

A GREAT HARVEST

Dates: Sunday 2nd February to Sunday 23rd February 2025

Purpose of this campaign: To set the heart and the 'why' behind our Vision Focus for 2025. This month, we will be exploring what Jesus says about the harvest in each of the gospels. Each week we will unpack a passage from one of the gospels, and some key principles and applications.

Key Scripture:

1 Chronicles 16:23-27 (MSG)

²³⁻²⁷ Sing to God, everyone and everything!
Get out his salvation news every day!
Publish his glory among the godless nations,
his wonders to all races and religions.
And why? Because God is great—well worth praising!
No god or goddess comes close in honour.
All the popular gods are stuff and nonsense,
but God made the cosmos!
Splendour and majesty flow out of him,
strength and joy fill his place.

Key text for this campaign:

Matthew 9:35-38

Mark 2:14-17

Luke 15:1-7; 25-32

John 4:31-35

- **Week 1:** A Great Harvest
- **Week 2:** Position Your Life Amongst the Harvest Mark
- **Week 3:** Rejoice as Heaven Does // Luke
- **Week 4:** The Fulfilment of the Worker

Key Historical Context, Commentary or References:

Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV)

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”

The situation of the harvest in 1st century world is more than meets the eye. The expansion of farmland alongside the expansion of alternative work opportunities (other than farm work) culminated in the exact scenario Jesus speaks about. There is plenty to harvest, but there are no workers willing to do the harvesting.¹ In other words, the metaphor of the harvest was very timely for Jesus’ audience. More than this, we can see that the idea of the harvest is deeply woven throughout the Old Testament. In many moments, the language is used to mark times of the year (e.g. Judges 15:1, Ruth 1:22). It’s also used quite frequently in prophetic literature as a picture of fruitfulness and also judgement (e.g. Jer 12:13, Jer 51:33, Hosea 6:11, Joel 3:13). The metaphor that Jesus chooses here is far more than painting a nice picture.

See https://biblehub.com/topical/h/harvest_metaphor.htm for more insight on this.

Throughout these campaign notes we will continue to unpack key context points for each passage which will situate us within the text. Please make use of external source links to help you have a rounded insight!

The Process of the Harvest

In the first-century world, grain crops were *very* important. When autumn rains had softened the ground, furrows were made by a simple wooden plough pulled by an ox. Seed was scattered by hand and the spring rains brought on the crop. To reap, farmers either pulled out the plants whole or else cut the stalks with a wooden sickle which had sharp flints set into the cutting edge. The stalks were carried to a hard level piece of ground known as the threshing-floor, where either the hooves of oxen or an ox-pulled wooden sledge was used to separate the straw from the grain.

During the period of evening breeze, the threshed stalks were winnowed by tossing it into the air with a pronged fork. The wind blew the light straw away from the floor, where it could be picked up and tied into bundles later for firing domestic ovens. The winnowing was completed by the use of a shovel, by which means the dust was removed too. The pure grain was then measured and bagged for use or sale.

Other Resources:

Harvesting Grains overview Simple: <https://biblediscoverytv.com/history/2021/harvesting-grains/>

Deeper Study of Agricultural Background: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-testament-studies/article/agricultural-background-of-the-harvest-logion-in-matthew-9378-and-luke-q-102/F2A63FE16129AD792AECE6AEFCBA5EB2>

Week 1: A Great Harvest

Date: Sunday 2nd February 2025

Key Point of this week: The harvest of salvations in this city is plentiful! We must have a heart for the harvest. We have to come to a place of care and concern for the lost.

Key Scripture:

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."

