

On A Mission From God

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 3rd, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

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 that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

~Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

1) Beginning At The End

- A) Often, when people want to define “the church,” they will go to Acts 2:42-47, noting the different functional characteristics (teaching, community, prayer, communion, baptism, etc.) of the earliest church located in Jerusalem.
- B) Others will appeal the etymology (the study of the origin and history of words) of “the church” in the Bible to derive meaning. In the original language (Greek), the construction of the word (ἐκκλησία - ekklesia) was a compound of “ek” (out of), and “kaleo” (to call). Thus, “the church” must be “the ones who are called out...”
- C) However, like all words, determining meaning in this manner can be misleading. English words like “butterfly,” or “buttercup,” or “firecracker” are all compound words, but have meanings which are different than their sources.

- D) While it is attractive to view the church as “ones who are called out,” and the concept of “calling” is certainly present in the Bible (John 15:19, 17:14; 1st John 2:15), this definition of “the church” is not supportable from the biblical text.
- E) Rather than try to start with these types of approaches (we’ll talk more about them this Summer), I recommend defining “the church” according to its mission, rather than its characteristics, etymology, or structures.
- F) I am convinced that when we view the church through the lens of Jesus’ final command to His disciples, we will find the most important definition of “the church” which exists.

2) The Great Commission

- A) Before Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, he gave His disciples a mission. Not just any mission. He gave them THE mission. At the central core of “the church” is its mission.
- B) Because Jesus delivered the mission with “all authority” (Matthew 28:18), we call it a “commission” (an authoritative command). But this isn’t just any commission, it is THE GREAT COMMISSION (28:29-20).
- C) There is one controlling verb in the Great Commission. We are to “make disciples.” There is nothing more important for “the church” than making disciples. This is the primary mission of the church -- making disciples!
- D) Modifying this singular mission of “the church” are three participles (things you do as we “make disciples”), we are to be “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” These contribute to our mission, and provide missional objectives for how we accomplish “making disciples.”
- E) At its core, “the church” is on a mission from God. When Jesus established “the church,” it wasn’t simply a group of called out people, a location, or a cultural institution. It was a missional movement, meant to change the world, and not even Hell can overpower it (Matthew 16:18).