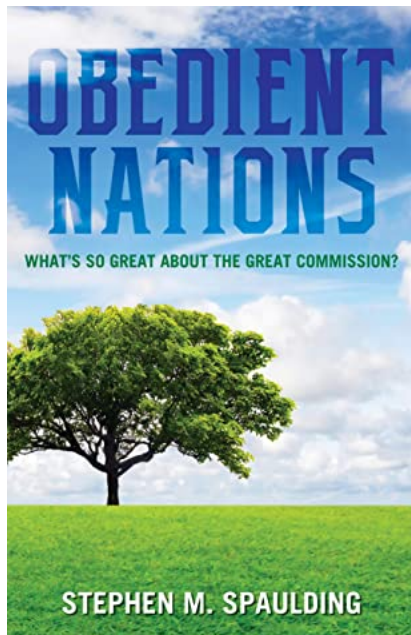


Obedient Nations: What's So Great about the Great Commission?

By Stephen M. Spaulding

Deep River Books LLC, 2020, 304 pages

Summary



The book argues that the Great Commission is “very individualistic as well as highly corporate and nation-focused and touches on all the social/communal elements in between these two poles: family, tribe, community, city and

nation” (Kindle location 3705). Spaulding tracing the concept of “obedient nations” (discipling nations to obey all that Jesus commanded them) from Scriptures (using backward exegesis), in history, and relation to ecclesiology and eschatology. In the latter part of the book, he elaborates on the what, who, and how of discipling nations that encompass every domain of societal life, in view of the shifting global demographics, the need for church unity and collaboration in the kingdom of God, and the value of addressing the spirit realm nationally.

Best illustration

The book narrates a moving story in modern missions about the story of Toyohiko Kagawa, who despite his expertise and education, chose to live in the slums of Kobe to show the love of Christ. After defeat came to Japan after the terrible war, the Prime Minister sent for Kagawa and said, “It’s not our bodies that need help; it’s our minds—our spirits, Dr. Kagawa, you must help to put the spirit of Jesus into the hearts of our people; you must teach us how to love our enemies!” Kindle location 3667

Best Idea

“We must learn, in this day of unprecedented church growth, to collaborate not only with church-health people to ensure that our efforts at growth aren’t at the expense of qualitative depth; and to collaborate with those who are seeking in the workplace, in the marketplace of ideas, in the art galleries, in the governing quarters, to bring people to truth, to cast the light of God’s good kingdom on all of life, to fight every form of evil we confront anywhere.” Kindle location 3579

Best Take Away

“Now that we have identified all the unreached people groups of the world and various agencies are focusing on them, what is the task that remains?” Winter said, “There are millions of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists in the world who are interested in following

Jesus Christ, but they will have nothing to do with Christianity. The remaining task is to free Jesus Christ from Christianity." Kindle location 3438

Our Recommendation

Though the author specifies that his audience refers to "any Christ-follower involved in the mission of God," his initial desire is to reach the "core of leaders in mission, mostly North American and primarily English-speaking, who have until recently been leading the most significant agencies worldwide." However, seminary faculty and students and pastors with passion on mission can also benefit from this book, especially its biblical, theological, and historical arguments for obedient nations.

Best Quotes

"The country with the highest daily turning to Christ is (or has been) China, between 10,000 and 20,000 people coming to Christ per day!" Kindle location 224

"One of the best cures for radical individualism is to live incarnationally, around a much more corporate culture like so many of the other peoples around the world." Kindle location 261

"In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, 'That is mine.'" (Abraham Kuyper) Kindle location 301

"Our Christendom will need to, in many ways, simply die in order that Christ may live in and through the church, so that it can fully accomplish its larger task: the discipling of all the nations." Kindle location 346

"The target of this task of discipling is all the nations, certainly not just members or a select few from all the nations! The measure of our obedience to this commission is that all the nations will be so discipled that they, all the nations, will be obeying everything, all that Christ commanded the first disciples." Kindle location 686

"The exodus of the Israelites is the first, actual discipling of a nation." Kindle location 882

"My generation was well on its way to reaching every creature with the salvation message, but had no idea what it means to disciple nations." (Landa Cope) Kindle location 910

"Many times, the rudimentary evils of Israel could be boiled down to three 'Is': injustice, immorality, and idolatry." Kindle location 931

"God was involved with every empire that came in any contact with the Jewish people, because God was intent on all the nations coming and worshiping him." Kindle location 1115

"The primary point here is that we need to examine the tradition we're a part of, find our relative strengths and weaknesses, and then find ways to collaborate with other parts of the body of Christ." Kindle location 1455

"The percentages of evangelistic growth are inversely proportional to the numerical size of any church." Kindle location 1489

"A truly biblical ecclesiology should focus not on the fact that the church is the community of the saved but that the church is the community of those who, being redeemed through the cross, are now to be a kingdom and priests to serve God and to reign on the earth." Kindle location 1668

"God is in the redemption business and it extends far beyond simply the human family. He has invaded history, partly in order to make the world right. So, it's really about avoiding the arrogance of the social- gospel view, imagining that we can do this ourselves; as well as the defeatism of the conservative view, which intimates there's really no point in even trying." Kindle location 1809

"The centerpiece of this matrix of hope is Christus Victor: the supreme, reigning king, whose rulership we are announcing to the world." Kindle location 2165

"The spiritual dimension is based in part on the personhood of nations—that a nation can be deceived... or repent, be disciplined, and be taught to observe everything Jesus commanded." Kindle location 2279

"The gospel, then, is not a message about the salvation of individuals from the world, but news about a world transfigured, right down to its basic structures." Kindle location 2470

"Event counter warfare is a subset of dealing especially with ancient pacts with the evil one, in that most cultures have traditions which have their roots in these ancient pacts." Kindle location 2633

"Something in Christ's incarnation and advent into ministry—as well as his entire teaching about the kingdom of God—and especially his cross event, suspended and actually ousted the devil from his position of authority over these nations." Kindle location 2656

"Any attempt to minister the life of Christ to another must be holistic, not strictly spiritual, simply in fairness to our humanity and to the heritage which Christ and all the others have left us." Kindle location 2716

"When the kingdom comes, it's an overwhelming, holistic, supernatural, and penetrating reality, but it comes when the appetite for God's presence overwhelms all other appetites." Kindle location 2817

"If it takes a lifetime to build a disciple, it takes at the very least one, two, or three generations to disciple a nation." Kindle location 2854

"The eight models of the kingdom by Howard Snyder are: (1) the kingdom as future hope: future kingdom; (2) the kingdom as inner spiritual experience: the interior kingdom; (3) the kingdom as mystical communion: the heavenly kingdom; (4) the kingdom as institutional church: the ecclesiastical kingdom; (5) the kingdom as counter-system: the subversive kingdom; (6) the kingdom as political state: the theocratic kingdom; (7) the kingdom as Christianized culture: the transforming

kingdom; and (8) the kingdom as earth utopia: the utopian kingdom." Kindle location 2909

"we're no longer having to decide which is the ultimate form of obedience to Christ but realize that he is after the whole person and the whole society—with a whole gospel." Kindle location 2995

"Social entrepreneurship is a venture that addresses issues of local and global concern by catalyzing enterprises that create sustainable change for improvement of the social conditions, quality of life and dignity of people as created in the image of God." Kindle location 3093

"We need to humbly admit that every nation has its own chemistry, its own relationship to history, its own people, and its own discipleship process." Kindle location 3314

"The church in every society must be both culture-affirming and countercultural. We must operate as both Barnabas the encourager and Elijah or Paul the prophet." Kindle location 3325

"Insider movements can be defined as multiplying networks of Jesus followers in insider-led fellowships where the Bible is obeyed as the word of God, transformation occurs, and insiders remain part of their families and socioreligious communities of their birth, bearing witness to Jesus, their risen Lord and Savior." Kindle location 3438

"The salvage of the family will be high on the list of anyone who's intent on discipling our nations." Kindle location 3518

"Being like Christ means precisely keeping the fine balance between being a friend of sinners and being the righteous conscience of the community, speaking prophetically against all things which do battle with the good reign of God." Kindle location 3576

"What does it look like when the Lord's prayer is answered—when his kingdom comes? All lesser kingdoms come under his rule, and all of life, culture, and even our national pride comes humbly under his rule." Kindle location 3602

"What is your skill set? What are your spiritual gifts? What are your key relationships? Where is your sphere of influence? What are your passions? What are your deep, inner longings? What is the vision that you have?" Kindle location 3686

"When Christ told us to 'disciple all the nations,' this was fulfillment of some of the very first messianic prophecies (Gen. 49:10), as well as of God's passionate calling of the Jewish nation at the outset (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18). It also ties directly to Paul's own personal great commission in Acts 9:15, also reflected in his benedictory prayer for the Romans (16:25-26), which culminates in John's view of our glorified future." Kindle location 3715

[Listen here to the interview](#) with one of the editors.