Historical Context, Commentary + Supporting References:

After Jesus' mammoth Sermon on the Mount, Matthew begins to lay out incredible signs and wonders. He heals the sick, calms a storm, delivers people from demons, restores sight and hearing, and, oh yes, raises the dead! At the end of Chapter 9, we get a glimpse into a crucial moment for Jesus' ministry. What we see in this passage is that "The works of Jesus in 8:1–9:35 [as above] must become those of his disciples in chapter 10."²

Without Moses (Num 27:17) or a king (1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron 18:16) Israel had been said to be "without a shepherd," or ruler... the shepherd's ministry included feeding (34:2-3), healing (34:4) and bringing back the lost sheep (34:4-6). Matthew 9:36 thus also implies that those charged with shepherding Israel, its leaders, were failing. - Craig Keener, IVP Bible Background

Supporting points to Key point (3-5 points max):

A Right Heart for the Harvest

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus was often moved with compassion for the crowds, as we see in verse ³⁶. He cared deeply about their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The foremost of which was their salvation. Jesus literally says that his mission was "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Paul also says in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

God's heart is made abundantly clear in the most well-known scripture in our day; "16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Just like Jesus, we must have a heart for the harvest. We have to come to a place of care and concern for the lost.

We must ask God to soften our heart toward those who are lost, broken, or struggling, so that our actions are driven by **love** rather than **obligation**. People who don't know Jesus are not just KPIs to hit, they are people to be deeply loved by showing them the love and care of Christ, so that they would come to know His salvation hope for themselves.

“The way we do apologetics (defend our beliefs) looks different when we are motivated not by our desire to conquer the other person, but by our genuine love and compassion, and by our desire to see people discover God's life-giving truth.” — *Preston Perry, How to Tell the Truth: The Story of How God Saved Me to Win Hearts—Not Just Arguments*

This calibration in our hearts can only come about by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. As individuals, we are not called to reach EVERYONE. But God can (and will!) highlight a certain demographic to you that He has called you to reach. It could be certain age groups, life stages, careers, cultural or social groups, or even other religions. Let's let God quicken our hearts to the harvest that is around us!

A Right Perspective for the Harvest

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “**The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few;**

Our perspective of the harvest is that it is plentiful, FULL of people who are ready to not just hear the gospel, but to repent and receive salvation. If our perspective is introspective—focused on ourselves—we will never see the harvest God has prepared!

Paul had this perspective in how he lived his life. See below as he writes to the Romans:

Romans 1:13

¹³ I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

When you look up at your world around you, what do you see? Do you see a field of people who “aren't the religious type” or “are too far gone”, or do you see opportunity for God's redemptive power to do something miraculous in the lives of people you love?

A Right Prayer for the Harvest

³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

Before sending out His disciples, Jesus told them to pray for labourers for the harvest.

We must pray regularly for God's guidance, strength, and boldness as we live out His mission. Not only that, but Jesus says that we must pray for more workers. We aren't praying for the **harvest**, but for **workers**.

As we prayerfully come to God, convinced that his gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”, we will be renewed in fervour, zeal, compassion, wisdom, and love towards those who God has called us. We are the workers! Our prayer should be that God would raise us up, alongside his whole church, to see the city of Sydney a city for Christ.

2025 Key Scripture:

1 Chronicles 16:23-27 (MSG)

²³⁻²⁷ Sing to God, everyone and everything!
Get out his salvation news every day!
Publish his glory among the godless nations,
his wonders to all races and religions.
And why? Because God is great—well worth praising!
No god or goddess comes close in honour.
All the popular gods are stuff and nonsense,
but God made the cosmos!
Splendour and majesty flow out of him,
strength and joy fill his place.

Connect Questions

2nd February 2025

A Great Harvest

Dear Connect Group leader, Happy New Year! With our C3 SYD vision this year for a great harvest, we want to ensure we as connect groups keep our focus on what Jesus came for – “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Connect Groups have an important role to play in this vision, so please consider how your cg can help play a part in reaching lost people.

We are looking forward to hearing your stories of how people are gathering, growing and going this year. Please remember to pop ‘go’ stories in the ‘Go’ text box of your cg report. There are also places to note how your members are gathering and growing in the ‘other info’ section of the report next to each person’s name. We love reading these stories.

We pray this Campaign will help refocus and equip your group toward the life-giving and Christ-centred mission of reconciling others to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thank you and God bless you as you help your cg members be ‘on mission’.

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(please choose a few from the selection below):

GATHER:

- Have one or two of your cg members recount their salvation journey/moment and what it was like and how they felt.
- In Matthew 9:36 we see Jesus had compassion for the crowds because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
- Discuss as a group how we can have that same heart of compassion for the lost in our community? (E.g. praying for our hearts to be softened so we’re motivated by love, rather than obligation; praying each cg meeting for unchurched people in our worlds and for labourers to be sent into the harvest etc.)
- How does the new start to the year provide a ripe spiritual harvest in our city?

