

Missions – What's In It For Me?
The Great Commission Passages
[Matt, 29:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8]

Intro: We live in a world that is always asking the question, “*What's in it for me?*” We see it in the business world; we see it in education, politics even in churches.

I googled the phrase “*What's in it for me?*” and was amazed at how many companies out there have training courses for the customer service personal titled “*What's in it for me?*”

When I was about 16 one of my first jobs was at McDonald's. From there I went to work for K-Mart. In both jobs when I was being trained I can remember that my boss would constantly remind me, “**Remember, the customer is always right.**” Today, customer service training has to answer the question “*What's in it for me?*” to get their customer service people to even do the job.

The world has become a “**What's in it for me?**” world. Consider this, 25 years ago one of the most popular magazines in the world was **LIFE** some years later came the popular magazine **US** next it was **WE** today there is even a magazine called **Self**. That is the nature of the world we are in.

This problem is not unique to just the world it has found it's way into the church. Most members of churches are always asking the question “*What's in it for me?*” How can I say that? It must be true because one of the top struggles most pastor say they have in ministry today is getting people to be involved in the ministry of the church; evangelizing, witnessing, & serving. I have had people ask me “how much do missionaries make a month?” or “How much does a youth pastor make?” When asking these kind of questions demonstrates the fact the people see everything from the perspective of “*What's in it for me?*”

Today we are going to see what's in it for us to be involved in caring out the Great Commission. Jesus gave the church the great commission...to go and preach the gospel to every creature. It was such an important part of what He came for that the Holy Spirit insured it was recorded 5 times in scripture; for of them have a promise tied to them and the fifth tells us what is expected of us. If you stand while I read the first and most familiar of the great commission passages...

[Read Mt. 28:19-20/pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

A woman was heartbroken when her dog disappeared. She put an ad in the paper offering a reward for its return. The next morning the phone rang. It was the voice of a woman: I'm calling about your dog.” Then she began to cough. She explained she wasn't feeling too well. In fact, she hadn't felt well for three years since her husband had died. She went on to say that after her mother and father had passed away, that recently her sister had contracted cancer and was undergoing painful treatments. Her friends weren't doing well, either. She gave details of their various illnesses and went on to describe the funerals of several of them. After thirty minutes of this, the woman who had lost the dog tried to get the caller back on the subject. She asked, “But what about my dog?” The other woman replied, “Oh, I don't have him, but I thought you might be feeling badly about losing it, so I thought I'd just call to cheer you up!” *Charles Krieg*

Consider the events recorded in John 21:15-22. The Lord has just asked Peter 3 times, “**Do you love me?**” and Peter has answered of course I do three times. Then the Lord says the just Follow me to which Peter replies :*What's in it for me?*” actually he looks back a John as says to the Lord, “...**what shall this man do?**” Jesus' response is classic, He says, “**what business is that of yours? If I want him to live until I return what is that to you? Your job is to just follow me.**”

We all spend way to much time worrying about what's in it for me and to little time asking what do you want me to do. The Lord does, however, tells us what's in it for us to serve him...

The First thing that is in it for me is...

1. *I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world.* Lk 24:45-48
 - A. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,"⁴⁶ And said unto them, **Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:**⁴⁷ **And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**⁴⁸ **And ye are witnesses of these things.**"
 - B. Not only had the Old Testament Scriptures been fulfilled in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but the Old Testament went much further—speaking of **repentance and forgiveness of sins** that would **be preached ... to all nations.**
 - 1) He wanted them to know that Christ's message of God's love and forgiveness should go to the entire world—and that this had been God's plan from the very beginning.
 - C. God wants the entire world to hear the good news of salvation.
 - 1) The apostle Paul later testified: "**Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles**" (Acts 26:22-23).
 - 2) Jesus was explaining the worldwide scope of plan when he told his disciples that his name would be preached to all nations.
 - 3) They would begin right where they were—in Jerusalem—and then be *witnesses of these things* throughout the world.
 - D. The provision of Salvation and the Great Commission cannot be separated.
 - 1) Every person who has been saved since Christ set down on the right hand of God has been saved because someone took the Great Commission seriously and carried it out.
 - 2) In a very real sense a church is not a healthy and properly functioning church if its members are not involved personally in fulfilling the Great Commission.
 - E. When Jesus that "**...repentance and remission of sins should be preached...among all nations...**" he was not talking about preachers.
 - 1) He was talking about each and everyone of us.
 - 2) We all need to be involved in taking the message of Jesus to all the people.
 - 3) It is through man God has chosen to provide the message of salvation.
 - 4) Why He has chosen man and not something much more obedient I don't know.
 - F. We are commanded to be involved in taking the message to a lost and dying world. **ILL:** One day a lady criticized D. L. Moody for his methods of evangelism in attempting to win people to the Lord. Moody's reply was "I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?" The lady replied, "I don't do it." Moody retorted, "Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."

