

# The Cult of: "The International Churches of Christ"

## (Formerly called: The Boston Movement)

10/24/99

**** Beware of a fast growing Wolf in Sheep's Clothing!***

***3 Cultic Marks of the International Churches of Christ:***

## 1. Arrogant Exclusivity:

(We alone are the true church)

## 2. Baptismal Regeneration:

(You must be water baptized to be "born again")

## 3. High Pressure, Manipulative Discipleship:

(God is with you only, if you are "cranking" out numbers)



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Introduction: A typical Senario:

*MAKING DISCIPLES, BOSTON STYLE*

“Lisa is at work, sitting alone one day and eating her lunch. Mary comes along, introduces herself, and asks if she can join her. During the conversation they discover that they have a number of things in common: they are both of Scandinavian descent; they grew up in the same part of the country; they both work in the nursing profession; and both claim to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

With a budding friendship initiated, Mary invites Lisa to a "Bible Talk" on Thursday night, one that she is attending. Lisa asks, "Who's teaching it? Who's involved?" Mary laughs and says, "It's just a group of believers meeting together to study the Bible. It's nondenominational." Lisa attends with Mary and there meets many wonderful people. These people are not only friendly but appear to be genuinely loving and caring. Lisa listens carefully to the lesson and finds nothing contrary to her knowledge of the Bible.

In the days following the Bible Talk, the people Lisa met there call her to talk with her and see how she's doing. She really appreciates their interest and concern. As she gets to know them she observes that these are people who really try to live out their faith -- not only on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week. Encouraged by these people and especially by Mary, she begins to attend their church service and to participate in other activities.

Mary and Lisa (at Mary's suggestion) begin to meet together for a weekly Bible study. Since Lisa already believes the Bible, Mary skips the usual first lesson, The Word Study, and instead focuses on the subject of discipleship. Mary obviously knows more about this subject (having notes and other materials), and so she leads and teaches Lisa. (At this point Mary becomes Lisa's spiritual mentor, her discipler.) In addition to studying the Bible, they pray together and confess sins (most of these being Lisa's). Mary calls Lisa every day, showing great interest in Lisa's life. She is always available to give help and always ready to provide some guidance and advice.

Though Lisa is attending this church and enjoying its life and fellowship, she has this feeling that she is not really a part of it. Perhaps this resulted from her observation that other women in the group are called "sisters," and she is not. She isn't sure. Then one day she hears a Bible Talk on baptism in which the teacher says, "Unless one is baptized as a disciple, one is not saved." He goes on to say that true baptism is a "conscious baptism in which one believes in that baptism for the forgiveness of sins." The wheels in her mind begin to turn. She had been baptized shortly after she put her trust in Jesus Christ, but that was not a "conscious baptism" (as the Bible teacher had described it). Furthermore, she was not a disciple at the time of her baptism, at least as this church defines a disciple. Was her baptism valid? She begins to think that it wasn't. Then the thought crosses her mind: If it wasn't valid, was she really saved?

Lisa immediately calls Mary. Mary comes over as soon as she can and takes her through certain passages in the Bible regarding baptism, verse by verse. Lisa concludes, from all that was shown to her, that her baptism was not a true baptism and she was not saved. She really loves Jesus and wants to serve Him. She wants to be saved, and tells Mary so. That Sunday afternoon she is baptized again and "becomes a Christian." As she comes out of the water, she is ecstatic. Tears of joy stream down Mary's face. All Lisa's new friends from the Bible Talk and the church are there, and so happy for her.

Feeling like a new person after her baptism, Lisa reflects a bit afterwards and starts to realize that if she was not saved prior to her baptism, neither are the people in her former church, nor are her family and friends. They are all lost and on their way to hell. This bothers her and she tells Mary. Encouraged by Mary and other new friends to evangelize these people from her past, Lisa begins to introduce them to her new friends and invite them to the Bible Talk, a church service, or some other special event. When her former pastor, her parents, and former friends try to speak to her about her new beliefs and church, Lisa is advised by Mary not to talk with them. "Instead," Mary says, "give them the telephone number of [her new pastor] and have them call him." (At this point a clear separation is occurring between the old and the new, and Lisa's life will become increasingly wrapped up in her new church.)..." by James Bjornstad.

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***HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT***

The ICC or Boston Movement is actually a more extreme version of the Church of Christ Movement.

In 1823, Alexander Campbell (the most influential man to the Church of Christ movement's position on Baptism) said:

"I know it will be said that I have affirmed that baptism "saves us," that it "washes away sins." Well, Peter and Paul have said so before me. . . . The blood of Jesus Christ then really cleanses us who believe from all sin. Behold the goodness of God in giving us a formal proof and token of it, by ordaining a baptism expressly "for the remission of sins". . . . Paul's sins were really pardoned when he believed, yet he had no solemn pledge of the fact, no formal acquittal, no formal purgation of his sins, until he had washed them away in the water of baptism. To every believer, therefore, baptism is a formal and personal remission, or purgation of sins. The believer never has his sins formally washed away or remitted until he is baptized. (Allen and Hughes, Discovering Our roots, p.106)

Campbell's doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins became the cornerstone of his movement and later the cornerstone of the entire Restoration Movement, the Churches of Christ, and, eventually, the Boston Movement."

From the Churches of Christ to the Boston Movement: A Comparative Study by Russell R. Paden B.G.S., University of Kansas, 1992

"In the early 1970s Kip McKean, the founding evangelist and pastor of the Boston movement, was a student at the University of Florida in Gainesville. There he met Chuck Lucas, pastor of the Crossroads Church of Christ. Lucas was active in a campus outreach program for the Churches of Christ, developing "Campus Advance" principles. He recruited McKean and trained him in what was then and is now a radical version of discipleship developed primarily from Robert Coleman's book, _The Master Plan of Evangelism._ Lucas understood Coleman to teach that Jesus controlled the lives of His apostles and then taught His apostles to disciple others by controlling their lives. Therefore Christians today should use the same process Jesus taught His apostles when bringing people to Christ. Lucas put this teaching into practice in a discipleship process which he taught to McKean and others.

In 1976 a number of Lucas's trainees, including McKean, were sent out to affiliate with Church of Christ congregations located near college campuses. The plan was that each would start a campus outreach using the local church for a base. McKean went to Heritage Chapel Church of Christ in Charleston, Illinois and initiated a campus outreach at Eastern Illinois University. Though he was successful, it wasn't long before some church members questioned his discipleship process and made charges regarding manipulation and control. In fact, several congregational splits occurred over the new discipling process being implemented on these campuses.

In 1979 McKean moved to the Boston suburb of Lexington where he became involved in the Lexington Church of Christ. Meeting on June 1 with thirty people -- each committing themselves to the Lord and His work -- McKean established an aggressive program of evangelism and discipleship. The result was phenomenal. The church went from 30 to 1,000 members in just a few years and outgrew its facilities. By 1983 the church had to rent the Boston Opera House for its meeting on Sunday and meet in homes ("house churches") for midweek services. Later that year the Lexington Church of Christ changed its name to the Boston Church of Christ.

In 1981 the Boston movement launched an aggressive missions program, sending out teams of people to establish churches throughout America and the world. These churches would be part of the Boston family of churches, under the authority and control of the Boston Church of Christ, and using the same discipling methods as the Boston church. As Jerusalem was the center from which Christianity spread throughout the world, so the Boston movement sees Boston as the modern-day center for "multiplying" worldwide ministry.

Churches were established in many major cities, including London (1981), Chicago (1982), New York City (1983), Toronto and Providence (1985), Johannesburg, Paris, and Stockholm (1986), and Mexico City, Hong Kong, Bombay, and Cairo (1987-88). Each church in the Boston movement places the name of their city in front of "Church of Christ" -- for example, "Los Angeles Church of Christ" -- because they believe churches in the Bible were called by the names of their cities. Today there are churches on every continent (103 in all) with a total membership of 50,000.[1]
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**Church Polity of the Boston Movement:**

“The "pyramid of relationships" that Yeakley stated exists in discipling churches created a hierarchy in the Boston Movement that was completely foreign to the Churches of Christ. While individual congregations within the mainline Churches of Christ practice strict autonomy and have no outside headquarters, boards, or individuals to whom they answer, the Boston Movement operates quite differently. There is a definite hierarchy of churches and church leaders based on McKean's plan of pillar churches. In 1988, McKean appointed nine World Sector Leaders, each responsible for a different sector of the world. In 1989, a World Sector Administrator was appointed to oversee the finances of each sector.149 The World Sector Leader is typically the Lead Evangelist (this is the Boston Movement's term for a pastor or minister) of the pillar congregation, and other congregations in that sector are accountable to the pillar church and the World Sector Leader. The nine World Sector Leaders are in turn accountable to Kip McKean who, since 1990, has overseen the Los Angeles Church of Christ and has served as World Missions Evangelist for the entire Movement.150

Based on its interpretation of the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, the Movement adheres to a "one church, one city" model.151 They believe it is unscriptural to have more than one congregation per city. Typically, but not always, a church affiliated with the Boston Movement will simply take the name of the city as its name, as the Los Angeles Church of Christ and the Chicago Church of Christ have done.

The polity within each congregation is also organized in a hierarchical fashion. Each congregation is divided geographically into sectors or quadrants with a Sector or Quadrant Leader (the terminology varies from congregation to congregation). The sectors are further subdivided into zones, and the Sector Leader oversees the Zone Leaders. Zone Leaders oversee individual Bible talks (what were called "soul talks" at Crossroads) and the Bible Talk Leaders. The Bible Talk Leader oversees the individual members of his Bible talk.152 This form of church government is in sharp contrast to the mainline Churches of Christ, which typically have a minister and often elders who serve as the leaders of a single congregation, with no other church hierarchy above them.”

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## ** Beware of a fast growing Wolf in Sheep's Clothing!*

***3 Cultic Marks of the International Churches of Christ:***

# 1. Arrogant Exclusivity:

(We alone are the true church)

"The Movement assumes that it is the only true movement of God in existence today. Members who consider leaving the Movement are told that they would be leaving God and that they cannot be a faithful disciple in another church.182 College-age members are urged not to go home for the summer if no Boston Movement church exists in their hometown,183 as no other church is suitable even on a temporary basis. An evangelism manual for the Movement states that candidates for baptism should be made to understand "that it is not God's will for him to attend any other church."184 A certain level of spiritual arrogance exists among the membership, for they believe they are the only true Christians, the only ones serious about their devotion to God, and members of the only true movement of God." (Russell R. Paden)

The following quotes are from an article titled: "3 Questions About the International Churches of Christ (Boston Movement)" New Covenant Publications (www.newcovpub.com)

"In an article entitled "Revolution Through Restoration II" (a sequel), written by Kip McKean (lead Evangelist and founder of the I.C.C.), Kip states that perhaps the most often asked question of the I.C.C. is "Are the people in the International Churches of Christ the only ones who are saved?" Kip avoids answering this question out right, but comments that the Bible's answer comes from understanding the nature of God's movements.

"To initiate his movement, God, in his grace, always works through a man. He puts his message on this man's heart. As God's man preaches God's message, God moves in other men's hearts to collectively Kip McKean, (In his article, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994) states: "I believe with all my heart that the Boston Movement is God's modern-day movement."

"According to the I.C.C. "a true disciple" or "true Christians" are those who are members of their movement.

"This is the true movement of God. There's no other group, no other church, that can touch this. The Boston Church is not any church, it is the Jerusalem of God's modern day movement." (Kip McKean, Boston Congregational Meeting, 5/6/90)

"When you say we're the only true church...that's gonna tick the religious people off." (Kip McKean, Preach the Word, Johannesberg Leadership Conference, Aug. 1995)

"Today, we are calling out of the world, calling out of the denominations, out of the mainline churches, out of the campus ministries all of the people who desire to be a part of God's restored true church and movement." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994)

According to I.C.C. doctrine, any church that is not a part of the I.C.C. is a false church.

"This is not just a church among churches. This is not just the best thing going in Tulsa. This is the movement of God, and we're calling all who will be true disciples to align themselves with this movement of God. You think this is a church among churches, you can't be a disciple. If you think there's other churches out there you can go and be a part of and be just as good and just as saved...you can't be a disciple." (Nick Young, Lead Evangelist for Dallas-Ft. Worth, Friday evening message for the Tulsa Reconstruction, Sept 1992)

"As Dr. Donald McGavran (considered the father of church growth by the denominational world) told me many years ago, 'You are the only church with a plan to plant churches in every nation of the world in one generation.' Once more, I believe this marks us as God's true and only modern movement." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994)

"Revolution was and is in each step and breath of those who dare to embrace the true church of Jesus." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994)

"This was and still is the true church of Jesus." (Evangelization Proclamation, 2/4/1994)

"However, the Holy Spirit led the few good hearted individuals--the remnant--to the Boston churches." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994)

"The Spirit then gave us a deep conviction that only these baptized disciples comprise God's kingdom on earth." (Evangelization Proclamation, 2/4/1994)

**This claim by the I.C.C. is plain arrogance. Paul rebuked a similar attitude in the believers at Corinth, asking them, "Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?" (1Cor 14:36)**