GROW:

- One of our ‘grow’ areas at C3 SYD is to be ‘on mission’. As believers, we gather to church and connect group. Is there someone in your world who doesn’t know Jesus you can bring along as you gather to church and connect group? Pray and ask God to reveal who this is.
- Can we set a faith goal as a group to each invite one unchurched person to church or connect group? (Perhaps the person God revealed for you to pray for in the point above.) Record the names somewhere so your cg can pray for them regularly.
- Before sending out his disciples, Jesus told them to pray for labourers for the harvest as it is plentiful. Discuss how your group members perceive the harvest? Plentiful or not plentiful? Do you see people who are ready or closed off?
- How can you grow in sharing the gospel?

GO:

- What were some of the things God did in your life in 2024 that you can share with others to describe our living and powerful God?
- Are there new groups of people you will have contact with this year? If people usually need to know that you care about them before hearing about Jesus, how can you intentionally build a relationship with them?
- As a group, discuss if you'd consider running *Go Training* (see link below), or *Foundations* in your cg this year? If so, please let your Connect Coach or Overseer know.

CONNECT GROUP RESOURCES:

Consider running *Go Training* in your connect group. (It's a fantastic four-session cg video course.)

<https://vimeo.com/user/3822411/folder/21955347>

Week 2: Position Your Life Amongst the Harvest

Date: Sunday 9th February 2025

Key Point of this week: Jesus had an incredible capacity to be with people but not of them. He was not thinking for a second that they couldn't be in his presence. The people weren't repelled by Jesus (who is literally grace and truth) and he was not at all compromised.

How do you position your life amongst the harvest like Jesus did?

Key Scriptures:

Mark 2:14-17

¹³ He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

¹⁵ And as he reclined at a table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Historical Context, Commentary + Supporting References:

The passage is vague regarding whose table is mentioned and who is hosting the dinner. However, Luke 5:29 is clear that Levi has invited Jesus and others for a great feast. They recline at the table, laying on their sides or bellies with their legs behind them, leaning on their left arms and eating with their right hand.

Tax collectors are easy enough to identify, but Levi also invites "sinners." **This is a technical term given by the Pharisees to Jews who do not have the time or inclination to attempt to follow their excessive rules.** They aren't necessarily breakers of the Mosaic Law, although undoubtedly some are. "Sinners" are also called "people of the land." Sinners were the outsiders, the marginalized.

These "tax collectors and sinners" are identified in contrast with Jesus and His disciples. The ungodly Levi and his friends are dining with the Son of God and His followers. This contrast angers the devout Jewish religious leaders and other people in the community (Mark 2:16). Yet Mark notes "there were many who followed" Jesus, including people who typically would not be identified as religious. The appeal of Jesus has spread far beyond the synagogue to the "sinners" in the community who respond positively to His message.¹

Supporting points to Key point:

Jesus reclines with these people, associating with them in an intimate way by sharing a meal with them. "Pharisees and legal teachers did not consider it proper to eat with those excluded from the religious community; besides such dangers as eating untitled food, **intimate table fellowship connoted acceptance.**"² He postures himself **among** them, making every effort to embrace them without compromising his convictions.

¹ [https://www.bibleref.com/Mark/2/Mark-2-15.html#:~:text=These%20%22tax%20collectors%20and%20sinners,\(Mark%20%3A16\).](https://www.bibleref.com/Mark/2/Mark-2-15.html#:~:text=These%20%22tax%20collectors%20and%20sinners,(Mark%20%3A16).)

² Craig Keener, IVP Bible Background.

Below unpacks 3 key questions we should ask to see where we are currently positioned, where we can be positioned, and what we do once we're there.

Who do I know?

Being a witness to the gospel starts in your own backyard. Do a stock take of all the people in your world and all the circles you are in, and you will find that God has people in your world who you are called to represent Jesus to, helping to guide them into his Kingdom.

Jesus intentionally spent time with people others might have avoided—tax collectors, sinners, and the marginalized (Mark 2:15-17). It's important to position ourselves to build relationships with people outside our comfort zone. Let's look for ways to serve and connect to our local community in genuine ways.

