

## Four Things That Are Needed for a Harvest (Part 1)

by Bayless Conley

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Well, my friend, you are in the right place. I'm going to be talking about something that is so simple yet so profound that people sometimes miss it. And it is absolutely basic to your life, to my life, and to us doing the Will of God. All I can say is this is a really, really important message, so I can hardly wait to get into it.

There is an amazing, often referred to story in John's Gospel, the fourth chapter. Jesus goes into the area of Samaria. The Jews basically avoided the Samaritans. The Samaritans were, well, they were considered half-breeds. They were Jews that had intermarried with the different tribes that were there in Canaan's land, and the Jews looked down on them. But Jesus went through Samaria, stopped at a well, and of course, a woman comes there during the middle of the day to draw water. That in itself is interesting because a woman wouldn't be by herself, it was dangerous, wouldn't come in the middle at the hottest part of the day. They would get the water in the morning.

There's some reasons for her being there by herself and without a bunch of other women around her. As the story unfolds, Jesus addresses her, tells her, "Go get your husband." She says, "Well, I'm not married." He said, "That's right. You've had five husbands, and the man you're with now is not your husband." I think that explains why there were no other girls with her; they're all protecting their men. Anyway, Jesus doesn't condemn her but has this conversation and reveals to her that He is the Messiah. She runs away into the village, leaves her water pot behind.

The disciples had gone to buy food. Meanwhile, they get back, and they're so surprised that Jesus had been talking to a woman. As Jesus is there talking to the disciples, apparently, the woman who'd gone into the town told everybody, "Look, come see a Man. He told me everything I ever did, could this be the Messiah? Is this the one we're looking for?" The whole town comes out because of the word of the woman. Jesus stays with them for a while. They become convinced because of her word and because they hear Jesus for themselves that He is the Son of God.

But as Jesus is having a conversation with a just-returned disciples—just imagine the scene. The woman has gone into town. She's stirred everything up. There's a mass of humanity coming out now to see who this guy is that has so impacted this woman. Jesus says this to the disciples. And I'm sure He said it as He's looking at this mass of humanity coming His way, He said to them, this is John 4:35-36 NKJV,

<sup>35</sup> "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! <sup>36</sup> And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."

Now, when Jesus talked about a harvest here, He's talking about eternal life and a harvest of human souls. Some people are always saying, "It's coming, it's coming." I'm guilty of that to a

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degree myself. I do believe that we are going to see a global harvest, that the Spirit of God is going to move among His people and upon His people. I believe we're going to see a great awakening and see a great harvest come into the kingdom of God globally. Yet there is a harvest now. We realize God's going to do greater things, and I understand that, but some people want to relegate everything to the future.

I remember I was preaching in a particular country doing a minister's meeting. The room is filled with pastors, and I used these very verses from John 4. I said, "We're always putting off the harvest." I said, "There are people around us now that are hungry. Let's not say it's four months. Let's not put it into the future." Said, "The fields are white. There are people that are ready and ripe to come into the kingdom now." And I encouraged these pastors; I said, "In your neighborhoods, in your cities, in your town, near your church, there are hungry souls that need to hear the gospel."

One of the guys came up to me afterward, one of the local pastors, he was not happy with me at all. He said, "You Americans, you think you know everything." I said, "Well, actually, Jesus is the one that said that." He said, "No, you don't understand. This is not harvest time in our country. You're a big know it all." Says, "You got no business coming here telling us this. This is prayer time. This is not a time to be thrusting in the sickle. The people are not ripe. They're not interested in God in our area." I said, "Well, you know what? I agree with you. It is time for prayer. It's always time for prayer." I said, "But it's also harvest time."

He, again, railed on me for being a stupid American and just thinking that I was acting above my station or whatever. To come in and try and tell them about their own cities. I honestly didn't do it in an arrogant way or anything like that. My heart was broken for this guy. I said, "Listen." I said, "I'm holding a meeting tonight, and it's in this building, that's five minutes from here. We've leased out the building. We're going to be using it. I'm going to be teaching, but I'm going to be throwing out the nets. We've invited people from this community, from your community, to come." We were actually broadcasting and had been there in the native language.

