

# A VISION FOR EVERYONE

## Discussion Guide

### A Vision for Everyone: Matthew 28.16-20

#### Getting Started: 10 minutes

- o Have you ever experienced a life-changing event? In what ways did this event change your life?
- o Optional: What, if anything from the sermon, encouraged, challenged, or really made you think?

**Setting the Stage:** *Sometimes life shifts, not in a gradual way but in tectonic jolts. Life as we know it is forever changed because reality as we know it has changed. This was the experience of the first disciples. Jesus rose from the dead with power over all reality. Life could never be the same. Rather than moving through life just trying to get by, the disciples of Jesus found themselves called to a new way of being, a life infused with the life, mission, and power of Jesus. Is it any wonder that those eleven men turned the known world upside down? They gave their lives to carry out what Jesus had begun. But that was then. This is now. How their lives were changed, how they lived has no bearing on mine. I certainly can't think that my life should look like theirs, that their calling is my own. But then again, is their experience any different from my own? Have I not encountered the same resurrected Christ? Have I not, like they, joined my life with His? So how is it that my life, my calling, my own reality is not like theirs?*

**Diving Into the Text: 60 minutes** (The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Read Matthew 28.16-20. (You may wish to read Matthew 28.1-15 for context.)
- What new realities do the disciples experience? (Draw out as many as possible.)
- What are the implications of these new realities for the lives of the disciples? (You may wish to write these implications down as you will want to refer to them in the following questions.)
- Think about the implications for the lives of Jesus' disciples. How do you see these implications lived out in followers of Jesus today? What might explain what you see?
- Consider Jesus' words. What of that which Jesus says might encourage and empower his followers to live out these implications?
- Considering your unique personality and present position, how might these implications look in your own life?
- Is this how you are truly living your life, or does your life look different than you described? Can you elaborate?
- In what ways are you open to these implications becoming a part of your everyday life? What steps might you be willing to take to move in this way?

#### Wrapping Up: 20 minutes

- o Prayer requests
- o Group prayer time
- o House-keeping matters (assignments for the next meeting)



## Group Notes

### *A Vision for Everyone: Matthew 28.16-20*

#### **Context and Background**

**Baptism:** Baptism is the act of immersing a person in water as an outward sign of an inward turning to God as the sole-leader of one's life. It is a practice that has its roots in Jewish purification ceremonies. Baptism, as we know it today, can be traced back to the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3.1-12). Jesus, himself, was baptized by John and prescribed baptism for his followers (Matthew 3.13-17; 28.19-20). Though practiced in various forms today, immersion was fairly certainly the original practice, and was the most common form through the Middle-Ages. In the New Testament, baptism is both a state of being and a sign as the term "baptism" can refer to both the physical act and the spiritual state of being immersed or initiated into a greater reality (Rom. 6.1-14). With baptism a person is identifying themselves as a follower of Jesus. As a follower of Jesus, they are indicating by a physical act that they are full participants of the life of God in His Kingdom (the spiritual reality). According to Jesus, both the spiritual reality of baptism and the act signifying the greater reality were to be part of the process of making disciples. Jesus commanded his followers to go about their lives seeking to make other disciples of him (Matt. 28.19). To make a disciple was to teach what Jesus taught, to point people to the truth that God's Kingdom was present and that they could, through the person of Jesus, become part of what God was doing (Matt. 28.19-20; Mark 1.14-15). With his statement on baptism, Jesus indicates that to become part of what God was doing is more than assenting to a set of beliefs or asking for forgiveness of sin. Rather, Jesus states that becoming part of what God is doing is to be immersed in the triune nature of God. Jesus' statement of baptism in the name of God indicates a sharing or partaking of God's life and nature. By being baptized in God's three-fold name, one is identifying with all that God is. In other words, the one being baptized is claiming to share God's life and to be part of what God is up to in the world. In the original context, baptism served as the first witness of a follower of Jesus, the first outward testimony to their friends and family that they were choosing to be a disciple of Jesus and thus making a break with their former way of life. To be baptized could lead to disastrous effects for one personally. Many people found themselves ostracized by family and community, a reality Jesus indicated would be experienced by those who joined their life with God's own in the Kingdom (Matt. 10.21-42).

