

THE GREAT COMMISSION:

1 + 1 = ?

Lesson # 26 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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." Matt 28:18-20 (NIV)

Lesson Goal & Objectives

GOAL:

\$ The students will personally consider tangible ways in which they can live out the Great Commission.

OBJECTIVES

- \$ The students will compare and contrast the Great Commandment (the previous lesson) with Jesus' "Great Commission" to, "Go and make disciples..." (Matt 28: 18 – 20 as above)
- \$ The students will consider ways in which they can show real love to others.
- \$ The students will think of some people who seem difficult to love.
- \$ The students will consider some ways of showing love to difficult people.
- \$ The students will arrive at an understanding that loving people is the way to make disciples.

Materials Needed for Lesson

- Large pieces of paper/newsprint
- Paper & Pens
- Bibles or verses printed out on paper to handout
- For the experiment – 2 liter bottle of diet soda and a roll of Mentos candy.
- For the Take-home Activity: print papers with the question described in the Take-home section below

Introduction & Teacher Background

This lesson will really get the participants thinking about how **they** can live out the Great Commission.

In this lesson you will be linking the two Scriptures:

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt 28:18-20 (NIV)

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12: 29-31 (NIV)

Many people today have great difficulty believing or even seeing that Jesus Christ is a real Person. They may have even less awareness of God's Love for them. In this lesson we want to communicate that God's Love in Jesus, our Savior is truly real. What is exciting about this idea is that we are the key to showing people the reality of God's love. When we live out the Gospel of Jesus – everyday – then people can understand that Jesus and His Love are real.

People in our society are surrounded – in fact bombarded – with all sorts of messages, important and trivial. Someone is always trying to sell us something. Christians can often be perceived as trying to “sell” their religion with words. The antidote to this challenging difficulty is active Love. When we love our neighbors as ourselves, the world is astonished and begins to take notice. Loving in this way is an impossible task without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Unselfish love in our lives demonstrates God's Love.

Did you ever wonder how the early church grew? It was illegal to be a Christian for most of the first three centuries: there were periods of time when being a Christian resulted in severe persecution including death. Most of the population believed in all sorts of gods, including the emperor. Christians believed something profoundly different: that there is only one God who within Himself is Father-Son-Holy Spirit. Christians believed that this God is good and loves us, His own creation. The people around them feared their many gods, constantly worrying that these gods would might capriciously hurt them at any moment. What an amazing contrast: a religion based on fear and the other based on love. The Roman emperors held total power and expected Christians to be “good Roman citizens” by worshiping them and their gods. The refusal to worship these gods was considered treason because this refusal could incite those gods to punish the entire empire. How is it, then, that before Christianity ever began to be tolerated and then legalized that it grew to over 1.2 million people in only 200 years?1 The answer: The Great Commission + The Great Commandment. In this equation 1 + 1 was much more than 2!

Loving our neighbors will be hard at times, and this is why so much of the curriculum has preceded this topic. Being able to love ourselves and our neighbors means we first need to know God and his Love through His Son Jesus Christ. To love in this way requires that we have accepted Him as Savior and Lord so that His Holy Spirit will come and live in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22 and Galatians 4:6). Being secure in our knowledge of God and His Love allows us to “grow in the faith” through such means as learning how to read the Bible, how to pray and all the other factors of the Christian Life. All of these factors work together (Romans 8:28-29) so that we might have the ability, the power, to love others. When people see us loving them, they will ask, “How – why – are you being so nice to me?!” Over time our love for them will soften their hearts to receive the Word made flesh – Jesus, Himself.

And so when we love our neighbors in the power of God's Holy Spirit: 1 + 1 = an *Eruption!*

Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands

Fairfield, Les. *Exploring the Church Past*, Christian Foundations Program, Trinity Episcopal Extension Ministries, Ambridge, PA, 2003, p.53

in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love your; for the honor of your Name.
AMEN. (BCP page 101, top)

Allow the students some time to pray in their own words also – offering their petitions and thanksgivings.

Introductory Activity (5-10 Min.)

You may choose to use *either* the first *or* the second activity suggested. (You are always free to develop another activity that might work better in your own situation.)

Option #1 – Using a “science experiment” in which a soda bottle turns into a geyser. Watch the “Eruption” and then invite the participants to consider, “When is 1 + 1 more than 2? The answer is when the 1 + 1 are powerful actions and ideas from God which erupt and overflow!

