

Lockwood Community Church

Clarification Statement

Regarding the Great Commission, the Conviction of the Holy Spirit,
the Nature of Repentance, and the Confession of Sin

The Great Commission: Is It for the Church Today?

The Issue: Some teachers believe the command given in Matthew 28:18-20 (known commonly as *The Great Commission*) was given only to the apostles and Jesus did not intend it to be binding on the entire church throughout its history. Others believe that the Great Commission is relevant today and is the church's principal mission.

Why Is It Important? If the Great Commission was intended by Jesus for the church for all time, then it should influence everything we do. We must understand what a disciple is and how disciples are made. If the Great Commission was not intended for the church for all time, then disciple-making is not our responsibility, and it is incumbent upon us to find another biblical mission for the church.

***Lockwood View:* We believe and teach that the command in Matthew 28:18-20 is a mandate to the church throughout this age. Members of the church will have different roles in fulfilling the mission, but all are employed in the enduring work of making disciples of all nations.**

Our Reasons:

1. While Matthew's gospel does not mention the presence of others besides the apostles, it cannot be said that others were not present. The Gospels frequently do not mention everyone present on a particular occasion. (For one example of many, compare Matthew 20:30 with Mark 10:46.)
2. Other versions of the command to reach the nations are given in other Gospels and in Acts. While the wording in each gospel differs, the consistent idea is that Jesus followers should go to the world with the news of God's grace through Jesus (Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8).
3. Within Matthew 28:18-20 itself there is evidence that the commission is intended for the church and not just the apostles, for Jesus there promises to be "with you always, to the very end of the age." Since the apostles all died within a few decades, the "you" here must refer to the church and not merely to the apostles. Besides this, the book Matthew wrote was for the church, not merely for the apostles.
4. It remains the primary mission of the church to make disciples. A disciple is a person who has committed himself or herself to Jesus and is intentionally taking on his character. The church's role in this process is mentioned in Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission).

The Conviction of the Holy Spirit

The Issue: Based on John 16:8-11, some teachers believe that the Holy Spirit convicts everyone, both believers and unbelievers, of their sins. Others believe that the Holy Spirit only convicts unbelievers, and the only sin of which the Spirit convicts them is the sin of unbelief.

Why Is It Important? Whether or not the Holy Spirit is concerned with sins in a believer's life is important because it has a bearing on what God thinks about sin and holiness in a believer's life. If God ignores our sins, then those sins must not be important for some reason.

***Lockwood's View:* Based on biblical data, which is supported by personal experience, LCC believes the Spirit brings sin to the attention of believers and unbelievers alike, not condemning believers but directing them to Jesus and the forgiveness and freedom from sin that he alone can give.**

Our Reasons:

1. Teachers who claim that the Spirit does not convict believers of sin often think of conviction as condemnation, but biblical usage is broader than that. To convict is to reprove or rebuke, not to condemn or reject.
2. The view that the Spirit does not convict/rebuke believers of sin is based on the idea that the Spirit will not rebuke/convict a person of a sin committed after conversion. But James 5:15 makes clear that the Lord still forgives people sins committed after they are justified. This forgiveness is necessary for maintaining a close fellowship with the Lord.
3. The word "world" in John 16:8 may refer to the non-Christian world only or to the entire world. John uses the word both ways (of many examples, see John 3:16 and John 17:16) and the context of John 16:8 is not decisive. To assume that "world" here excludes followers of Jesus is to go beyond what the text says.
4. Other biblical writers use the same word that the King James translates "convict" of the rebuke Jesus's people receive. For example, Jesus himself rebukes his people whom he loves (Revelation 3:19), and the "God-breathed" (or "God-Spirited," as the word could be translated) scriptures rebuke believers (2 Timothy 3:16).
5. It is by the Spirit that believers "put to death the misdeeds of the flesh" (Romans 8:13). The Spirit clearly does not ignore a believer's sins but enables the believer to put to death the practices that produce them.

The Nature of (and Need for) Repentance

The Issue: Some see repentance as "a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ" (theologian Wayne Grudem). Others see repentance as a change of the way the believer is thinking about their own identity as justified children of God. For the latter, repentance is not *from* sin but *to* a new way of thinking about oneself as forgiven and made perfect by the sacrifice of Christ.

Why Is It Important? The view that repentance is primarily a change of behavior overlooks the importance of the mind in human behavior and God's plan. The view that repentance is merely a change of mind regarding one's position as a child of God overlooks the Bible's emphasis on

turning from sin and to God. A view that misses either of these elements diminishes the biblical doctrine and makes the Christian's experience of God's grace less rich than he intends it to be.

***Lockwood's View:* Biblical repentance involves both a change of mind and a change of behavior. It includes thinking differently about oneself but also thinking differently about Christ and about sin. Repentance may include an emotional element – a sorrow over sin (2 Cor. 7:9-10). It includes a turning to God and a turning away from sin.**

Our Reasons:

1. Repentance involves a change of mind. The compound Greek word for repentance is taken from the root words for “change” and “mind”, hence “a change of mind.” Without a change of mind there is no lasting change of behavior.
2. This change of mind includes not only a change of thinking about oneself but also about one's sins. The author of Hebrews (6:1) speaks of repentance *from* dead works. Here it is clear that repentance involves a movement away from something and not merely a change of thinking.
3. Jesus said that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed” (Luke 24:47), linking repentance and forgiveness. Peter says, “Repent and turn back that your sins may be blotted out.” In Acts 5, Jesus is said to “give repentance and forgiveness of sins...” The recurrent linking of the words for repent and sin imply a strong connection between them.
4. The word which means “change of mind” is not the only word used in repentance settings. Another important word is “turn.” People are to “turn back”; they “turn to God” (1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 20:21); “turn to the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:16); “turn from worthless things” – idols (Acts 14:15).
5. Repentance and faith are indivisible. The Apostle Paul summarized his preaching as “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). In Greek, one definite article governs both nouns, tying repentance and faith closely together. Repentance and faith cannot be divided in practice.

Confession of Sin

The Issue: It is said by some teachers that Christians need not (and even that they should not) confess their sins to God, but that they should confess Jesus and their standing as justified people. Other teachers believe that it is necessary for Christians to confess their sins in repentance.

Why Is It Important? If God is speaking through his apostle to believers when he says, “If we confess our sins...” (1 John 1:9), then confession of sin is necessary for a rich and fulfilling relationship with Christ. If confession is necessary and believers neglect it, their relationship with God will be unsatisfying for them and for God.

***Lockwood's View:* Believers confess Jesus as Lord, *and* they confess their sins to God. When appropriate, they also confess their sins to others (James 5:16). Confession of sins is not a “work” believers must do to be forgiven and go to heaven. It is a loving response to God in**

the desire to have unbroken fellowship. To sin against God and not confess it to him dishonors God and diminishes the rich experience of fellowship the believer has with God.

Our Reasons:

1. Christians are to confess their sins according to 1 John 1:9. Some teachers claim that John is here addressing non-Christians. There is no clear evidence for this. There is, however, abundant evidence throughout the letter that it is addressed to Christians.
2. Christians are also to confess their sins to each other (James 5:16). This restores fellowship between believers and removes obstacles to a believers' healing.
3. In James 5:15, the believer in Jesus will be forgiven by the Lord *if he has sinned*. James does not say that the Lord has already forgiven this believer and he need only change his thinking and remember that, but that he *will* be forgiven. James goes on immediately to speak of confessing sins to each other.

The Doctrinal Clarification Statement was adopted by the elders of Lockwood Community Church on 10/20/2022. (Copies are available from the church office.)