

The Great Commission is a Team Command

READING
Matthew 28
Romans 12
1 Corinthians 12

Our goal, our job, our commission as the church is “as we go, working together as a team, make disciples of all nations.”

Do you ever feel guilty that you’re not a full time missionary in some foreign country? Do you feel like you have failed because so few people, (if any), have become Christians through you?

In Matthew 28 Yeshua said “Go and make disciples of all nations”.

Now, there is something we can easily miss because we are reading it in modern English. Yeshua said “Go ye and make disciples of all nations”. Ye is old English for you, (it’s plural).

(Actually, according to a Greek professor I know, there is another important difference: Yeshua said, “As ye go”, not “Go ye”. “As ye go, make disciples of all nations”. But more about that later.)

And regardless of the Greek text, if you think about the context - Yeshua was talking to his disciples, (plural). He wasn’t talking to one disciple, he was talking to them all together as a group. He was giving them a command as a team.

Imagine a soccer coach says to his team “Go out there and score goals”.

Early in the first half, Peter passes the ball to the star player, Harold, who singlehandedly dodges past 2 defenders and slams the ball past the opposition goalie to score a goal. The other team shoots several times in the first half, but goalkeeper Mike dives again and again to stop every shot. A few minutes into the second half, fullback Charles carelessly trips the other team’s player just as he is about to shoot and gives away a penalty kick. Mike tries his best, but can’t stop the penalty shot from going in. Late in the game Albert scores with a header from David’s corner kick. And right at the final whistle Mike does an amazing save to stop the other team scoring, and the team wins 2-1.

How do you think the coach is feeling? Can you imagine him angrily yelling at his players, “I told you to go out there and score goals and only 2 of you did it. Harold, Albert, well done. The rest of you... I’m very disappointed. Mike, I can’t believe you even let the **other** team score a goal!”

Of course this makes no sense. Of course he is happy, his team won 2-1. Albert scored a goal, but if David’s corner kick hadn’t been good, there would have been no goal. The one goal that did get past Mike, was more Charles’ fault than Mike’s. And if Mike hadn’t saved so many shots from the opposition, the team may have lost 2-5 instead of winning 2-1. Harold did score a goal “singlehandedly”, but what do you think the score would be if all the other players sat down and it was Harold vs the other team? And where did Harold get the ball from to start his amazing run for goal?

“Go out there and score goals” wasn’t a command to individual players, it was a team command. What the coach meant was “work as a team and score goals”.

This is what Yeshua meant too when he was talking to his disciples. “As you go, work as a team and make disciples of all nations”.

It is important that someone scores the goal, but we are a team. We need to work together as a team and recognise our dependence on each other.

We give too much emphasis to the person who “scores the goal”, the person who is the last link in the chain of people who plays a part in someone becoming a Christian, and not enough recognition to the team of people, all doing their part so that as the team we call “the church”, we can make disciples of all nations.

And a soccer team is not just 11 players. It’s them, their coaches, their bus drivers, the people who sew the uniforms, the ones who bring out the half time drinks....How could the team play without uniforms? Or shoes? Maybe you are only the person who makes the shoes. Or the one who sews the uniforms. Maybe you’re just the kid who brings out the oranges during the break. Everyone on the team, (the whole team, not just the ones on the field), is an important part of the team, and without everyone, working together as a team by all doing their bit well, the team wouldn’t be successful.

It’s the same with our Christian team. We might think that it’s only the full time workers and missionaries who are “on the field” playing. But we are all part of the team. Maybe you just teach a little Bible class, or get alongside people who are struggling from time to time. Maybe you just make cookies for the youth group. Maybe you just pack up the chairs or wash the dishes. These are all important roles. You are all members of the team.

Read Romans 12. It’s all about how as Christians we are all parts of one body. You are a hand, I am a foot, someone else is an eye, or an ear. Paulus says that all the parts are important, even the ones we don’t usually give special attention to. We don’t need a body with 10 eyes but no hands, no feet, no ears. We don’t all have to be evangelists. In fact, we mustn’t all be evangelists.

It’s not important whether you are the final link in someone’s chain. It matters that you are part of the team, and that you are doing the role that Yeshua gave you to do. And that you are doing it well.

And it matters that you know, that whatever your role, you are important. We need you on the team. Just as a body can’t properly function with bits missing, so the Christian team cannot properly function without you.

Yeshua needs you on the team, that’s why he picked you to be part of it.

Many western Christians have heard of D.L. Moody, the famous American evangelist. Literally thousands of people throughout America became Christians at meetings where he preached. But have you ever heard of Edward Kimble?

Edward Kimble was a nobody. He had an ordinary job and all he did for God was teach kids at the Sunday school of his local church. In his whole life he was only that “final link in the chain” for one person.

So, who is greater? D.L. Moody who was the final link for thousands upon thousands or Edward Kimble who was the final link for just one?

Does it change your answer if I tell you that the only person that Edward Kimble ever led to Yeshua was D.L. Moody?

Who is greater? Only God can answer that. But what if we asked D.L. Moody?

Our goal, our job, our commission as the church is “as we go, working together as a team, make disciples of all nations.” If Yeshua calls you to be a full time missionary you definitely should do that. But if he doesn’t, that’s because he has another role on the team for you. You don’t need to feel guilty about that. You don’t even need to feel bad if you never “led anyone to Christ”. Maybe that’s just not your job. Find your job. Do it well. Even if it’s just being the water boy. Even if it’s “just” sewing uniforms. Every part of the body is important. Every member of the team is important. The “Great Commission” is a team command.