

Four Things That Are Needed for a Harvest (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

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My friend, you made a great decision. Here we are. I've got something to share with you from God's Word that I think can really, really help you in your life. So what's your great decision? Hey, you tuned in, and you're listening. I just pray that the Spirit of God would give you something substantial as we carry on with a message about the end-time harvest and the four things needed for a harvest. Get ready, get ready, get ready!

We are continuing today on a message that we began last time about four things needed for a harvest. When we talk about a harvest, we're talking about men and women, boys and girls coming to faith in Christ. The Scripture, in many places, talks about people being won to the Lord is a harvest being reaped. The truth is God wants to use you, and He wants to use me as instruments in this great end-time harvest. He wants to use you to reach people for Him. He wants to use me to reach people for Him.

After Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, and she went into town there in Samaria. And a whole group of people came out to see Jesus after she told the people all about Him. He's with His disciples looking over that harvest field, those sea of people coming to Him. He said, "Don't say the harvest is several months before it happens." He said, "Lift up your eyes and look now; the harvest is ripe. It's ready now."

I do believe that we are going to see a great end-time global harvest. I believe that's coming. Yet we are surrounded by ripe souls each and every day. There are people in our world that need to be harvested. Someone's got to thrust in the sickle and reap them. Somebody needs to win them to Christ. There's people at your work. There are people at the stores that I shop in. There are people where you shop, where you go for your recreation. There's neighbors right over the fence.

There's people around us all the time that are hungry for God, and God is just looking for someone. Like in Isaiah's day, God said, "Who can we send? Who will go for us?" Isaiah responded back, "Here I am, Lord, send me." May we be that one that responds and says, "Here I am, Lord, send me." Now, what we began last time, we're just talking about four simple things needed for a harvest. You have to have these four things, or you can't have a harvest.

Number one, you need to have soil. We need to understand what the soil is. The soil is the human heart. When Jesus told the parable of the sower, that the sower was sowing the seeds of God's Word and that it fell on people's hearts. The soil was good, or the soil was bad. The soil was rocky, the soil was thorny, but the soil is the heart. It's with the heart that men believe.

The gospel is not just an intellectual proposition, my friend. If you can win someone to Christ merely intellectually, then they can be talked out of it intellectually. If I can persuade you intellectually to confess Jesus, then someone can come along after me and talk you out of it. But if you believe in your heart, no one takes that away from you, my friend.

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This is a heart business, and while we need to do our best to intelligently and legitimately ask people with honest questions, at the end of the day, winning souls to Christ is realizing that the target is the heart. If we miss the target, we'll miss the harvest. That's why the Bible says, "It's through the foolishness of preaching that God has chosen that men would believe." Not through the foolishness of explanation. Preaching means a declaration as opposed to a detailed explanation, just declaring Jesus is the Son of God. He came to this world, He died on the cross, He was raised from the dead, and if you put your trust in Him and confess Him as Lord, you'll be saved. A declaration as simple as that, the Holy Spirit will use it and convict a heart, and it's from the heart that a person believes.

We can share our testimony, talk about what Christ has done for us, but we need to realize that it's got to be shared from the heart to a heart if we're going to win a soul. Of course, the seed is the Word of God. Jesus said that in Luke's Gospel, the eighth chapter. The seed is the Word. Men and women, according to Peter, were born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible seed by the Word of God that lives and abides forever. We have to share the seed of God's Word. Our testimony is good, it's great, but we need to tell someone what the Scripture says about how to be saved.

I remember hearing a story once about an old farmer. He's sitting on his porch chewing on a piece of hay just sitting there, and a salesman comes up. This guy is thinking he's going to sell some cookware or something to this old farmer. He walks up, he's got his briefcase with the items that he wants to display, but he figures, "You know what, I need to start a conversation with this farmer first. I need to find some common ground here. Once I break the ice, I'll tell him that I'm selling stuff."

He says, "Hey, how are you doing?" The farmer says, "Doing fine. Just fine. How are you doing today?" He says, "I'm good." He asks the farmer, says, "Hey, how's your corn going along? I've seen a lot of corn growing around here." Farmers say, "Corn? Ain't got no corn." He says, "You don't have any corn?" He says, "Why don't you have any corn?" He says, "Didn't plant none, scared there wouldn't be no rain."

He says, "Oh, well, how's your cotton coming along? I know a lot of people in these parts are growing cotton. How's your cotton crop coming?" He says, "Ain't got no cotton." He says, "You don't have any cotton?" He says, "No." He says, "Why?" He says, "Oh, I didn't plant none, scared of boll weevils."

He says, "Well, how's your bean crop coming along?" He says, "Oh, ain't got no beans. Didn't plant none." He says, "You didn't plant any?" "No, no, scared of drought, scared there wouldn't be enough water." Finally, the salesman is a little exasperated; he hadn't really found any common ground. He said, "Well, tell me, what did you plant? What kind of harvest do you have or are you planning on?" Says, "Well, truth is, I just played it safe. I didn't plant nothing." Well, if you don't plant nothing, you don't get nothing. If you don't plant any seeds, you can't have a harvest.

My son, Harrison, he's 38 right now; while I'm speaking to you, he's the lead pastor of our church. When he was a little boy, he came home from children's church one day with a Styrofoam cup full of dirt. They taught a lesson about how the seed is the Word of God, and they'd planted a bean, they'd put a bean in the dirt. He says, "Dad, this is a bean, and it's like the Word of God," and he told me the lesson. I said, "That's great."

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He put it on the window sill. We put a little water in it, and the next day, he went to check his bean plant, and he says, "Dad, it's not growing. Something's wrong; we got to dig it up." I said, "Son, you can't dig it up. You'll kill it. It takes time for seeds to grow." He said, "Okay." Next day, he's checking, "Dad, it didn't start growing yet." I said, "Son, be patient. You put a seed in there; it'll grow."

He did that every day, and finally, after two weeks, nothing sprouted. I said, "Son, something's wrong." Like good boys, Mom wasn't happy with this, but we just dumped all that dirt out on the kitchen table. Started going through with our fingers. I said, "Son, there's no bean in here anywhere." He goes, "Oh, I must have forgot to plant it." Well, you can't grow a bean plant if you haven't planted a bean. Somebody's not going to be won to Christ unless we plant the seed of God's Word.

There's the soil; we need to understand what it is. It's the human heart. That's our target. The seed, it's the Word of God. The third thing that's necessary if we're going to see a harvest, if we're going to see people won to Christ, is there must be water. You've got to have water, got to have soil, got to have a seed; you got to have water. Let me read to you from 2 Corinthians 3, beginning of verse five (1 Corinthians 3:5-6). It says this,

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

God made it grow. I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow. There's two aspects scripturally when it comes to watering. The first is this. We plant the seed, and then when someone speaks to them a second time, that's watering that seed. You hear it once; it's planted. You hear it twice; it is being watered.

I remember I was on a backpacking trip many years ago in the High Sierras. It's a mountainous region in California. We were coming down after a week in the backcountry, and I passed a couple of hikers on the trail up, a guy and a girl. They walked past us, and as I stood there, I felt like the Holy Spirit said, "Go back and talk to that man. Share Christ with him."

I took my pack off and put it down, and I ran back up the trail and said, "Hey, excuse me." He turned around and says, "Yes?" I said, "You might think I'm right off the planet here, but I was down on the trail and feel like God spoke to me and told me to tell you that Jesus Christ loves you. He's the Son of God. He did come to this world, and He died as a sacrifice for your sins, and if you put your trust in Him, that you can be saved."

He looked at me, and he says, "You know what? You're like the third person that's told me that in the last few days. How weird." He blew me off and went his way. But you know what? Somebody else had planted the seed. Somebody else came along and watered it. Somebody else came along and watered it. I came along and watered that seed. We've got to have water; that's watering. Seeds need water if they're going to grow.

I read a story once about a Japanese emperor's tomb that they had opened up thousands of years old, and they found a lotus seed in this emperor's tomb that was thousands of years old. They put it in water, and the lotus seed blossomed. All it was needing was water. That's the first aspect. People are not always saved the first time they hear. We need to be obedient when the Holy Spirit prompts us to talk to others. Sometimes we're planting that seed for the first time. Other times, we're watering it, and if the seed's going to grow, it's got to have water. There's a second aspect of that idea of watering that is also very important. James 5:7 says this, it says,

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⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

Now, this is metaphorically talking about how Jesus Christ is going to return, but He's waiting for something. He's waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. Why hasn't Christ come back? Because this great end-time global harvest has not happened yet.

Now, I do think, honestly, Jesus can come back at any moment. I do believe that's possible. I believe the church can be raptured at any moment. That is that we can be caught up together with Him in the clouds. Now, so shall we ever be with the Lord, but there are certain things that haven't happened because there is a mighty harvest that is going to come, and the farmer is waiting patiently for the precious fruit of the earth.

