

Plant, Water, Grow

1 Corinthians 3:5–9

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For over a year there have been three driving forces in my life. Actually, it's been a few years that I have been driven by the truth that I am not going to be the pastor who closes the doors on this building. At first that was haunting me like a nightmare. I worried that it was inevitable that I would stand outside this building and hand the keys to a new owner, because First Baptist chose to close. There was Covid, then my time teaching. But, God made it clear to me that my name wouldn't be the last pastor's name on the banner at the back of the sanctuary. Now, this is a driving force within me.

Another driving force for me has been the reality that I have more ministry years behind me than in front of me. There will be a day, in a few years, when I will no longer be the pastor of this church. I won't be the pastor of any specific church. God has not revealed to me all of His plans for the future. It drives me that there is only so much time left. He has placed me here for a certain amount of time. When that time is up, it's up. I want to finish strong.

The third thing that is driving me is the Holy Spirit. The first two things I mentioned could be identified as personal. Someone could say that they are motivations based on pride. But, it is the Holy Spirit that has given me clarity about the future of this congregation. It is the Holy Spirit who has blown a breath of fresh power and inspiration into my soul. I have been renewed and revived from what felt like embers in a fire, to a full blaze. Through the mysterious ways of God His Spirit has set me free from the dread of closure and the limitations of time.

I recognize the newness of this work of God in my soul. I want you to be able to experience this also. I pray for each one of you. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit would breathe a fresh wind of His Spirit upon you. My prayer for all of us is that we would see ourselves as disciple makers who make disciples.

After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:5–9 (NLT)

You can plant or water or do both, but God grows the seed to harvest. The seed is the Good News that Jesus lived, died and rose again to save us from our sins. Jesus tells a parable about seeds, soils and a farmer. It's the same story, just depends on the perspective we see the story. The farmer sowed seeds by scattering them on the path, among the rocks, in the weeds, and in good soil. It's obvious what seeds grew to harvest, the ones in good soil.

Jesus is talking about the Good News that He is the Savior of the world. When a seed is grown in good soil it produces. Some might ask why even scatter seeds on the path, in the rocks, and in the weeds. Those places give almost no chance for the seed to grow and be harvested. The farmer is

faithful to sowing seeds. The farmers goal is plant seeds in every possible place with the eternal hope that the seed will grow. The farmer never stops sowing seeds.

The disciple of Jesus is always ready to plant the seed of Good News in Jesus Christ. I was at a restaurant on Wednesday morning. Several of us pastors had breakfast and shared and then prayed. Before we left a man came in. He walked directly to the water jug, got a plastic cup and sat down. This man looked rough everywhere, not just around the edges. His hair was a mess, with a hoodie part way over his head. He hadn't shaved in a long time and it looked like he didn't care. He was wearing a worn out camouflage jacket. For pants he had on red and green plaid lounge pants. He seemed unapproachable. This doesn't look like a place to plant the seed of the Good News of Jesus. From his appearance the man seemed indifferent.

One of the pastors went to him, sat down beside him. He was direct and asked, "are you hungry, do you need something to eat, if I get you some food will you eat it?" Before the seed could be planted the seed needed to be shown to the man. Before we could talk about Jesus, the man needed to see Jesus. For that seed or any seed to grow God will do the work.

The Good News may have a long or a short time of growth before it's ready for harvest. I came to know Jesus at a church camp when I was fourteen. But the seed, the Good News, had been planted a long time before that night around a campfire. I was surrounded by Christians. I was in church every Sunday. I heard the Good News many times. The people in my church, and the people in my family nurtured the Good News over and over again.

God was working in me for the right moment for that seed to be harvested. The person who lead me to Jesus had not planted that seed in my soul. That person did very little watering of the seed that was in my soul. But, God put that person in my life at the right moment for me to say YES to Jesus.

Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. 1 Corinthians 3:5–6 (NLT)

Do we take ourselves out of the process because we don't think we can plant or water the seed? As sinners who are redeemed we still have too much doubt in our minds and fear in our bones. I'm not even going to list the doubts and the fears. The reality is we are more focused on something else than planting and watering the Good News of Jesus Christ. Unplanted seeds don't grow. If the Good News isn't planted then it doesn't get watered.

We're making the growth of the seed more and more difficult. We can do a better job of planting and watering the Good News. As we let God grow the seed, we can also be there to harvest the seed. I sometimes wonder if we're planting and watering seeds of the Good News of Jesus Christ. If there is no harvest, is it because of the lack of planting and watering? Okay, you can dwell on that, be upset with me or not. I'm moving on.

Too often we think we don't have something when God is ready to provide what we need. Jesus promised that through His Holy Spirit we would have the words to speak when we were asked about our faith. We've all walked away from a conversation thinking we could have said something. This is because we don't think we have something, but God is ready to provide it.

When we don't think God will provide what we don't have, we don't ask, right? How about if we believed God would provide? No matter what has happened in the past, what would it be like if we believed God would provide and we asked Him to provide?

