



## Christian Mission: honest questions

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### Introduction

What is the Christian's mission in the world? What should be our driving motivation both as individual believers and as Christians together? We are all familiar with the 'Great Commission.'

### The Command of Jesus

#### 1. After his resurrection Jesus gave one last command to his disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

They were to go to all the nations.

To make disciples.

To baptize.

To teach them to obey everything he had commanded - whole counsel of God.

#### 2. He promised to be with them (and us) to aid in fulfilling this task.

He would rule the nations in order that this task might be fulfilled. That is what Jesus is doing now - ruling the nations for the sake of the Great Commission.

Just before the ascension he repeated this command - Acts 1:8.

The power of the Holy Spirit will be on you for the task of witnessing.

What more do we need? Christ ruling the nations and with us.

The Holy Spirit drawing people to Christ and giving us power.

#### 3. Who is the command of Jesus for?

It is for the church all through this age - the whole church of Jesus Christ.

It is also the calling of every individual church.

This command is for pastors and teachers and leaders of the church.

This command is for believers individually - not just for the 'church' or for 'evangelists', 'pastors' and 'missionaries' - nor is it just for our support of others who will do this work.

"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:5-6.

#### 4. What will this mean for us?

Prayer for family, friends, those we love - 'accursed for them'.

Prayer for those God providentially places in our lives - Philippians 1:12-16.

Prayer for open doors.

Prayer for ourselves - courage, clarity.

Living faithfully - 1 Peter 2:12, 3:1; Titus 2:10; Philippians 2:15-16; Matthew 5:13ff.

Ready to give an answer and ready to share the gospel we love - make the most of every opportunity.

#### Is the Great Commission Our Sole Focus?

However, having reminded ourselves of this command of Jesus we need to ask the question: are we to make the Great Commission the sole, the primary, or the most urgent, focus of our lives, our ministries and our churches?

Some Christians insist that the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1 has the priority, as that is given first by the Lord, and as it is foundational to our human lives.

#### 1. We are commanded to exercise dominion as those made in God's image.

We are to work as those made to reflect the character of our Creator.

We are to find fulfillment in developing body, mind, heart and will in our daily tasks.

We are to serve one another, working to bring blessing to the human community.

We are to bring this earth under our lordship (Psalm 8).

Now the world is under a curse, our work is to set back the boundaries of sin and its consequences.

## **2. We are to marry, be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth with our offspring.**

Others remind us that the Fall changes everything - the Cultural Mandate must take second place to the Great Commission now that our most fundamental need is redemption - restoration to fellowship with the Lord.

We may respond to this view by noticing that the Cultural Mandate is repeated after the Flood and is celebrated by God's people in their worship (Psalm 8). In other words the Cultural Mandate is still in force.

So, are we to set the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate alongside each other as two equal and complementary callings for God's people throughout this age?

Certainly – there is no Biblical justification for setting aside or downplaying either of these words from the Lord.

Perhaps we can answer this question by seeing both the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission as subsidiary to the most basic of all commandments or summaries of our human calling.

## **1. The Greatest commandments are to love God and to love my neighbor.**

Both these commandments require me to obey the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate

## **2. We are redeemed that we might be restored to the likeness of God, that we might be renewed in His image.**

This purpose of Christ's saving us requires me, again, to give myself both to obedience to the Great Commission and to the fulfilling of the Cultural Mandate.

## **3. We are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness – and to pray that the kingdom will come.**

The centrality of the kingdom also requires me to obey the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate.