

How Farming Best Illustrates Making Disciples

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Five main passages of scripture that use the farming analogy in relationship to making disciples:

1. The Parable of the Sower

Let's read the parable from Mark 4:2-9; 13-20.

Principles about making disciples taught through the Parable of the Sower:

- **"The sower sows the word."** The gospel worker proclaims God's Word, not his/her own word.
- **"The sower sows the word"** because the Word of God is what is _____ to make life and a harvest possible.
- **"Where the word is sown."** The condition of the soil/hearts of the hearers is not the responsibility of the sower, but the hearer.
- **"Those that were sown on the good soil."** Just a _____ of hearers will be good soil, those that believe. Many will outwardly respond and appear to believe for a while but will fall away. Ultimately, the Word will germinate and bring new life to relatively few.
- **"Satan immediately comes."** There is _____ for the heart of each person who hears. Satan, the world with its worries, riches, and pleasures, and the fear of man will all work against the Gospel advance.
- **"Those who hear the word accept it and bear fruit."** Some will believe! God's grace is at work!
- Some **"Accept it and bear fruit."** Those who truly believe will produce _____.
- **"Thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."** Levels of spiritual fruitfulness produced by believers will vary. Some will be a _____!
- **"Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed."** If we don't sow, we won't reap.
- **"When they hear."** That some fall away is not the fault of the sower.

The emphasis on this parable is on _____. It is the responsibility of believers to sow the seed, to preach the Gospel and give people opportunity to believe. It is the hearer's responsibility to accept the message they have heard.

2. Harvest Realities from 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Principles about making disciples taught in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9:

- **"I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."** Gospel ministry is _____, like farming. It is not a "once and done" affair.
- **"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."** Gospel ministry has three stages that mirror farming: sowing, watering, and harvesting.
- **"I planted."** The Word of God, the seed, is the agent God uses to bring life. Man's greatest need is the Word of God.

- **“He who plants...he who waters...his labor.”** Gospel ministry is _____ even as farming is. The process takes time, energy, and patience.
- **“But God gave the growth.”** Our task is _____, not growth. We can do no more.
- **“He who waters.”** Seed sown, the Word communicated, must be cared for to encourage growth. The gospel conversation _____ where it has been heard. We might add another idea here—weeding. Weeding could be compared to answering questions and removing obstacles in understanding.
- **“He who sows and he who waters are one.”** Gospel ministry is a _____. Each believer sows and waters as **“the Lord assigned to each.”** Each has been given opportunity to sow and water until the harvest of a soul is made when the person repents and follows Christ.
- **“He who sows and he who waters are one.”** Sowing and watering are equally _____ in gospel work and crucial to seeing a harvest.
- **“Only God gives the growth.”** It is God alone that gives life, regardless of the one ministering to the individual when he/she comes to Christ.
- **“We are God’s fellow workers.”** The harvest is the reward, the culmination of faithful hard work, God using our efforts to build His church. Gospel ministry is co-laboring with God!
- **“Each will receive his wages according to his labor.”** Gospel laborers will be eternally rewarded by God for their labors.

This parable focuses on God’s _____, His people. It also strongly reminds us that God alone is the One Who grants repentance and is the Giver of eternal life.

3. The Samaritan Harvest

Let’s read the words of Jesus regarding the people of Samaria in John 4:34-38.

Principles about making disciples taught through the Samaritan Harvest:

- ❖ **“The will of Him who sent Me.”** The ministry of the Gospel is God’s work, His will, His plan, and His heart.
- ❖ **“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish his work.”**
_____ is to be as busy about making disciples as He was.
- ❖ **“The fields are white for harvest.”** Some individuals and peoples are more ready for harvest than others. Some hearts have already had God’s Word sown and watered among them. They need just a little more encouragement before they come to life and bear fruit.
- ❖ **“The fields are white for harvest.”** Some individuals and peoples are less prepared for harvest, for there has been very little sowing and watering among them.
- ❖ **“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see.”** We must _____ “lift up our eyes” to see the spiritual need around us and do something about it.
- ❖ **“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see.”** Gospel ministry is an act of faith and _____.
- ❖ Our sinful hearts may _____ gospel ministry to some people or in certain circumstances, like the disciples did here with the Samaritans. The Gospel is for every people and person, no matter how despised, sinful, or ethnically different.

