

The Objectives of Finishing the Task:

Mobilizing All of Christ's Church, to do All Christ Commands,
with All People, in All Places, Using All of God's Gifts, All for God's Glory

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A  White Paper

When we talk about the Great Commission, most people don't realize that Jesus actually gave five Great Commissions. In Finishing the Task, we're talking about all five of them—one in Matthew and one in Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. You know when something is repeated in scripture that we're really supposed to take note. It's as if Jesus is saying, "If you didn't happen to get one, I want you to get the others."

In Matthew 28:19, we have the most famous Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (NIV).

But in Mark 16:15, Jesus said this, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone" (NLT).

In Luke 24:47-48, we get the next Great Commission: Jesus said, "It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' You are witnesses of all these things." (NLT).

And in John 20:21, Jesus said, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (CEB).

Then in Acts 1:8, Jesus says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (NIV). What's the purpose of God's power in our lives? Just to feel good? No, it's so we can be witnesses.

Our Objective in Finishing the Task

Did you notice in those five Great Commissions of Jesus that the word "all" is used seven times? "All" is a very important word in the New Testament. So, based on these five Great Commissions, what is our objective in Finishing the Task? What are we going to do together?

Here's our objective:

Mobilizing all of Christ's church, to do all Christ commands, with all people, in all places, using all of God's gifts, all for God's glory.

Each of these phrases has very important significance to what we're trying to do. Let me give you some scriptural support for each.

Phrase 1: 'Mobilizing all of Christ's Church'

The first phrase is this: "mobilizing all of Christ's Church." God has always intended for the Church to be his agent and tool in the world. Ephesians 3:10 says this: *"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known"* (NIV).

If the Church doesn't share the Gospel, it's not going to get shared. God's agent and tool on Earth is the Church. It's not government, it's not business, it's not education, it's not entertainment, it's not sports. God's planned agent on Earth is his Church.

And, of course, the Church is everywhere. I could take you to 10 million villages on Earth where the only thing in it is a church. A church is always the first thing in any village. They may not have a police department, grocery store, post office, or school, but the first thing in every village is a church. The second thing is a bar, but the first thing is always a church. Why? Because the body of Christ is the biggest network on the planet.

Now, I want to pause on this phrase for just a minute and ask this question: Why, in 2,000 years of church history, have great, godly men and women not already fulfilled the Great Commission?

I've done a lot of research on this. During COVID, I read everything I could find on why every previous attempt to complete the Great Commission in the past 500 years, essentially since the Reformation, has failed. The largest reason why every other effort to complete the Great Commission has failed is because no effort has ever involved *all* of the Church. In almost every instance, past efforts to take the gospel to the whole world were led by a very small and limited band of white, Western men. They didn't mobilize all of Christ's Church, so they weren't able to do it.

The truth is that white, Western men don't represent all of the church. Most Christians are not white, half of Christians are women, and most Christians aren't Western; they're from other places around the world. Previous efforts failed to mobilize Christians of every nation, of every denomination, and believers of both genders. Most of the Church was left on the sidelines in previous attempts to complete the Great Commission.

We're going to change that. We're going to mobilize all of Christ's church.

Now, one of the big problems has been the unwillingness of Christians to partner with Christians of other denominations. This isn't a new problem. This problem is as old as the original 12 disciples. At first, even they wanted to work only with their group.

In Mark 9:38, the disciple John said, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us" (NIV).

"He's not one of us." Does that sound familiar? It's denominationalism in the flesh.

Jesus replied, "Do not stop him . . . for whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:39-40 NIV).

The same kind of small-minded, narrow thinking John showed in Mark 9 has prevented every previous generation from fulfilling the Great Commission—because they've never involved all the Church, young and old, men and women, every race, every nation, every denomination.

Jesus had to remind his disciples of this repeatedly. In John 10:16 Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (NIV). You know the sad thing today? A lot of Christians don't realize not all Christians are in their pen. Most Christians are not in your denomination—not in your church, your strategy, or your tradition. Have you ever realized that most Christians in the world are not from your tribe or your brand?

Now, let me pause here to encourage you. Most Christians really have no idea how big the Church is. I have been blessed, in that God has given me the privilege of training pastors around the world. In the last 40 years, I've taught over 1.1 million pastors in 165 nations, which has allowed me to see how big the church really is. It's far bigger than you think, because we all tend to think only of our own tribe, nation, brand, or denomination.

Now, let me put this in perspective. The world population is about to reach 8 billion people. Of those 8 billion people, about 600 million of them are Buddhist—about 7 percent of the world's population. There are about a billion Hindus in the world; over 90 percent of them are in India.

There are about 1.8 billion Muslims; they're growing by birth rate, not by conversion. There are only 15 million Jews because the Holocaust wiped out about five generations; there should be almost 10 times that amount—140 million Jews.

But there are 2.6 billion Christians in the world. Did you know that? That's one out of every three people on the planet.

