

## **Pray for Laborers for the Harvest**

*“When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send more workers into His fields.’” Matthew 9:36-38 NLT*

Jesus went about teaching and healing every person who came to Him. Jesus knew that it was impossible for one person to reach the vast multitudes of people who were lost *“as sheep without a shepherd.”* Realizing the great need, Jesus asked the disciples to pray for more workers.

In Jesus’ day, the economy was mostly agrarian. Every daily activity revolved around and looked forward to a plentiful harvest. Bringing in the harvest was a big deal. Villages and regions prospered or suffered based on the measure of harvest. Even with this understanding, the disciples did not know completely what Jesus meant when He said, *“The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send more workers into His fields.”* Why? Because Jesus was talking about a spiritual harvest, which was a foreign concept to the religious Jewish culture. Jesus had to change their way of thinking (and ours) because every believer is called into the harvest field of suffering and unredeemed people—His lost sheep.

Moreover, societies of that time rarely cared for or tended to the needs of the helpless and infirm; this attitude was a cultural norm. Relatives bore the burden of an unproductive family member, but beyond that, the helpless and infirm faced destitution, starvation, sickness and premature death. That is why Jesus was such a phenomenon. Jesus had to shift His followers’ mindset by establishing a new spiritual family and a spiritual kingdom. Jesus began by explaining in Luke 4:18-19 why He came. *“...bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim that captives will be released, pray for the blind will see, pray so the oppressed will be set free, and proclaim that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” NLT* Healing, restoration and reconciliation were hallmarks of Jesus’ ministry that demonstrated God’s goodness and validated Jesus as God’s anointed. Jesus demonstrated His calling everywhere He went.

Jesus knew that He would be leaving soon and He needed to transfer His deliverance message, as well as His power and authority, to His disciples who remained. He longed for His disciples to continue the work that His Father gave Him to do. This, of course, includes genuine believers in this present day. Jesus began by teaching His disciples with “on-the-job training.” Immediately following His command to pray for laborers, Jesus sent the disciples out into the harvest field of needy people. He gave them the power to do miracles just as He had done.

*“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”  
Matthew 10:1-2 NKJV*

Many theologians believe that God’s desires, and the work He wants to do through us, are entirely dependent upon our prayers. Understanding this is the crux of Jesus’ request that we pray for laborers. If our prayers are not needed, then our heavenly Father could easily send tens of thousands of laborers at any time to any place. That is why Jesus asked His disciples to pray for this great need. It should be sobering to see the great need all around us and not care enough to take-up the mantle that Jesus gave to us carry. The question that begs an answer is: Are you willing to step outside your comfort zone, exercise your faith and draw from the well of courage?



*Consider that when you pray to the Lord of the harvest for laborers, you may hear Him call you!*

I challenge you to set aside time to identify with Jesus' compassion for the lost. When you do, you will step into your role as a co-laborer with Christ and in fellowship with Him to advance His kingdom.

*“Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ...we can come to God with bold confidence. And we will receive from Him whatever we ask because we obey Him and do the things that please Him.*  
*1 John 3:18-22 NLT*

You may ask, “Where or what is the promise connected to this call to obedience?” First, consider that when Jesus asks us to pray for the harvest of souls, He was not merely making a suggestion. Also, consider that this question brings into question a desire to obey. Our obedience demonstrates the depth of our faith, as well as the condition of our hearts. Jesus said, “*Those who obey Me show their love for Me.*” Second, as I mentioned earlier, bringing in the harvest was often a “life-or-death” responsibility. A person who has an apathetic, defiant or a hard heart towards Jesus' mantle given in Luke 4:18-19, could indicate the possibility that that person will himself miss the harvest. And lastly, bringing in the harvest speaks of bounty, prosperity, fulness of life, as well as a time of festivity and celebration. Luke 15:10 even tells us that “*...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*” *NKJV*

Let's stir up a deep desire for the harvest field, reaching God's lost sheep. We all know dozens of people who need God to save them and redeem their lives. I know that I have sometimes grown complacent in praying for people who need Jesus. But here, you are asked to go beyond what you know to do as an individual, which is to take up Jesus' mantle to go into the harvest field, but you are also asked to pray for others to join you. In essence, we are being told that the labor supply is dependent upon our prayers. Having that realization is a solemn conviction that without our prayers, fields that are ready for reaping will be left to perish. The “harvesters” reading this will gladly tell you that there is great joy and celebration—an eternal promise for all believers. —Ω

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### *Taking God's Word Back to Him*

*Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word that reaches the innermost realms of my heart, calling deep unto Deep. Yes, I, too, want to reach the lost sheep You are concerned about! LORD, I know many people who are in need of healing, restoration and reconciliation, so I ask You to help me reach them. Help me change my thinking and see more clearly the great need for more workers in the harvest field. LORD, I accept Your challenge to set aside time to identify with Jesus' compassion for the lost and pray for more harvesters. I want to be a co-laborer with Christ, in fellowship with Him to advance His kingdom. Help me step outside my comfort zone, exercise my faith and draw from the well of courage. LORD, search my heart and reveal to me any apathetic, defiant or hard heartedness towards Jesus' mantle given in Luke 4:18-19, knowing that bringing in the harvest is often a “life-or-death” responsibility where many lives hang in the balance. I want to be the harvester who gladly celebrates with joy when even one lost soul surrenders to Jesus. I praise You and ask these petitions in Jesus' precious name. Amen.*

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