What do I do?

Be Hospitable! Hospitable people are generous with their time, money, and attention. Showing hospitality to someone communicates care.

Get to know people's worlds. Remember details of people's lives, follow up on how things are going. Put reminders in your phone if you need to!

Thinking for the new believer – how to be amongst them without being of them.

Jesus ate with the tax collectors and sinners. He wasn't engaging in the things that compromised his convictions because he didn't care to 'fit in'. He was doing something with them that was a shared human experience – eating! You can do life with people **without** having to engage in compromising things. Jesus had his inner circle. Make sure you have an inner circle of people who love Jesus and can support you on your journey.

What do I say?

Have ears to hear people's needs. Moments of need are opportunities for God to provide.

Be their greatest champion. Encourage them as you think Christ would.

Sharpen your testimony. Your story is a great way to start.

You don't need to have all the answers to start conversations.

Listen to the need in people's hearts and fill that need with Jesus. It's as simple as, "hey can I pray for you I believe God can heal you, or I believe God can help you with your family."

"Fear wears many faces. Some of us are afraid to engage the world with the truth of God's gospel because we're afraid of confrontation. There are others who are afraid of what could become of their reputation, peace, and paycheck. Then there are the sincere types who want to speak but don't know what to say, maybe because all they know of the Bible is how it explains that Christ died for the world, and to them, that knowledge doesn't seem good enough. **Whatever the cause, fear has to die for dead people to learn how to live.** This may come across as intense, since fear is a constant reality for most of us. **So perhaps we need to be reminded of the fear beneath the fear, which is that most of us don't believe God is really with us.** That he's sent people into the world to teach others all that he commanded and then left them to fend for themselves. But recall the testimony of the entire Bible. When has God ever sent his people to do anything of eternal value that he did not do with them?" — *Preston Perry, How to Tell the Truth: The Story of How God Saved Me to Win Hearts—Not Just Arguments*

Week 3: Rejoice as Heaven Does

Date: Sunday 16th February 2025

Key Point of this week: We need to have a good attitude towards new believers coming into our church. A heart that rejoices at the one, rather than grumbling and complaining like the older son.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 15:1-7; 25-32 (Older Son Focus)

Luke 15:1-7

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance..."

Luke 15:25-32

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

²⁵"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Historical Context, Commentary + Supporting References:

IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND LUKE 15:1-7:

v1: Tax gatherers and sinners were excluded from the religious community. Proverbs (1:15; 13:20; 14:7) warns of the danger of spending time with sinners (cf. also Ps 1:1). But it is clear in this text that the moral influence is from Jesus to the sinners, not the reverse.

v2: Pharisees and legal teachers did not consider it proper to eat with those excluded from the religious community... **intimate table fellowship connoted acceptance.** "Grumbling" could remind biblically knowledgeable ancient readers of Israel's unbelief and murmuring in the wilderness.

v3-7: Jesus addresses three parables in Luke 15 to his religious accusers (15:1-2), **in effect turning the tables on them and demonstrating that they were not truly God's friends.**

v3-4: Because shepherds often worked together (cf. e.g., 2:8) or with cowherds in the same area, this shepherd could probably leave his flock with his companions **without endangering** the flock.

v6-7: The moral of the story is: As the shepherd's friends rejoice when he finds that which was lost, so do God's friends rejoice when he recovers what was lost to him. Thus, Jesus' accusers, who resent his fellowship with sinners he seeks to restore, may not really be God's friends (15:1-2).

Supporting points to Key point:

Jesus is speaking to the pharisees and scribes who were self-righteous, grumbling over the fact that Jesus sat with sinners and not with the seemingly "righteous". Jesus speaks directly to them, saying that "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Jesus is being cheeky here, since the reality is that there is no righteous person who needs no repentance. ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus is requiring them to take a good hard look at themselves. Heaven rejoices over repentant hearts, not self-righteous ones.

He then gives a **practical example** of this principle by telling the story of the Prodigal Son, even though we focus on the prodigal son, the focus of the story is actually the heart of **the older brother** that is angry when the son comes back. So, let's look at what we can learn from the older son's reaction to the returning prodigal.