The church is the biggest thing on planet Earth. The church is bigger than any nation. The church has more people than China does. In fact, it has more people than China, the United States, and Europe combined.

The Christian Church is the biggest organization on the planet. It dwarfs everything else. We have no reason to be ashamed or cower in a corner. Our army of volunteers numbers in the hundreds of millions, and it's larger than all the national armies put together.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Not all of those Christians are your brand. But if you were to say to those 2.6 billion people, do you believe in the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? They'd say, "Yeah." Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world? "Yeah." Do you believe he died on the cross and rose again on Easter for your sins? "Yes." Do you believe he ascended back to heaven and is coming back one day? "Yeah." Do you believe Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to start the church at Pentecost? "Yeah." Then we're on the same team!

Let me get more specific. Of the 2.6 billion Christians in the world—that's one out of every three people on the planet—1 billion of those Christians are Catholics. 300 million are Eastern Orthodox (Russian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox—all of the Orthodox in the Eastern areas). 500 million are Pentecostals, which is the fastest growing segment of Christianity. And 800 million are different kinds of Protestants and Evangelicals. The Church is bigger than you think.

Now, in *Finishing the Task*, guess what? We're going after the whole Church.

Of course—just like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews—Christians disagree on a lot of different doctrines. Those 2.6 billion wouldn't agree on everything. But we all agree that Jesus is the true God, not merely a man, who died on the cross to save us from our sins and rose again.

So—what if we were to really mobilize all of Christ's Church? Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant, Evangelical, independent, and all the other different versions? Wouldn't that make the task a whole lot easier? Yes.

Did you know that this was Jesus' prayer right before he went to the cross? In the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed that his church would be unified. And then he said, "Father . . . not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42 NIV).

You know what the sad thing is? That is the unanswered prayer of Jesus. And he prays it twice. Look at these verses: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one . . . May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21 NIV).

Look at that again. He says, "All of those who will believe in me through their message." He was praying for you at that moment.

Then he says, "That all of them may be one." He's praying for unity for those of us who've believed.

And he goes on: "May they also be one in us so that the world may believe that you sent me." The phrase "so that" is a *hina* clause in Greek. The purpose of unity is not just so we're unified. The purpose of unity is for mission, it's for evangelism, it's for witness.

"May they also be one . . . so that the world may believe." The world will be *won* to Christ when we are *one* in Christ. He says it twice.

In John 17:23 he says it again: "*I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity*" (NIV). Did you know that God was praying that you would have complete unity with every other Christian? He wasn't talking about structural unity. He was talking about how we treat each other as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Again, unity is a key to Finishing the Task. If we don't learn how to get along together—how to love each other in spite of our doctrinal differences—we will never finish the task. It's too big. But if we were able to mobilize all the Church—every denomination, every background—it would be easy because we would have one out of every three people on the planet.

Now, in FTT, we're going to use a principle Billy Graham used called cooperative evangelism. It means that we're going to work with anybody who's willing to work with us. We want to have all of Christ's Church. That's the first phrase.

Phrase 2: 'To do all Christ commanded'

Here's the second phrase: "To do all Christ commanded." That's the second part of Finishing the Task—all of Christ's church doing all Christ commanded.

Many people think that once you've brought a person to faith in Jesus, you've fulfilled the Great Commission.

Let me ask you a question. Do you know how many specific commands Jesus gave? Have you ever made a list of all of them? If you don't have a list, how can you possibly finish the task, to "teach them to do all I commanded"? If you don't know them, how in the world can you teach anybody else to do them, much less do them yourself?

Most Bible scholars agree that, depending on what you consider to be a duplicate or a repeat, there are approximately 250 commands of Jesus in the New Testament. Let me show you some verses.

In John 14:15-17, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey all I command." It's the mark of love. It's the test of love. And he continues, "And I'll ask the Father, and He'll give you another counselor to be with you forever. He is the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth."

And in John 10:21, Jesus says, "Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them" (GNT). You want God to reveal himself more to you? Obey his commands.

Do you know what is one of the greatest barriers to obeying all of Christ's commands? It's the same problem the Pharisees had: our own traditions. We want to do things the way we're comfortable doing them, not the way God said to do them.

In Mark 7:7-9, 13, Jesus says this: "Their worship is worthless because they teach human rules instead of God's commands. You abandon the commands of God in order to follow human traditions. You have no trouble rejecting God's commandments in order to keep your own tradition. In this way, you canceled the Word of God in order to protect your own traditions."

What's the quickest way to figure out what's biblical in your church and what's simply traditional? Go live in another culture and serve in another Christian church for a year. This is how I learned it. I was planting a church as a teenager in Nagasaki, Japan, and all of a sudden, I saw a lot of things that I'd done all my life as a Christian and thought, "Is that really biblical or is it just traditional? Is it just something national? Is it denominational?" I realized that a lot of what we do is not biblical or even practical—it's just traditional.

Phrase 3: 'With all people in all places'

In *Finishing the Task*, we want to "engage all of Christ's church" and mobilize them "to do all Christ commanded." And here's the next phrase: "with all people in all places."

