

Response

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What the Great Commission is and how the Church in Mozambique has tried to fulfil it as told by Violeta Mandlate is very good and refreshing if you are a Christian whose spiritual heartbeat is of “Making Disciples” (Matthew 28:19)¹.

The key note of the Great Commission is to “make disciples”. To “make disciples” in the Greek Bible is in the imperative mood which is defined as command or entreaty². In such phrases the will of Christ is making a direct, positive appeal to the believers’ will to the extent that the believer wills to allow his will to be characterized by the great commission³. Therefore, biblically speaking, a good church is that which “makes disciples”. This is top on the list of such a church to the degree that a visitor will get the impression just on his first visit. The will of the Mozambican members who did not drift into socialism was marked by this kind of characteristic to disciple and commission the true new Christian for personal evangelism at the expense of mass evangelism, the other important wing.

God is not tempted by evil but he takes what is bad and uses it for the good of His Kingdom. He did the same with socialism in Mozambique. It was at this time that the church in Mozambique weeded out the half-hearted Christians. This is a process difficult for most pastors to do. But for our churches to grow we need to find the committed Christians. We do need to weed out, and focus on the few Christians who will make things happen. This is the breed of believers that will beget committed Christians in turn.

Socialism in Mozambique is like the persecution of the early Church where Christians, when faced with persecution, ran out to the world and spread the gospel through personal evangelism. In Mozambique they did the same. Take note of the present church growth and compare it to growth before socialism. We can conclude by saying, personal evangelism is a New Testament standard of fulfilling the Great Commission but is neglected. It is put in its best use mostly when the church is faced with

persecution or hard times.

I am happy to know that mass evangelism; preaching from the pulpit at funerals and weddings, are now taking place in Mozambique. I am sure the experience they had of doing personal evangelism has equipped them to easily conserve the converts. I say this because without such an experience the church loses a lot of converts. One who is a church growth analyst can easily depict the fact that Africans are very strong in the area of mass evangelism, pulpit preaching, and the like. They preach a moving message and a lot of people are converted. It just ends right there. Such preaching becomes an end in itself because the majority of Africans have a systematic pattern of poor disciple making after such campaigns. This kind of evangelism is biblical but we have made it defective by not making disciples which improves the quality and quantity of our church people. We do not take the altar call as serious as we should, as in the case of the lady drunkard in the Mozambican church who, after conversion, was helped into a church.

In Africa we seem to agree with the saying that “most people talk about personal evangelism, write about it, preach fervent sermons about it and in isolated cases you find a few people who do it”.⁴ In view of Mrs Mandlate’s paper, in practice they do not agree with this saying. Their personal evangelism strategy has made them strong disciple makers to the extent that any occasion is a harvest of souls. The Great Commission is top on their list of things. They know where and how to make the connection with the lost as our Sunday School theme of 2003 says.

Furthermore, as they are effective in wining souls, they do not depend on church structure, both buildings and leadership. They depend on individual ministry such as that of saving the lost through spiritual gifts. Church structure, especially with leadership in Africa, is the number one stumbling block to church growth. One should know that personal evangelism does not depend upon church structure. I can assume that the socialist government in Mozambique demolished the church structures driving it into a biblical democracy. The early church is a good example. When the people fled because of persecution, the apostles, who were at the top of the church structure, remained in Jerusalem. As an African Church the

Mozambican part is seriously challenging us to re-visit our church structure, i.e. the way in which we lead, so as to remove all impediments to church growth. This will free the people. Church leaders should know that the power of a church to grow rests in the hands of the church members.

The church members are the ones who do the bonding with the new converts. They do this by creating a friendly atmosphere which the new converts find in the church. They help him find new Christian friends. They become a new family that laughs and cries with this member irrespective of his status in society. We see this in the way the Mozambican church treats funerals.

Lastly but not least, the church in Mozambique did personal evangelism in respect of the homogenous principle. This principle works very well if used well in traditional societies like in Mozambique. Under circumstances, which are normal for this principle, the changes evolve, but once you bring certain agencies like war and socialism it brings in a revolutionary pace to church growth⁵. This is true because war creates anxiety which brings in a realization that only God is the answer. It also dismantles the social structure of higher, middle, and low classes which complicate the task of evangelism. Here in Mozambique discipleship was made simple. It was a leper telling another leper where to find food (2 Kings 7:8).

All in all, as Mrs Daphne Mathebula, the Selection Committee Chair, prayed that I might be blessed as I interact with this paper, I was indeed more than blessed and inspired to re-visit my attitude in disciple making. More-over, I was revived and have developed good insights which, I pray will result in helping my church become a soul wining church.

1. All Scripture quotation are from the *New American Standard* (NAS).
2. Pershbacher, J Wesley. *Refresh Your Greek*, P.121
3. Dana and Mantey. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* P. 175
4. Edwards, Gene. *How To Have A Soul Wining Church*. P. 13
5. Hesselgrave, David. *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally*. P514