

## **Matthew 28:16–20 - Bible Study Handout**

### **Big Idea**

The risen Jesus sends imperfect disciples into the world with a holy mission. They worship Him, but some still doubt. Jesus doesn't reject them for that. He comes near, claims all authority in heaven and on earth, and sends them to make disciples of all nations. The Church's mission rests on Christ's authority, not our confidence. We go, baptize, teach, and witness because Jesus is Lord, and we keep going because He promises, "I am with you always."

### **Context**

- Matthew 28:16–20 is the final scene of Matthew's Gospel.
- Jesus has been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead.
- The women have seen the risen Christ and carried His message to the disciples.
- The eleven disciples go to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go.
- The group is wounded. Judas is gone, Peter has denied Jesus, and the others have scattered.
- Matthew does not hide their weakness. They worship Jesus, but some doubt.
- Jesus still gives them the mission of the Church. Grace meets them before they're fully steady.
- Matthew begins with Jesus as Immanuel, "God with us," and ends with Jesus promising His presence to the end of the age (Keener).

### **Key Themes**

- The authority of the risen Christ
- Worship mixed with doubt
- Grace for unfinished disciples
- The mission of making disciples
- Baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Teaching obedience to Jesus
- The gospel reaching all nations
- Christ's continuing presence with the Church

### **Passage Overview**

#### **Verse 16 - The Eleven Go to Galilee**

- Matthew calls them "the eleven," which reminds us that the community has been wounded.
- Judas is gone. The number itself carries grief and failure.
- Jesus sends them back to Galilee, where much of His ministry began.
- Galilee was the place of calling, teaching, healing, and formation.
- The disciples are not starting over from nothing. They are being gathered back into the story of grace (France).

#### **Verse 17 - Worship and Doubt**

- The disciples see Jesus and worship Him.
- Matthew adds, “but some doubted.”
- This does not necessarily mean unbelief. It can mean hesitation, uncertainty, or wavering (Hagner).
- Their faith is real, but it’s not polished.
- Jesus does not wait for perfect confidence before He gives them holy work.
- This verse is honest about the way faith often works. Worship and questions can exist in the same heart.

### **Verse 18 - All Authority Belongs to Jesus**

- Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
- His authority comes through the resurrection. The crucified Jesus has been vindicated by God.
- This statement echoes Daniel 7, where one like a son of man receives authority, glory, and sovereign power (Keener).
- The mission of the Church begins with who Jesus is, not with how strong the disciples feel.
- We are sent because Jesus is Lord.

### **Verse 19 - Make Disciples of All Nations**

- The main command is “make disciples.”
- Going, baptizing, and teaching all serve that command.
- Jesus does not tell the Church to make spectators, fans, or religious consumers.
- Disciples are people who follow Jesus, learn from Jesus, and grow in obedience to Jesus.
- “All nations” shows that God’s promise now moves outward through Christ to the whole world (Wright).
- No people group stands outside the reach of God’s grace.
- Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit marks people as belonging to God and to the covenant community.

### **Verse 20 - Teaching and Presence**

- Jesus tells the disciples to teach others “to obey everything” He commanded.
- In Matthew, this includes mercy, forgiveness, humility, enemy love, prayer, truthfulness, and care for the least.
- Christian teaching should lead to transformed living, not just increased information.
- Jesus ends with promise, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- He does not send the Church alone.
- Christ sends, Christ sustains, and Christ stays (France).

### **Important Observations**

- The mission begins with a broken group, not a perfect one.
- Jesus comes near to disciples who worship and still wrestle.
- The Great Commission rests on Christ’s authority, not human ability.
- Making disciples includes evangelism, baptism, teaching, obedience, and community.

- The gospel is for all nations, not one people, place, or culture.
- Jesus' presence is the Church's deepest source of courage.
- Matthew's Gospel begins and ends with the promise of God's presence.

### **Wesleyan Insights**

- **Prevenient Grace:** God's grace goes before the mission. When the Church witnesses, we are joining the work Christ is already doing in people's hearts.
- **Saving Grace:** Baptism points to God's gracious claim and the new life offered through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Sanctifying Grace:** Teaching obedience reflects God's ongoing work of forming believers into holy love (Collins).
- **Holiness of Heart and Life:** Discipleship is not only belief. It is love for God and neighbor made visible in daily life.
- **Mission:** Wesleyan faith has always connected personal salvation with active witness, mercy, and service in the world.

### **Life Application**

- We don't have to wait until our faith feels flawless before we obey Jesus.
- Doubt does not have to be the end of discipleship. It can be a place where Jesus meets us and steadies us.
- The Church must keep the main thing clear, we are called to make disciples.
- Programs, buildings, and traditions can serve the mission, but they can't replace it.
- Teaching matters because discipleship takes time. People need Scripture, worship, prayer, correction, encouragement, and patient grace.
- Jesus is with His people when the mission feels too big, the Church feels fragile, or the next step feels unclear.
- We go because Christ sends us, and we keep going because Christ stays with us.

### **Apologetic Reflection**

- Matthew does not make the disciples look stronger than they were. He admits that some doubted, which gives the account an honest and grounded feel.
- The rise of Christian mission needs an explanation. A small, wounded group began proclaiming Jesus to the nations because they believed the crucified Christ had been raised and given all authority.
- Christianity is not vague spirituality. It is life under the authority and presence of the risen Jesus.
- The passage answers the human need for purpose. Jesus gives His followers a mission larger than survival, comfort, or self-protection.
- The Church's hope is not that we can hold everything together by effort. Our hope is that Christ reigns and remains with us.

### **Details Worth Noticing**

- “The eleven” reminds us that resurrection does not erase the reality of loss, but it does redeem the future.
- The mountain setting matters. In Matthew, mountains are places of revelation and teaching.
- Jesus speaks before the disciples are fully steady. Grace comes before readiness.
- “All authority” means the mission belongs to Jesus before it belongs to the Church.
- “Make disciples” is the central command of the passage.
- Baptism is Trinitarian, naming Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Teaching obedience means discipleship reaches into everyday life.
- The final promise, “I am with you always,” completes Matthew’s opening promise that Jesus is Immanuel.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why do you think Matthew tells us that some disciples doubted?
2. How does Jesus’ authority give courage to the Church’s mission?
3. What is the difference between making church members and making disciples?
4. Where do you see God already at work in people around you?
5. What would it look like this week to live as someone sent by Jesus and accompanied by Jesus?

### **Key Verse**

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.” - Matthew 28:19

### **Cross References**

Genesis 12:1–3 • Isaiah 49:6 • Daniel 7:13–14 • Matthew 1:23 • Matthew 5:13–16 • Matthew 10:5–8 • Matthew 24:14 • Luke 24:44–49 • Acts 1:8 • Romans 10:12–15 • 2 Corinthians 5:18–20

### **Takeaway**

Matthew 28:16–20 shows us that Jesus sends real disciples, not perfect ones. He meets worship mixed with doubt, speaks with all authority, and gives the Church its mission. We are called to make disciples, baptize, teach, and witness to all nations. We do not go alone. The risen Christ is with us always.