

Matthew 28

Go

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The *mat* = **MATTHEW**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of pairs of feet = **CHAPTER 28**
3. The THEME:
Feet *pointing outward* = **GO**

MATTHEW 28: BACKGROUND

God has given only one Great commission to his church. He didn't give us six from which to choose. Just one! The Great Commission directs us to go to the entire world and make disciples for Christ. This is to be done by baptizing and teaching God's Word. The Holy Spirit will convert as we proclaim the message about Christ. (See Key Chapter booklet Acts 2: Spirit.)

Other activities of the church (nurture, fellowship, service, worship, etc.) have their purpose and fulfillment as they relate to carrying out this one Great Commission—to reach the world for Christ through the Word! Nothing is of greater importance. Nothing is more urgent. Nothing else takes priority.

The church exists to bring us in, to build us up, and to *send us out*.

Are we willing to be sent? We have little difficulty speaking to others about things we know and love. As the Spirit of God grows in us through the study of his Word, our knowledge of him and our love for him will deepen. Our desire to witness will increase.

The world, without Christ, is lost. Jesus Christ is the world's only hope. God loves every person. He sent his Son to be our Savior. Now he wants everyone to be made aware of that fact. He wants all to know, so they can believe (Romans 10: 14-15).

That is why he says, *GO!*

KEY VERSES OF MATTHEW 28

Verse 6

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Other great religious leaders of the world have made powerful claims. They died. And they stayed dead. You can visit their tombs.

Christ died, but he didn't stay dead. He rose! He lives! He is true God!

Verse 6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

True lasting peace cannot be achieved by the artificial means of the world. It will do no good to try escaping life's problems through alcohol or drugs. You won't find peace by blaming others for your problems or by comparing yourself favorably to others whom you consider worse sinners. True lasting peace can come only through faith in Christ. He alone offers the solution: forgiveness, companionship, freedom from fear, and the promise of his guidance and presence in the future.

Verse 7-8

Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.

The women take the message to the disciples immediately.

Verse 10

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Jesus appears and directs the women to "Go...tell!"

Verses 15

So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

To this day, some people choose to disbelieve.

Verse 18

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Jesus has the highest authority. All things in heaven and earth must yield to him. (See also 1 Corinthians 15:24).

Verse 19

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.

Disciples are followers. From every nation on earth there will come followers of Christ.

Verse 20

“And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The teaching of God’s Word is necessary for our spiritual preservation and growth. We do not “go” alone. Christ will be with us.

THOUGHTS ON MATTHEW 28

Day 1

Matthew 28:19 refers to the Holy Trinity—three persons in one true God.

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Some were confused and doubted—Matthew 28:17. They had not yet received the filling of the Holy Spirit. (See Key Chapter booklet *Acts 2: Spirit*). After Pentecost, they were bold and full of faith. They went to their death rather than deny Christ.

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We do not proclaim a dead hero but a risen Lord who *lives* (Acts 1:3).

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The empty tomb is the Father’s stamp of approval upon the saving work of Christ. (Romans 1:4).

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Angels were the first to announce the news of Christ’s resurrection. The word *angel* (“messenger”) is part of the word *evangelism*.

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If Christ had not risen from the dead, there would be no Christian church today.

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Jesus could have simply required the disciples to believe in his resurrection without any proof. Instead, he chose to reveal himself to them after his resurrection. Not just once, but many times. Not speechless, but speaking. Not at a distance, but up close. The disciples, confused and skeptical at first, now were convinced. They had *seen* the risen Lord. He was *alive!*

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There were 11 recorded appearances of Christ prior to his ascension:

1. Women returning from tomb (Matthew 28: 9,10)
2. Mary Magdalene (John 20: 11-18)
3. Disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-32)
4. Peter (Luke 24:34)
5. Disciples except Thomas (Luke 24: 36-43)
6. Disciples with Thomas (John 20:26-29)
7. Seven disciples by Sea of Galilee (John 21: 1-13)
8. Eleven disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28: 16-20)
9. More than 500 in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6)
10. James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
11. The apostles at the ascension (Luke 24: 50-51)

St. Paul says he also saw Christ (1 Corinthians 15:8). (See Key Chapter booklet *Acts 9: Paul*).

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Day 2

Without the resurrection, there would be no Great Commission. There would be no message.

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The commission is to mission.

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Jesus keeps his word. He said he would rise; he did. He said he would come again; he will.

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The two massive pillars holding up the “arch” of the Gospel are Jesus’ death and his resurrection.

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The Great Commission given by Jesus is recorded (in different words) also in Acts 1:8; Luke 24: 45-49; and John 20: 21.

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Prayer is an essential part of witnessing! Without Christ’s presence and the Holy Spirit’s power, the witness is merely words. (See Key Chapter booklet *Matthew 6: Prayer*).

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Christ's resurrection guarantees our resurrection. Our resurrected body will be glorified—free from sin and its effects.

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You are to go! If not you, who? If not here, where? In not now, when?

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To be a faithful witness for Christ you need to know more than his teachings; you need to know him *personally*. You must know him before you can make him known (Philippians 3: 8-11).

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Baptizing and teaching are the means by which the Holy Spirit produces converting faith. That is why we are to “baptize” and “tell”.

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Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had been at the crucifixion. They were the first to hear the news of the resurrection. Their response is an excellent example. They *believed*, then went quickly to *tell*.