***Do the leaders of the I.C.C. believe and teach that leaving the membership of the I.C.C. is actually leaving God?***

"Certainly to leave the family of God, the true church, is to leave God." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, 1994)

"This is an issue of salvation. There are not two churches of God in this town. There is but one, and there will always be but one." (from a speech by Kip McKean, Indianapolis, 3/17/94)

"Your salvation is hanging in the balance. You're about to walk away from the movement of God. When you walk away from the movement of God, there is no where else to walk to. Walking out of the light into the darkness. There is nobody else, there is nobody else in this country that has the true gospel,...This is the movement of God." (from a speech by Nick Young, lead evangelist for the Dallas Ft. Worth church, Aug 1992)

Now the I.C.C.
claims that their church is exclusively the Kingdom of God, as "only these baptized disciples comprise God's
kingdom on earth." (Evangelization Proclamation, 2/4/94) So, according to the I.C.C., to be baptized into their church
or movement is to be born again into the Kingdom of God. It logically follows, then, that to be outside their membership is to be outside the Kingdom of God. This would mean that anyone not baptized into the I.C.C. (born again into the kingdom) is not a part of the body of Christ, not born again, thus not "saved".

According to a statement by Ed Powers, former Lead Evangelist for the Indianapolis church (I.C.C.), Ed says, "I personally was in Los Angeles and was sitting in the audience while I heard Kip McKean state very emphatically to the cheers of leaders from nearly fifty churches in Marty Fuqua's Sector,...I heard Kip say definitively, 'If you are not a member of the International Churches of Christ then you are not saved.' ...I remember feeling extremely uncomfortable with that..."

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**Does SIZE & growth rate prove this movement to be of God?**

"In just 15 years, the Bible revolution, which began in 1979...has multiplied by the power of God into 156 churches with a collective attendance of almost 90,000 in 60 of the approximately 200 nations of the world! The parallels to the book of Acts unmistakably mark this movement to be of God." (Kip McKean, Revolution Through Restoration II, UpsideDown Magazine, 94)

What did Jesus say about the size of movements? Mt 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

The Boston Movement is losing members about as fast as it is gaining:
"You look at 1994, there were 30,000 baptisms in the Kingdom of God. I praise God for 30,000 baptisms...but I look below that, in addition to 30,000 baptisms, there were almost 20,000 fall aways. You heard it right, 30,000 baptisms, 20,000 fall aways." (Al Baird, Shepherding the Flock, Johannesburg Leadership Conference, Aug 95)

# 2. Baptismal Regeneration:

(You must be water baptized to be "born again")

A "Proof-text" Hermeneutic is characteristic of the ICC, often with little regard for context, historical background, or intention of the writer.

Order: 1) Become a DISCIPLE, 2) Get BAPTIZED, and then you 3) Get SAVED

"Since the blood of Christ is contacted at baptism, then let us stand firm on teaching that to become a Christian, according to the Bible, one must have faith in Christ and respond by repentance and baptism..." (Kip McKean, Boston Bulletin, June 16, 1985)

The I.C.C. teaches that a person cannot be saved before they are baptized in water. In fact, in one of the Equipping Classes, prepared by G. Steve Kinnard, it is taught that: "Whenever faith, baptism and salvation occur together in the Bible, salvation always follows baptism. No reference can be found to place salvation before baptism." (Lesson Eight, "Denominationalism")

***3 Primary passages used by the ICC to prove baptismal regeneration:***

**Mark 16:15 – Note People are condemned for not believing, not for not being baptized in verse 16.**

**John 3:5 – The reference to "water" is not to baptism, but to the womb from which a child enters the world in the first birth.**

**Proof:** **Context is contrasting the first birth with the second**

**Nicodemus was thinking about a new physical birth, so Jesus in context speaks to address his misunderstanding**

**The greek grammar means "born <u>out of</u> (ek) water"**

**The parallel statement by Jesus in verse 6 indicates that he was using the word water to refer to the "flesh" not to baptism.**

**Acts 2:38 – Salvation comes via repentance, not baptism. (Baptism is simply the sign that repentance is being professed)**

"Repent" = Have a <u>change of mind</u> about <u>Jesus Christ</u>. In context he is saying: "Accept Christ's authority (v. 22), death (v. 23), resurrection (v. 24-32), ascension and exaltation (v. 33-35), Lordship and Messiahship (v. 36).

NOTE: It is the repentance, <u>not</u> the baptism that brings forgiveness of sins.

(See Acts 3:19; Acts 10:43; Mk. 16:16 - Condemnation is for not believing)

Baptism can't wash away sins because Jesus was baptized, yet the Bible says he never sinned!

Acts 2:38 - "for" (eis) can be used in the sense of “because of” (Mt.12:41; Lk.11:32; Mt.3:11; Rom.4:20 -- We use the word "for" in the sense of "because." Jose went to jail for (because) stealing cars - he didn't go to jail to steal cars.

You go to heaven for believing, you do not go to Heaven to believe. You get baptized because you have remission of sins, not in order to have remission.

If Peter means to say: "Get baptized so that you will have the remission of sins," he would have used and the subjunctive.

Why the close connection between belief (repentance) and baptism?

1.Baptism always occurred immediately after belief (Acts 8:37)

2.Baptism was an outward expression of an inward change ("For [because of] the remission of sins")

3.Baptism was the distinguishing mark that showed your new identification with Christ.

4. Baptism followed reception of the Holy Spirit (See: Acts 10:43-48)

If Baptism saved people, what happened to the thief on the cross?

If Baptism saved people, why didn’t Paul baptize more people?

If Baptism saved people, why didn’t Paul state this when asked: “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)

If Baptism saved people, wouldn’t this make salvation a gift attained by works?

# 3. High Pressure, Manipulative Discipleship:

(God is with you only, if you are “cranking” out numbers)

## A. Authoritative “Discipling Partners”

In the conversion account of Paul (Gal 1:13-24), was he assigned a "discipling partner" after he was baptized? In the conversion of the eunuch in Acts 8, and the baptism of Cornelius' household in Acts 10, were they commanded to have a "discipling partner"? Paul describes the Biblical authorities in the Church set by God in Eph 4:11-12. There is no mention of "discipling partners", Bible talk leaders, or zone leaders. Being "partners", friends or brothers and sisters to help one another is good, and needed. (Eph 4:15-16) But by assigning to each new convert a person to be in a position of spiritual authority directly over their fellow disciple (which the I.C.C. calls "discipling partners") and to have them operating the way in which these so-called "discipling partners" function, the I.C.C. has added a totally new and anti-Biblical office of spiritual authority to their group. (Consider the International Churches of Christ - www.newcovpub.com)

## B. Coerced Confession of Sin

According to a former member of the I.C.C., the I.C.C. teaches that the confessing of one’s sins to another person, a person which the leadership has assigned as a "discipling partner", is an ordinary and expected part of the Christian life. During the time I spent in this movement, one was expected to call his or her "discipling partner" on a daily basis and discuss how one’s day was spent, how many people one had invited to church or Bible talk, how many phone numbers one had obtained, and what were the sins one had committed that day. Many times I was asked if there were any sins that I needed to confess. At times I was taken through a short verbal check list of sins. My "discipling partner" would ask if I had committed a particular sin, I would answer yes or no, and then we would move on to the next sin. I was expected to confess all of my sins to my "discipling partner". On one occasion I was told by my "discipling partner" that after my giving into a temptation to sin, the first thing I should’ve done was to have called him and confessed it to him. (www.newcovpub.com)

The idea of confessing one’s sins to another is derived from the text in James 5 which states: **“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”** James 5:16

"Confess" = be open. Admit specific areas of sin (ex. thought life, tongue, attitude, sinful habits)

It does not only mean to confess to one you have sinned <u>against</u>; but admit to those you can share confidences with. Share the areas you stumble in so that you can be prayed for!

This does not mean confession in a public worship service. He says it is to be to "one another" privately.

We don't do this because we are proud.
IF we would do this, we would have:
1) specific prayer support
2) encouragement and accountability
3) a powerful deterrent to sin

However, this confession of faults is a matter that should be:
1. Private (Not for public knowledge)
2. Spontaneous (Not orchestrated)
3. Voluntary (Not Forced)
4. Reciprocal (Mutual, not one-sided and not limited to one person)
5. For Prayer Support

It is not supported anywhere in these verses (or anywhere else in Scripture) that confession to a specified person, such as a discipling partner (or to any other person for that matter), is expected or necessary (especially on a daily basis) in order to have "purity of heart" before God or to be forgiven by God. And if a believer does choose to confess a sin to another (in addition to his or her confessing to God), then it should be kept confidential. The person hearing the confessed sin has no Scriptural warrant for going to anyone else with this information, unless the person confessing is asked and permission is granted. The one hearing the confession has but one responsibility, to pray for the one confessing the sin.

