

The Harvest Is Ripe—Now You Need Jesus' Compassion

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you know that discovering the love and grace of God and receiving the forgiveness of your sins have completely and utterly changed your life. When you interact with your family and friends, coworkers and strangers, do you feel compelled to tell them about your faith? Do you struggle with the courage or the right words to say in attempting to articulate the gospel message? We all do! So how do we get past these obstacles and boldly tell others about the Good News as the Lord commanded us to do in Matthew 28:19-20?

First, we allow Jesus to give us a clearer vision. When we walk closely with Him, we begin to see people as He sees them. Matthew 9:35–36 says, “Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted and were scattered, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Now, let's be honest. Seeing huge crowds of people usually doesn't spark compassion within us, right? If you live in a large, metropolitan city such as Los Angeles, California like I do, we are constantly surrounded by droves of people. Sitting on the freeway with thousands of cars crawling in front of you usually produces more frustration than compassion. We're more likely to think, *I wish these people would get out of my way!*—not, *Gee, I wish I could tell all these people how much Jesus loves them!*

But Jesus is on a different level than we are. This passage of Scripture in Matthew 9 reveals that Jesus had compassion on those who were sick, harassed, lost and helpless. They were

“like sheep without a shepherd.” In verse 35, His compassion turned to action when He not only healed their diseases and sicknesses (which is to serve their physical needs) but also verbally shared the Good News of salvation with them (which is to meet their spiritual needs). Then He issued this edict to His disciples in verses 37–38: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he will send out laborers into His harvest.”

I’ve often wondered what Jesus would say about the lost people in our world today. Did you know that the population of humanity has grown from 300 million people in Jesus’ day to almost 7.5 billion today? Cities, towns and villages across the globe are teeming with people who need to hear about how they can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. If our Lord asked for workers to be sent forth into the fields 2,000 years ago that were ripe for harvest, what would His prayer be for the present-day fields that have twenty-five *times* more people than in His time?

What would He say if He saw so many sheep without a shepherd in your city, in your country, and in other nations around the world? The truth is, our planet is in desperate need of people who are compelled to share the hope of Jesus Christ. *We* are Jesus’ workers—you, me, and everyone who professes the name of Christ. He is counting on us to take His message to a world that is spiritually bankrupt. Pause for a moment and silence the many distractions competing for your time and attention, and you’ll hear the faint whisper. A gentle yet irresistible call in your spirit. An invitation nudging you toward something greater than you could ever imagine.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11–15 (NIV), after writing about our responsibility to “persuade others” about the Good News, the apostle Paul made this beautiful assertion: “*For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who*

live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (vv. 14–15).”

When the New Testament was written, the word “compel” referred to the privilege Roman officials and soldiers had to force people (as well as their horses, equipment and family members) into public service. Our contemporary definition of “compel” carries the idea of driving or overpowering something or someone. It also means “to have a powerful and irresistible effect, or influence.” But Paul identified that it was not Roman officials, nor force or obligation, that compels us to share the gospel with our fellow man, but Christ’s love! You might say that to compel is to propel into action.

After meeting Jesus on that dusty road to Damascus, Paul’s life was changed forever and set on a different course. No longer fervently persecuting the Christian church as he had done before, he literally had seen the light. And he spent the remainder of his life traveling the known world to tell the world about the light of the World (see John 8:12 and 1 Cor. 15:8–10).

The gospel’s irresistible effect is the reason Paul went on missionary trips and voyages across tumultuous seas. His travels put him in unspeakable amounts of danger, distress and brushes with death. But Paul could not help himself. He was compelled to tell others about the love of Christ.

In the same way, though you were once on a path away from God, you now have a miraculous story of conversion. You’ve met the Lord and have been changed by Him. Just as He did for Paul, God wants to put your life on a different course for His glory. When we truly examine the depth of God’s love and the truth of His gospel, we will become compelled to share it with others, just as Paul and so many other fearless believers have throughout the history of the world. {eoa}

Pastor Dudley Rutherford *is the author of* **Compelled: The**

Irresistible Call to Share Your Faith (available on Amazon) and the senior pastor of Shepherd Church in Porter Ranch, California, which has campuses in Agua Dulce, West Los Angeles and the West Valley. You can connect with Dudley at and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram