



GO 102

BUILT FOR RISK

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. ~ Matthew 28:19-20

GO

This passage is what we call “The Great Commission.” It is the very last thing in Matthew’s gospel and serves as a charge to Jesus’ followers. We are to go and (1) make disciples, (2) baptize and (3) teach. But these tasks consist of tons of other lesser tasks, and God gifts his people to accomplish them all. We all have a part to play in representing Christ to the world. We just have to figure out what that part is and then dive in.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. ~ Romans 12:6-8

If you are not sure what your gifts and passions are, are you willing to do what it takes to discover them? One of the “next steps” we will offer after completion of this curriculum will be a formal spiritual gifts assessment.



For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ~ 2 Timothy 1:6

Similar to the virtues we must cultivate – faith, hope, love, and unity (among others) – Paul seems to be telling Timothy that he needs to develop his God-given gifts, but it will require attention and intentionality. It is

not enough to charge ahead on emotion alone, rather we need to determine what part of the Body we are designed to be, discover where our passions lie, and then we need to build and develop those gifts and passions, always considering how they fit with this charge Jesus has issued and how they contribute to God’s mission. There may be some trial and error. We might need to seek feedback from those who know us best. But as we find our place and our role in the Body, all the work will be worth it.



If you know your gifts and passions, list them:



What has been your experience with active use of your gifts within the Body?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-26. In this illustration, we read that every part of the body is indispensable. You might think your contribution is unimportant or that you don’t need other parts. But this passage explains that we desperately need each other. Never underestimate your part.



Think of one person who has had a dramatic influence on your life? What things did they do to influence change in your life?



Do you see yourself being able to have a similar influence on others? Why or why not?

GIVE

“Mine” is often one of the first words kids learn. For some reason, selfishness seems to come naturally but sharing has to be taught. Even as adults, we work and we earn and we receive benefit from that work, so we mark our territory. That is part of our culture and it is, in fact, biblical.

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ~ Romans 4:4

Elsewhere, Paul tells us that a workman is worth his wages. We should receive for our efforts. But this crazy, new, upside-down kingdom, while respecting “wages” and “property” sees them in a new light, the light of Christ’s sacrifice and God’s grace – things we can never earn and that are the furthest thing from property or wages.

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. ~ Psalm 24:1

...every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ~ Psalm 50:12

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ~ John 1:16

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” ~ Acts 15:10-11

We have already discussed man’s call to hold dominion over God’s creation, and there is of course the story of the rich young man which we discussed at length earlier. So how should we view our possessions, property, etc.?

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. ~ Deuteronomy 8:17-18

God gives us dominion over things, things that are “ours” to oversee during this life. He does this in order to meet our needs but also dignifies us by asking (not demanding) that we consider his will in how we handle all we have. He gives us the opportunity to participate in His work in the world through sharing our time, our talents, and our treasure.

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD: it is holy to the LORD. ~ Leviticus 27:30

The tithe (literally "tenth part" or ten percent) was established by God during Old Testament times (see Genesis 14:18-20 and Malachi 3:8-10). The tithe was designed to support God’s work and provide his people a regular opportunity to ensure we are still observing the created order (God>man>creation). The tithe represents a small part of what we have been given but can often seem like a great burden. But, in this new upside-down kingdom, our “tithe” of time, talent, and treasure should not be like a wage, but a gift cheerfully given.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ~ 2 Corinthians 9:7

Our giving, like all of our service to God, should flow from our gratitude and our enthusiasm to invest in his purposes. Some would say that these ideas are “Old Testament Ideas” and they no longer apply to this new upside-down, Jesus-centric kingdom. But Jesus himself said he did not come to abolish the law but fulfill it. He is not a NEW God, but the same God, who has, through his death, burial and resurrection, opened a new Way to his throne. Here’s what Jesus says about it...

...if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone

else's property, who will give you property of your own? "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ~ Luke 16:11-13

Jesus indicates that money can create a rivalry in our hearts. If we are more enthusiastic about our pursuit of money and possessions than our pursuit of God, then money BECOMES our god. We take that created order and mess with it, elevating the creation above the creator. Jesus wants us to know that money may be a great tool, but it makes a lousy god.

➔ What do you think are the "true riches" that Jesus mentions and who will receive them?

Perhaps the best answer to that question is found in the example of the Jerusalem church described in Acts 2...