Many former members of the I.C.C. have claimed that confidentiality of members' confessed sins has been routinely violated by the leaders of the I.C.C. (e.g. See television reports WCVB/Boston "Evening News" 04/18/93; BBC/London "Newsnight" 10/05/93; ABC TV "20/20" 10/15/93; CBC/Canada "The 5th Estate" 12/15/93; King World "Inside Edition" 05/19/94) Many have alleged that leaders' knowledge of confessed sins (which were supposed to have been forgiven and forgotten) were later used against them to exploit, dominate, control or even publicly humiliate them. (www.newcovpub.com)

It must be remembered that the Bible teaches that we have but "One Mediator" (Jesus Christ – I Timothy 3:5); and that our confession is to be ultimately made to God (I John 1:9; Psalm 32; Psalm 51)

## C. Competitive Spiritual Ambition

"Some of you have lost your competitiveness...Some of you have so little competitive ambition...You're dragging your sorry little butt around with five baptisms a month...Listen brother, you're a man of God. You better get your head up, and you better start being something, and get some competitive fire. Nice guys finish last...You're a wimp, you're a sissy." ((Marty Fuqua, The Cutting Edge, Boston Leadership Conference, Aug 92)

"Every member of the church is in a Bible Talk. They are expected to bring visitors every week. Everybody's expected to bring visitors every week! They don't bring a visitor, we ask why. Not pressure, I'm concerned about the soul, you're not fruitful, you're going to be sawed off the vine." (Kip McKean, The Super Church, Boston Leadership Conference, Aug 92)

"God put you there in Boston, He put you there in New York, He put you there in Charlotte, He put you there in Atlanta, He put you there in L.A., now crank!" (Kip McKean, ibid)

"I think it's a sin to let any denomination church be bigger than us." (Kip McKean, ibid)

Here again is the pressure placed on members by the leadership. Where in the Bible does it teach that it is a "sin" not to be the biggest church, or that you are in sin because you "let" another church be bigger than yours?

"We're talking raw ambition, here! I'm talking about the attitude of ambition! Some of you, you've lost your competitiveness! You say, 'Well, I don't want to be competitive with anybody.' HOGWASH!!! I spent my whole life as a child of God being competitive! As a student, I wanted to have the most fruitful Bible Talk. I didn't want anybody's Bible Talk to out-baptize mine! NO MAN!! NO WOMAN!! I remember one time one of the sisters was out-baptizing me. I said this is not acceptable. And we sat down and I said, 'I want to know everything you're doing.' And she told me everything she was doing. And I did it better and out-baptized her." (Marty Fuqua, The Cutting Edge, Boston Leadership Conference, Aug 92)

The apostle Paul even spoke against similar kinds of behavior in his epistle to the Church at Corinth (1Cor 3:5-7, 1Cor 1:26-31), and in his epistle to the Philippians (Php 2:3). Paul also wrote, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each should carry his own load." (Gal 6:3-5)

"Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Gal 5:26)

"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise." (2 Cor 10:12)

"Some of you have so little competitive ambition. You're willing to go three and five all your life. You're willing to be middle of the road, middle of the pack. Some of you young guys out there in those...those young church plantings in America, you ought to...you ought to hang your head in SHAME! YOU OUGHT TO BE CRANKING LIKE WILD MEN OUT THERE!!! YOU OUGHT TO BE SO GLAD YOU GOT YOUR SHOT, YOU GOT YOUR CHURCH!!! IT'S YOUR TIME!!! And you're draggin' your little sorry butt around with five baptisms a month." (Marty Fuqua, The Cutting Edge, Boston Leadership Conference, Aug 92)

The phrase "...three and five all your life." is referring to the number of baptisms per month.

The only person of those Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 1:14 that he actually baptized in Corinth was Crispus, the synogogue ruler. (read page 3 of the article Bring Forth Fruit) After Paul's vision, he remained in Corinth for an additional year and a half. (Acts 18:11) The King James Version states that Paul "...continued there for a year and six months..." And during that year and a half, Paul baptized nobody. He wasn't even doing one a month, much less "three and five". According to Marty Fuqua, Paul should've been hanging his head in "shame". (Additional Quotes, www.newcovpub.com)

"Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel..." (1Ch 21:1-7) David focused on (became consumed with) numbers. And God punished him, and all of Israel, for it.

