

Youth Prospectus 2015-2019

Theme: "The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Calling, Personal Transformation, Personal Instruction and Personal Commitment"

Overview

The quadrennial theme, "The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Calling, Personal Transformation, Personal Instruction and Personal Commitment" simply put, is a serious call for youth to make their walk with Christ personal. YOUth are challenged to share the message of Christ with others. This challenge is God's command and this command is "The Great Commission".

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

It is at this very point in your faith, where Jesus challenges your love and duty to Him, by inviting you to partner in "The Great Commission". To do so, means to be active and authentic Ambassadors of God's reign (kingdom), telling what you have heard, learned and experienced about His Love and Gospel in your homes, church, during Bible Study and Sunday School.

The Bible teaches that every Christian has been given the important task to reach the world for Christ. Jesus' last words to his disciples (*Matthew 28:18-20*) tell us to go make disciples. This must have been important. In fact, if we are not doing and fulfilling the mandated task, we're being disobedient to God and His will for our lives.

To understand "The Great Commission" we need to know that *commission* is defined as the act of granting certain powers or the authority to carry out a particular task or duty. Jesus tells us right away that He is not only an authority, but He is *the* authority of heaven and earth. The word authority here means "power" in the sense of control and ability. He is in charge and telling us what *we must* do. Here is what the scripture is telling us:

Go. Means to move from one place or point to another; to travel; to leave or depart. *We must* go and invite people to meet Jesus.

Make Disciples. A disciple is a follower or student of a teacher. The teacher is Jesus. *We must* help those who receive Jesus learn and know more about Him as they develop a closer relationship.

Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. After leading someone to Christ, *we must* teach them how to grow a relationship with Him. Obedience comes as the relationship strengthens and we better understand God's will for us. You are equipping believers to be Christian workers.

Surely I am with you always. Finally, Jesus promises He will always be with you. His presence and power is there for you unto the end of the world (*period!*). What a relief to know we are never alone in all we do for His Name's sake.

Bottom line, "The Great Commission" is the job of every believer and that includes YOUth. It must become a part of the way we live our lives and who we are. When this happens, we get a whole new perspective on how we live. Home, school, work and favorite hang-outs will become our place to go and reach others. Unsaved friends will become our responsibility, leading and helping them grow in Christ. YOUth will be excited and become motivated to share God's Word. The result is God's glory.

Global outreach is directly connected to living out “The Great Commission”. We are commanded to make disciples of all nations, inclusive of those across the street and across the world. We become Ambassadors for Christ as we go out representing Him.

“But 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.” Acts 1:8 (NIV)

These words from Jesus to the disciples tell us which direction to *go*. Jesus wants us to be His witnesses. Being His witness is like being called to testify before a court. We must be *eye witnesses*, who have a PERSONAL experience to share with others. Then we can tell who He is and what He has done, and be convincing as we share our story. Our Jerusalem is home, our Judea is community and our Samaria could be our state or country, until we actually travel the ends of this earth. Wherever God positions us, we are to identify with Christ by telling family at home, friends in our community and school, and even those we just meet, until we reach everyone with the *Good News* of being born again.

We are to be witnesses, not judges. A witness just tells what they know. Don’t judge or be critical of others, just tell what’s right and what you know to be God’s truth. Don’t debate or argue to justify or embellish your point, just share it and live it.

We come in contact with people who don’t know Christ and are unsaved every day. We can’t expect people to knock down our door or come running to ask how they can be saved. That’s why Jesus gave “The Great Commission”. So, what are YOUth to do? Start mornings out with a prayer for God to empower you as witnesses so that you can go and share the message of Christ. Remember you are not alone. Pray for those you come in contact with during the day. Youth to youth, invite them to your church or Bible study and to participate in youth activities. Witness in your emails, texts, on Facebook, in chat rooms, or even instant message (IM) the gospel. As a youth you have an opportunity to witness to your peers in all sorts of ways. In fact, you are your biggest witness, they will be watching how you talk, walk, how you dress, what music you listen to, what movies and television shows you watch and even how you react to situations around you or in the news.

Being a witness and making disciples is no small task, but YOUth can do it! The key is to *go*. Pray about it and if you need help, seek guidance from your pastor or another adult Christian who’s grounded in God. Do something!

“The Great Commission”, Gods command, your challenge. Are YOUth ready?

“The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Calling”

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 14:6 (NIV)

While fulfilling the Great Commission is for everyone, YOUth are personally called by God for a particular task. It is important that we know His will and true purpose in our lives - what has He specifically assigned to you. So, how do we find out what this is, what is our true calling?