Now, that's not just the earth of California where I live. That's just not the fruit of the United States, the country that I'm a part of. That's not just the fruit of Germany or France or Sweden or Spain. That's just not the fruit of Europe. It's not just the fruit of the Middle East. It's not just the fruit of Africa. It's not just the fruit of the Pacific Rim and the South Pacific. It's not just the fruit of South America and Central America. No, it's the precious fruit of the earth. I believe we will see a global harvest. Again, we have a harvest all around us that we need to be busy reaping, but that there will come a global harvest, and it says He's waiting for something, that's the early rain and the latter rain.

In the land of Israel, there were two rainy seasons. The first rain came before planting time. It would soften the soil, and it would prepare the ground to receive the seed. The second rain, the latter rain, came just before harvest time. It would help the fruit to become totally ripe so it could be harvested. Both are necessary when it comes to winning souls. They're going to be necessary for the great end-time harvest. They're necessary for the harvest that is round and about us each and every day.

My friend, the early rain and the latter rain refer to, in type and shadow, are symbolic of the moving of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit working in people's lives. Descending, if you would, upon people's hearts and making them ready to receive the seed of the Word of God, and then bringing them to the place where they are ripe and ready to put their trust in the Savior. My friend, the Holy Spirit's influence comes when we pray. We need to share the seed of the Word of God, but we need to pray. I think we need to talk to men about God, but we also need to talk to God about men. Zechariah 10:1 says,

¹ Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone.

Ask the Lord for rain. Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. We need to pray. We need to ask the Lord. We need to seek His face on the behalf of lost, sighing, crying, and dying humanity. As we are faithful to target people's hearts with the Word of God and to share the incorruptible seed of His Word, and as we pray, we will see men and women come to faith in Christ.

There's a fourth thing that's necessary. We need to have soil, the human heart. We need to have seed, the Word of God. We need to have rain, which comes by sharing the Word of God over and over, not just one time, and by prayer. The influence of the Holy Spirit will come by

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prayer as well, but the Holy Spirit also needs something. He needs laborers. The Lord needs laborers; seeds, soil, rain, and laborers. We need workers. Let me read to you from Luke 10:1 if I might. Luke 10:1-3 says,

¹ After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

² Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The next verse, Jesus said this,

³ "Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves."

The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of harvest would literally thrust out laborers into His harvest. We need to pray that the Lord would send laborers into His harvest field, pray that God would send missionaries and send men and women to share the gospel, and for people to plant churches and raise up great soul-winning churches around the world. We need to pray that God would raise people up to do that.

But Jesus said, "Pray this way," and then He said to them, "You go, therefore." In other words, you can also become the answer to your own prayer. You need to pray that God will thrust out missionaries, thrust out pastors, thrust out evangelists, thrust out workers, but you need to go as well. You need to go to your coworkers and to your fellow students and to your neighbors and to your friends and to your relatives, and to your acquaintances and to strangers.

We need to pray that the Lord will send laborers, and we need to be laborers as well. We need both. Now, that is you and me ministering one-on-one, sharing our story with people. That is doing what I'm doing right now. This actually goes out into multiple languages around the world on multiple different social media platforms. We're doing all we can to get this Word out to hungry hearts. We're doing our best to do our part, but we all have a part, no one's exempt.

I realize you may be watching me, and maybe you are a very, very successful businessman or businesswoman. The main thing that you feel called to do is to support the gospel. I applaud you for that, and I want you to continue in that. I pray God would give you great wisdom so that you can raise far more resources for the sake of the gospel and that you and your family might enjoy it as well, and that you might leave that inheritance to your children's children, as the Scripture says, in Proverbs, a righteous man does. May God bless you in that.

If you haven't considered doing, I pray that you would support us in a big way because we are about the master's business, doing our best to take the gospel to the four corners of this planet. But even if that is your main calling, that doesn't exempt you from you sharing your story and you talking to someone about Jesus. It may be a fellow business partner, it may be your board members, it may be family members, it may be somebody that you strike up with a conversation in a restaurant. God will use you as well.

You may be volunteering in your church, and you work with kids. Praise God for that. We need volunteers. You may be working a camera. You may be literally up to your eyeballs, as we say here in the work of the Lord, that's great. Don't forget that Jesus said that we're to go into all the world and share the gospel with every creature. We need to pray. We need to pay someone else's way to go, but we also need to share ourselves. God will give you opportunities.

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Listen, even if you just share the seed of the Word of God with one individual, and that individual comes to Christ as a result. That's worth more than all of the wealth of this planet. Well, Jesus said, "What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul?" Meaning that a single soul is more valuable than all the wealth of the world. The smallest child can carry a seed. You can carry a seed. Anyone can carry a seed, and you may not be eloquent. You may not feel like you're dynamic enough to share it. You just be yourself. God will use you. Let me read something to you. Proverbs 10:5 says this,

⁵ He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.

