

God Gives the Increase

It should be very evident from the “Sharing the Abundant Life” series, that I am in favor of expending the effort required to become proficient at soul-winning. In fact, I believe that we should perform any service for the Lord to the best of our ability, whatever form that service might take.

We need to realize that leading souls to Christ is not all up to us. Even with our best efforts we don’t control all the variables. Our experience and proficiency can make a difference, but unless some other ingredients are present we do not have all that it takes to succeed. Two key passages in the New Testament indicate how the three ingredients in evangelism—the soul-winner, the prospect, and God—work together.

First, there is the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-23. This parable discusses four kinds of soil (the path, the rocky soil, the soil among thorns, and the good soil). The same sower sowed the same seed in each kind of soil, but only one was productive.

What determined its productivity? It could not have been the seed or the sower because they were the same for all. It had to be the type of soil. In this parable, the soil represents the human heart, the seed is the Word of God, and the sower is the evangelist (Mt. 13:19; Lk. 8:11). The evangelist reaps a harvest if the Word of God is sown in a receptive heart. He controls what he sows and where he sows it, but he doesn’t control the receptivity of those who hear it. This is their choice. This is the power of personal decision that God has given to all people. As a general rule, the more we sow the Word of God, the more we will reap a harvest. But we need to pray to God and depend on Him to help us sow it in fertile soil.

Second, Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7 affirms that God causes the growth. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then, neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.” Even though the ultimate growth comes from God, man still has to plant and cultivate. We have a “treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). We are instruments of God, spreading and nurturing His Word, but God is the instigator of any growth that takes place.

How God does this is one of His secrets. We know that the seed is His Word, and we know also that He doesn’t overrule the free-choice of His creatures. In some providential way, perhaps including the time and place of sowing, He gives the increase.

It is our responsibility to be the best sowers we can be. We should use the best seed, which is the Word of God. We should try to determine to the best of our ability which is the good soil. Then we should put the whole enterprise in the hands of God, for His blessing and His increase. In this way our evangelism will be maximally affective, we will eliminate dependence on self, and we’ll have peace of mind, whatever the result.