

Countercultural Commission

BY CAROL REID

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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 commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:18-20).

She was only a servant girl, but she did not withhold the Good News from her captor. She spoke to Naaman’s wife about the God in Israel who could heal even leprosy.

The unlearned disciples were not intimidated by the religious elite in Jerusalem. *We cannot help but speak about Jesus*, they told them.

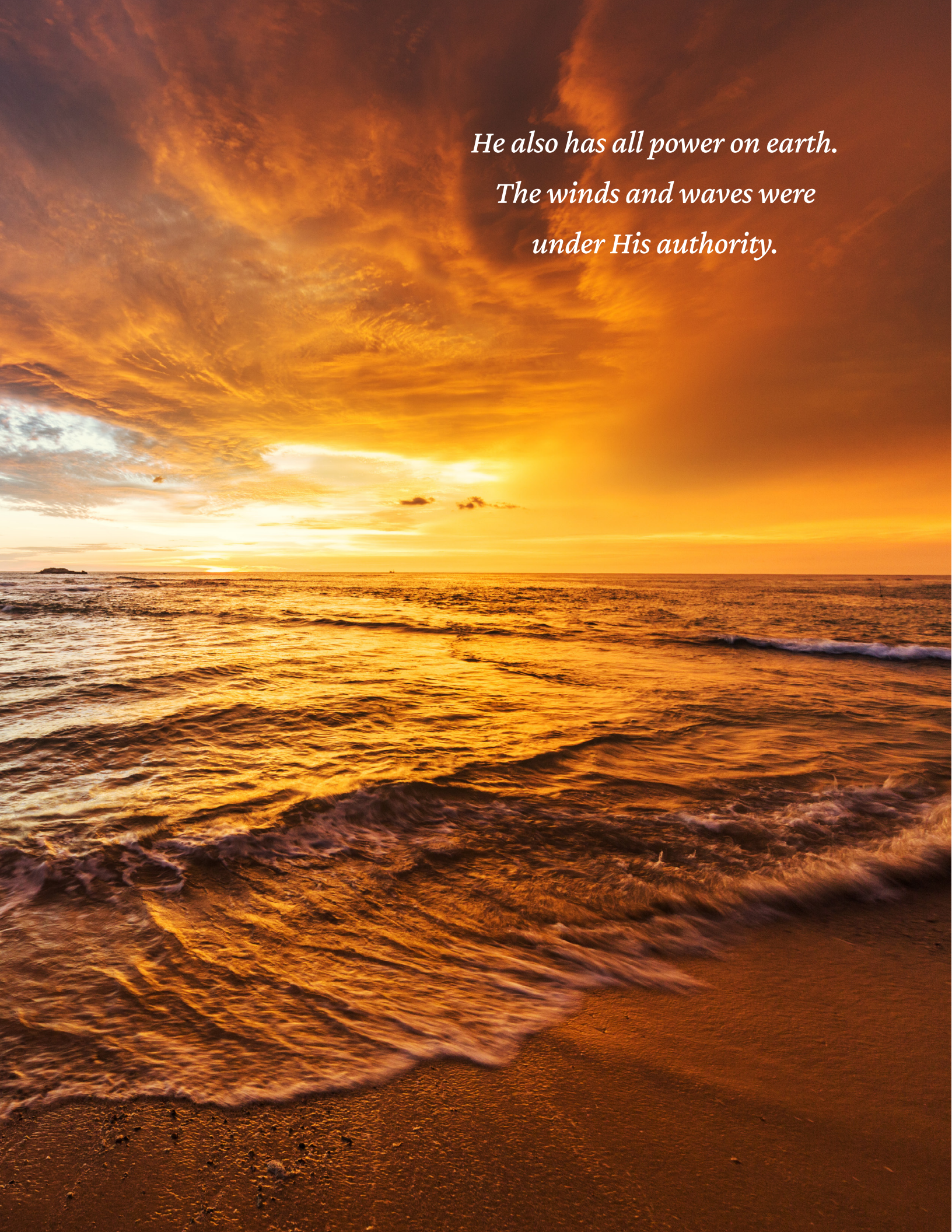
Paul could have been weighed down by heavy baggage: he had persecuted the early church, destroyed families, and terrorized communities. He could have carried the shame of his past, but instead, he carried the gospel with the same ardor he had once persecuted those who followed it.