We don't want to be asleep during harvest. The Bible says this in Romans 13:11,

¹¹ And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

Jesus' return is nearer than when we first believed. Our time to go to heaven and to be forever with Him; it's nearer than when we first believed. We don't want to be sleepwalking through life. My point is this, it's not to throw condemnation your way. Not at all. It's just to help you understand that there are opportunities all of the time to share the gospel. If we'll just be bold enough and obedient enough to the Lord to do so. He needs laborers. There's the soil; it's the human heart. There's the seed, it's the Word of God. Then we've got to have prayer. We need water. We need to pray for the influence of God's Spirit to open people's eyes, but we also need to say, "God, here am I. Send me. Use me."

I remember, many years ago, I was helping in a crusade down in Mexico. It was in a very rural area. In fact, it was sort of a soccer field that had been dug out of the side of a mountain, and it was just kind of dirt and rocks. They had put these cinder blocks down with boards across, it seated a couple of thousand. An evangelist preached that night, and honestly, he didn't do a great job.

I was not a mature Christian. I hadn't been saved that long, but his message was full of little pithy sayings, and he didn't share the Word. He was sharing things that didn't even relate culturally. I still remember him saying, "You got to get on this gospel train." It was a bunch of stuff like that sort of Americanisms that some of them were dated, and they were very specific to certain regions of our country. They didn't translate into Spanish well with the translator, and he didn't even tell them what they needed to do to be saved. We got this crowd of several thousand; most of them would've been unsaved.

When he gave his invitation, when he told people to jump on the gospel train, only one woman responded. It was heartbreaking. Well, it's all broken up that night. By the way, a different guy preached the next night that shared the Word of God, and people got saved by the score, by the hundreds and hundreds. People came to Christ the next night—a lot of the same people there.

We're leaving that night, and I'm driving. I got my old '63 Volkswagen microbus, and I'm driving on this pothole dirt road. There's this guy; he's hitchhiking along the road there, so I pick him up. I'll never forget it, his name was Marcelo. I began to share the gospel with him. He'd been sitting in the meeting hearing about the gospel train and all these other things that didn't make a lot of sense to the people there.

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I shared a simple gospel message with Marcelo. I said, "Marcelo, would you like to accept Jesus?" He said, "Oh, yes." We took hands and prayed, and he started to sob. He cried, and he cried, and he cried, and he cried. I took him into his village, and I let him go. You know what? Maybe it was a trick of the light on my eyes, but I swear, it looked like when he got out of my van and started walking down that darkened street, he was glowing. He was luminescent. There was a huge smile on his face. I tell you, the life of God was about him. You could perceive it. You could sense it, but all that was needed was somebody to share a simple message.

You can do that. You can do that. You may have never done it in your life before. Listen, you're going to be at the bank, or you're going to be at a restaurant, or you're going to be at the store in a line to pay for your groceries, or you're going to be filling up your car with gasoline, or you're going to be walking in the park, and you'll see someone sitting on a bench. You might be in any of those locations, and your eyes are going to land on someone.

God will use your eyes, and when the man at the beautiful gate of the temple is there begging for alms, the Bible says, Peter fastened his eyes on him. God will sometimes use your eyes. Someone will just suddenly come into stark relief against the background. I'm just telling you, God will do that. If you'll say, "God, use me," He's going to show you someone. When that happens, don't think, "Well, is this God?" Just go for it. Just go for it.

Even if you feel awkward, be honest. Say, "Look, I've never done this before, but when I saw you, I just felt like God wanted me to tell you that He loves you, and His Son, Jesus, died for you. You can have a relationship with God." Do it in your own words, but do it. God will give you the opportunity, and He wants to use you to win a soul to help bring in this harvest.

Heavenly Father, I pray for those that are watching right now. I pray that You bless them. I ask You to use them for Your glory in Jesus' name.

If any's watching me now, that's never made You the Lord of their life. Friend, if you're watching me, there's a reason for it. Maybe you've been searching for God all your life, you may be a religious person, but you don't have a relationship with Jesus. Would you pray with me right now? Just say "Jesus," say it out loud. Say,

"Jesus, come into my heart. I believe in You. I believe You are God's Son. I believe You died on the cross for me." Tell Him that. "I believe You died on the cross for me, Jesus. I believe You were raised from the dead, and I ask You now, be my Lord and Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen."

We'd love to hear from you, but I pray that God would richly bless you in the precious, mighty, wonderful name of Jesus. We'll see you again.

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