Look at this verse: In Mark 16:15, Jesus commands, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (TLB). Now, that doesn't need a whole lot of explanation; it's pretty straightforward. Any place you find people, we need to take the Good News there.

Phrase 4: 'Using all of God's gifts'

The next phrase that's key to Finishing the Task has been ignored in past efforts to fulfill the Great Commission: "Using all of God's gifts."

God gave us all of his gifts to get the Gospel around the world because God wants a big family. God is a god of love, and he wants a family to love. He put us on Earth so that we'd come to know him and spend eternity with him.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 says this, "There are different kinds of gifts, but they're all from the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but we all serve the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but it's the same God who works through and in all of us."

God works in different ways in different groups, different nations, and different denominations.

I remember one time, a long time ago, I went through the Scriptures to try to find out what was Jesus' standard approach in sharing the Gospel. How did he win people to Christ? Did he use the four spiritual laws? Did he have a little booklet? What was the standard way that Jesus shared the gospel?

Here's what I discovered: He didn't have one. There is no standard, correct way to share the Good News. When Jesus was with farmers, he talked about farming and sowing seed. When he was with fishermen, he talked about catching fish. When he was with the woman at the well, he talked about living water.

Jesus didn't have a canned, memorized Gospel presentation. Never do you find that anywhere in Scripture. He had a much more reasonable, natural, relational way. He started with the needs and the hurts of others.

There's more than one way to share the Good News. There's only one way to the Father. Jesus said, "I am the way . . . No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 NIV). But there are a thousand ways to Jesus. People come for many different reasons. Some come out of loneliness, some come out of fear, some come out of grief, some come out of a question, and some even come out of wrong motivations.

Some people came to Jesus to see a miracle. Some people came to Jesus to ask a trick question. Jesus didn't care why people came to him, as long as they came. People can come to Christ for the wrong motive. Jesus just wants them to come because then there's sanctification after salvation, where we get our motives worked out.

There's more than one way to share the Gospel, just like different baits catch different kinds of fish. I can give you a thousand different ways to share the Good News, depending on who you're talking to—a prisoner, a military person, a mother of a preschooler, an elderly person, or an immigrant.

There's also more than one way to plant a church. It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. There's more than one way to get a Scripture portion translated. The list goes on.

The truth is that most people in the world don't think like you do. Different people have different needs, hurts, interests, questions, and fears. Finishing the Task—going to every person in every place—will require the most creativity of any project ever in history. Why? Because God made every single person unique, and the key to everyone's heart is unique.

We're going to apply this verse that we read earlier, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, not just in evangelism, but in recognizing the value and the contributions of Christians who are not a part of your tribe.

God is not looking for uniformity. He's the one who made us intentionally different. Christians who are not part of your tribe have value and contributions to make. For me to say, "God, why didn't you make those people like me?" is the ultimate arrogance. Prejudice, racism, and bigotry are big sins. They're like saying, "God, you made a mistake. You should have made everybody like me."

God intentionally made us all different. God is looking for unity—but he's not looking for uniformity.

Here's a principle we're going to have to practice as we work together—all of us, the whole Church—to win the whole world. The only way to ever have unity is to love diversity.

Phrase 5: 'All for God's glory'

The last phrase states our motivation: All for God's glory.

We know that our purpose is to bring glory to God. But how do you do that?

Let me ask it another way: How did Jesus bring glory to God? However he did it, we ought to do that too.

In John 17:4, Jesus is talking to the Father, "I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (NLT).

In other words, Jesus brought glory to God by finishing the task God gave him to do. We bring glory to God the same way Jesus did—by completing the work, finishing the task, that Jesus gave us to do.

Here's another way we can bring glory to God. John 15:8 and verse 16, Jesus said, "You give glory to my Father when you produce a lot of fruit and therefore show that you are my disciples" (John 15:8 GW). God doesn't just want faithfulness; he wants fruitfulness. Jesus continues, "You didn't choose me, but I chose you. I have appointed you to go, to produce fruit that will last" (John 15:16 GW).

The New Testament tells us that God is glorified anytime people are saved.

Revelation 1:5-6 says, "All praise to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us. He's made us His kingdom and His priests who serve Him before His God. Give Him everlasting glory, he rules forever and ever." That's how we give glory to God.

And right along with that, Revelation 5:9-10 says they sang a song, "And they all sang a new song to the Lamb: 'You are worthy . . . because you were killed.'" In other words, they sang about the cross. And then it continues: "And with the blood of your death you bought people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You made them a kingdom of priests for our God" (NCV). That brings glory to God.

ARE YOU IN?

Join a coalition of thousands of believers, churches, denominations, and organizations coming together to fulfill the Great Commission. Finishing the Task is a call to mobilize all of Christ's Church, to do all Christ commands, with all people, in all places, using all of God's gifts, all for God's glory by 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the instructions given to us by Jesus.

Learn more and get started at FinishingtheTask.com.