- ❖ **“Labor.”** Making disciples is hard work. Whether sowing, watering, or harvesting among a prepared people, it is labor.
- ❖ **“So that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”** The one who does the reaping is an _____ to the sower and waterer of the seed. Their reward is the same.
- ❖ **“Receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life...rejoice together.”** All phases of Gospel labor are unfailingly _____ by God.
- ❖ **“So that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”** Harvesting of souls brings eternal joy for those that have labored.
- ❖ **“Sower and reaper.”** Gospel laborers can expect to be at _____ sowing, watering, or harvesting.

Gospel ministry is team ministry. It is God's people working together through time by His grace, faithfully sowing and watering so that some might harvest where others have sown and watered. When we are witnessing, we often do not know where we are in that process.

These words focus on the spiritual _____ of making disciples and the need for _____.

4. The Patient Farmer

Mark's Gospel provides us with a humbling illustration about making disciples in chapter 4:26-29.

Principles about making disciples taught by the Parable of the Patient Farmer:

- **“Scatter seed...seed sprouts and grows...first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain.”** Making disciples is the process for obtaining a harvest that cannot be _____.
- **“As if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows.”** The gospel laborer is compared to a farmer who does all that he can to prepare for the harvest. He does what he _____.
- **“He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.”** The laborer does his part then waits. He does not trouble himself over what he does not understand, but trusts God and the power of the seed to work.
- **“The harvest has come...he knows not how.”** Only God can provide the conditions necessary to secure a good harvest.
- **“The harvest has come.”** God's harvest of souls for His kingdom is _____.
- **“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.”** Where there is _____, no harvest. This is the law of the harvest: we sow, we reap.
- **“But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”** We labor in the realization that harvest time comes for unbelievers—eternal judgment.

This parable focuses on God's _____ over the process of bringing people into the kingdom and over the success of it.

5. Praying for Laborers

Jesus teaches us about making disciples through this farming analogy a fourth time in Matthew 9:36-38.

Principles about making disciples taught by Christ's call to pray for laborers:

- **"He had compassion on them."** Jesus had great compassion for the masses in their godless and pitiful condition. _____ must move us to labor in the harvest, not mere duty.
- **"The harvest is plentiful."** The harvest of souls for God's kingdom from the peoples of the world is very great, but it must be reaped.
- **"But the laborers are few."** Working in the fields to obtain a harvest and gather it in is hard toil. We must not grow weary or _____ the toil it requires.
- **"But the laborers are few."** There is a severe shortage of laborers compared to the need. We must glory in our share that God has thrust us out to help meet this urgent need.
- **"He saw...He said."** Jesus intends for us to be moved to action by the spiritual need of unbelievers and by the lack of laborers. Going and praying for more laborers are the natural response of true compassion.
- **"Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."** Through earnest prayer for laborers we _____ with God as He sends out laborers into His harvest fields. He uses our prayers towards this end.
- **"Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send/thrust out laborers into his harvest."** The need for laborers is so intensely urgent that God " _____ " out those He sends when His people pray.
- **"Pray earnestly."** The Great Commission includes praying for laborers.



Gospel-impooverished Peoples: Pioneer Fields

The term " _____ " has been used to describe the truth that evangelism often requires much preparatory work among unreached peoples. The more _____ a people group is the more preparatory work is most likely needed to reach most people.

A pioneer mission field compared to a plot of land that has never been used for farming.

Limits of the Farming Analogy

No word of God returns _____ (Isaiah 55:10-11). The seed of the Word cast _____ accomplishes the purposes for which it was given. _____ peoples and nations will indeed be represented in that great multitude worshiping the Lamb (Revelation 5:9; 7:9). Our labors are _____ in vain (1 Corinthians. 15:58). Christ will build His Church, and the gates of hell will _____ prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).