Before we can plant a seed of the Gospel, we need ask God for the opportunities to plant a seed. We need to ask God to give us His words to speak. There are very few of us who can speak the Good News unless we've prayed for the right words. You might be envious of the person who meets a stranger at the checkout and shares the Good News. Stop being envious and start asking God for the words to plant seeds and to water seeds. Pray for boldness to erupt out of your chattering lips. Pray for clarity of thought when you see someone enter your personal space. Whether it's at Walmart, Lake Park, the ski slopes, or your favorite hang-out be engaged with Jesus. Seek what He would do.

We're surprised by our situations. Surprises scare us. We don't like them. Jesus was never surprised. He was ready for every leper, demon possessed person, every hypocrite, every soul that crossed His path. He was ready to plant seeds, and water seeds, and bring in the harvest. You might say this was because Jesus was God who knows everything. Well, of course, but He also spent time in prayer, alone with the Father, giving thanks for what happened and preparing for what was still to come.

We don't know when we can plant the seed of the Good News or when we can water that seed. God knows and He wants us to be praying for the opportunity to plant and water. God wants us to be praying for those who can receive the seed, and those who need their seed watered.

It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. 1 Corinthians 3:7 (NLT)

As you pray for the seed to be planted and watered God will prepare the person to grow. In your family, in your neighborhood, at your work there are people who need the seed to be planted or watered. You know the people in your family. You may be getting to know the people in your neighborhood. You may have a clear picture of the people at your work. So, we're praying for the Holy Spirit to show them their sin. If they see their sin, they will need someone to plant the seed of Jesus Christ in their lives. If they are struggling they will need someone to water the seed of Jesus Christ in their lives. So, we're praying for family members to see their sin and for the opportunity to plant Jesus in their lives. This is true for neighbors and co-workers.

We also want to be praying for God make that seed grow. Any person that we pray for we want God to be working in their lives. We can pray for the specific person by name. We can pray for their needs. We can pray that God will make the seed of Jesus grow in their lives.

As I pray for my neighbors I'm asking God to give this person peace. My neighbor tends to be anxious and angry. I don't think this person realizes how their anxiety and anger is impacting them. While I share, planting and watering, I can talk about Jesus meeting my needs. I talk about Jesus giving me peace in the worst of my situations. I reveal the promises God has given to me. I'm planting and watering as God gives the opportunities. I'm praying for the seed of Jesus to grow within this neighbor.

I say this often, God wants us to trust Him. In every crisis and troubled situation, God's desires is that we trust Him. When the sun is shining and it's seventy-five or the wind is blowing and it's twenty, God asks us to trust Him. I say us I mean Christians, believers, disciples of Jesus. I also mean heathens, sinners, unsaved, lost people. In every circumstance and situation Jesus died and rose again that every person would trust God. So, as we pray for unsaved family, neighbors and co-workers what is God asking of them? God is asking them to trust Him, to call upon Him, to believe in His Son Jesus.

We're praying for the people we know and love to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ. God is calling to them in their medical emergencies and in their pleasure seeking gluttony. While people right next door are caught up in greed, we're praying for the Good News to be planted and watered and harvested. God through His Holy Spirit is making them aware of their sin. As your family member rages on about the unfairness of life, you're praying for the Good News to be planted and watered and harvested. God through His Holy Spirit is making them aware of their sin.

Everything that happens in our lives, in the lives of the people we love, is happening for a reason. Here is the reason, so that they will trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This is the work God has been doing since the first two people rejected Him and did their own thing. God has not stopped. We can't stop either. We can pray for the seed of the Good News of Jesus Christ to be planted and watered. We can pray that we will plant that seed and water it.

The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:8–9 (NLT)

There are people who need the seed planted and watered, pray for God to make the seed grow. Life without the Good News of Jesus is empty, meaningless, discouraging. No matter what face a sinner is wearing, inside they know they need something more. People can put on the mask of happiness and well-being. But unless Jesus is growing within them they are empty. People can and will be angry, depressed, and aimless. They need the seed of Jesus Christ growing within them. People can keep busy every moment of everyday of their lives. But, if they don't have Jesus growing within them, there is an emptiness.

Even though we still live in this world of sadness, anger, discouragement and emptiness, we know what life is like without and with Jesus. For every moment that we couldn't control we knew Jesus was walking beside us. In each situation that ended in disappointment we knew Jesus was blessing us. In all of our circumstances we know Jesus is within us. This is why we pray for family, neighbors, and co-workers to see their sin and their need for Jesus. This is why we pray for seeds to be planted in their lives. This is why we pray for those seeds to be watered and grow to be harvested.

Life with the Good News of Jesus is empowering, filled with grace, and contagious. You are empowered to overcome sin and temptation. You are filled with grace to meet every challenge. Your life – words and actions – speak of the joy that is within you: Jesus. The day you chose Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you were changed. You were no longer lost, but found. You were saved from your sins. You were redeemed from the power of sin. You were delivered into a new life in Jesus. Someone planted a seed in your life. Somewhere, somehow that seed of the Good News of Jesus was watered. Then one day you were brought into the Kingdom of God.

Anyone who wants to be saved needs only to ask Jesus to come into their life. All that needs to happen is to admit that you are a sinner in need of Jesus' salvation. By admitting your sin you are turning away from it and turning to Jesus.

Today, is the opportunity for you to give your life to Jesus. God by the power of His Holy Spirit has been calling you to trust Him. Now, you can invite Him into your life.