not attended church very much. I am discipling him, but once he got filled with the Holy Spirit his learning capacity multiplied manifold as the Spirit truly became His teacher.

Once someone is water baptized he should be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Remember this is another doctrine of Christ called baptisms (Heb. 6:1-2). "And these signs shall follow those who believe ... in My Name they shall speak with new tongues" (Mk 16:17b).

In the West we are taught to turn new believers over to the church system instead of personally disciplining them ourselves. If you lead them to the Lord, you are responsible for them. If you invite them to a church service and they receive Christ, you are responsible for them. Jesus commanded you to make a disciple out of them.

The Ephesians 4:11 equipping ministry gifts in no way excuse us from our personal responsibility of making disciples. This is the work of every church member. There has to be a greater responsibility shift in the process of discipleship from the ministry gifts to the believer.

Until that transfer happens, we will have more converts than disciples, more fans than followers, more false converts than true.

Jesus never told us to get people born again. He commanded us to make disciples.

Being born again and baptized in water is the first step in the process.

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