Don't Gatekeep the Gospel

⁸ But **he was angry and refused** to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

Gatekeeping Definition - The activity of trying to control who gets resources, power, or opportunities, and who does not.

Without even knowing it, we can *passively* gatekeep the gospel. We can become so insular in our faith community that we fear the disruption of new people coming in. In turn, our value on those who are new to faith and to church drops out. New Christians become "other" or almost a threat, since they are given greater attention.

Don't be jealous or envious when as a church we are giving more attention to newborn believers. Like a baby when it's first born, new Christians NEED more attention.

Will you stand by and grumble, or will you jump in and help disciple them?

Grace is Scandalous

³⁰ But when this son of yours came, **who has devoured your property with prostitutes**, you killed the fattened calf for him!

You can hear the tone of the older brother's voice, he is deeply offended and hurt! He doesn't even want to associate with his brother.

But the only way for the prodigal son to be restored was to come back to the father. There was no other way. In the same way, the **only way** for people to be reconciled to the Father is through Jesus. To some this can be offensive, but the grace of the gospel is scandalous!

The exclusivity of the gospel is made even more scandalous because of the grace of God which restores and reconciles **all** people who turn to Jesus.

“The radical message of the gospel is that our problem—sin—is worse than anything we could ever imagine. But also, that the solution—grace—is better than anything we could ever deserve. Through repentance and faith, any sinner no matter how great the offense receives access to God through the cross of Jesus Christ.”³

See also the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20.

Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² **It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.**”

Every time someone repents and receives the gospel, that is someone who was dead COMING ALIVE! How amazing would this moment have been if the older brother could have had the same heart as his father. He would have had a tone of joy just like the Father did, “**my brother** has come back, **what an amazing day it is!** You killed the fattened calf for him!”

We must always celebrate and be glad when someone receives salvation and starts their journey with Christ. This is a time for the body of Christ to come around individuals and walk alongside them to grow in their maturity in Christ. This is ALL our jobs, not just the work of a few people!

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/scandal-sheer-grace/>

Connect Questions

16th February 2025

Rejoice as Heaven Does

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

GATHER:

- Share any stories you might have of unexpected people coming to Christ and how you felt about it.
- If we aren't to avoid the godless but don't want to "walk in their ways", what does it look like practically to love the sinner but not the sin?
- We as connect groups never want to become 'gatekeepers', fearing the disruption of new believers/people into our connect group (cg). Why is it important to include new believers, or new people, in our cg, and to not think we are 'full'?
- If we think our cg is 'full' or too big, how can we accommodate new believers/people into our cg? (This will be an opportunity to discuss multiplication - starting a new cg out of your existing group, e.g. have your assistant/faithful members to host a new group elsewhere on Connect Week etc. Please speak to your Connect Coach or Connect Overseer about this)

GROW:

- Take time to imagine yourself as the older brother. Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and show you anything you might need to change.
- Who are the new Christians or almost-Christians you know that need extra attention? How can you help them?

GO:

- In life we get lots of opportunities to forgive people. While we may have boundaries in place, do you still earnestly pray that they will come to repentance before God and be saved?
- Who are the leaders of this world that are "lost sheep" to pray for?
- It is an amazing day when someone repents and turns to the Lord. What do you do during an altar call at church? Do you fidget/think about lunch, or do you pray for those who might be wrestling with a response? Discuss. (We encourage you to pray during altar calls and rejoice when people respond.)

Who feels confident in sharing the gospel or telling their story of salvation to unchurched people? Perhaps you could read a book about how to do this and practice sharing the gospel/telling salvation stories in your cg. (Please see resource list below.)

Connect Group Resources:

Preston Perry, How to Tell the Truth: The Story of How God Saved Me to Win Hearts—Not Just Arguments

J. John, The Natural Evangelism Course (These books were handed to CG Leaders in the past. We still have some in storage if you need one. Please email connect@c3syd.church and we will do our best to get one to you before we run out.)

Consider running *Go Training* in your connect group. (It's a fantastic four-session cg video course.)

