



When the Great Commission Comes to You

BY Judy Lytle

ALL AND SO TWO LITTLE WORDS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Matthew 28:18-20, John 3:16, Revelation 7:9, Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 28:18-20

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **all** power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach **all** nations [make disciples], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them [these new disciples] to observe [obey] **all** things [commands] whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

John 3:16

“For God **so** loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Let’s take a fresh look at the familiar passages of Matthew 28:18-20 and John 3:16. How can we apply these passages to 2023? What does it mean for us when the world an ocean away is now living next door? Does that suggest our mandate to go to **all** nations has changed? No, some are still called to go to different places across the globe and share the Good News of Christ. God has a global heart. Maybe because God so

loved the world, He brought the “ends of the earth” to our front door. That doesn’t necessarily mean we have failed in carrying out His final command, but God, in His divine sovereignty, knowing the times, has brought many to us. They are here! We can reach them for Christ from where we live. But how?

In these passages, we will examine two words of importance. They are “**All**” and “**So**.” Have you ever thought of the profound meaning each of these words holds?

Did Jesus know today’s world would look totally different from the world of AD 33? Of course! Our world today is different from the world in the 1950s (when I was a child growing up in rural Southeast Missouri). At that time, the “world around me” was basically the same as I was. We all had the same skin color, culture, and education level. “Sameness” described my world. When you live in a community where everyone is mostly the same, you think the entire world is just like you. Naturally, when I thought of reaching people for Christ from other cultures, I thought of places far away, not down the street from me. I thought people looked different on the outside but were like me on the inside; I assumed they thought and felt like I did.

As a child, I couldn’t understand the idea of different languages. I supposed everybody thought in English and just spoke a different language but would be able to understand me. Naïve I was. When I moved to St. Louis, Missouri and attended a large high school, the other students and teachers couldn’t understand my country accent, and I was speaking English! Later, when we were studying Spanish in a language school in Costa Rica, I began to see the differences in languages and their importance to each culture.

Language is not the only difference in cultures. Values, family life, food, and many other things separate us culturally from others. When we were appointed missionaries to Panama back in 1975, we studied culture acquisition (understanding and adapting to different cultures). Most missionaries study this. Christ is for **all** nations and cultures, but if the missionary doesn’t

understand the culture of those he is called to serve, he can’t adequately present Christ. One must use different terminology and strip off the superfluous we might think is essential here in the US. Here are some examples. Is a church building absolutely necessary? What about a piano or keyboard? Do service times have to be like in the States? What about a Christmas tree? The Easter Bunny?

Another example is from an indigenous group in Panama, the Wounaan. When the missionary told them after they accepted Christ, they should share the Good News of Jesus with others; they could not understand why. In their culture, they kept anything good and important to themselves. The idea of sharing this good news of Jesus with others was absurd and difficult to understand for them. Why would they want to do that? If Jesus was as wonderful as they were told, they should keep Him in their hearts and enjoy Him, not share with others. Daily teaching and the missionaries living a Christlike life of sharing with others helped them understand. They finally did, and today, there is a growing church among this indigenous group. As they began to tell others about Jesus and share Him, they realized He was growing inside them. They had not given away this treasure of Christ. He was still with them more than ever! The missionaries studied and learned their culture to better present Christ to them.

God’s Power—Matthew 28:18

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **all** power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Jesus lived, taught His disciples, died, was buried, and rose again. His resurrection was a confirmation of His authority. He conquered death! Only Jesus could (and can) say with absolute certainty that **all** power is His both in heaven and earth. What does “**all**” mean? As Eric Hankins said, “**All** means **all**.” **All** is everything, the whole lot. Nothing is missing. He has the totality of authority and power on earth and in heaven given to Him by the Father. We can’t comprehend this. His power was shown when He parted the Red Sea, fed the Israelites in the desert for 40 years, raised the dead,

healed the sick, rose from the grave, saved our sinful souls, and the list goes on.