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles (**talents**). All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need (**treasure**). Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together (**time**) with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (my remarks are in parentheses) ~ Acts 2:42-47*

➔ What were the two big benefits Luke lists that result from giving our time, talents, and treasure?

➔ How do a person's budget and calendar reveal what they love and what they value?

➔ React to this statement: "The tithe is not so much God's way of raising money, but God's way of raising his children." What lessons have you learned from giving?

➔ What has been your attitude regarding giving to God and his purposes? Your practice?

SERVE

Okay, so we are supposed to cultivate the spiritual virtues of faith, hope, and love through discipline, we are supposed to discover the gifts of time, talent, and treasure God has provided through self-evaluation, and we are supposed to give generously of those gifts through service, ministry, and monetary giving.

➔ Based on all of our study of The Way, this may seem like a silly question, but do you think it's enough to attend services every Sunday and write a big check for the offering?

Some passages that address the nature of our service...

I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. ~ Mark 9:41

If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ~ James 2:16

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. ~ Matthew 25:40

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ~ Ephesians 2:10

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. ~ Matthew 5:14-16

➔ According to the last passage, what influence will our service have on those around us?

➔ What is the difference between “just writing a check” and the service described above?

And something we want to be careful not to back away from – the “you” in the Matthew passage, above, is plural. It refers to the people of God. It is you, yourself, but it is also you, together with God’s people. You can make a difference through your service, but it is nothing compared to God’s plans for the world through the combined efforts of people just like you.

➔ What do you hope will be the lasting impact of your life after you die? What one thing can you do today to start making that happen?

➔ What do you hope could be the lasting impact of our church?

As we have already shown, to fully represent Christ to the world around us, each member of the body must do its part. We must therefore see ourselves differently — not merely as people existing on our own, living for ourselves and our own purposes — but as interdependent parts of Christ’s body — the physical agents of Jesus in the physical world.

If WCC’s hospitality and worship teams were not using their gifts to serve and create, what would our worship services look like? Certainly a lot less worthwhile. If those gifted in shepherding and teaching did not teach Adult Bible Fellowship classes or lead lifegroups, where would our members learn to navigate their spiritual hurdles? What if those gifted with mercy, wisdom and discernment said, “I’m too busy to help all those hurting people?” What if we all said, “My money is just for me? I earned it; it’s mine.” So many worthwhile endeavors, including WCC, would cease to exist.

Without every Christ follower actively deciding and committing to function in their unique place in his body, we could never fully reflect him to Washington or the world. Instead, each of us has an opportunity to see ourselves as an essential, important, irreplaceable person in God’s family.

➔ What gift, ability, or resource have you been withholding from service to God’s kingdom? How can you invest it today?

SHARE

So, even though we have poured through many Bible passages and wrestled with many new theological ideas and learned much about God’s plan for us, where are we now? We started by trying to understand the way God set things up and where we fit in his plan. Then we discovered that he wishes us to grow in our knowledge of him through study, prayer, and other disciplines, so that we can effectively do the work in the world for which he has designed us, both individually and together. This seems pretty simple, right? It may be simple, but it is not easy, dumbed down, or merely pragmatic.

Jesus never says it will be easy. When we share of ourselves in the way Jesus has taught us to share — dying to ourselves and living for God’s purposes — following The Way by turning away from the way of the world — there are consequences.

When one of the teachers of the law told Jesus he would follow him anywhere, Jesus warned him...

Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

~ Matthew 8:20

We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. ~ Acts 14:22b

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

~ Acts 20:23

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

~ Hebrews 12:7

Make no mistake, there is no guarantee of a smooth road along The Way. There is no promise of calm seas or deliverance from hardship. But it is worth it. Living for Christ, walking the Way of Christ, is a life of purpose, a life-giving, world-changing, people-enriching adventure of eternal significance.

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” ~ Mark 10:29-31



If you already have a good idea of your gifts, are you stepping out and taking risks in using them? What is preventing you from taking the leap?

SO FAR

Just writing a check is P_____ but God expects

us to be A_____ as his agents.

Like our virtues, we need to develop our G_____ .

All of God’s people are V_____ to his P_____ .

We earn our W_____ but it all really B_____

to God whose greatest gifts cannot be E_____ .

Our giving of T_____, T_____, and T_____

are both to help the C_____ and teach us how

to P____ God F_____ .

Attending church is I_____, but it’s not the same

as S_____ which leads others to P_____ God.

Following Jesus is S_____ but not E_____ .