

## Harvest? What Harvest?

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Sorry I haven't been more active lately (well, I have been, just not here on this page!). This musing was prompted by a recent post by our friend Guy Muse (The M Blog) in Ecuador. Guy posted an article entitled "20 Reasons why we don't see harvest". Just like I'm doing now, Guy was reflecting on an excellent post by our mutual friend Felicity Dale who blogged on "15 reasons we don't see harvest". Guy added 5 more reasons to come up with an "even 20".

Not being a terribly creative dog and of limited abilities, I thought I would simply "piggy back" on what Guy and Felicity have done and make some comments of my own concerning the lack of any significant harvest in the Western Church. Some of these thoughts have appeared in other articles (hey, I told you I wasn't very creative), but here I want to apply them to the topic of "Why no harvest?".

**1. Post Modern Skepticism.** I've beat this drum before and I'll continue to beat it until we get it. Specifically, the Post Modern skepticism of our culture has infected the Church and is rotting us from the inside out. A growing number of people in the Church genuinely believe that there are other ways to God and that adherents of other faiths will make it to heaven without conversion to biblical faith in Christ. If that's true, who needs missions or a harvest? Combine this with the rising number of "practicing universalists" in the Church who believe that God loves everyone so much that He will find a way to get them into heaven, even if He has to break his own clear Scriptural rules and concoct some form of "post-mortem salvation". In an article in Relevant Magazine posted on-line, Scot McKnight writes: "My own estimation is that somewhere near 75 percent of my students, many if not most of them nurtured in the church, are more or less universalist. They believe in Jesus and see themselves as Christians but don't find significant problems in God saving Muslims and Buddhists or anyone else on the basis of how God makes such decisions. The Baylor Study of Religion, if my memory is correct, asked a question or two that reveals that an increasing number of American evangelical Christians think the majority of humans will be saved." If you want more evidence of this, read Jon Meacham's article on Bell in TIME on-line. Simply put, how do you raise up a generation of missionaries and martyrs in such a pervasive cloud of doubt and skepticism?

**2. Thinking that better training equals a bigger harvest.** Let me be clear. Training can often times be helpful, but the people attending "training weekends" are (generally speaking) those already motivated to make a difference and simply need to work on their "technique". As a college student during the tail-end of the Jesus Movement I cut my teeth on Campus Crusade for Christ leadership training and went on to spend 2 years on staff before heading off to Seminary. So I am well aware that training can be helpful. But my spiritual hair was on fire long before I ever attended a Campus Crusade Leadership Training Class, Group or Conference. Why is there no harvest in America today like there was during the Jesus Movement? The correct answer certainly isn't "training" or a lack thereof (if you need some excellent organic house church training, go to [www.CMAResources.org](http://www.CMAResources.org)). Training alone will not turn "Laodicean believers" into fire-breathing missionaries. That requires a burning coal fresh from God's altar. If I must ever choose between a "trained" person and a "passionate" person, I'll choose passion over training. Why? Because the passionate person can be "trained" and his passion productively channeled, but a trained person can't be made passionate. Passion is "caught" not "taught". Either your heart and your hair are on fire for God or not. On a side note, lots of "training" is what you get from a Church dominated by "teachers". Teachers have never encountered a problem which (in their opinion) couldn't be solve with more and better teaching. Likewise, prophets have never met a problem which couldn't be solved with a "fresh word from God". Apostles have never encountered a problem which couldn't be resolved with a better strategic understanding of what God is doing and a renewed commitment to pioneer new ground. Well, hopefully, you get the point. Where more training is the answer to all the Church's woes (including a bigger harvest), teachers are in charge. And when the only tool in your tool box is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. I'm just sayin' . . .

**3. Equating "harvest" with "reaping".** Consider the words of the Apostle Paul, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*" (1 Corinthians 3:6-8) Simply put, everyone wants to "reap", but no one wants to sow or water. Can God allow us to reap where no one has sown? Certainly He can. He's God. But that is the "exception". Paul is giving us the "rule". If we want a harvest, then we need to pray for laborers willing to sow and water, possibly without seeing any fruit in their generation. In an excellent article on the changing role of missionaries in Ecuador, Guy Muse points out that the current harvest being experienced in Ecuador among house churches represents the fruit of many years of sowing and watering by others in that country. Some laborers will sow. Other laborers will water. Still others may harvest. But Jesus is Lord over all their labors. On a side note, American Christians have been taught to equate "evangelism" with "closing the deal", sort of like a door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman. When our "prospect" doesn't immediately respond to our sales pitch with an order to buy (i.e., pray to receive Christ on their doorstep) we pack up our traveling display case and move on to greener pastures, leaving a trail of confused and bewildered non-Christians wondering what that little episode was all about. Spend

more time sowing and watering and less time trying to sell vacuum cleaners and maybe we'll see more and better fruit.

**4. A Failure To Understand Seasons of Spiritual Awakening.** Yeah, I know. I'm a broken record on this theme (or in today's jargon I guess I'm a looped mp3 file or something). The point is simple, historical and unmistakable. Men's training and techniques notwithstanding, the history of the Western Church for the past 300 years demonstrates that the greatest periods of church growth - both in numbers and percentages - has occurred during times of historic spiritual awakening. Such periods, on average, witnessed between 5 and 7% of the population of the affected areas making first time professions of faith in Christ, usually within a span of 2 or 3 years (localized percentages could be much higher). In an America of over 300 million people, this would mean a dramatic influx of between 15 and 21 million new believers in 36 months or less. That's what I call a harvest . . . and a discipleship challenge. For more on this topic see my book, "Preparing For The Coming Spiritual Outpouring", available on Amazon.