

Gather and Scatter

1 of 2 | We Gather to Grow

SLIDE 1 Introduction

This brief series this month is to help focus us on the harvest field. Today I will share about the benefits of gathering together each week as a community of believers. Then next Sunday I will share about how we are the agency of God for tending the harvest field.

But before I get into this, let me lay a little groundwork.

SLIDE 2a 1. *Why doesn't God send revival?*

First, it's not all about us. The church needs to be all about others. However, we spend much of our time discussing our needs rather than our purpose.

Secondly, the church is not where you go to get your needs met. That flows from your personal relationship with the Lord. The church is here to train and equip believers for their work in the harvest field (discipleship). Can you imagine a person trained as a doctor spending all his time working as a plumber? He would feel useless and others would never benefit from his training.

Finally, God sends revival to those committed to rising up and doing the things he has instructed them to do. Which brings me to number two.

SLIDE 2b 2. *Why doesn't God save those we care about?*

The Bible tells us that God does not want *"anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2nd Peter 3:9 NIV)

That's why God created the body of Christ in the earth. We are his agency of evangelism. We are the *"sent ones."* (Greek: *aspóstolos*)

When we go into the field and sow the seed of the gospel into people's lives, God has the *"groundwork"* he needs to bring that person to salvation.

We are often asking God to do for us what he has called us to do for others. Therefore I think it is good to remind us that the field of harvest is where God is seeking workers.

Yes, we need leaders in the church, and yes, we need people to pray, but if we are going to grow as a church and fulfill what God is desiring for us to do in this community, we need workers in the field.

SLIDE 3 Matthew 9:38 (NKJV) *"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out*

laborers into His harvest."

These are the words AND the heart cry of Jesus. The church needs to train leaders, but it is FOR the equipping of the saints.

Although this series of two messages is not about the following passage, it is worth noting it as a prelude to what it means to gather and scatter.

SLIDE 4 Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV) *"¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

It is through the people of the church that the church is built up. It should be evident that when we "grow up" we will be "built up." As long as we shy away from the work of evangelism and feel unprepared, then the church simply does not grow.

If we want our church to grow, then we must first grow into maturity. This is where it is no longer about us, but about our work in the harvest field.

SLIDE 5 *"¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."*

SLIDE 6 *"¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, **we will grow to become in every respect the mature body** of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.**"*

The devil is often a demon of distraction.

SLIDE 7 Why We Gather

When we come to church each week we are excited to worship God, we are needing others to pray for us, and we want to tell everyone what's going on in our lives, our family, and the world. However, although all of these are good, they are not the purpose for which we gather.

The church gathers for discipleship. As in the passage I shared from Ephesians, this is where the fivefold ministry of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers takes place. This is where they share their god-given gifts with the body of Christ. This is where believers are equipped to live the life of faith that all must witness and to learn to serve the Word of God to others, in the hope that they will be

saved.

If that be the purpose we gather then:

SLIDE 8a 1. Why is there so little investment in training believers to share the gospel?

SLIDE 8b 2. Why do some believers never lead anyone to Christ or even talk to them about salvation?

Let's look at this base theme of Jesus and his attitude towards gathering and scattering.

SLIDE 9 Matthew 12:30 (NIV) *"Whoever is not with me is against me, and **whoever does not gather with me scatters.**"*

Even though it may seem harsh, if your life is not actively involved in the work of the harvest, then you really are working against what others are working for. You may even be found working against God.

But this "hardness" is reflected in this passage in Matthew 12 where Jesus expounds on the kingdom of God. He ends this discourse with something that almost sounds like not working in his harvest field is like blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In verse 36 he even says we will give an account before God for our lack of service.

SLIDE 10 Invest in Your Training

From the onset, a believer needs to be actively investing in the things that grow them up and train them for service. Becoming a Christian is like enlisting in the Lord's army –there are things that are expected of us.

I know that this is not a popular viewpoint in this world where everything is supposed to serve me. When in truth, we are actually stewards of God's kingdom. A steward is someone who has been given a responsibility for and area of oversight and we will be held accountable for it.

Jesus says at the end of his Parable of the Talents (Bags of Gold):

SLIDE 11 Matthew 25:24 (NIV) *"Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, **harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.**'"*

Jesus spends 17 verses of Holy Scripture expounding on this and we brush it aside as inconsequential. God is harvesting where you have sown, not where he has sown. He is gathering souls from where you have scattered seed, not where he has scattered it.

Therefore it would do us well to admit our calling and equip ourselves to sow some seed into the lives of others. Jesus explained this about the *Parable of the Sower* in Mark chapter 4:

SLIDE 12 Mark 4:13, 14 (KJV) *"¹³ And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? ¹⁴ **The sower soweth the word.**"*

Too many are trying to find their calling within the church, when it is actually in the field. Yes, there is a fivefold ministry called to equip the saints, but the purpose is to bring in the harvest.

SLIDE 13 A New Perspective

Quit telling others your testimony. Quit sharing an inspirational thought. Learn to sow the Word into their lives. The power of God is in the Word of God. It transforms your life. It will also transform the lives of those you sow it into.

SLIDE 14 Romans 1:16 (NIV) *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, **because it is the power of God that brings salvation** to everyone who believes."*

Again, it all starts by changing your view of why you gather with the body of Christ. The church makes disciples. The believers make converts. Converts grow into disciples who are sent out to make more converts.

I think we have all grown too needy, too self-centered, and too focused on our own lives. When we come together at church, we need to feel better about ourselves. We want acceptance, love, understanding, compassion, and the like. So much so that we have forgotten God's purpose in our midst. Yes, we need all these things, but if we do not watch out we engender more neediness and never grow into the strong warriors God has called us to be.

As a pastor, I equip believers to live their lives as examples o others about the saving power of the Lord. As members of Calvary, we need to grow up in him and fulfill our calling. We don't just gather to fellowship:

SLIDE 15 We Gather to Grow.

SLIDE 16 Altar Time

Next Week: We Scatter to Sow