<https://vimeo.com/user/3822411/folder/21955347>

Week 4: The Fulfilment of the Worker

Date: Sunday 23rd February 2025

Key Point of this week: The sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in the Christian life is to fulfil the will of God, which is that none would perish.

Key Scriptures:

John 4:31-35 (Jesus' reaction to Samaritan woman encounter)

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴² They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Historical Context, Commentary + Supporting References:

IVP BIBLE BACKGROUND JOHN 4:31-38:

v31-33: Ancient teachers sometimes used food as a metaphor for spiritual food. In the Old Testament, this metaphor sometimes related to one's calling (Jer 15:16; cf. Ezek 3:1-3).

v35: "Lifting up one's eyes" was a common Old Testament expression for "looking" (e.g., Gen 13:10; 18:2; 24:63-64), although it became rarer in later Hebrew. The main wheat harvest ran from mid-April through the end of May; the barley harvest, which made fields "white" was in March. In Palestine, the gap between sowing and reaping was normally four to five months. Some scholars think that Jesus here cites a Jewish proverb that refers to four months between planting and harvesting.

v36-38: In this context, Jesus and the Samaritan woman sow, and the disciples see the harvest (v. 39). Verse 37 seems to adapt a popular proverb based on ideas such as Ecclesiastes 2:18—changing an image of sorrow to one of joy.

Supporting points to Key point:

When the disciples offer Jesus' food – what is Jesus' response? Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that his heart and soul are **full** after his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Should we, as followers of Jesus, live in this same paradigm as He did? Yes! Although we cannot "accomplish" the work of the cross, as Jesus was most likely referring to here, the New Testament and Jesus himself speaks over and over again about how we are to continue to outwork God's plan in this age of the church by doing the will of Him who has sent us.

Matthew 20:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (ESV)

Fed through Obedience.

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Jesus compared His obedience to God's will to physical nourishment. Just as food sustains the body, fulfilling God's purpose nourished Jesus. This shows that his **deepest satisfaction** came from aligning His life with the Father's mission, not from physical needs or desires. We have all had that moment when we were so passionate about something and so involved that we forgot to eat. Temporary things become unimportant when you are doing the things that have eternal impact.

Jesus perfectly modelled what it means to prioritize God's will over personal comfort or ambition. For believers, it's a call to examine our lives and ask: Is our ultimate "food" to do God's will? Are we finding sustenance in fulfilling His purpose?

Jesus lived with an eternal perspective, valuing spiritual work over temporary needs. This points to the idea that life is about more than survival—it's about participating in God's redemptive plan.

You find joy when you are doing what God has called you to do, serving in God's house, being a part of the connect, sharing Jesus with people. These eternal moments bring great joy, purpose and fulfillment to our lives as we follow God.

The Samaritans are Coming!!

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

While the disciples were focused on the temporal situation of food, Jesus' knew that something big was about to happen. Jesus knew that the encounter with the Samaritan woman was about to become a "great harvest" of Samaritans coming to meet with Jesus.

The disciple's world was about to be turned upside down and they are unaware of it. We need to be ready for the harvest, be aware of the season we are in as a church that we are about to see new believers flooding into our churches. Are you ready?

Are you ready for the kind of people God will bring into this place? Are you ready to be a bit offended? Are you ready for the mess?

CALL TO ACTION

In the broader context (John 4:35-38), Jesus invites His disciples to see the "harvest" of souls ready for salvation. His statement serves as a challenge to his disciples, and to us, to focus on eternal matters and join in God's work, recognizing that it has lasting significance.

We as a church are stepping into a Great Harvest, it's time to get excited to see our family members returning to Christ, new believers coming in and joining this community. It does mean it might get messy, it means it

may mean change, but it will be the most exciting days when we see God move powerfully. It's time for all of us to get involved, do our part, let strength and joy fill his place and start singing and telling of his glory!!

1 Chronicles 16:23-27 (MSG)

²³⁻²⁷ Sing to God, everyone and everything!
Get out his salvation news every day!
Publish his glory among the godless nations,
his wonders to all races and religions.
And why? Because God is great—well worth praising!
No god or goddess comes close in honour.
All the popular gods are stuff and nonsense,
but God made the cosmos!
Splendour and majesty flow out of him,
strength and joy fill his place.