

## CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION: March 6, 2016

### WHY BOTHER? BE ONE I MAKE ONE

#### *“ALL IN”*

### OPENING

READ THIS QUOTE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

*Loving God and our neighbors with devotion and service is not something which can ever be completed. Love is something that can only grow over time and must be pursued at all times. But the Great Commission is a global, historic achievement, a task to be completed. In spite of popular understanding, the Great Commission is not a command to do evangelism as often as one finds possible. It is a mandate entrusted to all of Christ's followers to accomplish a work that requires many generations of labor that at the end of history will be finished.<sup>1</sup>*

### GOING DEEPER

- How do the Great Commandment and the Great Commission differ?

*Leader's Guide: The Great Commandment and the Great Commission differ in many ways. Below is an excerpt from an article that describes the differences in great detail:*

*“Of course, the Great Commission is also a command, but it differs from the Great Commandment in several ways. First, they differ in their **subjects**. The Great Commandment is given to all people in every time and place, while the Great Commission is given to the church alone. Second, they differ in their **mandate**. The Great Commandment calls all people to love God and*

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<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne, Steven (2014-08-28). Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader and Study Guide - eBook (Kindle Locations 9534-9537). William Carey Library. Kindle Edition.

neighbor, while the Great Commission calls the church to make disciples of Christ. Third, they differ in their **methods**. The Great Commandment is natural, inscribed on the human conscience in creation as part of the image of God, and these natural precepts are codified and enforced by social institutions (the family, various voluntary associations, and the state). The gospel, however, is not something that all people know inwardly and innately; it's a surprising announcement that must be proclaimed. Unsupported by the regimes of this age, the kingdom of Christ advances by Word and Spirit, through preaching and sacrament. While social justice has the divinely ordained power of the sword to back it up, the church's mandate refuses all appeals to temporal power.

Finally, these mandates differ in their **goals**. In its fallen condition, the human race is incapable of fulfilling its original vocation. There is no perfect society. Nevertheless, the moral law that resounds in the human conscience cries out for specific legislation and enforcement in civil societies. There are better and worse societies, and Christians work alongside non-Christians to improve the common good. Eschewing utopian illusions of grandeur, Christians nevertheless respect civil authority because it is ordained by God. Even if constitutions, laws, and enforcement cannot create the City of God, they can preserve a relative justice and peace in the corrupt regimes of this age. However, the goal of the Great Commission is not simply the restraint of public injustice and violence, but also the justification of sinners that establishes peace with God and reconfigures our relationships in the communion of saints. As the blessings of the covenant of grace are greater than those of creation and

*providence, so too are the responsibilities. In our common society, we may be obliged to exercise coercion (especially as soldiers or police officers) and demand repayment of loans (especially as bankers), but in the communion of saints our recourse must be to church courts for reconciliation, and we are to share our goods with one another. This is not social justice in the City of Man, but the new kind of fellowship that can spring only from union with Christ. Yet the former is still taken seriously by God and indeed has serious implications, especially for those who suffer injustice. [Emphasis added]*<sup>2</sup>

- Why is the Great Commission referred to as “a task to be completed”?

*Leader’s Guide: The Great Commission is referred to as “a task to be completed” because it is fulfilled through the act of making disciples of all nations (proclaiming the gospel, baptizing and teaching). As Dr. Ron J. Bigalke says, “It is not to say that every Christian must accomplish all components of the Great Commission in his own personal ministry. God has given various gifts, ministries, and offices among His people. However, it is certainly the will of God for each Christian to support, actively and prayerfully, that group of Christians wholly dedicated to this task.”*<sup>3</sup>

*See above quotation for more help in answering this question.*

- Do you think this is a task that can be completed?
- The Great Commission “requires many generations of labor”. How will you personally embrace this work? What changes will this mean for you?

## **CHALLENGE:**

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<sup>2</sup> Horton, Michael S., *Justification and Justice: The Great Commission and the Great Commandment*, [www.modernreformation.org](http://www.modernreformation.org).

<sup>3</sup> Bigalke, Ron J., *How should Christian fulfill the Great Commission?*,

**Will you live your life based on these truths? Will you share these truths with others?**