Christ said He has **all** power. What is power? Some defining words are control, energy, and strength. He can do anything! As the children's song says, "My God is **so** big, **so** strong and **so** mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do." He has **all** power!

What does Christ's power have to do with us and doing His will and carrying out this command?

The greatest demonstration of His power was when He rose from the dead. Only God could do this. Because of this, He assures us of His authority. This is a promise to live by! He asks us to do something and supports us with **all** His power. He has our backs! He is for us!

Apply It: Before giving His disciples the task of the ages, He gave them the confidence to do it. They (and we) are not working in our human strength and power. The one with **all** power backs us. It is easy to be intimidated and frightened by the unbelievers around us. They argue against the Gospel, and we grow weary. We can assume a position of confidence because Christ has **all** power. Can you think of times you felt this power as you shared the good news of Jesus Christ?

Our Task—Matthew 28:19

19 Go ye therefore, and teach **all** nations [make disciples], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Another translation states, "As you go, make disciples." This is a lifestyle, not a one-time event. As we live each day at home, school, work, or play, we should be making disciples.

Where? **All** nations. This time **all** refers to every people group in the world. **All** refers to people the same as us. **All** is that bad-tempered neighbor down the street. **All** is the hard to please co-worker. **All** is the Hispanic in Mexico, Panama, and in your city. **All** is the person in Africa and the African American in your neighborhood. **All** is the Muslim in Iran and the

Muslim close by. Do you get the picture? We are to go, teach, and baptize **all** people. Who does this leave out? No one!

Have you ever noticed some folks in churches here in the US are willing to send missionaries across the ocean to Africa or another country but would not befriend or welcome a person from that same race or country into their neighborhood or church? How do you react to other cultures and ethnicities? How do you feel when you hear Spanish spoken **all** around you in Walmart? Can you honestly say you welcome **all** people into your church?

You may be thinking, "I know people from other cultures live close to me. I know they need Christ as much as I do, but how can I get to know them? How can I share God's love and the good news of Jesus with them? I'm clueless. They are so different, and we don't understand each other."

Possible reasons we are hesitant to reach out to those of other cultures:

1. Fear—They are different; we have heard horror stories about drugs, crime, violence, etc. We are afraid of them.
2. Language difference—We can't understand them. They can't understand us.
3. Culturally different—Their entire lifestyle is different.
4. Prejudice—Whether consciencely or unconsciously, we may be biased regarding other races or cultures.

When talking about different cultures around us, we refer primarily to two groups. First, there are the international students. They are in the US on student visas to study and return to their home country. Secondly, there are refugees (immigrants) settling here to flee persecution in their home country or in search of a better life for their family. One of the largest groups of immigrants is the Hispanic group.

Please, don't let excuses stop you from reaching out. Fight your fear, misunderstanding, and prejudice with:

Facts—Refugees are among the most vetted foreigners to enter our country.

Understanding—Most seek the same things you want for yourself and your family. Try to understand their motives.

Love—Love drives away fear. Look at I John 4:18a. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear...” I learned the above way to fight fear from *Across the Street and Around the World* by Jeannie Marie. I highly recommend this book to anyone serious about reaching the world around them.

Knowledge—Take the first step to get to know them. Learn about their culture and a few words in their language.

Overcome prejudice (pre-judging)—Recognize it exists and change actions and attitudes. Take the first step.

Most of us would say we are not prejudiced, but is that true? When we look at another person or culture as inferior to us, we pre-judge them.

God gives us a perfect example. Let’s look at the familiar verse, John 3:16. This helps confirm the reach of God’s love for **all** of humanity and His lack of prejudice.

How can we define that little word “**so**?” One definition is “to such a great extent.” Another is “and for this reason.” I’m sure you can think of others. How would you define this little word?

What did John mean when he said, “For God so loved the world?” The little word **so** has many meanings. It is **so** common in English; we use it without thinking. See, I just did!