To start, God’s specific call for your life first involves a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Jesus offers us Salvation. Salvation is the gift of a lifetime pardon from sin that Christ purchased when He shed His blood for us on the cross. This gift is for everyone who accepts Him. A *personal calling* requires a *personal relationship*, opening the door. God will **only** reveal your calling if you accept Jesus as your Savior.

Jesus tells us, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*
John 14:6 (NIV)

You will only be able to carry out the plan God has for you with the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. A personal relationship with Jesus guarantees that the Holy Spirit will live within you, giving you the direction you need. If you try to rely on your own understanding, you’ll always be guessing about what your calling is. You can’t succeed on your own.

We cannot recognize God’s calling by phone, email, text, or Instagram. We must listen through prayer and meditation, reading the Bible and talking with people who have a relationship with God. It is revealed to us as we mature in Christ. Stop and think about what you’re doing in your life right now. Are there skills, talents and gifts you use more than others? Everyone has different talents and gifts. God made you unique. Others may do something similar but there’s only one you.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” Romans 12:6-8 (NIV)

Ask yourself what are you passionate about? What excites you? What would you work on or do for free? In the answers you’ll find a good sign of God’s calling for you. Whether we are giving, praying, sharing, caring, leading, working, witnessing or worshipping, we take on the role of Christian service. We have been called to be capable and committed servants of Christ. Some people use their talents and gifts to measure their success and have that, “Look what I did. What’s in it for me?” attitude. God is concerned with how you are using those talents and gifts to help others. Listening to God’s call is not always easy. Sometimes sacrifices have to be made. You may become discouraged, even by those you call your friends. Talents and gifts can be misused and it’s hard to be a servant.

We are called to Christian service and as we grow in Christ our calling becomes clearer. Jesus said, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”* Mark 10:45 (NIV) When we properly use our gifts to serve others, we discover some things just feel right. It’s then we know and say to ourselves, “I was meant to do that.”

God is calling you! Are YOUth ready to answer?

“The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Transformation”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

As we are called by God for His specific purpose we experience a *personal* transformation. Transformation is defined as the state of being transformed; a marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for the better. For YOUth, simply said, it is a process, a series of ups and downs and adjustments made in life that affect your growth experience with Christ. The old is gone, the new is here: a personal change.

Transformation is a constant changing process that shapes the life of a Christian. It happens as we become dedicated followers of Christ. Change is never easy and often hard to accept. We have to be willing to surrender ourselves to the process. It is always easy for us to point the finger and recognize the need for change in others and in the world, but we fail to realize that change has to start with us. The lyrics in Michael Jackson's song, “Man in the Mirror” express those thoughts so clearly, *“I'm starting with the man in the mirror; I'm asking him to change his ways; and no message could've been any clearer; if you wanna make the world a better place; take a look at yourself and then make that . . . change!”*

When we decide to allow God through the Holy Spirit to work in us, our hearts and minds change. There is a renewing of our mind.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

There are many distractions to keep us busy and take away our focus on Christ. Youth have such active calendars. School schedules, extracurricular activities, ball games, mall trips, concerts and the list goes on. Daily activities are a balancing act. While there's nothing wrong with having things to do and places to go, you have to ask yourself, “Is what I'm doing according to God's will?” We're **in** this world but we don't have to be **of** this world. What we read, listen to and watch, as well as, what we do effect our thinking. Renewal of the mind is the daily process of thinking biblically or Christ-like. “WWJD?” (*What Would Jesus Do?*) is not just a slogan, it's a reality.

A whole body transformation begins from the inside out. It changes the way we think and act. That's why it's important for us to feed our minds with prayer, scripture and meditation daily to keep our focus. It's time YOUth have some *personal* time with God. Remember it's an ongoing process. Start out small by setting aside 10-15 minutes of your time. Pray, read scripture or a daily devotion and then reflect (ask yourself how this all applies to you). It's a commitment and a sacrifice but look what Christ did for us. Try it and don't worry if you miss a day. Just pick up where you left off. When the mind is renewed, God's will for our lives becomes clearer.

The old is gone, the new is here! So begins your road to *personal* transformation.

"The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Instruction"

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future."

Proverbs 19:20 (ESV)

The Great Commission was Jesus' *last* recorded instructions to His disciples and to us as His followers to share the Good News of salvation with everyone. He even left directives for us to use. The task at hand is to follow them and more importantly to follow "Him".