I said, "I've invited people to come and to bring unchurched friends." I said, "Come out tonight and just see if God does anything." He said, "There's no point in doing that." He stalked off, and I was really sad. He didn't come to the meeting that night, but when I got to the meeting, it was jammed. From the front to the back, it was absolutely jammed, and a great atmosphere in the place. I preached the gospel, gave an invitation, and so many people—I had them walk to the front if they wanted to have their lives changed by Jesus and to be saved.

The entire front of that auditorium was filled from side-to-side, several feet deep. There was a mass of humanity that came there, and people were weeping. It was a marvelous time that we had. But that pastor was convinced, "No, it's not harvest time now." Friend, yes, there will be a harvest in the future, and I believe a mighty harvest, but let us not overlook the fields that are white and ready around us. Let's lift up our eyes like Jesus said and look on the fields. There is opportunity now. People are ready at your work. The soccer field where you take your kids, at your school, in your neighborhood, there are people that are ready. Let's lift up our eyes and say, "God, show me. Direct me."

And when we get involved, there is reward in that. The apostle Paul, having completed his task for God, said this, he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Now, I do believe that as we win souls, there are going to be eternal rewards for us in the life to come. Daniel 12:3 says that, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." I believe that God will not only reward us in heaven, I believe there's a reward in this life.

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Jesus said, the one that sows, the one reaps, they will receive their wages. Proverbs 11:30 says, "He that wins souls is wise." The very next verse, verse 31, says, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." He that wins souls, that's in the earth. That's the only place we can win souls. There aren't souls that need to be won in heaven. Our labor is done when we get there. We entered into our final rest. But those that win souls in this life, those that win souls, they're wise, and God will recompense them in the earth. God supports those that do His work.

You ought to read James 5. Read it again slowly. It talks about the reapers and wages that are held back. God is very, very concerned with material supply and resource coming to those that are working in His harvest fields. There is a harvest in your neighborhood, in your backyard, in my backyard, in our schools, on our streets, at the gas station where you fill up your car. Everywhere there's hungry souls. Let me share with you just four simple thoughts.

If we're going to see a harvest reaped, if we're going to have a harvest of souls, there's four things that are needed. The first thing that's needed is soil. The soil is the human heart. Let me read to you from Luke 8. Jesus is sharing here the parable of the sower. The sower is sowing the seed of the Word of God. In fact, verse 11 (Luke 8:11-15 NKJV) says,

<sup>11</sup> "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."

It's talking about a preacher, a person sharing the truth of the gospel with others. He went on, He said,

<sup>12</sup> "Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

All right. The devil comes and takes the word out of their hearts. "But the ones," He went on in verses 13-14, this is Luke 8,

<sup>13</sup> "But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

<sup>14</sup> Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

Not everyone that hears is going to make it. Then He said this in verse 15,

<sup>15</sup> "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

They keep it and they bear fruit with patience. But they keep it where? They keep the Word in their heart. The soil is the human heart. That is the target. In Romans 10, the apostle Paul said, "It's with the heart that man believes, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." Friend, there are multitudes waiting to hear. There are empty fields waiting to be planted. Again, the heart is the target, not just the head. People are not just reached intellectually when it comes to the gospel because the truth is, if I can argue you into confessing Christ as Lord if I can talk you into it, then somebody else can talk you out of it. If I can argue you into it, and it's simply a mental decision you made, somebody else can argue you out of it.

Oh, friend sharing or preaching from your head only reaches people's heads. When we share, and we preach, and we tell people from our hearts, that reaches people's hearts, and the gospel

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is not just meant to be an intellectual message. You don't have to be a genius to win someone to the Lord. You don't have to be a theologian that can read Greek and Hebrew to win someone to the Lord. Listen to these words. This is the apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:17-21 NKJV. He said,

<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. <sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Then he goes on verse 20,

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Now, listen to this, verse 21,

<sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

"Through the foolishness of the message preached." Not through winning an intellectual argument, and granted, if someone has genuine questions, we need to do our best to intelligently answer them. But at the end of the day, it's with the heart that someone believes, not just with the head. Paul said this in the very next chapter, 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 NKJV says, "I, brethren, when I came to you—" Now think about this, these Corinthians, they're the foremost philosophers of the world. They treasured wisdom. Some of the greatest sages of history came from the Greek culture. Here in this city of Corinth, where wisdom is worshiped, Paul said this,

<sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. (or the Gospel.) <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Paul said, "Look, I came to you with a simple message. I came with the message of the cross." God anoints that message. When we talk to people about Jesus, the Holy Spirit brings and adds His testimony to that. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. Now, those verses we read, he talked a lot about declaring and about preaching and about testifying, about announcing, not teaching an intellectual message, but just making an announcement of truth. Not a detailed explanation, but a bold declaration. I think we miss it there. People are saved through the foolishness of preaching, through a bold declaration, not through teaching.

Now teaching has its place, and the saints need to be taught the Word of God, and they need to be built up. To preach just means to proclaim; it means to declare. Again, I'm going to do my best to intelligently answer someone that has an honest question, but it really comes down to the heart. I had a 12-year-old boy share Jesus Christ with me in a park one day. He was the first person to ever do so. First person to ever tell me that Jesus Christ was alive. Through him and through the testimony of others, through hearing a simple gospel and some other things that happened, I came to faith in Christ. I have seen people win an intellectual argument with someone, but they lost the soul.

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I've done a lot of fishing in my life. I still like to do a lot of fishing. It's a terrible thing when you get a good fish up to the boat, and I'm talking, we're out in the ocean, and it might be a 30, 40-pound fish. You've got it up. You got a deckhand there, and he's got a gaff. You got a guy that misses the fish and hits your line, breaks your line, and the fish swims off. I've seen people. I've stood there while people paraded these great intellectual, theological arguments before someone, and they actually were able to shut the person down. At the end of the story, the fish swam off because they were missing the real target. They were not about the heart at all. They were just about the head.

Now, I know of a number of people that, just in simplicity, their deal is they'll go out on the street, and they'll talk to strangers. They engage people, and they share the simplest message. They win people to Christ right and left. We trust the Holy Spirit to do His work. I'm not saying the head is not involved. Please hear me. I think we need to intelligently be able to explain things to people, but it's from the heart to the heart.

The soil is the heart; the sower sows the Word. Those that receive the Word in a good and honest heart they're the ones that produce fruit. It's with the heart that man believes, so we've got to have soil. If we're going to see a harvest reaped, number one, we need to understand what the soil is. We're after people's hearts.

Again, you don't have to be a theologian. You don't have to be a genius to do that. You can make a declaration; you can tell that gal at work, "Look, I just, all I know, this is what Jesus did for me. I was messed up on drugs. I would drink and drink every night till I'd finally fall asleep. I was filled with fears, and somebody told me about Jesus. When I asked Him to come into my life, He changed me. I have peace in my life for the first time. I've been delivered from substance abuse." It doesn't have to be any more than that.

Friend, if it's from your heart, it will pierce another person's heart, and people can't get away from that. If you just tell someone, "You know what? Jesus is real. He's the Son of God. He loves you, and He died on the cross for your sins. He's paid the price, and now you can come to God if you will put your trust in Jesus. Who died for your sins and Who was raised from the dead." Man, anyone can share a story like that.

The second thing we need to understand if we're going to have a harvest, we need seed. We already read in the Gospel of Luke the seed is the Word of God. It's the good news about Jesus. We read those verses in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. He talked about the gospel. He talked about the message of the cross. He talked about Christ crucified. He talked about the testimony of God, which all refer to the Word of God. The seed is God's Word. Share your testimony; that's a good thing. Tell them what Jesus has done, but share some of the Word. Until we give them the Word, the ingredient necessary for them to get born again is not there.

There are so many people that they over-complicate things. I tell people all the time to this day how God delivered me from drugs, how I got saved in a street mission. How I really didn't understand anything, but I knew that Jesus Christ was real. Somebody told me that if you believe in Jesus, believe He is raised from the dead, confess Him as Lord— I heard a simple message, and I believed it. It doesn't have to be more complicated than that, but people do need to hear the Word. 1 Peter says that we're born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God that lives and abides forever.