What's in it for me? I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world.

The Second thing that is in it for me is...

2. *I can have the blessing of His Presence all the time* Mt 28:19-20
 - A. "**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**"
 - B. **ILL:** A man was getting ready to get on an airplane for the first time. He was being consoled by his friends who saw his fear of flying. "**Don't you know that Jesus said, "I will be with you to the end of the world?"**" "Yes," he responded, "**but He also said, 'LOW, I will be with you...'not HIGH!"**"
 - C. The Bible promises that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us.
 - D. If you want to know that presence in your life the best way to find it is by being involved in His mission.
 - 1) In verse 18 Jesus tells His disciples that all power in heaven and earth are given to Him.
 - 2) In a very real sense what Jesus is saying in Mt. 28:19-20 is "**Since I am the Lord of heaven and earth if you go then I will be right there with you.**"
 - 3) Who doesn't want Jesus with them?
 - E. As a church we can have the presence of Jesus or it can be removed; it all hangs upon weather the church is obedient to His command to **Go!**
 - F. **ILL:** In 1958, a U.S. soldier wandered the streets of Berlin to see the sights. Despite the bustling new life in parts of the city, reminders remained of the destruction of World War II.

Walking through a residential area one evening, across the cobblestone street he saw an open space edged with flowers. In the center stood the stone front of what had been a church. The building was no longer there, but the rubble had been cleared away in an attempt to fill the empty space with a little park.

The former church's main door was shaped in a Gothic arch, and over it was carved into the stone in German: HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL PASS AWAY, BUT MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY. As he stepped through the arch where the doors had once been, of course he wasn't inside anything. What was once a place of worship had been reduced to a patch of stone pavement and open sky.

Today many of the churches in Germany are just like this church. They are not bombed out shells but they empty shells. Why? Because long ago the presence of the Lord has left those churches because they lost their evangelistic zeal. When people step into Christ, we enter into his unshakable, eternal presence. It cannot be reduced; it can only be experienced -- forever.

What's in it for me? I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world; I can have the blessing of His Presence all the time

The Third thing that is in it for me is...

3. I can live always safe in His Protection Mk 16:15-18

A. "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

B. Protection from Hell

- 1) We don't like to bring out Jesus' words of condemnation.
- 2) John says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36).
- 3) Jesus made it clear that belief in him is not a matter of individual preference or personal choice; instead, belief in him is a matter of life or death, a decision with eternal consequences.
- 4) In our smorgasbord culture where we pick and choose among brands and features, the tendency is to treat Christianity as a life-enhancer or an added feature rather than the source of life itself.
- 5) Don't treat belief in Christ lightly.

C. Protection from Here

- 1) Notice the references to the signs; casting out devils, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, and drinking poison.
- 2) These signs would authenticate the source of their power and draw people to belief.
 - (a) Driving out demons was a power already given to the disciples (3:14-15).
 - (b) This power proved that the believers were not from Satan, but from God.
 - (c) Speaking in tongues was a spiritual gift that enabled people to speak in foreign languages.
 - (d) This occurred at Pentecost when the disciples "began to speak in other languages"
 - (e) The disciples placed their hands on many sick people and healed them (Acts 3:7-8, 5:12-16)
- 3) At times God would miraculously intervene on behalf of his followers.
 - (a) While some people have taken the "picking up snakes" literally, believing that one's faith is demonstrated by handling rattlesnakes, the writer seems to have in mind incidents like the one described in Acts 28:1-6 where Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake without being harmed.
 - (b) The same could happen for someone who accidentally drank deadly poison.
 - (c) This does not mean, however, that we should test God by putting ourselves in dangerous situations.
 - (d) **ILL:** Some sects practice handling poisonous snakes as a sign of faith.
Should Christians drink poison and make pets of rattlers as evidence of their faith?
No. God does not ask us to tempt the laws of nature.
God is not a safety net for people who leap off of tall buildings.
No one should build a religion one a portion of Scripture.
God calls us to live as new citizens in the eternal kingdom and to witness by word and service

to God's love and power.

