IT'S NOT ABOUT CHECKLISTS: THE GREAT COMMISSION 11

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Once again, we need to start by looking at Matthew's version of Jesus' last command to his disciples from Matthew 28:

> *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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

Very often this passage is read as saying "go to all nations and make disciples" or something along these lines, which can inspire people to see the different nations of the earth as being on a checklist. We've made disciples here: check. No disciples here yet: no check...

This sort of checklist thinking can be exacerbated by a reading of Matthew 24:14 which, taken out of context, can seem to imply that Jesus can only return when the Gospel has been preached to every nation. I have looked briefly at Matthew 24:14 here and here, though I plan to do a more serious post in the future. For the moment, I'd just like to comment briefly on the checklist mentality from the point of view of the *Great Commission.*

The first thing to note is that, as we noted yesterday, the commands to make disciples, baptise and teach implicate the church in a long term engagement which is renewed in every generation. The idea of a checklist that says that a group has been reached and the commission fulfilled is completely foreign to Jesus' command to the church.

Another point is that the command to GO is not actually in the forefront of what Jesus says to his disciples.

On this theme, it is worth notingÂ Luke's version of Jesus' command:

> *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)*

In other words, wherever we are; in our home city, or area, a neighbouring country or in a far-away country, we have to be witnesses to Jesus. Far from giving a checklist of places that we must go to, Jesus was saying that wherever you are, you should be a witness, or make disciples. Yes, some people are specially called to "go" to places, but all Christians, wherever they are, whatever they are doing, have a responsibility to be involved in mission.