

What If We All Did Our Part? *Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12*

When Jesus was wrapping up his life and ministry on earth, he gathered around him his followers and gave them a huge challenge. It's recorded in Matthew 28:19-20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Think of Jesus as a military commander giving final instructions on the night before the decisive battle of a war. As the invasion of Normandy was about to begin, General Dwight David Eisenhower recorded a public message that was sent to all of the allied troops. He said, “The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and the prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you.”

Or, imagine Jesus as the coach at half-time as he gathers his team together in the locker room and says, “Okay, now, listen up. This is it. This next half determines everything. If we win, then we go to the playoffs. If we lose, we're done for the season. It's up to you. Get out there and to do it. Fight. Win.”

Who's the “you”? Is every soldier individually responsible for the outcome of a major battle? Is every player individually responsible to win the game? Is every Christian called to evangelize the whole world alone? Who was Jesus talking to when he said, “Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age”, and you “go and make disciples” from every people group in the world?

Whatever he meant, Jesus was obviously very serious about this. He actually intended that his gospel be communicated to every group of people in the world. He meant for Christians to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and the rest of the earth.

I used to think that Jesus meant me. I took Jesus very seriously. I prayed for everybody I could think of who did not have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. I gave as much money to missionaries and to missions causes as I possibly could. I started

doing that when I was a college student and had very little money to give. When I was a father of young children I sought to continue to do that even though I didn't have much money then, either, and every credit card was maxed out. I remember a number of times when our children wanted to stop at a McDonald's or a Burger King and I didn't have a dollar or two in my wallet to be able to do that. But even then I did the very best I could to give whatever I could to get the gospel out. I prayed. I talked to people about Jesus Christ. I even pursued full-time missionary service in east Africa.

It was exhilarating to think that God wanted me to help him in the most important business of the entire universe. It was exhilarating, but it was also exhausting. There were billions of people in hundreds of countries. How was I supposed to do that? It would take billions of dollars. What possible difference could I make?

Then one day I realized that Jesus wasn't talking to me alone; he was talking to us. Jesus never expected me to give alone, pray alone or go alone. He was speaking to a dozen followers who were the beginning of the church. He was talking to the whole body of Christians.

But that discovery raised all kinds of other issues and problems. Could I trust “you” to do your part?

Could I trust “you” to spend my money for Jesus' sake? Could I believe that the church could do the job?

Then I realized that that's exactly what Jesus did! Jesus trusted the church with his name, his gospel, his Bible, his plans. He trusts us to pray. He trusts us to give. He trusts us to

go. If Jesus can trust Christians to carry out his will, then so must I. But how does this work and what is my part?

God led me to I Corinthians 12 and more amazing discoveries. By this time I wasn't a novice. I had graduated from college. I had gone to a theological seminary and received a Master's Degree. I had become the pastor of a church. And finally I began to

Jesus trusted the church with his name, his gospel, his Bible, his plans. He trusts us to pray. He trusts us to give. He trusts us to go.

discover that all of us together make up the church and that every Christian has a part. Let's see what it says in I Corinthians 12 beginning at verse 12:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.

This is talking about every one of us who is a Christian. The church is the "body of Christ" on earth. We are like Jesus to our generation. Every Christian is a part of the church. There is no such thing as a Christian who is independent of the church, the body of Christ. That's impossible. It's like having an eye or a hand that is totally independent of the rest of the body. You just can't do that.

The church is like a body with lots of different parts. Every part is important and no part is supposed to operate independently of the other parts. We're all connected together. Some parts have more faith. Some parts have more money. Some parts have more wisdom. Some parts have more knowledge. Some parts are terrific at teaching. Other parts are terrific at leadership. So there are different parts and they have different roles and functions.

The main point is that we are supposed to live and work together as a body—a team. God's plan is for every Christian to do his or her part. Together we can "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded."

So, what's my part? What's your part? Is it prayer? Is it teaching? Is it inviting friends to church? Is it helping or giving money or exercising leadership? It is absolutely essential that every one of us knows and does our part or the whole body will be handicapped. We need eyes, ears, feet, hands, heart, lungs, brain—every part is important.

That's the theory. But what's really going on? What is reality? Is God's plan working?

There is an old rule of participation that says that 20% of the people do all the work. That means that 80% do little or nothing. Imagine! If only 20% of your body worked it would be hard to do much of anything very well.

We all know this percentage from experience. At work there are some people who carry more than their share of the load while others arrive late, leave early and spend hours standing around talking or making personal phone calls. At home, one person rakes the leaves, washes the dishes and vacuums the carpet while there are other family members who never offer to help. It's the 80-20 principle.

Across America there are many people who claim to be Christians but they just don't do their part. They don't do what God has planned and asked. There are thousands of churches that have no evangelistic outreach and no missionary ministry.

There are two possible approaches we can take to these seemingly discouraging facts. We can become discouraged and quit or we can be more motivated to do our part and then some. I've chosen approach number two. Regardless of what others may or may not do, I want to do everything good that I can do and I want the church of which I am a part to be strong for Jesus Christ in evangelism and missions. The way I figure it, God loves me and has been amazingly generous. In fact, God has been infinitely sacrificial in doing his part for me. He gave his Son. And so I want to do my part in response to God. God is going to accomplish his great purposes in the world. That greatly motivates me. I'm convinced that God is doing more to reach the world for Jesus Christ in our generation than ever before. This is an amazing time to be a Christian. God is doing something fabulous and I want to be part of it. It's sad for those who miss out on all God is doing, but I want to be God's partner in winning the world to Jesus Christ.

All of this makes me wonder what would happen if each of us did our part. What if every Christian decided to commit 100% to the leadership of Jesus Christ over the next twelve months? What if every one of us

prayed for God to show us our part and promised to do whatever task God gave us to do? What if every one of us shared our faith in Jesus Christ on a regular basis? What if every person gave financial support to missions? What if every person pursued the options of some personal missions experience for at least two weeks during the next five years? What if every Christian bought a map and picked a country of the world to pray for every day that God would bring peace and blessing to that nation and that he would grow the number of Christians there?

What if everyone loved the church as Christ loved the church? Ephesians 5:25 says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." No Christian can honestly claim to love Jesus Christ and not love the church.

Dwight Lyman Moody was an American evangelist in the 1800s, much like Billy Graham has been the great American evangelist in the 1900s. Moody was once challenged by a friend who said, "The world has yet to see what God can do through a person who is fully committed to Jesus Christ." Moody heard that and said, "By God's grace, I'm going to be that person."

What if every one of us said that? By God's grace, I will be the person who is fully committed to Jesus Christ. What if we decided that we will be what God wants us to be? We will say what God wants us to say.

We will give what God wants us to give. We will go wherever God wants us to go. Would you prayerfully consider your part?

God, I fully commit my life to Jesus Christ. I'll do my part. Just show me what you want me to do. I'll say what you want me to say. I'll give what you want me to give. I'll pray what you want me to pray. And I'll go where you want me to go. God, I really mean this. Just show me my part. I'll do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Faith Matters® is the Broadcast Ministry of
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church
6630 Shady Oak Road
Eden Prairie MN 55344
952-944-6300
www.wooddale.org
©Leith Anderson