#### **The Text**

**Seeing Jesus (Matthew 28.16-17):** With his arrest, the majority of Jesus' disciples deserted him and went into hiding (Matt. 26.56, 69-74). However, several women remained by Jesus through his trial and execution on the cross (Matt. 27.55-61). Perhaps as a natural outcome of their faithfulness, it should not surprise us to find that these women were the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (Matt. 28.1-10). When these women saw Jesus, he told them to gather his disciples, instructing them to go to Galilee where Jesus would reveal himself to them (Matt. 28.9-10). The message of the women must have been hard to believe. People do not normally rise from the dead. However, the disciples listened to the women and went to the place in Galilee where Jesus would meet them. As the disciples arrive at the appointed place, they see Jesus and the experience overwhelms them. They find that they are filled with mixed feelings of a desire to worship Jesus and doubt that what they are experiencing could be real. Their present experience tells them that what they are seeing is real, but their understanding of the world tells them that what they are experiencing is impossible. Perhaps their struggle to accept their present experience is rooted in Jesus' desire to appear to them as much as in his appearing. That Jesus would approach these men after they had deserted him is almost as difficult to understand as the reality that somehow Jesus had defeated death. That Jesus would desire to see them and be seen indicates a powerful character of love and forgiveness not seen in the everyday fabric of the ancient or modern world. The one who had been abandoned had no desire to abandon. Rather, he desired to restore.

**Call to mission (Matthew 28.18-20):** As Jesus restored his disciples to himself, he revealed to them that he now had all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus was in complete control of every sphere of reality. This statement in the context of Jesus' ministry engenders hope. What Jesus set out to do, bring in the Kingdom of God and drive out other Kingdoms so that heaven and earth might be one, has not experienced a setback (Mark 1.14-15; Matt. 6.10). God and His creation can be together once more. Jesus has the authority to bring about this reality. However, rather than using his authority to bring heaven and earth fully together in an instant, Jesus uses his authority to hand off his ministry to his disciples. What he has been doing, his disciples are to continue. They are to make disciples as they live their lives. In the language of the NT, the life of a disciple is a life of disciple-making (literally "as you are going make disciples"). According to Jesus, the process of making disciples has two parts. First, like Jesus, they are to call people to share in God's Kingdom life (immersing them in the three-fold name of God—See *Baptism*). Sharing in God's life and Kingdom work naturally leads one to a new way of living embodied by Jesus himself. Jesus exemplified what life in God's Kingdom looks like. Thus, after introducing and leading people to share in God's life, disciples of Jesus were to engage in the process of instructing people how to live this life by teaching all that Jesus had commanded. That is, instruction was to be given in how to take up the life of Jesus, a life of one who shared in God's life and Kingdom. As Jesus' disciples engaged in this way of being in the world, they had the assurance that Jesus was with them. This was not a task to be completed in their own strength but a way of life empowered and infused by the presence of Jesus himself, the one who held all power over reality.

**Application:** Jesus brought in a new way of being, a new reality. In his life and ministry, God's Kingdom began to drive out the competing kingdoms of this world so that God and His creation might be together in the way God intended. In love and mercy, Jesus drew God and His people together. In Christ, one can join their life with God and be part of what God is doing in the world. They find in Jesus one who has the power and authority over reality, a power and authority that he uses to restore both people and creation. However, the process through which Jesus has chosen to restore people and creation is that of handing off his ministry to those who have chosen to follow him. Jesus calls those who are his followers to a new way of living, a way of living in which calling others to become followers of Jesus is a natural outgrowth. Like Jesus, his followers call others to unite their life with God and join Him in what He is doing in the world. This calling is not to assent to a set of truths but is a calling to a new way of life infused with the life and power of Jesus, a way of life that Jesus' followers teach others to live.