

Under Orders

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Many days had passed since the First Easter Day. The disciples of Jesus had returned north to Galilee, and by appointment, Jesus met them on a mountain. When they saw Him (probably some distance away) their reactions varied between extremes of adoration and unbelief. Some "worshipped him", but "some doubted".

Jesus then came up to them and spoke to them. First, He made a declaration (v.18). Next, He issued a command (19, 20a). Lastly, He gave them a promise (20b).

1. The Declaration He Made (v.18)

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," He said.

Jesus begins by declaring that He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. This is a clear reference to His exalted position as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This is the honour conferred on Him by God the Father in recognition of His obedience as the Son of Man in the days of His flesh (Phil 2:5-11).

Christ's authority is universal. His authority extends from heaven to earth. By his death on the cross, Jesus destroyed Satan and all his emissaries (Col 2:15). By His resurrection, He robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory (1 Cor 15:55-56). By His ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God the Father, He became the undisputed Ruler of the universe. All things have been put under His feet. He is now the Head of the church and the King of the ages (Rev 15:3-4). There is no conceivable power – human or demonic, natural or supernatural – that is not subject to His absolute rule.

It was in the light of these great facts that Jesus announced the Great Commission. This is clear by the use of the word "therefore". It is His person and His power that form the basis of the worldwide mission of the church.

2. The Command He Issued (19-20a)

"Therefore, **go** and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptising 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."

We "go" because we are under His authority. We go to "all nations" because they are under His authority also.

As we go, we have specific instructions to fulfil. Christ used three verbs: "make disciples", "baptise" and "teach". These three verbs are descriptions of three distinct parts or stages of the Great Commission. There are three things we must do as we go to fulfil the Great Commission.

2.1 We are to Make Disciples

We are to "make disciples of all nations". It means to win disciples for Jesus Christ out of all the nations on earth.

How we are to do this is made plain in the other versions of the Great Commission. We are to do it by preaching the Gospel (Mk 16:15). For in preaching the Gospel we preach Christ so that men are converted to Him and become His disciples. The main aim of all evangelism is to win the allegiance of men and women to the person of Jesus Christ, not to a church nor a system of thought or behaviour.

In summoning people to discipleship, we must never forget to spell out the solemn conditions of this discipleship laid down by Christ our Master. Unless we die to self, take up our cross, and renounce all that we have, we cannot be His disciples, He said (Mk 8:34-38; Lk 9:57-62).

2.2. We are to Baptise

Converts who have become disciples of Jesus are to be baptised "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

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of the Holy Spirit". Jesus did not say baptise them into the **names**, but into the **name** (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The word Trinity does not occur in Scripture, but it well describes the three-in-one nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We baptise disciples not just **in** the Name, but **into** the Name of the Trinity. It signifies union with God, the God who has revealed Himself by His three-fold "Name", as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Romans 6 teaches that baptism unites a believer with Jesus Christ in His death to sin and resurrection to new life.

Baptism is a public act by which the disciple of Christ openly identifies himself with his new Master and confesses before the world his allegiance to his new King.

2.3. We are to Teach Them to Obey

It is not enough to make disciples and baptise them; they must be taught. A lifetime of learning and obeying follows conversion, until disciples are like their Master.

A disciple is always a learner. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31-32). Paul wrote, "Him (Christ) we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ" (Col 1:28).

Secondly, the substance of the teachings to be given to the disciples is all the teaching of Jesus, "everything I have commanded you". Not what they may want to hear, not what we may want to say, but what Christ Himself has taught. We are not at liberty to pick and choose, to select what we like and reject what we dislike. Jesus is our Teacher and Lord and we are under His authority and His instruction.

Thirdly, we are to teach the disciples to obey everything our Lord has commanded us. This is the great omission in the Great Commission. Note verse 20 very carefully. Jesus did not say "teaching them everything that I have commanded you" – complete the curriculum. No. He said, "teaching them to **obey** everything..."

3. The Promise He Uttered (v.20b)

"And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

Note carefully the position of the Great Commission in the context. It is sandwiched between the declaration of Christ's authority and the promise of Christ's presence. Without these, we could not obey Christ's commission. How could we go forth to make disciples for Christ, to baptise them and teach them, if we had no assurance of His authority behind us and no assurance of His presence beside us?

Verse 20b should not be taken out of context. The promise of His presence is given to those who go out into the world, sacrificing their lives, in search of disciples. This promise is not given to those who are disobedient and self-centred.

