

How Soon Will You Reap What You Sow?

I'd never been in a riot before. And to be honest, it wasn't as bad as I would have thought.

I was in Rome filming my newest movie, *Holy Ghost Reborn*, and I was with one of my good friends, an evangelist named Todd White, who is one of the most fearless and exuberant people I know. He lives to pray for people, and literally nothing will stand in his way to do that.

We had arrived a day earlier without any real plan of action. I was trying to make the first movie series ever that was, as much as possible, completely led by the Holy Spirit, and in the course of praying and deciding where to go, Rome was one place I felt was highlighted to me by the Lord. So Todd, myself, and my crew got off the plane and wondered what we were supposed to do here. I honestly had no clue other than a vague notion to go to the Vatican at some point.

Since we couldn't think of anything else to do, I thought we should go see a couple sights—why not start with the Coliseum? That sounded cool. So we hopped on the subway the next morning without thinking much about how the day was going to turn out. We came up out of the subway and tried to get our bearings. The Coliseum was looming just before us. But then I noticed a bunch of people looking at something and pointing. When I looked, I saw a mass of people marching down the street holding signs and chanting. Smoke was looming up from somewhere in the middle, and police were beginning to pour in. Some kind of protest or riot was happening on the streets of Rome, and it just happened to be passing by us at the very moment we got off the subway to go sightseeing.

My first instinct was to stand on the sidewalk and just let

everyone pass. Hopefully it would remain peaceful. But then Todd turned to me, his eyes ablaze, and he handed me his passport.

“Bro, here’s my passport, and you have my wife’s number. If I get arrested, let her know I’m OK. I’m going in.”

Now, in moments like this, there are two sides to my personality. The first, normal side of me reacts with an “Are you joking?” response. But the director side of me says, “This could be interesting.” Since I had a camera in my hands, the director won out. And into the riot we all went.

For two hours we walked through the streets of Rome as Todd moved through the crowd, engaging with and praying for as many people as he could. We met all kinds of people that day: angry people, frustrated people, hurt people and violent people, and I kept asking myself, *What we were doing here?* The timing seemed like such a set-up from God, but to what end?

At one point early on, we met a kid named Enrique who was actually one of the main people involved in setting up this protest. Todd, who has dreadlocks, honed in on him because this kid had dreadlocks as well, and he was able to pray briefly with the kid, then we moved on. The rest of our time was just a blur of activity, reactions and wild moments. I remember thinking at one point, “Man, I feel like I’m in a movie!” Then I caught myself.

The next day, we set out to find the catacombs on the outskirts of the city. My decision to go there was a result of a series of dreams that all pointed to us going somewhere that was underground, and that’s the only place I could think of that would have any meaning for my film. So once again we hopped on the subway, then went to a bus station to catch a bus to our destination. When we turned the corner for what we thought was our bus, we all stopped short. Standing right in front of us was Enrique, the kid with dreadlocks.

I knew this was God. I mean, even I could figure that out! I was so certain this kid was going to get saved, and it was going to be another awesome story for my movie. But as we talked to the kid, and Todd offered him a relationship with Jesus, the kid was hesitant. He had only ever had bad experiences with the church, and he wasn't about to jump into what he viewed as a religion again, even if he could tell that these events were abnormal. So we prayed for him and continued on to our catacombs, and I wrestled with what I had just experienced.

Did God lose this one? I mean, He was obviously chasing after this kid, but then the kid didn't want Him. Todd and I talked about it a lot, and what we both finally realized has since changed my outlook on what our job actually is as Christians.

In Todd's words, he was "planting seeds." With everyone we encounter, we are either planting a seed, watering a seed or harvesting a seed for God's kingdom. Unfortunately, sometimes we are stomping on a seed or poisoning a seed by our bad behavior as representatives of Christ. But in moments like this one, we did what we did out of love. The church really likes the harvesting of seeds; "saving souls" is what we say we're about. But Jesus told us that the kingdom of God was like a farmer who scatters seeds. Our job is to farm for the kingdom, in a sense, and we get into trouble when we think our only job is to harvest. A person's journey is a fragile thing, and the frightening thought to me is wondering how many times I may have damaged the growing process of someone in my impatience to reap what hasn't yet been fully sown.

And to think, it only took me jumping into a riot in Rome to figure that out.