# We do need to be disciplers:

**See Matthew 28:19-20**

***"Teach all nations" -*** lit. make disciples of all nations. The verb *"teach"* is the same root as the word *"disciples"* (v. 16).

A "disciple" is a disciplined one, one who is trained int he disciplines of His Master.

The obvious prerequisite of discipling someone is evangelizing them.

--They must hear the Gospel, and you and I are expected to give it (Mk. 16:15 - *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.")*

"In most churches, the congregation pays the pastor to preach, win the lost, and build up the saved--while the church members [stand on the sidelines and] function as cheerleaders (if they are enthusiastic) or spectators (if they lack all zeal)." (Wiersbe, p. 107).

How much faster churches would grow and how much stronger would believers be if each Christian was discipling another believer.

Which step are you on?

1. Saved

2. Saved and growing

3. Saved and growing and helping others become saved and growing

If you are a born-again Christian, the Lord Jesus Christ has a commission for you!

***Be a Disciple-Maker this year!**

## I. Jesus Christ Gives Us the AUTHORITY to Disciple Others (v. 18-19a)

During His earthly ministry, Christ proved His authority over sickness and disease (Mt. 4:23; 9:35), over demons (4:24, 8:32, 12:22), over sin (9:6), and over death (Mk. 5:41-42; Jn. 11:43-44) (MacArthur, p. 339).

**V. 18**

***"All power [authority] is given unto me" -*** After Jesus paid redemption's price and rose from the dead, He was given from the Father the same "power" (authority) He had and shared with the Father prior to His coming into the world (cp. Jn. 17:5, 24; Phil. 2:6).

***"Power" -*** *exousia* - the absolute, unrestricted right to rule.

Jesus rules Heaven and earth! What He says goes. What He wants done gets done.

*"By Him all things consist"* (Col. 2:17).

By claiming to own all the authority of Heaven and earth, Jesus is either liar, lunatic, or LORD!

***"Therefore" -*** In light of the fact that Christ has all the authority to command Heaven's angelic occupants and earth's mortals, Christ gives a command with total clout behind it.

I do not disciple others based on my authority, a church's authority, some other man's authority. . . but on the authority of Jesus Christ, my Command-in-Chief who sent me!

## II. Jesus Christ Gives Us the ACTIVITY to Disciple Others (v. 19-20a)

Some people try to excuse themselves from following this Great Commission by calling it "the Disciples' commission" and saying that this imperative was only for the disciples to carry out.

This position is not correct for several obvious reasons:

1) It would be impossible for only 11 men to disciple *"all nations"*

2) The command is valid for as long as Christ presence is promised: *"even until the end of the world [age]"* (The eleven did not even see the end of the first century!)

3) Elsewhere, Scripture applies the responsibility of evangelism and discipleship to <u>all</u> believers

a) The Early Church obeyed this Commission (Acts 8:4)

b) We are all called *"ambassadors for Christ"* (II Cor. 5:20) II Cor. 5:18 - *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,a nd hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."*

The Early Church carried out this Great Commission:
They *"went"* (Acts 8:4)
They *"baptized"* (Acts 2:41, 8:38, 10:45)
They *"taught"* (Acts 18:26)

Discipleship involves 3 key elements:
1) Going
2) Baptizing
3) Teaching

A disciple is "one who has <u>believed</u> on Jesus Christ and expressed this faith by being <u>baptized</u>. he remains in the <u>fellowship</u> of the believers that he might be taught the truths of the faith (Acts 2:41-47)." (Wiersbe, p. 107).

A. Discipling involves <u>going</u>

***"Go ye" -*** As you go. . . make disciples. The *"go"* is not commanded but assumed. You can't disciple someone unless you get up and <u>go do it</u>!

Discipleship is to be woven into our "going" through life. As we "go" through life, we are to fulfill the responsibility of discipling others to maturity in Christ.

***"Go ye. . . all nations" -*** Christ intends that there <u>not</u> be a country, a state, a tribe, etc., that is neglected or by-passed. All nations need the Gospel, need discipleship.

In Jesus' previous commission, which applied specifically to His first-century disciples, He sent His disciples only to the Jews (Mt. 10:5-6). From now on their mission would involve the Gentiles and be worldwide.

Going to people of all nations requires:

1. A <u>willingness to cross</u> language and cultural <u>barriers</u>

2. An <u>unprejudiced heart</u> toward others of diverse ethnic backgrounds and skin color

B. Discipling involves baptizing

***"Baptizing them" =*** immersing them in water (Acts 8:38-39).

The same word "baptize" was the Green word the rich man in Luke 16:24 used when He requested Lazarus to "*dip" (baptse)* his finger in water.

