**Why Are We Here?**<sup>1</sup> Avoiding the distraction of all the things we should do *while* we are here, without neglecting *why* we are here.

You must not only have a goal in life, but you must be able to "see" it, it has to be in your heart, before you can accomplish it. Florence Chadwick failed to swim from Catalina Island to the coast of California (July 4, 1952), but succeeded later that year.<sup>2</sup>

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever"
-Westminster Shorter Catechism

Are	you	here	to
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- **be the best \_\_\_\_\_ you can be?** (spouse, parent, child, boss, employee, citizen...)
  - o Millennials understand the importance of family<sup>3</sup>

# "I will never be an old man. To me, old age is always 15 years older than I am." -Francis Bacon

- o "who is my mother and who are my brothers?" 4 (Mark 3:31-35)
- o "hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, [to] be my disciple" (Luke 14:25-33)
- o Trying to be "the best me I can be" is good for *while* you are here (cf. Eph 5-6; 1Cor 10:31), but it is not *why* you are here. We are here for the Gospel.
- clean everyone up (or) accept everyone the way they are?
  - o The call of Jesus is "follow me" not "do this, not that" (cf. <u>Luke 19:1-10</u>5)
  - o But, the church is called to hold *Believers* to account<sup>6</sup> (cf. 1Cor 5:9-13)
  - Top 6 reasons why young people are leaving the church:<sup>7</sup>
    - Churches seem overprotective (cf. <u>Matt 10:16; 1Cor 5:9-10</u>)
    - Teens' and twentysomethings' experience of Christianity is shallow
    - Churches come across as antagonistic to science
    - Young Christians' church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental
    - They wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity (cf. Acts 4:12)
    - The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt (cf. Mark 9:24)
  - Behavior modification is a shallow distraction. We should accept people as they are, then as they join us, hold them accountable for biblical change. The Gospel isn't "dos and don'ts." Fix the root, trust for the fruit - root = Gospel

## care for the poor?

- o Millennials are motivated by social action "making a difference"
  - They are tired of trying hard for things that don't ultimately matter
  - Build homes, dig wells, AIDS, malaria, shoes, i.e. "helping the poor"
- The OT President: 10% "General Budget;" 10% "Worship;" 3⅓% "Poor" 10
- o Jesus: "the poor you will have with you always" (Mark 14:7)
- o Caring for the "least of these..." is very important *while* we are here, but it is not *why* we are here. It is part of a Gospel-centered life, but it is not the Gospel.

#### protect doctrinal purity?

- It is important to draw clear lines in the sand on *major issues* to communicate to the world what we believe about the Gospel. 12
- o But there are many distractions on "side issues" (especially in the SBC13)
- o "Whoever is not against us if for us." (Mark 9:40)
- Keep the "main thing" **Proclaiming the Gospel** *it matters* **Quotes by Charles Haddon Spurgeon:** 
  - "If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for."
  - "If there existed only one man or woman who did not love the Saviour, and if that person lived among the wilds of Siberia, and if it were necessary that all the millions of believers on the face of the earth should journey there, and every one of them plead with him to come to Jesus before he could be converted, it would be well worth all the zeal, labour, and expense. If we had to preach to thousands year after year, and never rescued but one soul, that one soul would be full reward for all our labour, for a soul is of countless price."
  - o "God save us from living in comfort while sinners are sinking into hell!"
  - o I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unravel all the mysteries of the divine Word, for salvation is the one thing we are to live for.

#### What did Jesus say: why are we here?

- "Teacher, which is the great commandment...?" (cf. Matt 22:36-40)
  - o Love God
  - o by loving people (specifically, your neighbor)
  - o by meeting their needs (cf. Luke 10:25-37 "You go, and do likewise.")
  - o *chief* among these will always be to *hear* the Gospel (cf. <u>1Cor 15:1-4</u>)

## What should we be doing to accomplish this task? Something to give your life to...

### Matt 28:16-20 (the main text for the main thing - "Great Commission Baptists" 14)

- **Reach people** "Therefore, go and make disciples..." 15
  - o "...proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)
  - o "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Rom 10:13-14)
- **Teach people** "...to observe16 all that I have commanded..."
  - o Not just information, but practical application, passed on to others
  - o The Apostle Paul understood this methodology (cf. <u>2 Tim 2:1-2</u>)
- Love people (i.e. minister to people)
  - o "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (cf. 1Cor 13:1-3)

**Conclusion:** There are many things the Bible calls us to do, and many worthy ministries we can give our lives to, but if these do not lovingly lead lost people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we might only be doing the good things (God things) that we are called to do *while* we are here, but not engaging in the reason *why* we are here.

**Why Are We here?** to proclaim the Gospel, reaching people, teaching people, and loving people to the ends of the earth, for God's glory.

invite someone to church, follow-up with a guest, or simply have a conversation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> July 8, 2012; 8:15, 9:30, 10:55am; First Baptist Church Maryville, IL (FBMaryville.org); ©2012 John M. Harris, johnmarkharris.net; an archive of various note sheets are available at: johnmarkharris.net/select-notes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Two books do a very good job of explaining the three---fold task that I believe summarize well our practical call to fulfill the Great Commission: Reaching, Teaching, and Loving. Both books are by Allen Taylor, Minister of Education at First Baptist Church Woodstock, GA (FBCW.org). They are: "Six Core Values of Sunday School" (Riverstone, 2003) and "Sunday School in HD: Sharpening the Focus on What Makes Your Church Healthy" (Broadman & Holman, June 1, 2009). These, and other resources by Allen Taylor, are available at: EmberToBlaze.org. This story is recounted in the introduction of "Sunday School in HD."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Also previously known as "generation Y," now almost exclusively "Millennials, are those born between 1980---2000, and are made up of 78 million people in the United States. According to "The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation" (Broadman & Holman, Jan. 1, 2011) by Thom Rainer, 61% of this generation said family was most important to them. Only 13% in general view religion and spiritual matters as important, 18% of Christians, and 65% of Evangelicals. One interesting anecdote in the book was when Thom gave an informal survey of 12 millennials at a conference "If you could choose between a 10 percent pay raise or two more days of vacation a year, what would you choose?" The millennials chose the vacation days unanimously! Barna research shows that 66% of Millennials list someone they know, not a celebrity or well---known personality, as their primary role model. Family, and family---like relationships, is the most important thing for this generation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Scripture quotations (unless otherwise noted) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. OR they are the author's own from NA27 as the textual basis for the NT.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The call of Zacchaeus was not one of "stop being greedy" but to a relationship with Jesus. Though genuine salvation was accompanied by a change in behavior, the focus of the offer was not centered on ethical change. So too with the (almost certainly apocryphal) story of Jesus with the "woman caught in adultery" when he says "neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." John 8:11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> One of the most often quoted verses is Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged." In context, however, Jesus is not calling on Christians to not judge their brothers and sisters in Christ, far from it. He is calling Believers to judge other Christians, but to start with themselves. Judgment is a necessary part of life as a part of the Christian community.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Church" (Baker Books, Oct. 1, 2011) by David Kinnam was the result of a 5---year project by the Barna Group.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Read the emphasis of the Gospel in 1Cor 15 "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of *first importance* what I also received: that Christ died for our sins..., that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day... so we preach and so you believed." Paul's Gospel was not a set of rules and actions to either perform or avoid, but a trust in the completed work of Jesus Christ that leads to a change in life ("fruit"). It is radically different than the "Gospel" of his Judaizing opponents (cf. Gal 1:6---9; 2Cor 11:4).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> For a book about having the right strategy when going on short---term missions, see "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself" by Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert, forward by David Platt. If you have the desire to go on a helpful Gospel---centered short---term mission trip (and you should) designed to help equip the indigenous church (even starting them when not present) see E3 Partners (e3partners.org) and go on a trip!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> 10% was given to the Levites for regular ongoing ministry (Numbers 18:21, 24); 10% was given specifically for worship services, primarily the 6 (later 7) festivals celebrated every year (Numbers 14:22---23); 10% was given every three years to care for the poor.

- <sup>11</sup> See Jesus' depiction of the blessing/judgment for those who care for others in Matthew 25:31ff. Note, those who care for the poor from among Jesus' "brothers" did it unto Him. It is those who specifically neglect caring for Jesus' "brothers" that are sentenced to "eternal fire" and "eternal punishment." There will be people who do "many mighty works" in Jesus' name and even call Him "Lord" (cf. Matt 7:13---29) but that is not the true test of a "sheep" vs. a "goat." It is good to do good things, but not at the expense of caring for the church, His body, first.
- <sup>12</sup> See the "Baptist Faith & Message" (sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp); as well as the following posts at johnmarkharris.net "What Makes a Baptist a Baptist" (Feb. 15, 2012); "Baptist Distinctive" Parts 1---7 (Feb. 18---24, 2012)
- <sup>13</sup> See blog posts: "12 Cs of the Controversy Conspiracy in the SBC..." parts 1---3 at johnmarkharris.net (June 27---29, 2012)
- <sup>14</sup> On June 19, 2012 the majority of messengers present at the SBC Annual Meeting voted to adopt the optional descriptor "Great Commission Baptists" for the Southern Baptist Convention (http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=38089)
- 15 Some have attempted to translate this passage "as you go, make disciples..." to convey the *aorist passive* construction of πορευθέντες. However, upon deeper investigation, this is not syntactically likely. One will find this participle to be *circumstantial* in the *idiomatic (pleonastic)* sense (BDF, §417---19). πορευθέντες meets all five of the requirements for such an *attendant circumstance* participle: (1) it is *aorist*, (2) the main verb μαθητεύσατε "make disciples" is also *aorist*, as well as (3) in the *imperative* mood, (4) it precedes the main verb, and (5) it is within a narrative passage (Wallace, p.640---43). Thus, it is coordinate, *to wit* a *conjunctive participle*, to the main verb and the modal force is not derived from within the participle itself, but rather it serves to even emphasize to a greater degree the mood of the main verb, in this case μαθητεύσατε, which is *imperative*. The remaining two *adverbial participles*, βαπτίζοντες "baptizing" and διδάσκοντες "teaching," also modify the main verb μαθητεύσατε and thus are given an *imperative* force, though not to the degree of πορευθέντες, and function more in the *instrumental* sense so as to describe a representative sample of how one is to accomplish the action of the main verb. The force of the action in verses 19--20 falls on the *imperative* command to "make disciples" by means of "baptizing" and "teaching" (among other things), with the coordinate command to "GO! and..." with equal (or perhaps even greater force) as the main verb. Thus, an accurate translation of Matt 28:19--- 20 would look something like "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father of and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them..."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> τηρέω "activity to continue, keep, hold, reserve, preserve" BDAG