

FAITH: TRUSTING GOD IN DISCIPLE-MAKING WORK

The work of making disciples for Jesus Christ is the great mission Jesus has given all His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). It should be considered a great privilege for any disciple to take part in fulfilling this mission. As there are many moving pieces in disciple-making, it can become overwhelming and discouraging, or tempting to give up or place the emphasis where God hasn't. Therefore, solid faith in God and trust in His process are needed to anchor all your efforts in this work. Consider, therefore, some Scriptures to help you trust God and in the process God has set in place for making disciples.

2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12

The work of living for Christ and spreading the gospel is full of challenges (as Paul experienced, 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 4:6-8). But the gospel worker must never be ashamed of the gospel because it is God's power for salvation (Romans 1:16)! Paul knew his suffering would be worth it (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18) because he knew who He had firmly placed his faith in and entrusted himself to (a faithful Creator, 1 Peter 4:19)! In your gospel work, you must recognize there will be many challenges and much opposition. If your faith is not firmly placed in Christ, this work can shake you to your core and possibly destroy your faith (2 Timothy 4:10).

ISAIAH 55:6-11

Through the work of the Messiah (Isaiah 53), a great invitation would be offered for everyone to come and seek the Lord. God's word accomplishing what He intends would be critical in this plan. The comparison given concerns the rain and snow falling from Heaven, which finds all the crevasses where it is needed and is designed to go so that the seed can grow and food can be produced. So we must also trust in God's word! Even though it may often appear as though people do not listen to and obey it, God is ultimately the One who is at work through it – despite how people respond (Romans 10:13-18). How much you trust in God and the power of His word to accomplish what He

intends will impact how diligent you are in doing gospel work!

MARK 4:1-8, 14-20

As Jesus taught a crowd, He demonstrated that not everyone will listen to God's word in a way that produces the results God desires. However, some will. In doing so, Jesus taught that God's word is like seed that must be scattered on all the different kinds of soil. But, to do this work, the one who sows the seed must be fully confident in the seed's potential (1 Peter 1:22-25; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21)! The sower's job is to simply scatter the seed, not just to select those who he/she believes will be willing to listen. Instead, there must be such faith in the power of the gospel (like potential in a seed) to scatter the word as much as possible and allow God's seed to sprout, grow, and multiply! Even though most seed will never produce fruit, faith in God and His seed will lead you to continue sowing even when it is difficult, trusting God will help the seed find the right soil. Yet, even if no good soil is found, faith results in sowing anyway because it is the only aspect of the work you control!

MARK 4:26-29, 30-32

Being a gospel worker does not require you to understand how God's seed works. In fact, you may have no idea as to how the gospel is working in someone's life. You must simply trust that God's seed is powerful and that it does the work God intends it to do. Like a farmer cannot force a seed to grow and produce fruit and must trust God's process, you must trust God's process for His word and do your part as effectively as possible. Then, you must be satisfied with the work you have been given to do. Furthermore, God's kingdom can look small but grow into great things! First, the number of those who were part of His kingdom was small initially and has grown throughout the world over time. Second, the influence of God's kingdom in a person's life can also start small and then grow to produce all kinds of fruit and influence others. So, gospel workers must be fully convinced in the power of the gospel of the kingdom, even when it may not seem like much in a moment. Each seed that is planted contains great potential to influence others. Even when it may not show initially, great things can happen in ways that cannot be explained when God's word penetrates the heart!

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9

It can be tempting to emphasize gospel workers rather than God in disciple-making! As was the case in Corinth, sometimes people start following others instead of keeping the focus on Christ. Furthermore, sometimes people try to take too much credit or blame for the results of gospel work. This passage keeps gospel workers in the proper perspective: As servants of God and workers in His field who simply plant and water the gospel. The growth is given by God alone when it contacts the right soil. You can neither take credit for its growth nor blame yourself for its lack of growth. Instead, you must simply trust God and His process so much that you will plant, water, and repeat as often as you can!

PSALM 126:5-6

Sowing can be costly and result in many tears. This can be seen in the farmer who spends long and tiresome hours putting in all the work required to prepare the soil and plant the seed. This can also be seen in someone who is poor and limited in food putting seed grain into the soil rather than using it to prepare some extra meals for his family. So, gospel work is also costly and can result in many tears (Acts 20:19, 31; Romans 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 2:4; Philippians 3:18). Gospel work involves spending the precious resources of time and energy (perhaps in addition to other things). It often involves relationships and vulnerability to demonstrate love for others (often more than they have for themselves). It certainly will involve disappointments when the soil demonstrates itself not to be of a good quality to produce fruit. Yet, gospel workers must have enough faith to sow in and through the tears, trusting God to give the harvest in whatever way He provides. For sowing in tears is the only way to then rejoice with the harvest (Galatians 6:7-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)!

CONCLUSION

Faith in God and His word is essential in gospel work. Although it may at times seem glamorous and exciting, true gospel work is difficult, tiresome, and often painful. The one who works without faith may soon become discouraged, give up the work, and/or even fall away from God. However, the one who stands in faith and grows through these challenges will be the one who can rejoice in the harvest one Day! Ultimately, you must remember that God will be pleased whenever you simply trust Him enough to do the work He has entrusted you to do and leave the results to Him, planting and watering the seed of His word!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Why is a strong personal faith in God necessary in doing gospel work?

What does God promise His word will accomplish?

How does your trust that God's word will accomplish what God intends impact your gospel work?

How does faith in God regarding gospel work resemble scattering seed?

How is the working of the gospel mysterious?

What are some ways God's kingdom grows like a seed?

What part do you control in gospel work to make disciples?

What is the connection between sowing in tears and reaping in joy regarding gospel work?

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