



The Patient Soulwinner

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The Patient Soulwinner Jerry Ferro Mon, 10/23/2023 - 13:06 Patience! Does any Christian not need to grow in this area? We want our questions answered immediately, our trials resolved quickly, and every irritation removed yesterday. It doesn't matter if we are at Costco trying to figure out which checkout line will be the fastest or at a restaurant wanting our food at lightning speed. We have an agenda. This impatience can creep into our soulwinning as well. We want to share the gospel and see instant fruit, and we grow weary when we don't see the results that we desire in the time frame that we desire them. Yet, God doesn't seem to be in the hurry that we are in. I am often reminded of the truth that is uncovered in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." I'm thankful the Lord is patient in His dealings with me. I'm thankful He gave me time to hear the gospel "multiple times" and trust Him. May we exhibit that same spirit toward those whom we long to see to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus. One of the ways that we express trust in God and in the power of the gospel is by committing to the process of a harvest. To be clear, I've never lived on a farm. (I haven't even been successful in planting a garden.) But I do know that farmers don't just plant seed and see a harvest tomorrow. They participate in a process that creates favorable conditions for the seed to flourish. The gospel is a seed, and God calls us to plant it. But rather than becoming discouraged when we don't see immediate results, we should commit to the process of cultivating, planting, watering, and harvesting. Cultivating Before a farmer plants a field, he takes time to prepare the soil by plowing and fertilizing. We do something similar in our witness when we establish a friendship relationship with the one with whom we want to share the gospel. I'm not suggesting a long, drawn-out process just that we take a few minutes to build rapport, treating them as someone we care about rather than simply another set of ears to hear our message. The best way I have discovered to do this is by asking questions. These questions will vary with each person, but they should convey genuine interest. Through this "pre-conversation," the person with whom you are talking begins to feel comfortable. They begin to "let you in," as the invisible barrier between you begins to disappear. So, have the patience, and take the time to cultivate a relationship. We see an example of this in Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. Rather than immediately sharing the gospel with her, He first connected with her as a person and even created a curiosity for what He had to tell her: "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. (John 4:7, 9-10). Planting The whole purpose of cultivating soil is to plant seeds. We catch a glimpse of this in the parable of the sower: "And other [seed] fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." (Luke 8:8). Ultimately, it is the Spirit of God who prepares people's hearts to receive the seed of the gospel. The Spirit does, however, use people "like you and me" in this process. And an essential part of this process is that we actually plant the seed "that we share the gospel." For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:13-14). Watering As diligent and earnest as we may be in cultivating and planting, many people do not trust Christ the first time they hear the gospel. Some people, like some seeds, require time. Some people need to work through questions and ideas that have filled their minds through the years. This is where patience on our part comes in. If the person doesn't immediately trust Christ, are we going to leave the "field" of their life, unwilling to wait for the harvest? Or are we going to prayerfully and persistently water the seed? This persistence is often called "follow up," and I believe it is essential to a fruitful soulwinning ministry. Our church takes these efforts so seriously that we emphasize them in our outreach program and encourage our church family to practice it in all their gospel outreach endeavors "including when witnessing to friends, family, and coworkers." If someone has listened to the gospel "including by attending a service at your church" but has not made a decision to trust Christ, don't give up on them. Rather, water the seed by continued prayer and ongoing outreach. Invite them again to church. Offer to answer questions. Stop by to visit with another printed gospel resource. Send texts and notes to let them know you're praying for them. Keep inviting them to special events at church, and continue with a readiness to share the gospel. Most of all, pray diligently for God to work in their lives. Harvesting Have you ever shared the gospel with someone and the person received Christ as their Savior immediately? When this happens to me, I usually walk away thinking, "Wow! That person was ready to be saved!" But do you know why they were ready? Usually it is because someone else put in all the labor. I may have had the opportunity to see the person trust Christ, but their "instant" decision was the result of the previous witness of a coworker, prayers of a grandmother, or the gospel efforts for someone else in their life. Others did all the cultivating, planting, and watering. I came along, and God used me to do the harvesting. Jesus described this scenario to His disciples just after the woman at the well left to bring everyone she knew to hear Christ: "One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." (John 4:37-38). If you aren't currently seeing the harvest you would like from your gospel witness, don't get discouraged. Just be sure that you are faithfully cultivating, planting, and watering. God will tend to the seed, and He may even use someone else to do the harvesting. However, you'll be rewarded in Heaven for your faithful work as one of the Lord's laborers. Category Outreach & Discipleship Tags Soulwinning Outreach