Our witness should center on Jesus, not on superhero-type stunts.

- 4) **ILL:** D.L. Moody the great evangelist of the last century said that when he was in England he had a great curiosity to visit the zoo because of a story he had heard concerning them. There was a man who had a little dog he had trained to run. So one day he made a bet about his dog's running, but when the time came for the race, the little dog wouldn't run at all, and the man lost all his money. This so enraged the man that he beat the dog terribly, and at last he tucked him in the lions cage to be eaten. Instead, the lion lapped the dog and made a pet of him. Later the man decided he wanted his dog back, but now he had a problem. He called the dog, but the dog wouldn't leave the lions cage. He tried every trick he could think of but nothing seemed to work. At last, he asked the owner to help, who sent him to the keeper. The keeper came and the man explained his predicament. The keeper said, "If you want your dog you can take him out of the cage." So the dog remained in the cage for years. This makes us think of the safety we have in Christ. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who has conquered the lion of hell. If we keep close to Christ, none will be able to pluck us out of his hand. He can and will keep you forever if you will let him.

What's in it for me? I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world, I can have the blessing of His Presence all the time, I can live always safe in His Protection.

The Fourth thing that is in it for me is...

4. I can walk in His Peace Jn 20:21

- A. **"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."**

B. Jesus gives his peace to us and then He commissions us to be His representatives, even as he had been the Father's.

1) The Bible speaks of a peace that passes our understanding, "**And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**" (Phil. 4:7)

2) Have you experienced that peace in your life?

3) The best way to get that peace is to be in God's will and, according to John 20:21 that peace comes from being a witness for Christ.

- C. **ILL:** . The truth is that many of us find ourselves bogged down in the mire of discontent.

The philosopher Schopenhauer once compared us to a Bulldog Ant. If we cut a Bulldog Ant in half, the front and rear segments will enter into a savage fight. The head will seize the tail with its teeth, while the tail will sting the head with fury. The fight might last for hours.

That is the way some of us are on the inside. There is part of us that wants to move ahead and a part that wants to stand absolutely still. There is a part of us that wants success and recognition. There is another part that wants to sit on the river bank and while away the hours. There is a part of us that wants to serve Christ. There is another part that says, "No, I've enough to do right now. Let someone else take their turn." There is a fierce battle going on within many of us. Few of us know what it is to live lives of contentment and peace.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn't fragile like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid." What a promise! What a gift! Peace of mind and heart. He can give it to us.

What's in it for me? I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world, I can have the blessing of His Presence all the time, I can live always safe in His Protection, I can walk in His Peace

The Fifth thing that is in it for me is...

5. I can always function in His Power Acts 1:8

- A. **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."**

B. Jesus said that we shall receive power, He gave us His power.

1) This is the same power He used to walk on water

2) This is the same power He used to cause the blind to see, the lame to walk and the dead to raise.

- 3) It is this same power He gave to those of us who will be His witness "...unto the uttermost parts of the earth."
- C. This is the last recorded statement of Christ on earth. It is thus final, authoritative, and of utmost importance.
- 1) The Holy Spirit is a major theme in Luke and Acts and is the major point of continuity between the life of Jesus and the ministry of the church.
 - 2) "*There is no believer whom the Son of God does not require to be his witness. In what place, at what time, with what degree of frequency, in what manner, and to what extent, we ought to profess our faith, cannot easily be determined by a fixed rule: but we must consider the occasion that not one of us may fail to discharge his duty at the proper time.*"—John Calvin
- D. Who here does not want the power of Christ in their life?
- E. **ILL:** . One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses Parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas.

The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas.

Often, Christians neglect their spiritual maintenance, and though they are "clothed with power" (Luke 24:49) find themselves out of gas.

Conclusion: What's in it for me? ***I can have the privilege of being a part of His Plan for a lost world, I can have the blessing of His Presence all the time, I can live always safe in His Protection, I can walk in His Peace, I can always function in His Power.***

Those who accepted the challenge last week you will be blessed, today I challenge those who were not here last week to accept the challenge.