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The Jewish authorities of that day tried every way to eliminate Jesus. They used trickery to arrest him. They used illegal means to try him. They used slander in their charges before Pilate. They always failed. After Jesus' resurrection, they used bribery (Matthew 28: 12-15) to cover it up. They failed. Those who had seen the risen Lord were so convinced, so committed, that the truth was aggressively proclaimed. It hasn't stopped yet. It never will.

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Day 3

The command to reach the world would be impossible if it were not accompanied by Christ's promise to be with us as we go to the world.

God never makes a demand without giving the enabling power to obey.

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The word *all* dominates the closing verses of Matthew 28—*all* authority, *all* nations, *all* things, *always*.

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“Go!” is an imperative. We have no option.

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Scripture repeatedly encourages, “fear not”. Those who trust in Christ need never fear.

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Faith in Jesus comes only as a gift from God. Physical evidence will not lead to faith unless accompanied by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel.

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Disciples are not born, but born again.

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You cannot accept Immanuel’s promise and ignore the process of going. The promise and the process go together. Christ promises to be with us. He assumes we will go (Matthew 28:20).

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Our talents, bodies, energies, gifts, and possessions are all to be used to carry out this one goal: to reach the world for Christ.

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Let your light so shine... (Matthew 5: 16). (See also 2 Corinthians 4:6).

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Our entire life is to be a witness. Read the advice St. Peter gives to a woman who has become a Christian while her husband remains an unbeliever (1 Peter 3: 1-6).

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Day 4

Jesus remains with us as our Good Shepherd (John 10), our Bread of Life (John 6), and our Physician (Matthew 9). He constantly guides, supports, consoles, and forgives us. He surrounds us with his love and presents himself to us in Word and Sacrament.

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It is fine to talk about your friendly church, your pastor, or your choir, but you haven't begun to witness until you speak of *Jesus!*

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Witnessing is not produced by coercion or force. God wants volunteers. The disciples were *invited* to follow.

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The message, when "sown", will produce a variety of responses. (See Mark 4: 3-8, 14-20).

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The call to discipleship is a call not merely to inner peace and joy but also to sacrifice and commitment (Luke 14:2-27). We are to count the cost (Luke 14: 28-33).

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We are to bear fruit (John 15:8). See Key Chapter booklet *John 15: Growth*. Witnessing is bearing fruit.

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Each time Jesus spoke of his coming suffering and death, he followed with a teaching on discipleship (Matthew 16: 21, 24-27; 17:22-23; 18:1-4; 20:16-23). The connection is not accidental. Disciples must be ready to suffer for their faith. (See also 1 Peter 4:1 and Philippians 2: 5-11).

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You are a witness for Christ. Whether you wish to be or not. That's a fact. The only question is whether your witness is negative or positive.

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You don't argue people into the kingdom of God. You love them in by sharing the Gospel, which is the power unto salvation.

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The greatest "good work" (Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13: 21-21) you can do is to glorify the Father by proclaiming his Son Jesus to the world. (See Key Chapter booklet *James 2: Works*).

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The Christian's goal is to seek the lost. All of Luke 15 is devoted to that concept. The parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and the lost son teach us beautiful gospel. That is what the world needs. That's why we "go!"

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All living things move. A living faith moves and goes.

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All power belongs to God (Matthew 28:18). *Nothing* can stop the spread of God's kingdom. It can be hindered. But, ultimately, God's kingdom continues to grow.

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Preaching and teaching ministries must go hand in hand.

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Day 5

What about those whose faith is weak and who are full of doubt? It's a terrible feeling! Maybe you have been struggling with doubt about God and his Word. Perhaps you hesitate to go to your Christian friends, fearing that you will upset them. You may wonder whether even your pastor would understand. You are a bit ashamed and mixed up about the whole thing. But one thing you know for sure—you have doubt!

First, let's make sure of what we are talking about. Some philosophers claim that doubt is a type of "belief" seeking more information. For them "doubt" means to be perplexed, to be puzzled, to be uninformed, to need more information, which would then lead to belief. For example, a young man says, "I doubt that what you say is in the Bible." He can resolve that type of doubt by searching the bible on the subject under discussion.

Suppose you doubt something Scripture teaches. You don't need more information; it's simply that you have difficulty accepting what Scripture says. This kind of doubt makes you feel ashamed. You even wonder whether you are still a Christian.

The faith of our Lord's disciples, we know from the New Testament, was often at a low tide. On more than one occasion, Christ had to remind his followers that their weak faith kept them from understanding and achieving.

Remember when the disciples came hurrying back to Jesus because they had failed to perform miracles of healing? The wind was really out of their sails. They wondered what had gone wrong (Matthew 17: 14-20; Mark 9: 14-29).

Christians of all times have their moments of doubt. Martin Luther said it was a usual and common thing for someone to doubt. He wrote many words about his own struggles with doubt.

Can a person be a Christian and still doubt? Yes! Many Christians have doubts in their moments of weakness.

You do not discover whether a person is a Christian by asking whether he doubts. You must know something far more important: what is his attitude toward his doubts?

The non-Christian nourishes his doubts and thrives on them. He boasts about his unbelief and takes great pride in his ability to question the Word of God. The believer, on the other hand, admits his doubt. He is struggling with it. He goes to God in faith to have his doubt resolved. He prays earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit to change his doubt into a strong conviction of belief.

Remember how Jesus dealt with the doubts of Thomas (John 20: 26-29). He was kind and gentle. He lovingly confronted Thomas with the evidence. The Lord didn't strike Thomas down for his doubt. Rather, in love Jesus restored his faith.

Doubts are serious business. Treat them seriously. Talk them over with understanding Christian friends. Pray, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). And he will.

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