Good instruction come with rules, requirements and guidelines that give us the steps we need to get from A to Z. Instruction is good to have when you want to get things done correctly. That's why Jesus made it *personal* so that we could get our lives right. His instructions were to love one another and to treat each other like we want to be treated. "*Love one another, as I have loved you.*" John 13:34. Jesus wanted us to share the good news of salvation. He called us to be like Him.

We must apply the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples to our own personal lives. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus instructs us to "*...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...*" and everything else will not be in vain because we built our works on a firm and sure foundation – Jesus the Rock. Sometimes we get it twisted and seek what we want for our personal lives first and when something goes wrong or is out of place we wonder why. It's easy to point the finger and say those instructions are for anyone but ourselves. He is not just speaking to your pastor, your Bible study or Sunday school teacher or to your parents. Jesus is speaking to YOUth!

In Matthew chapters 5 and 6 we find many of the teachings of Jesus. In these chapters He addresses everything from attitude, in the "Sermon on the Mount", to how to pray. He wants our outward actions to reflect our greatest inner character. Some of His teachings sound abnormal. Who really feels blessed if they're sad, or full when hungry, or content when people talk against you or abuse you? Who really wants to turn their cheek or look the other way when someone slaps them? Our initial instinct is to slap them back. Jesus was trying to teach us to love and care for each other as a Christian community through forgiveness, service and respect for one another. God wants us to live in obedience to His commandments and glorify Him.

Jesus not only gave instruction, but was the Word of God (John 1:1). Jesus applied the gospel by example. "*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*" John 13:14-15 (NIV). It's time to follow His lead.

These teachings were all put into place to prepare us for Jesus' last instruction, to "Go". "*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*" Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

As YOUth, prepare to "Go" out as Ambassadors for Christ by following His instruction. Remembering we're not perfect beings and this is not a perfect world, but we are to strive for perfection: "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" Matthew 5:48. With Christ as our example and the Holy Spirit to empower us, we can keep striving to do our best and follow the instruction set before us.

"The Great Commission - A Global Outreach: Personal Commitment"

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" Matthew 22:37 (NIV)

In order for us to know what it means for YOUth to have a *personal* commitment to Christ we have to examine what commitment is and what it isn't.

Commitment is defined as a promise to do or give something; a promise to be loyal to someone or something; and the attitude of someone who works very hard to do or support something. Something being the common term here is where we must go further. A personal commitment to **Christ** is more than a promise or an attitude. It must consist of our efforts to be intentional through service and at times even to make sacrifices. When we say "*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" Matthew 22:37, we have to mean it and make an effort daily to do just that.

We can't have the appearance of commitment, like when you say one thing and do another, or talk a lot but your actions don't fit your words, or putting a condition on your commitment.

- I always bless my food when I'm eating. (*As long as no one's watching.*)
- I'll go to youth Bible study as long as it's not on Friday.
- I'm willing to help with that outreach project if it only lasts an hour.

Sound familiar? We all have good intentions but we don't always follow through on them. Commitment to Christ and the church require priority choices. It is a spiritual discipline that requires your time, work and will power.

So how do YOUth become more committed? How do we show our commitment? It starts with prayer, study and service. The amount of time that we spend on these things comes with our spiritual growth. Commitment builds up our faith and cultivates our character.

As a youth, you are sure to have multiple commitments. There's family, friends, church, school, extracurricular activities, work and projects galore. All of these commitments can be good, but they are not all equal. There will be times we will place more importance on one than the other. When we do that regarding our personal commitment to Christ, we push God to the side without even realizing it. These things make us lose sight of what is really important. We need to slow down from just being busy, take control of our lives and set priorities. Don't get caught up in doing a good deed so you can be seen. What we do should be because we want God to be seen in us. "*Be sure you do not do good things in front of others just to be seen by them. If you do, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*" Matthew 6:1 (NLV)

Remember, there is no commitment that takes priority or outweighs our commitment to God. Commitment to Him comes first. When we chose to make a commitment to God, everything we say and do become a reflection of Him. That's where our foundation lies. Everything else will fall into place according to God's will. "*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.*" Proverbs 16:3 (ESV)

Total commitment to God means Jesus is the one in charge, He is our guide. As Ambassadors for Christ we must not only follow His lead but be intentional with our service. William McDowell, "I Give Myself Away" lyrics carry a message of commitment, "*Here I am, here I stand; Lord, my life is in your hands; Lord, I'm longing to see your desires revealed in me, I give myself away...*" Are YOUth ready to make a commitment and give yourself to Christ? "*Take my heart, take my life, as a living sacrifice; All my dreams, all my plans Lord I place them in your hands. I give myself away...*"