

THE THREE PHASES OF EVANGELISM

PART 2---SOWING

(John 4:34-41)

John 4:34-41 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! ³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” ³⁹ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I *ever* did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of His own word.

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Last Sunday I began my message with the story of Sonya Federov. Sonya was that Christian lady who cared for and encouraged a poor woman and her family in such a significant way that it eventually opened a door for her to share Christ with them. Sonya did an excellent job of **cultivating** the soil of that family’s heart---of preparing them for the good news of Christ.

Last week, we defined cultivating very simply as **an appeal to a lost person’s heart through the building of a relationship.**

We said that “people will be more apt to believe in Christ if they can first believe in you.”

So a good farmer **first** cultivates the soil, **BUT!!!!!!!** to have a crop, he must **also** plant the seeds.

And it’s this second phase of evangelism---the planting of God’s word---that I would like to talk to you about this morning, just before we share the Lord’s Supper together.

Earlier, we read the story in John chapter 4 of Jesus’ interaction with His disciples after they saw Him talking with the woman at the well. Of course, they couldn’t believe that he was talking with a foreign woman---it was shocking to them. Verse 27 of John 4 says that they “**marveled**” that He talked with the woman (the NLT says that they were *astonished*). Of course, Jesus knew what every one of them were thinking and He used this as an opportunity to teach them some important lessons. For instance...

- He told them that bringing people to faith sometimes involved sowing and sometimes involved reaping. In fact, He told them that there will be times when God will bring people across their paths who are ready that very day to be saved **because others have already labored**---others have

already done the hard work of cultivating and sowing to bring them to that point.

That's one lesson Jesus taught.

- But He taught them that those who enter into this kind of work---this work of sowing and reaping---**will be rewarded for the work they do**. And apparently, He pays really "good money" for this because it says that His workers get together and celebrate! (Look at verse 36):

John 4:36 And he who reaps **receives wages**, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may **rejoice** together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'

So, Phase One of evangelism is cultivating. Phase Two is sowing. Phase Three is reaping.

Cultivating is...	Sowing is...
Preparing the soil of another person's heart.	Dropping seed in that soil.
If evangelism is "show and tell," cultivating is showing ---it's buying groceries, fixing a neighbor's car on your day off, or letting them borrow your lawnmower. That's "showing"---showing God's love.	But sowing is telling ---it's dropping the seed of God's Word into the soil you've worked so hard at cultivating---maybe through a book, a tract, a CD, or through simply telling them how God brought you to Christ.
When you go fishing with someone---you're cultivating.	But when you comment about the beauty of the lake and about all that God has made---you're sowing.
If you clean the fish your friend caught, you're cultivating.	If you talk about the one who said, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," you're sowing.
Giving someone a plant, a card, or a freshly-baked pie is cultivating. (<i>If it's blueberry pie, it's heaven!</i>)	But a pie given to your neighbor along with a good book about Jesus by Chuck Swindoll is sowing.

Do you get the picture? We always cultivate with sowing and reaping in view. A farmer would starve to death if all he ever did was cultivate. He might have the most beautifully prepared soil in the valley, but if he didn't eventually plant some seed, he'd have the most useless field in the valley. So we cultivate so that eventually we might sow the gospel seed.

Christian speaker Lorne Sandy once told the story about a businessman who became a believer in Christ after attending an outreach service in his city. After this businessman got saved, he decided to start going to a church he had previously attended as a non-believer just every once in a while. After one

Sunday morning service, the businessman walked up to one of the elders in that church that he knew and told him that he had gotten saved recently. The elder replied, "I heard about that and I'm so happy for you!" Then the businessman said to the elder, "Say, how long have you and I done business together in this city?" The elder replied, "Well, if I'm not mistaken---about 23 years." And the businessman said: "Have you known Christ for all of that time?" "Yes," the elder replied. Then the businessman said, "Well, I don't ever remember you speaking to me about Christ all those years. I thought highly of you as a businessman and a person. In fact, I thought so highly of you that I felt if anyone could be as fine a man as you were and not be a Christian, then I didn't have to be a Christian either."

Folks, that's what happens when we cultivate and do not sow. The elder set a glowing example for 23 years but he never told the businessman why.

Just before we share the Lord's Supper together, let me to give you several extremely important principles of effective sowing:

1. Sow on cultivated soil

We've talked about this. A wise farmer doesn't plant seed on hard ground. Be sure to cultivate first **then** sow!

2. Sow compatible seed

Here's what I mean by that. Soils differ. People are all different. If a person loves science, give her a book by Hugh Ross. If they have an interest in the end times, a good book on prophecy like "Power to Make War" would be great. Maybe a CD on salvation by Chuck Swindoll would be in order that they can listen to privately while they commute to work. If they like movies, give them the DVD of the gospel of John acted out before their eyes.

The seed of God's Word is full of many different types of stories and passages---share seed that is compatible with the person you are ministering to. That's so important!

3. Space the seeds properly

It is better to communicate a little bit at a time and get high comprehension than to share lots of info with little comprehension. View each seed that registers in their brain as a divine nudge toward the Cross. Our goal is for truth to **register**, not just to be **scattered**.

4. Back up sowing with more cultivating

Joe Aldrich said the following: "A friend of mine trusted Christ because a

buddy of his loved him, spent time with him, and kept after him. This man asked my friend to go to church or to participate in some church activity 46 times and my friend said no 46 times. But on the 47th invitation, my friend went and believed in Christ. And now he is in full-time service.”

Your sacrificial acts direct people toward “The True Sacrifice”---Christ!

5. Anticipate a cumulative effect

Believe that all the seeds you plant---every word of testimony, every tract, every book create momentum---especially when backed with a godly life and lots of prayer (if you haven’t already, get your Top 10 lists going!).

6. Earn a platform for your sowing

In other words, “Don’t let your mouth write a check that your body can’t cash!” Back up your lip with your life or keep it zipped. It’s better to say nothing than to be the laziest guy in the shop who stops everyone at the water cooler and preaches to them.

7. Sow quality seed

Anything associated with Christ should be quality (e.g., *You Can Be Sure/Living Water*). We could spend a lot less on tracts but we refuse to do so---we should never be stingy when communicating the good news.

(Also, word here about **what** you give others (being clear in what you communicate). Just because it is in the Christian bookstore does not mean it has a clear presentation of the gospel (local tract company---some good, some not).

(Lord’s Supper)