Though once blind, mentally ill, leprosy, outcast, or

lame, those who followed Jesus began telling their stories to their families and friends and neighbors. The news was too good to be quiet. Their limitations due to social status, education, nationality, or past reputations were forgotten in their desire to tell about Jesus.

The commission is bigger than the culture.

Undoubtedly the culture is not friendly to the message. But your reputation is not the issue. Your preparation, your background, and even your comfort are beside the point. At stake is the gospel. At stake is your obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), given to all those who follow Jesus. The marching orders of Jesus demand our countercultural, revolutionary action to share the gospel.



*He also has all power on earth.
The winds and waves were
under His authority.*

**We are countercultural as we acknowledge Jesus is all-powerful.
(Matthew 28:18)**

Jesus is a real person, not an ideology or myth. He is fully God. He came to earth as a baby and grew up in an unremarkable Jewish family. He fulfilled every Old Testament prophecy about the coming Messiah.

How does Peter describe the ministry of Jesus Christ in Acts 10:38?

When Jesus met with His disciples to share His final commission with them, He did not start with the need. He did not start with their preparation. Instead, He started with Himself. *All power is given to me*, He said. He has all the power in Heaven because He is God. We can't understand or explain the workings of the Trinity, but we know Jesus Christ is one with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. His power created the world. With His power, He arose from the dead. He has the power to forgive sins. He has all the power and privileges and authority of Heaven.

He also has all power on earth. The winds and waves were under His authority. He cast out demons and healed the sick. He blessed the bread and fish and fed a multitude. He spoke and the blind could see, and the lepers were restored.

How did others respond to Jesus' power?
Mark 6:51; Luke 4:36; 5:26; 9:43

So, Jesus commissioned His followers because He had both the authority to send them and the resources to empower them for the task.

We must begin at the same place as those disciples in the Gospels. We recognize who Jesus is and bow to His authority. We submit to His leadership and follow His directions. It doesn't matter if we are out of our comfort zones or even out of our zip codes.

Because He is all-powerful, we have work to do—and strength to do it.

**We are countercultural as we go into all the world with the gospel.
(Matthew 28:19)**

Culture will allow your faith to motivate you to be kind to others and to work honestly. It will permit you to be disciplined and generous, neighborly and devout. But culture wants to gag you and handcuff you, exile you to the privacy of your home or the walls of your church. If you keep your faith to yourself, culture will not argue. But you have a commission, and the clash is quite evident.

The Great Commission is not for a private audience. This is not a secret mission where the recording will self-destruct in thirty seconds. Christ's instructions are an open command to all who follow Him. His commission involves reaching out to others and sharing the message. The New Testament gives us multiple examples and clear instructions about sharing the message with others.

Take note of some who went to share with others.

Acts 8:26–39

Acts 10:34–48

Acts 16:23–34

What are some of the ways others would see the gospel in action?

Matthew 5:16

1 Timothy 5:10, 25

Romans 13:8–14

Colossians 4:5–6

By word and deed, attitude and action, we must be actively sharing the gospel with those around us.

Every nation is included in the commission. We are not limited to those who look and sound like us. Of course, you have a natural circle of influence that

begins in your home and extends to your community. But even in our own homes and communities, we tend to stick with the easy targets. We might feel uncomfortable sharing the gospel if we think our message will be rejected. Go anyway. Share the message, whether or not it is accepted.

Be bold to reach outside your community. How can you do that?

- Give so that missionaries and Bible translators can go to unreached people far away.
- Expand your circle of influence by serving your neighbors. Especially consider those who are learning a new language. Share your friendship and your faith with them. Get involved with organizations that help in the resettlement of refugees.
- Develop friendships with newcomers in your community. Eat at an ethnic restaurant, visit a new section of town, smile often.
- Remember the “least of these”—those at the margins of society who are disadvantaged and struggling. Show them Jesus by your kindness.

- Volunteer at your public schools to be a tutor or to assist needy families.

- Take a mission trip and share your gifts far away from home.

- Pack a shoebox or buy a goat.

- Brainstorm with your friends, small group, or family about other ideas. Open your eyes and your heart, and you might be surprised at the opportunities God opens for you.

- Invest in Christian camps and vacation Bible Schools and Good News Clubs—whether by serving or giving—where the message of the gospel is clearly shared.

