

Seven Ways to Prepare Now for Spiritual Harvest

Fifty years ago, Time magazine featured Jesus Christ on its cover to document an unusual spiritual revival that was sweeping the nation at that time. At the height of the Jesus movement, which began around 1967, thousands of teenagers and young hippies found salvation as an alternative to psychedelic drugs, free sex and Vietnam War protests.

But this spiritual awakening exposed a big problem. Many churches weren't prepared for an influx of new souls—especially young people with long hair, tie-dyed T-shirts and love beads. Some Christians actually rejected the new converts because they couldn't handle the change.

I sense we are on the cusp of a similar awakening. People who have been traumatized by the social upheaval of this pandemic are now looking for spiritual reality. Many of them are watching church services online—and then venturing out to make their first visit. I've seen firsthand in my travels that spiritual desperation is growing.

But are we ready for an invasion of newcomers? The Bible urges us to be prepared. Proverbs 10:5 (NASB) says, "He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully." Are you alert in this critical time? Here are seven ways you can prepare for this season of revival:

1. Rekindle your own spiritual fire. You can't pour into others if you are empty yourself. You won't be equipped to help new Christians if you have become spiritually apathetic or if you aren't following Jesus passionately. Jesus warned the church in Ephesus: "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). Turn from sin and

sluggishness and begin pursuing God again.

2. Open your heart to people. Some Christians are perpetual spectators, standing on the sidelines while they watch others share the gospel and minister to others. Make a decision to get in the game. Jesus has called every believer to love people and make disciples.

3. Learn to discern people's spiritual needs. When Jesus went to Samaria, He sat down by a well and waited until a rejected woman came during the hottest part of the day. Jesus was busy but that didn't stop Him from conversing with this woman who needed answers. He perceived her struggles, met her spiritual needs and then sent her to her village to reach others.

As an ambassador of Jesus, your job is to offer hope to the people God puts in your path. Whether you are at a gas station, a grocery store, at your child's school or in an office, people who struggle with depression, anxiety, stress, fear and loneliness are everywhere around you. The Holy Spirit wants to give you a word for them.

4. Make room in your schedule. When new people start visiting your church or asking you spiritual questions at your job, you must make room for them in your life. Don't miss the opportunity. Invite them for coffee, host them for dinner in your home or take them to a Bible study. Don't be surprised when the harvest totally disrupts your routine!

5. Renounce any judgmental attitudes. Many Christians post caustic messages on social media complaining about social problems. You have a right to your opinions but how will unbelievers feel when they learn about your faith and then see those messages?

God may want you to minister to someone with piercings, tattoos or blue hair: or you may find yourself praying with someone who is confused about their gender or sexuality. Don't let your politics or your religious views prevent you from

showing Christ's unconditional love. When you show true love, sinners will find the grace to repent.

6. Get more training. Many Christians shy away from praying for people or sharing their faith because they feel ill-equipped to counsel or use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Yet we have more opportunities today than ever to train believers for ministry. Sign up for a class at your church, join a small group study or enroll in online seminars to prepare you to pray for others.

7. Mend your nets so you don't lose people. Many churches are so accustomed to preaching to the choir that they don't have proper systems to care for visitors or new converts. If your nets have been out of use, you will lose people. Train your prayer ministry team and implement a system of small groups so that new converts can plug in immediately for discipleship.

A harvest is coming. Jesus told us in John 4:35 (NKJV): "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." New people are heading in your direction—and they are weary, stressed out and looking for the answers that our dysfunctional culture can't provide. Let's roll up our sleeves and be ready for the influx. {eoa}

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