"I will be with you **always**" – days of safety and danger, days of failure and success, days of restriction and persecution, days of peace and turmoil. Christ is present with us in all situations. "I will be with you always, to the

very end of the age." Christ will always be with us not only in all situations but also at all times – now and forever, even to the very end of the age.

David Livingstone, a missionary to Africa, asked: "If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honour, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?"

Looking at this Matthew passage, we are struck by its comprehensive sweep indicated by the four-fold repetition of the word "all":

1. Christ has been given **all** authority in heaven and on earth.
2. Therefore He commissions us to make disciples of **all** the nations.
3. He instructs us to transmit to these disciples **all** His teaching.
4. Finally, He promises to be with us **all** the days, even "to the end of time".

Time for Action

The Great Commission is not just for all apostles; it's for the whole church. It's for you and for me.

Dr John Stott made this comment: "In the final analysis, we engage in missions today not because we want to or because we choose to or because we like to, but because



we have been told to. The Church is under orders. The Risen Christ has commanded us to 'go', to 'preach', to 'make disciples' and that is enough for us."

Wan Chee Wan
Dean

From Batam to Bali

"In response to the Great Commission, I developed a training centre in Batam, Indonesia in 1995, to train Indonesian nationals to reach the Unreached People Groups in Indonesia. We provided a one-year training program. We took in 30 to 50 trainees from all over Indonesia and, after one year of training, we sent them out in teams of two to five persons to the groups to which a team felt called to go. Chandra Tobing was one of our trainees. After the training in Batam in 2001, he was sent to do church planting in Bali, the only Hindu province in Indonesia. After labouring for two years, a number of Balinese came to know Christ and they were baptised, and a small church was established in Jembrana. In 2004, he moved on to Denpasar and planted a church there. A small church-based Bible school was also established to train new workers who were sent to various areas of Indonesia to plant churches."

DTC Welcomes New Dean



*Dr Lim Khay Tham
with his wife, Jenise*

Education

- BD (1986, Trinity Theological College, Singapore)
- MA with Distinction (1993, Durham University, UK)
- PhD (2019, University of Edinburgh, UK)

Ministry Experience

- Executive Director, The Boys' Brigade (1980-1992)
- Assistant General Secretary, Bible Society of Singapore (1993-1998)
- Chief Executive Officer, Care Corner Singapore (1999-2004)
- General Secretary, Bible Society of Singapore (2004-2012)
- Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Anglican Community Services (2012-2013)
- General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Singapore (2000-2015)

Dr Lim Khay Tham, 66, will be DTC's new Dean from June 1 this year. He shares about how God led him to DTC, his previous ministry experiences and his hopes and expectations.

1. What were you doing before you were approached to be dean of DTC? What were your original plans?

I was approached around August/September last year. I had recently returned to Singapore from Edinburgh after obtaining a PhD in Systematic Theology. Having been away for nearly five years, I was enjoying time with family and friends, as well as doing some travelling around the region. I did not then have any plans of going back to full-time work, at least not for a while. But I have always retained a keen interest in theology, and to be a teacher of that discipline.

2. How did God lead you to DTC? What was your initial reaction? Why did you agree?

My initial reaction on being approached to be dean was one of total surprise. I had been unaware of any forthcoming vacancies. I did, of course, know something about DTC—its history, ethos, and vision. In discussions over subsequent months with the Board chairman, the chairman and members of the search committee, and the current dean, I came to better appreciate the *raison d'être* for the existence of DTC, and also to have a clearer picture of what my role would be. I soon learned about some of the challenges faced by DTC. Initially, I was apprehensive about taking up the post, wanting to turn it down. But as my wife, Jenise and I prayed and conferred together over many weeks, we began to become more open, thinking that if this was an opportunity for service it should be welcomed, not declined. With further encouragement from my now late father-in-law whose counsel we are always grateful for, we accepted the post. As we prepare ourselves to embark upon this "journey" with DTC, we invite your prayers that we may be able to value-add to the community, God helping us.

3. What is your impression of DTC at this moment? Any previous experience with DTC/ DTC community?

That the student enrolment at DTC is low is something that sits uneasily with me, accustomed as I am to think in terms of bulk quantities. Yet, one must not disparage fewness in numbers because the principles of discipleship training are best applied within the context of a small community.

