

# The First Church: Worthy Traits

## THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, [Acts 2:1-7:60](#)

### Labor for God, [Matthew 9:37-38](#)

[\(Matthew 9:37-38\)](#) **Vision— Jesus Christ, Vision of:** the mission of Christ was to share the vision of a world in desperate need. The vision of the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest challenge known to man.

**1. The vision of a great harvest.** All men everywhere are fainting, weary, bewildered, scattered, and are as sheep without a shepherd. **But note a critical point:** the Lord's vision is not only worldwide; it involves the changing of every human life on the globe ([1 Peter 3:9](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

[1 Peter 3:9 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> “Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”

[2 Corinthians 5:17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

[John 4:35-36 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> “Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

<sup>36</sup> “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”

[Galatians 6:9 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

**Thought 1.** The harvest is *needful work*.

- 1) It is great, that is, plenteous. There are fields and fields of people growing in the valleys and hills of the world ([Matthew 9:36](#)).
- 2) It is a ripe harvest, ready and desperate to be reaped ([Matthew 9:36](#)).
- 3) It has to be reaped in its season, that is, in its generation. There is only a short time when it can be reaped; otherwise it will rot and die in the field where it grew.

**Thought 2.** Every generation has to be reaped in its generation.

- 1) Everyone has only a certain season (generation, life-span) when he can be **reaped**.  
**His season for being reaped is short, ever so short.**
- 2) Everyone has a peak season, a time when he is really at his peak and ready to be harvested. It is so much more fruitful and joyful to harvest a man in his peak season than to try at other times.

**Thought 3.** The harvest is plentiful.

- 1) A harvest of children needs to be reached and taught.
- 2) A harvest of young people needs to be reached and grounded in the Word.
- 3) A harvest of women needs to be reached and taught the confidence and protection of God's love.
- 4) A harvest of men needs to be reached and taught the strength and security of God's direction and care.

**Thought 4.** There is a world of opportunity out in the harvest. There are fields and fields of localities, nationalities, classes, professions, health, abilities, appearances, emotional states, and mental conditions—and all are lost, spiritually sick, and unreached. There is no end to the fields of harvest.

**2. The vision of a great need for laborers.** Christ needs people, that is, believers: men, women, boys, and girls. Laborers are few. He needs many laborers and He needs them *now*. Unless there are reapers to go forth, the harvest will die and rot upon the earth.

**Matthew 9:37 (NASB)**

<sup>37</sup>“Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

**Romans 10:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup>“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

<sup>15</sup>How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”

**James 4:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>“You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.”

**Thought 1.** There is an unlimited amount of work to be done, but there are so few to do it.

- 1) The harvest will never be reaped unless laborers go forth ([Matthew 28:19-20](#); [John 20:21](#); cp. [Luke 19:10](#)).
- 2) The harvest will rot in the field where it grows (the earth).

**Thought 2.** Laborers are desperately needed for every generation.

- 1) The harvest is always great. The harvest is every man, woman, and child within a generation.
- 2) The harvest must have enough reapers to reap each living person during his or her season, that is, life-span. Just imagine—the whole population of the earth changes about every hundred years!

**Thought 3. Why are there not more laborers?**

- 1) Some reject the call of God.
- 2) Some postpone the call of God.
- 3) Some deny the call of God; they close their minds entirely.
- 4) Some seek a profession, a position, or a livelihood instead of really reaching out and ministering to people.
- 5) Some preach false gospels. They seek to propagate their own rationale and ideas instead of the truth of God.
- 6) Some just lack enough commitment to reach out and minister.
- 7) Some are satisfied with the traditional ritual and approaches of religion.
- 8) Some are more concerned with the bureaucracy than with laboring, more concerned with carrying things on as they have always been.

**3. The vision of a great need for prayer.** Laborers are needed, but they must be the laborers of God, for the harvest is God's. It is totally inadequate to humanly select the laborers, lay human plans, and send laborers forth in human strength. Such human action will not get the job done. God's call and God's appointment are needed. Christ is saying, **"Pray that God will raise up enough laborers to reach your generation, the generation for which you are immediately responsible."**

**Matthew 7:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

**John 16:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

**Ephesians 6:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

**Thought 1. Note three significant facts.**

- 1) Christ Himself prayed all night before choosing the first laborers and before sending them out on their first missionary journey (**Luke 6:12-13**).
- 2) The number of laborers for any generation depends upon the prayers of God's people in that generation. If God's people are concerned for their generation, they pray for laborers to reach and minister to it. If they lack concern, they do not pray and laborers are few. Compare the *deadness of religion* in Christ's day and how few true laborers there had been for some four hundred years.

- 3) Christ first of all gives this charge to His apostles and ministers. They are to take the lead and to teach the absolute necessity of praying for laborers.

**Thought 2. Note two things.**

- 1) The harvest is the Lord's. He knows the harvest, every stem and blade of it. He knows everyone—every body and mind, act and thought, need and provision ([Matthew 10:30](#)). He knows the heart and just what must be done to harvest the field in the most efficient and effective way.
- 2) Therefore, the laborers must be chosen, called, and enlisted by Him. Christ is the One who must send forth laborers.

**Thought 3. Three things should drive us to pray for laborers with all fervency.**

- 1) The good news, the gospel of the kingdom ([Matthew 9:35](#)).
- 2) Compassion for the souls of men, for those who have fainted and are scattered and are without a shepherd.
- 3) Love for Christ and appreciation for what He has done ([2 Corinthians 5:14](#)).

**4. The vision of a great force of laborers.** The harvest is so plentiful and ready that a great force needs to be sent forth and *sent forth now*.

**Note several truths in the Scripture.**

- a. God is “**the Lord of the harvest.**” He is “**the Husbandman**” ([John 15:1](#)). The harvest is “**the vineyard of the Lord of hosts**” ([Isaiah 5:7](#)). The world is His. He can see that it is reaped if there are enough laborers.
- b. “**For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building**” ([1 Corinthians 3:9](#)). God labors and we labor; we both have a part. What a glorious truth and challenge, God needs us! What a glorious privilege—we are to labor side by side with God!

**Thought 1. Note several significant lessons.**

- 1) God desires every generation to have a great force of laborers. He wills for every man, woman, and child to be reached with “**the gospel of the kingdom**” ([Matthew 9:35](#)). He wills for none to be lost ([2 Peter 3:9](#)).
- 2) It is God who is to send forth laborers, not men. He is to do the selecting, calling, ordaining, and sending. Our task is to pray for laborers, and when God raises them up we are to support them by utilizing every means possible.
- 3) God raises up people with very special gifts to harvest the fields.

**Ephesians 4:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> “**And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.**”

**5. The harvest is God's.** It is to be harvested as He says and wills, not as we may wish. No man has the right to harvest by using his own message and ideas. Christ has clearly instructed and demonstrated that “**the gospel of the kingdom**” is to be preached.

**Thought 2.** The harvest is God's. He can reap the harvest if several conditions exist.

- 1) If there is enough *concern* within our generation for the multitudes of people who are lost.
- 2) If there is enough *prayer* for laborers.
- 3) If there is enough *commitment* to surrender to His call to go.
- 4) If there is enough *dedication* to follow Him day by day and hour by hour.
- 5) If there is enough *faith* to believe Christ and the truth of the Scripture.
- 6) If there is enough *conviction* to stand true and firm through all.