Here is John 3:16 in the New Living Translation. “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son **so** that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

We can see God’s heart when we put John 3:16 with Matthew 28:18-20. He loves **all** people, the rich, the poor, the clean, the dirty, the homeless, the murderer,

and the foreigners across the street. His love reaches every person who ever lived or will ever live. It reaches everyone, even the foreigner among us!

A Biblical Perspective Regarding Foreigners

Several words mean foreigner. The Bible uses sojourner, stranger, alien, foreigner, outsider, and even Gentile.

There are dozens of verses in the Old Testament addressing foreigners and how God’s people were supposed to treat them. God loved them and made provision in the law for them. What do these passages say about the strangers (foreigners) living in Israel?

Leviticus 19:9-10: you shall not reap or glean the _____ but _____ for the poor and the stranger. (Make provision for them)

Leviticus 19:33-34: not ____ him but ____ him as _____. (Treat them as you want to be treated)

Numbers 15:16: One _____ and one _____ shall be for you and the stranger that sojourneth with you. (Nondiscriminatory)

These are only a few of the dozens of references in the Old Testament referring to the treatment of foreigners.

The New Testament also addresses this. In Matthew 25:35b, Jesus said, I was a _____ and you took me in. (Caring for others)

1 Timothy 3:7 - And he must have a good _____ of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (Good reputation)

Reaching and Teaching Out of Our Comfort Zone—Matthew 28:20

20 Teaching them [these new disciples] to observe [obey] **all** things [commands] whatsoever I have commanded you.”

We are to teach everyone to obey **all** the commands Jesus has given us. Teach them to love God, love others, live moral lives according to His word, pray, study

the Bible, and teach others the same thing. It is a cycle meant to continue from generation to generation.

It may take weeks, months, and maybe years to see someone you have worked with come to Christ. Be patient. Those acts of kindness, the Scriptures you share, your motivation, and your love will point them to the Savior. The Holy Spirit will do the work in their hearts. This is discipleship.

Apply It: Are you a disciple? Who is your disciple? We **all** need to be one and have one or more. One of your disciples could be an international. Why not?

Christ concludes His final command in Matthew 28:20 with these words:

“... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

This is His promise to believers. We are never alone as we step out of our comfort zone; He is with us and will never leave us. He was with John, Peter, and the other disciples the instant these words left His mouth, and He ascended into Heaven. He was with the church fathers and our ancestors. He is with us and will be with our decedents who love and serve Him. Remember the little word, “**all?**” He is with **all** of us.

When we meet a stranger on the street and don't know what to do or say, remember Jesus is with us. Pray for His Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and words.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Pray each day God will put people in your path who need Him and ask Him to guide you in learning ways to connect with them.

Be willing to move outside your comfort zone.

Become a friend to someone not the same as you.

Be friendly.

Smile and say hello in the grocery store.

If you have a neighbor from another country or race, greet them and meet up to take a walk.

Invite someone not the same as you (foreigner) to a meal or coffee. Most international students in the US have never been in an American home.

Your child's teammates on a sport's team may be immigrants. Talk with them. Get to know their parents. Make friends. Share Christ.

Learn about other cultures, so you are not totally clueless.

Ask them questions. Be interested in their story.

Tell them your story (testimony).

Be guided by the Holy Spirit and go beyond just being friendly. Share the message of salvation.



We can express God's heart to our world around us and fulfill the command He gave us by taking some of the following steps:

Action Steps in Moving Forward

- English classes: Start a class in your church or volunteer as a conversation partner in person or on Zoom. Most large cities have several opportunities to do this. (Google ESL classes near me.) In small towns, you may need to be more creative and offer English to a small group of women or a mixed group.
- University student ministry: Check with local universities or colleges to see if they have a ministry with internationals. Get involved by being a conversation partner, having students in your home for a meal, or other ways.
- Good News Club: Talk with your pastor and others in your church about starting a Good News Club (Bible club) in a local public school near your church. Child Evangelism Fellowship has directors in almost every state and can explain your church's commitment and will also train the teachers. Not only can you reach children from the US and even other countries, but you are also reaching the parents and families of those children. Check out www.cefonline.com.
- Help meet new arrivals' needs, such as food, clothing, and medicine. Our church has helped several Hispanic families adjust to life in the US. Many immigrants arrive in the States with only the clothes on their backs. Go with them to organizations that help immigrants. Introduce them to a clinic for medical care, thrift stores, Goodwill, and Walmart. Take them to a park where their children can play.
- Empower instead of enabling them. This is so important. Yes, an immigrant family may need help to furnish an apartment and feed their family. Your church can bless them in these ways. Constant help like this should end as they acclimate into society. It doesn't need to be ongoing. Occasionally, a family may need extra help because of a crisis or unexpected expense, but they want to be self-sufficient. Empower

them to be self-sufficient. They don't want to be dependent on you or your church.

- Answer questions regarding immigration, medical care, housing, and employment. If you don't know the answer, find someone who does. Be a facilitator.
- Listen to their story. Why are they here? How did they get here? What family members do they have left in their country of origin? It is like losing a loved one. It is healing for them to talk about it. Let me warn you. Their stories will break your heart and, at the same time, show you God's tender love for them.
- If the immigrants you meet are Hispanic, investigate where the closest Hispanic Free Will Baptist Church is located or where a Free Will Baptist Church with a ministry in Spanish is. Try to connect the Hispanics you meet with a church that can minister to them.
- Respect them, their culture, and their religion. Their culture is different from yours, but show them respect and don't abuse or humiliate them. Don't put down their religion. God loves **all** people.
- Pray (with their permission) for them and for God to meet their needs.
- Talk about Christ. Share your testimony. They may disagree, but they will respect you.
- Don't be surprised to find out the immigrant you meet is a Christian and looking for a church.

If you research a bit (Google it), you will find organizations working with immigrants and international students. You can be a volunteer to help. It is amazing how God will put people in your path when you take the first step to get out of your comfort zone.

Apply It: Think about your community. Who are the groups of people and families in need of Christ and of your love and friendship? Pray God will open doors for you to minister to them.

We are motivated to act when we see the world as God sees it. Why?

1. Because it's our job description given by Christ.
2. Because we realize God **so** loved **all** the world, and in

turn, so should we.

3. Because Revelation 7:9 is true, will someday happen, and will be part of our reward in heaven.

The Same But Different—Revelation 7:9

After this, I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

In this verse, we see a final and very significant reason for us to reach out to those not the same. In heaven, we will be surrounded by “sameness” in the sense we will **all** be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and praising God. But we also will be surrounded by “different,” and we will love every minute of it for **all** eternity. There will be saints from every tribe, culture, and nation around God’s throne. Having relationships here on earth with people from other countries and cultures

and reaching them for Christ allows us to experience a tiny piece of what it will be like in heaven.

This study is aimed toward the internationals among us. Can you see the heartbeat of God for **all** people? We can apply these passages to everyone because He loves the world **so**. There is no end to His great love, and His last command was to go, teach, and baptize **all** people. This is our challenge, and it is doable. *W*

About the Writer:

Judy Lytle grew up in southeast Missouri. In 1972, she graduated from Welch College and married Steve, her husband of 50 years. They began their missionary career in Panama in 1977 and retired in 2015. Judy is a proud wife, mom to three great sons, mother-in-law to three lovely daughters-in-law, and grandmother to 11 beautiful grandchildren (ten on earth and one in heaven). She serves in her home church Cofer’s Chapel Free Will Baptist and is passionate about reaching internationals, locally and abroad.



Useful Resources for the Great Commission and You:

Bible (various passages)

Marie, Jeannie, *Across the Street and Around the World*, Nelson Books, Nashville, TN, 2018.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-information-source/>

<https://www.perspectives.org/>

<https://www.cefononline.com>

Know Your Community—a resource available from NAFWB Executive Office. Call 877-767-7659 for more information.

John Weaver — [National Convention 2021](#)