Option #2 – If the “science experiment” isn’t a possibility, then start the lesson by inviting the participants to “brainstorm” about: 1) Ways in which they can show love to others; and 2) The kinds of people that they find hard to love. [Note: not individuals or names of persons, but characteristics.]

Whichever of the two different introductory activities you use, the lesson follows in the same way.

Option #1: The “Science Experiment” (Not for the faint of heart) 1) This activity is probably best done outside in the middle of a field, or out on a lawn, so it will work best if this lesson occurs during warm weather. If it is still cold when you are teaching this lesson, and you really want to risk your ceiling, stand the soda bottle in the bottom of a large sink, and be ready with plenty of paper towels.

2) Carefully open the bottle of soda. (Diet soda is less sticky) Position the bottle on the ground so that it will not tip over.

3) Unwrap the whole roll of Mentos candy mints. The goal is to drop all of the Mentos into the bottle of soda at the same time (which is trickier than it looks). One method for doing this is to roll a piece of paper into a tube just big enough to hold the loose Mentos. You'll want to be able to position the tube directly over the mouth of the bottle so that all of the candies drop into the bottle at the same time.

4) Before beginning, warn all the spectators to stand back. Drop all of the Mentos into the bottle at the same time and then get truckin' – move out of the way as fast as you can.

5) The result will be just like fireworks on the 4th of July: a geyser of soda spray!

Option #2 – If you are not geared up for dramatic geysers, then hang up two pieces of newsprint paper on an easel or on the wall, and have the participants list on one sheet the kinds of actions people do that make them hard to love (the lists should not include the names of any individuals). The list (which you may have begun during the previous lesson) should include characteristics such as “bully”, or “gossip”, or “selfish”, etc. On the other piece of paper the students will list loving actions that they could practice toward such people, or others in their lives.

Lesson (20-25 min.)

After doing one or the other of the Introductory Activities, discuss our theme; 1 + 1 = ?

The students will read from their Bibles or from these verses printed on paper:

²⁹ "The most important one, [commandment]" answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-31 (NIV)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matt 28:18-20 (NIV)

Discussion Questions for Option #1:

What was your reaction to the eruption? What do you think about the way in which the soda and Mentos reacted to each other? Guide the students to see that only 2 items were added together to produce such a spectacular eruption.

Discussion Questions for Option #2:

What would happen if you put those 2 lists together? How could you show love in such a way that the difficult person might begin to change? Guide the students to understand that the list of love could transform the list of bad behaviors. List 1 + List 2 = Something wonderful

Follow-up Discussion Questions for both Options:

1) How are the two Scripture readings connected to each other? What does "loving your neighbor" have to do with "making disciples?" "Actions speak louder than words." We can't really just tell people about Jesus, they need to see love in action. Guide the students to understand that it is by loving people that we can make disciples.

2) Application:

Among the people you know, who would you would really like to meet Jesus?

Think about this: Among the people you know, who seems to be more difficult to love and needs to meet Jesus? Sometimes the most "difficult" people need Him most. [Again, remind the students not to call out names of individual people]

Open the discussion to the entire group as a whole: What might happen if each of us reached out to these people in love?" Point out: two different kinds of things might happen. 1) the person receiving the love might respond positively to it, and might even start to change. 2) the person doing the loving actions might be rejected and mocked by the person receiving their love and even by their friends. Unfortunately we need to be prepared for rejection.

How can we deal with the rejection? Is it worth it to try anyway?

Reflection (10-15 min.)

Give each student a piece of paper on which to write down some ways in which they could reach out to one or two of the individuals they were thinking about who need to encounter Jesus.

Take-home Activity (5 min.)

Before class, print up sheets of paper with the following quote at the top:

“We know Jesus loves us, yet He was so rejected that they nailed Him to a Cross.” Instruct the students to write down some ways in which Jesus has shown His great and amazing love to us.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

Invite the students to offer their thanks to God for some of the ways in which they have received His Love. (*You might want to start them off with simple things, like food, shelter and warmth and people who love us*)

Scripture References

- Mark 12:28-31,
- Matthew 28: 18 - 20
- 2 Corinthians 1:22
- Galatians 4:6
- Romans 8:28-29

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