There was a friend of mine many years ago, he was living in another country, and he came back, heard that Bayless had become a Christian. So he looked me up, and he was spiritually

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hungry. I told him my testimony. Told him how my life was changed. He and I used to do drugs together and got in trouble together, and he realized I didn't do that anymore. He says, "Man, you are changed; you're not the same person."

We're having lunch together, and I was trying to be sneaky about sharing. I was being really covert, and just like in the conversation, I'd just sneak in and drop a hint and sneak back out and then drop another hint. I talked about being changed, but I never shared the Word. We got done, we're outside, walking to our cars. He said, "Look, Bayless, what do I need to do to be saved? What do I need to do to have happen to me what's happened to you?"

I was stunned. I had done everything but give him the seed. I'd done everything but give him the means. I said, "Well, you know what? The Scriptures say, 'If you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead after He died for your sins, and if you confess Him with your mouth as Lord, you will be saved.'" Standing there in the parking lot, cars parked all around us. There's people walking in the parking lot. He throws his hands up in the air, looks up, and says, "I believe with all of my heart that Jesus is God's Son, and Jesus, I confess You right now as my Lord," and he got saved right there in the parking lot.

The seed is the Word of God, I don't have to be a theologian, but I can share a simple Scripture too. I need to tell my story, give an example of what Jesus has done for me, but then I need to share the seed of the Word of God. It's one of the reasons that we do these broadcasts. And you may not know this, but you get this in the language that you speak in your heart language. We actually take a program like this, a teaching like this, and we dub it, we subtitle it into multiple languages around the world, in well over 100 nations of the world, into many, many, many languages. We go into areas of the world where they can't just turn on their television and find a preacher. You can do that pretty easy here where I live in the United States.

TV's full of preachers. If you want to hear a preacher, they're easy to find. That's not true all over the world. It may be true in your country, I don't know, but we get into many, many regions of the world, and we mostly try and target places where there's not an abundance of gospel preaching, and we put this into the heart language of the people.

Someone says, "What are you doing, Bayless?" Well, we're taking a single seed, and we're multiplying it. We're turning it into bags of seeds. We're turning it into truckloads of seeds. We're trying to literally spread the seeds of God's Word around the world because this is how people are saved. This is how people are set free. Jesus said, "My Word is truth." He said, "You'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free." We're just multiplying, and we're doing our best to scatter the seeds of God's Word into the hearts of men and women and languages and people groups all over the world.

I just want to stop right here. I've got to say thank you. There are a number of people that pray for what we do regularly. People that support what we do financially, we are so grateful for that. I'm not super well-known in my own country. We used to do a lot of broadcasting here in the US, and we do a little bit now, but it's just a very little bit. The lion's share of what we do goes into regions of the world where we might never get a thank you. I wouldn't get recognized on the street unless I went into those places. So, I may not be known or recognized here; this is not about that. Friend, life is too short. Time is too short. Eternity is too long. Hell is too hot, and heaven is too real, for us not to be busy about the Master's business.

We want to reach the harvest fields of the world. Jesus said, "Go unto Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth, be My witnesses there." Now, He didn't say,

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“Go to Jerusalem and work that harvest field until you’re all done there, and when you finish your Jerusalem, then you can go into your Judea, the next region over, and when you get done there, then you can go to your Samaria, and only when you get done there, do you go to the ends of the earth.” No, He talked about working all the harvest fields simultaneously.

Again, I just have to say thank you. Because there are people we couldn’t do what we do, we couldn’t take this message to the nations of the world, to people that would not find the gospel in their heart language, if not for what we’re doing, so thank you. If you’ve never supported us, hey, pray about it. Be a partner in taking the seed of God’s Word to the lost of this world as we scatter the seed into the hearts of men and women and boys and girls around the planet. We believe we’re going to see a mighty harvest. Listen, you’re going to have to join us as we complete this. There’s a couple more things that are needed if we’re going to have a harvest. We’re going to talk about those next time. Until then, may God’s richest and best be yours always. Amen.

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