

# THE MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Jesus has saved and redeemed those who are in His church. However, with the tremendous blessing of being part of Jesus's church also comes the responsibility of accepting and joining Jesus's mission. This mission can be seen on the level of the "universal" church and applied to how each member of His church must live and on the level of the "local" church and applied to the things done collectively by that church.

## **MATTHEW 4:18-22**

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These are the first people recorded in Scripture as being called to follow Jesus. Although these are eventually named apostles, everyone who becomes a disciple of Jesus (and part of His church) can and should learn from this call. Particularly, verse 19 should serve as a model. First, Jesus has called each person through the gospel to follow Him (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Matthew 11:28-30; John 8:31-32). Second, Jesus will transform each person who is committed to following Him into someone useful in His service (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:20-21; Ephesians 2:10). Third, this person will then join Jesus in His mission of making disciples (Luke 19:10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Romans 10:13-18). Furthermore, accepting Jesus's call to follow Him requires His mission to come before everything and everyone else in your life (Luke 14:25-33)!

## **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

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Before Jesus left this earth, He gave these instructions to His apostles (often called the "Great Commission"). While Jesus had completed His part of God's mission, His followers were given the mission of making disciples of all nations (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). First, those who have believed and obeyed the gospel must go into all the world (i.e. to people who need the gospel). Second, as

these go, they must preach the gospel that tells of God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Third, those who believe this gospel must be baptized to be saved from their sins. Fourth, after baptism, these people must continue being taught how to live as disciples so they can also join Jesus's mission to make disciples for Jesus. While this commission was first given to the apostles, the mission of making disciples has now been entrusted to every Christian and local church (Romans 10:13-17; 2 Timothy 2:2, 24-26)!

## **EPHESIANS 3:8-11, 20-21**

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God had an eternal purpose of making salvation available to everyone (Jew and Gentile) through Jesus Christ. However, it had been hidden for ages in God. Even the angels and the prophets did not know how God would accomplish His purposes (1 Peter 1:10-12). Now, God has made His multi-faceted wisdom known to everyone through what Jesus has accomplished and the revelation of Scripture (Ephesians 3:3-6). Now, it is the church's responsibility (those who have experienced salvation in Jesus) to bring glory to God in their lives and share His saving message with others!

## **TITUS 2:11-14**

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Those in Jesus's church are recipients of God's grace (gift) that has brought salvation! Yet, God's grace is not just something to be taken and used however people may desire. Rather, it should lead to the transformation described in this text (denying what is contrary to the will of God and living in the way that pleases God). For, Jesus did not die to purchase people to be part of His church who would live for themselves; but so that He would have a people for His own possession who would be dedicated to His service and eager/zealous to do the good works He has prepared for His people to accomplish (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 6:1-23; 1 Peter 2:9-12). Therefore, anything short of eagerness to share in the good works Jesus wants from His saved people fails to fulfill the mission Jesus has for His church (Revelation 2:1-7; 3:1-6, 14-22)!

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

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God's church is His family (household), not a physical structure. While there were many elaborate temples to dead idols throughout the Roman world, Jesus's church is a living temple (1 Peter 2:4-7) for a living God! So, Jesus's church does not work to uphold lifeless things, but to support and hold up the truth from God that sets people free from sin (John 8:31-32)! Some of the grand themes of the truth are then given in verse 16. So, though, the church's purpose is *not* to build elaborate structures, provide entertainment, provide humanitarian relief, etc., but to live by and spread the truth God has revealed!

## ACTS 11:19-26; 13:1-3

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The local church in Antioch (of Syria) is a great New Testament example of how local churches should develop and function in Jesus's mission. First, notice how the gospel came to Antioch by Christians who preached it (Acts 8:1-4). As people in Antioch obeyed the gospel, Barnabas was sent to help the church grow and continue spreading the gospel (also joined by Saul/Paul). Then, the disciples (Christians) grew so there were other prophets and teachers. Since the church in Antioch was equipped in this way, they were told to send out Barnabas and Saul on a preaching journey to help the gospel spread in other areas! Therefore, local churches must grow in their own knowledge and spiritual maturity, and to be about God's mission of influencing others to follow Jesus with great vision and eagerness!

## CONCLUSION

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Jesus's church has a great mission! Sadly, many Christians and local churches will fail to recognize their mission, get distracted by things that are not the true mission, or simply fail to accomplish this mission. Therefore, every Christian and local church must stay focused on the mission of Jesus's church to live as disciples of Jesus who glorify God in their own lives and work diligently to make disciples of others!

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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What does Jesus expect of those who follow Him?

What was the mission Jesus entrusted to His followers?

How were Jesus's followers taught to accomplish the mission?

How does Jesus's church work to glorify God and make His wisdom known?

How should experiencing the grace of God transform those in Jesus's church?

Why did Jesus give Himself as the sacrifice for sin?

What is the relationship between Jesus's church and the truth?

How does the church in Antioch provide a good model for how a local church helps accomplish Jesus's mission?

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