4. What were your previous job/ministry experiences? How do you see them in relation to your new role as Dean?

I am thankful for my time with The Boys' Brigade, Care Corner Singapore, the Bible Society of Singapore and Singapore Anglican Community Services—spanning a period of nearly 40 years—during which I learned to work with a wide cross-section of people towards some shared objective. My voluntary

time as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Singapore had also helped me to appreciate that we are always part of a wider community. Hence, we pray, "Blessed are You, Lord, our God", and not "Blessed are You, Lord, my God". I therefore count it a privilege to be invited to be part of the DTC family and share in its community-oriented approach to training workers for Christian ministry.

5. What are your hopes and expectations as Dean?

Firstly, I hope to be able to blend in with the students and the staff as smoothly as possible. But before anything else, I seek to understand the dynamics of the situation in which DTC is in, or as they are conceived by those involved. Along the way, I aim to build on the work of the current dean and board in making DTC better known. Other priorities for me would naturally include strengthening finances, increasing student enrolment, and so on.

6. How will you be involved with the DTC community?

I suspect the priorities I have mentioned earlier will keep me very busy. However, I intend to be involved in some teaching as well as to know everyone within the DTC family more personally.

7. What will you be doing to ease the handover/transition with the current dean?

I will be starting in April as Dean-designate. I will be working closely with the Rev Dr Wan Chee Wan, to learn the ropes.

8. Tell us about your family. How does your wife view your new role? How will she be involved?

My family comprises my wife (Jenise) and I. We have a daughter (Debbie) who is married and lives with her husband (Daniel). Jenise has always been a great source of support to me as well as my biggest advocate. While she is happy for me to join DTC, she also knows that plenty of work lies ahead of us. I am confident that before long Jenise herself will figure out her role.

9. Tell us about a little about yourself: What are your interests/hobbies?

According to my wife, I enjoy being the boss and palming off work to her. Seriously speaking, I have lots of interests in life, but I seem to be always desperately trying to catch up on a backlog of required reading.

10. How can the DTC community pray for you?

For positive working relationships with the board, faculty and staff, students and alumni. For good health and wisdom in fulfilling my role, and for wise stewardship in applying resources to the work.

God Answered His Prayer for a Laptop

DTC student Nelson Kro, 33, recently received enough funds to buy a laptop. It was God's answer to his prayer from five years ago, in 2015.

Then a college student in North-East India, he could not afford a laptop to do his assignments. So he borrowed the laptop from students at the Christian hostel where he lived and served.

In 2017, he had the opportunity to spend a year in the United Kingdom on a social work internship. A British couple, whom he knew from their previous visit to India, met him one day with a friend. Before they parted, they handed him an envelope. Opening it later, he was amazed to find money enclosed. He thanked the couple, Nick and Karen, and asked if he could spend £100 on a laptop when he returned to India. They replied: "It's a gift. Use how you would like."

Back in India about six months later, his church lent him one of their two laptops, so there was no urgency to buy one. He was involved in ministry with young people and so had no written assignments to do. But in June last year, he left for Singapore to be trained at DTC. He brought with him the £100 he had received in 2017.

DTC lent him an old laptop which he used to access the Internet. A Singaporean friend gave him another old laptop for typing his assignments. With assignments piling up, he was praying again for more funds to buy a new laptop.

One day after sending his monthly update to friends

in the UK and India, he got a message from Nick and Karen. They arranged for a phone call. They asked about his studies and, unexpectedly, whether he needed a laptop. "I said, 'Yes'. They told me to go to the store, find out how much it costs and let them know." When he got back to them about the price, they promised to pray about his need and share it with their friends.

Meanwhile, DTC lecturer Dr Eileen Poh handed him a gift of S\$500 from anonymous donors. Nelson informed the couple about this gift, so they did not need to raise as large a sum as before. In March, he received from them S\$800.

Scrolling through his messages with them, he is amazed that God prompted the same couple who gave him £100 in 2017 to meet his needs again in 2020, and for others who helped him along the way.

"God taught me to be faithful with small things. Once people give you something, and you've said how you'll use it, then don't use it for another purpose. God sees your needs. He will give you the best and at the time when you really need it.



Nelson with the laptop that DTC lent him. He intends to buy a new one with the funds he received.



Gathered for Chapel

Visiting DTC alumnus Candra Ananta (2017-2019, standing, 5th from right) shared about ministry in Indonesia at chapel in February. Also present were visiting lecturer Dr Robert Shaughnessy (standing, 4th from right) and his wife Kathy (sitting, 4th from right), from Canada. We gather for chapel on Wednesdays to hear an invited speaker. Faculty and students preach for chapel on Tuesdays and Fridays respectively, while we set aside Thursdays to pray for DTC alumni by country.



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