- Pray. Remember the prayer request of Jesus for the Lord to send laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:2). Adopt a missionary or an unreached people group and pray for them. Pray that the Lord will move in unusual ways to reveal the gospel to all people.

Remember, there is no Plan B. If we do not share the gospel with those who have never heard, *we will be accountable.*



Be scattering seeds everywhere you go.

We are countercultural as we make disciples. (Matthew 28:19)

Most of us will not encounter cultural opposition as we make friends with others. Others are happy for you to be helpful and charitable, as long as you leave faith out of it. But when you start to make *disciples*, you'll find quite another story.

You should keep your religion to yourself!
You have no right to tell me (or her) what to do!
You do you. But leave me alone.

This is the job description, though. As we go, we make disciples, sharing what Jesus has done for us. We can tell our story and tell His story and invite others to make it their story. We can clearly state the plan of salvation.

We are powerless in ourselves to accomplish the task of making disciples. The fruit comes only from our Heavenly Father. But the fruit cannot come unless the seed is planted. That's our job. Plant. Water. Wait. Repeat.

This is what disciples do. They make more disciples. This mission is critical in your own home. Your children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews are your primary mission field. Be invested in preparing their hearts to accept Jesus through telling His story and praying faithfully for them. Don't put any obstacles in their way.

Plant the seed at your Bible study. Water the seed in your small group. Cultivate the ground at the committee meeting or PTA group. Add fertilizer at Vacation Bible School or Good News Club or campus groups. Be scattering seeds everywhere you go.

Then don't leave those baby Christians to try to grow up on their own. Baptism is a natural next step as a clear symbol of the work Christ has done in moving us from death to life. Help those young believers to understand their commitment and follow through on it.

We are countercultural as we teach them to do all that Jesus commanded. (Matthew 28:20)

The task is big. It involves shaping another's thinking. Again, our culture will be offended by this so-called *indoctrination*. They will call it brainwashing. They will shudder at intentional instruction instead of allowing others to find their own way, to seek out their own truth. But we must protect against error and help others to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the truth. How can we do that?

This teaching requires Bible study. You cannot teach all the things Jesus has commanded us without studying His Word. This is no pick-a-page or verse *de jeur* study either. Every believer needs a systematic, thorough study of Scripture, Genesis to Revelation, hard spots and easy spots, the "amen" and "oh, me" sections. This kind of teaching takes time and

commitment. It requires strategy and investment, first to understand and then to apply. It means rubbing elbows with other learners, following in the footsteps of scholars, and digging in

to care enough to sort out the "meat" of Scripture. It allows us to ground other disciples in foundations that cannot be shaken.

This teaching also relies on modeling. We know it is easier to follow the video on a project than to read the instructions. Having both is ideal. That's one reason Jesus came—to fulfill the Law as a perfect example for us to follow. We walk in His steps. We follow His pattern. In turn, we provide flesh and blood lessons as we mentor and model for those disciples we teach.

What do these verses teach us about examples?
John 13:15

1 Peter 2:21

1 Timothy 4:12

Mark 8:34

1 Corinthians 11:1

*That's our job. Plant.
Water. Wait. Repeat.*

Philippians 2:5

1 John 2:6

We are commissioned not only to go, but to make and equip other disciples to follow our Savior.

Is this too hard? Yes. We cannot do it. We cannot stand against the culture to accomplish the task. We are unable in our own strength to do what Jesus has asked us to do. But that's why He gave His promise: "I am with you, always" (Matthew 28:20b).

Check out the promise in this sampling of verses, too. What can we learn from the repetition? Why is it important?

Jeremiah 1:19; 42:11

Haggai 1:13; 2:4

Matthew 1:23; 18:20

Psalms 23:4; 46:11

Isaiah 8:10; 43:2

Acts 18:9-10

Joshua 1:9

The presence and power of Jesus means we do not face this countercultural commission alone. And with Him, nothing is impossible. *W*

About the Writer: Carol Reid is the senior editor for FUSION Family and FUSION Next devotional magazines at Randall House Publications. She and her husband Garnett worship at The Donelson Fellowship (Nashville, Tennessee) and have two great sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and five marvelous grandchildren.

To hear Matthew 28:18-19 read in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Japanese, and Bulgarian, listen here:

<https://youtu.be/gxCq2C8KA2M>.

Carol Reid and Phyllis York discuss the importance of obeying the command found in Matthew 28:18-19 at this link: <https://youtu.be/HPLXDf3drNg>