



spirituality

vocation as a means of spiritual formation



**Topic Eight:
Salt and Light in a Watching and Needy World**

you know...she's the Jesus freak

What are some of the stereotypes of Christians who actively try to share their faith with coworkers and colleagues? (Is there any truth to them?)

What do you think is least appealing about Christianity to non-Christians?

What is most appealing to them?

sow what?!

Much of the time we forget that evangelism is a process, not an event. As a matter of fact, Jesus and Paul regularly use the agricultural images of planting, watering, caring and harvesting to discuss evangelism.

key biblical passages

Paul is telling the Corinthians that the need to grow up and realize that their faith was the result of several stages of effort but God is ultimately in control.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ***I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.***

JC just talked with woman at well, and the disciples show up with food from town for him. He tells them he isn't hungry.

John 4:34-38

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ***Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.***"

What can we conclude based on these passages?

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According to these passages, we see that when it comes to spreading the Gospel:

- *There is a labor-intensive process that takes place (sowing/planting) long before conversion occurs (harvesting).*
- *Sowing and harvesting go hand in hand—we cannot have one without the other and one is not more important than the other.*
- *At different times, in different places we are assigned to different duties. All of them are “evangelism.”*
- *God is ultimately responsible for the spiritual growth and harvesting of individuals.*

harvesting and sowing

The harvester focuses on...

The End Result
 Proclamation
 Immediate Results
 Individual Effort
 Points of Disagreement
 Answers
 Justice
 Courage
 Innocence

While the sower focuses on...

Preparing the Way
 Persuasion
 Gradual Change
 Team Impact
 Common Ground
 Questions
 Love
 Wisdom
 Shrewdness

Tim Downs, *Finding Common Ground*, p. 102

Most of the harvesting that we do encounter is more like picking fruit than harvesting grain: it takes individual effort to determine if the fruit is ripe, needs more time, needs to be protected and nourished etc

how sow?

What have you found to be some of the most effective ways to “sow”?

finding common ground

There are lots of simple but effective ways to get people to open up and eventually move them toward more spiritually significant conversations. Most people will actually discuss religion if you simply ask them what they think, listen carefully and don't try to clobber them. Try doing this 3-4 times where you only ask questions (as part of a larger discussion)—people love to tell their story if they think you are actually interested.

In addition we can:

- Ask good questions about their backgrounds, what they think is important, intriguing hypothetical questions etc.
- Look for places that you agree with them and regularly point them out.
- Find discussion topics in the day-to-day events (TV, movies, the news, sports) that give you a chance to sow.

living as salt and light

(with out saying "i'm salty, i'm salty" all the time)

"Preach Christ always. Use words when necessary."

St. Francis of Assisi

Our lifestyles do matter. There is an attractiveness of living the best life imaginable in front of others and doing so without the need to constantly say, "Look at me, look at me!"

redeeming that which is broken

Our security as Daughters and Sons allows us some very unique opportunities in the workplace to:

- Serve others (as Christ served us) instead of demanding that we be served.
- Rest in the security of our identity in Christ instead of the security we generate by our performance.
- Forgive lavishly (as we have been forgiven) instead of demanding our "rights."

If the real goal of our jobs in God's mind is to make us more like Jesus, this should make us more and more attractive to (some) people. Jesus certainly had a knack for getting "sinners" to feel comfortable and have a good time with him.

repentance

More than anything else, I think the most attractive thing we can do to "sow" as Christians is model repentance. NOBODY likes Christians who are so "holier than thou" that you can't even talk to them.

On the other hand someone who comes to you and says, "I'm sorry. What I did was completely wrong," has a completely different feel. For us it will feel like dying (dying to self, dying to reputation, dying to being able to hold up our own good record). Prodigals will not return home until they can see that they will be welcomed (like the Father) rather than rejected (like the older son). Our own repentance is the way that opens this door.