***"Baptizing them" -*** the "them" refers to ones discipled. The day an infant is intelligent enough to be discipled is the day infants can be baptized.

Infant baptism is a violation of the Great Commission!

Only those who have repented (Mt. 3:2-6; Acts 2:38), believed (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 8:37) and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47) can be baptized.

***"In the name*** (singular) ***of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" -*** This verse is proof for the unity of the Trinity ("name" - singular) and the equality of the Trinity (it would be blasphemous to putt Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit on par with the Father if indeed they were not co-equal with the Father).

By baptism, a convert identifies with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(For a Jew, baptism in the name of the Father and Spirit was no big deal, butt in the name of "Jesus" was the biggest test. Hence, the emphasis in the New Testament is baptism in the name of Jesus - Acts 2:38, 8:12).

Baptism is a picture of one's union with Christ and a proclamation of one's devotion to Christ.

C. Discipling involves teaching

***"Teaching" -*** to impart Biblical instruction

This teaching is not designed to inform a mind or fill up a notebook but to transform a life" (Doug Finkbeiner)

This teaching is to be formal (Eph. 4:12) and informal (cp. Dtt. 6:7). It should be visual (modeling) and verbal (instructing)/

***"Disciple" -*** IMPORT NOTES FROM DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

***"All things . . . I have commanded you" -***

*The whole counsel of God must be taught (like Paul did - Acts 20:27)

*Complete obedience is expected of disciples of Christ.

**III. Jesus Christ Gives Us the <u>ABILITY</u> to Disciple Others** (v. 20b)

***"Lo" -*** Listen, see or look!

An attention grabbing little word to point to a great truth.

It is a fact that Jesus gives us His:

1. <u>Personal</u> presence (*"with you")*

2. <u>Perpetual</u> presence (*"always")*

It is unheard of for a commander or king to give a subordinate a command and then go accompany that person on the assigned task. Yet this is what Christ our exalted King does!

Discipling others is the only specific New Testament command which is accompanied with a promise of Christ's presence!

Why does Jesus promise His presence?

--to <u>relieve fears</u> (EX: Acts 18:9-10)
--to <u>provide enablement</u>
(Christ empowers us, sharpens our mind, etc. when we are busy about His commission)

<u>How</u> would Jesus remain with us? Answer: In the person of the Holy Spirit; He is with us by His Spirit (Acts 1:4, Jn. 14:26)

The Holy Spirit is our power (Acts 1:8).

The end of the age marks the time when the Lord Jesus shall return from Heaven (The age of the Gentiles will come to an end and the Day of the Lord will begin)

We must give Him our <u>AVAILABILITY</u>!

This "passing on" of what Christ gave us is the ultimate duty of a disciple of Christ (II Tim. 2:2).

--Discipleship begins at home!
Parents are expected to disciple their children; saved husbands their wives

--Discipleship then extends to relatives, neighbors, co-workers, people whose path crosses yours.

What is called by many the "great Commission" has become by much of the pressing church the "Great Omission"

For a Christian to not disciple someone else is to . . .

--Live an unfulfilled life (incomplete; you are not fulfilling a major purpose for which you were saved; we must have an inlet and outlet, be a lake not a stagnant pond).

--Live in sin (the sin of omission; you are not right with God if you are not involved in the spiritual growth of someone else)

Are you willing to be a disciple maker?

--right now?

--Are you willing to be a missionary for Jesus Christ?

Conclusion:

“Woe to you leaders of the International Churches of Christ! In the name of "bearing fruit" you have neglected the fruits of justice, mercy and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former! Many leaders have sought to dominate, manipulate and control personal areas of peoples lives, things that are supposed to be only between a person and God. In your pride, you have separated yourself from the rest of the body of Christ; thus, you have hindered your people from growing and learning from other members of the body, and hindered your people from sharing their talents and knowledge with other Christians. You practice a form of information control instilling fear in people's minds to even visit other churches or consider other points of view. You forbid them to talk to ex-members, many of whom left because, in seeking to be a true disciple of Christ, they could no longer go along with many of the unethical and abusive practices that you are fostering. In your harshness you have caused many people to leave God altogether. Repent of these injustices or you will be cut down and thrown in the fire!” (Ezek 34, Jer 23:1-4, Jer 22:3-7, 13-16) (Consider the ICC, www.newcovpub.com)