

6 Ways to Prepare for Spiritual Harvest

Last week I preached at Freedom Point Church, a small congregation in Carrollton, Georgia, 50 miles west of Atlanta. Two years ago the church had shrunk to 12 people, and it was at risk of closing. But when I went there last Thursday, 103 people came for a regular midweek Bible study. On some Sundays, people sit in the church's basement because there isn't room in the sanctuary.

What happened? In 2021 a young pastor named Jason White moved to Carrollton with his wife, Leslie, and their two children. Jason not only preached on Sundays but he started taking a mobile stage into neighborhoods to evangelize. A homeless couple found Jesus, and the church helped them find a place to live. Teens and younger kids started coming to the church, but older people also found Christ.

When I went to Freedom Point last week I met an 83-year-old woman who told me she found Jesus for the first time just a few months prior. She had never heard the gospel until she was 82. "I'm just so glad I met Jesus toward the end of my life," she told me.

I also met two young men at Freedom Point who had invited Jesus into their lives within the past two months. Jason plans to restart the discipleship class because several of the people were converted after he began teaching it. People are getting saved quicker than they can be discipled.

I believe what's happening at Freedom Point will become the norm soon in the United States. Even though many lifeless churches are shrinking or closing right now, growth is happening in places where the Holy Spirit is welcome. Even though our culture has grown dark, and some churches have

compromised with the world, the light of Jesus shines brighter in that darkness.

We are on the verge of a great season of harvest. But when God sends revival, we still have a choice as to whether we will be a part of it. When hippies started finding the Lord during the Jesus movement in the turbulent 1960s, some Christians rejected what was happening—either because of fear, religiosity or pride. I hope we don't repeat that mistake.

If you want to be a part of this harvest season, here are six steps that will encourage growth:

1. Prepare your heart for a harvest miracle. Prayer always precedes Pentecost. When the disciples tarried in Jerusalem, God prepared their hearts, stretched their faith and ignited them with heaven's fire. Mobilize your church to pray and fast for a move of God.

2. Preach the pure gospel. The only churches that are growing today are those that haven't watered down the Word of God. Many mainline churches will be closing over the next few years, but many new churches are being planted. Preach Jesus, and Him crucified. If you mix the gospel with the lies of today's culture, the Holy Spirit's anointing won't be there.

3. Give plenty of opportunities to respond. People today are hurting. They are desperate, and they need prayer. Like the Philippian jailer, they are asking, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Invite people to the altar and have trained counselors ready to minister at all times. Don't be embarrassed about having extended altar ministry times.

4. Train plenty of leaders. The day of the one-man show is over. If you are a pastor, stop trying to do all the work. Don't be threatened by gifted people who have been sent to your church to help you. The harvest will spoil if we don't have plenty of laborers ready to teach, heal hearts, lead worship, mobilize small groups and mentor new believers.

5. Make discipleship a priority. When 3,000 people were saved on the day of Pentecost, they immediately began meeting in homes so they could grow spiritually. Get your nets ready now. Create a network of loving relationships so that new believers can be assimilated and cared for.

6. Don't stay in your limited box. Many congregations today wouldn't know what to do if a few hundred new converts showed up at their door. Some wouldn't even like it, because they hate change. We must break out of this selfish mentality! The church is not about you and your comfort! Our loving Father always wants to adopt new children into His family.

✠ Isaiah 54:2-3 says: "Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities." If you have run out of room in your church, expand! Start a second or third service; start an ethnic congregation in a different language; or launch a new location on the other side of your city.

(And don't let a lack of funds limit your faith. In this harvest time, many churches will move into office buildings, abandoned stores and empty church buildings—and we will hear of many financial miracles.)

My friend Jason White, the pastor of the church in Georgia, won't be staying in his current building too much longer. I'm convinced someone will give Freedom Point a new building, so that all these new converts will have a place to grow. God will do the same for the many growing churches in this country that are faithfully preparing for harvest season.

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