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The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship

Dallas Willard

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The last command Jesus gave the church before he ascended to heaven was the Great Commission, the call for Christians to "make disciples of all the nations." But Christians have responded by making "Christians," not "disciples." This, according to brilliant scholar and renowned Christian thinker Dallas Willard, has been the church's Great Omission.

"The word *disciple* occurs 269 times in the New Testament," writes Willard. "*Christian* is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus. . . . The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ. But the point is not merely verbal. What is more important is that the kind of life we see in the earliest church is that of a special type of person. All of the assurances and benefits offered to humankind in the gospel evidently presuppose such a life and do not make realistic sense apart from it. The disciple of Jesus is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian -- especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast lane on the straight and narrow way. He or she stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of God."

Willard boldly challenges the thought that we can be Christians without being disciples, or call ourselves Christians without applying this understanding of life in the Kingdom of God to every aspect of life on earth. He calls on believers to restore what should be the heart of Christianity -- being active disciples of Jesus Christ. Willard shows us that in the school of life, we are apprentices of the Teacher whose brilliance encourages us to rise above traditional church understanding and embrace the true meaning of discipleship -- an active, concrete, 24/7 life with Jesus.

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