



*"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)*

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## THE HARVEST TRULY IS GREAT

Forty years ago, the passage from Luke 10 that sits underneath The Harvester logo formed the beginnings of this publication. In sending seventy disciples out, Jesus told them,

*...The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. (Luke 10:2)*

It has been approximately 2,000 years since this directive along with Jesus' great commission to teach and baptize in all

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THE HARVESTER

141 County Road 474

Woodland, AL 36280

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



nations (Mat. 28:18-20). Among countless other efforts in these centuries since, The Harvester has been just one small attempt to sow and harvest.

The Harvester has always been part of my life, because it was there before I was born. Forty years ago and with a near-newborn (my sister) in the house, Ray McManus used a type writer to meticulously create the first issue of his attempt to labor in this field through a paper periodical. A couple of years later, I came along. For the majority of my childhood, I saw many things with my dad and this big box of papers that sat in the house once a month without fully understanding or appreciating them. That's what The Harvester was to me for many years: A big box of papers. Hundreds of papers would be folded by hand. Carefully printed address labels were attached, one-by-one. Colorful stickers sorted stacks of 50 papers at a time. Technology made some things easier. I remember an automatic paper folder, but it didn't fold up to Ray's standards. Also, it was loud. Personal computers certainly made writing and formatting the content easier. Still, changes in how this box of papers was created, prepared, and sent out were inevitable.

Although not a military family, we seemed to move every 3 years or so. Towns changed, houses changed, and as a result, printers and post offices for The Harvester also changed. Through it all, I'm ashamed to say that Ray did the majority of the work himself. He always preferred to have other writers' articles in The Harvester, and many great articles indeed were contributed. But, when it came to the physical labor with the big box of papers that entered the house each month, it was almost 100% his labor. I could make the excuse that I was just a kid, but there was more I could have done. As I hit teenage years, I did fold a few hundred papers here and there. Still, my dad would rarely ask for help. There were a few periods I recall where our congregation at the time would come together and help with tackling the big box of papers. I remember many people from Hokes Bluff (Gadsden, AL) sitting in our living

room folding papers. There was also a time when once a month, an old ping pong table was pulled out at Sunhill Road (Birmingham, AL) to fold papers. I'm sure not every paper was folded with the crisp symmetry that Ray's meticulous nature preferred, but there comes a time when one just needs help. That time came for my mother, my sister, and myself about twenty-one years ago.

After Ray died from injuries sustained in a car wreck, we were left needing to decide what to do about the big box of papers. The decision to continue it wasn't too difficult. How to accomplish the work was the hard part. We asked for help in the form of a few members from each of the surrounding congregations. Once a month, several people came together and worked on this big box of papers. Over the twenty-one years since, this group of laborers has grown, changed, lost, and learned many things over this big box of papers. Younger ones have grown, married, and moved elsewhere. Some have passed on. Perhaps the most saddening is that the congregations they once represented have fallen apart or otherwise dissolved. Now the majority of this core group resides in one congregation. Still, we fold and we stamp this big box of papers.

At seventeen, only then did I start to appreciate the labor of the harvest. The aspects of creating, preparing, and mailing The Harvester were things I took for granted. Ray would not want the attention, but I have trouble seeing how he managed this big box of papers on his own. Yet, somehow he made it work. Through all the work and changes life brings, the important part is the message to which The Harvester points in Luke 10:2.

Laboring in the fields contains many aspects and involves many people. In John 4, Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman, effectively convincing her that He is Christ (John 4:7-26). The disciples had gone to find food, now returned, and were astonished that Jesus had been talking to her - likely because of their Jewish-Samaritan conflicts. The woman spread word

of Jesus through the city, causing them to come find Jesus (John 4:28-30). The disciples display an attitude we find ourselves in: Distracted by life. Here, the distraction is mealtime. They do want to make sure Jesus has eaten, but Jesus reminds them of God's work (John 4:34) and God's work takes many members in John 4:35-38:

*(35) Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

Open your eyes and see the work to be done around you. The fields are ready to harvest, but do you see that you can labor there? If we're focused elsewhere, distracted by life, or self-absorbed in pleasing ourselves, we're going to miss these opportunities. Most of the time, such opportunities are not accompanied by flashing neon signs that say "Work here to harvest." How did the opportunity that Jesus mentions in verse 35 come to be in the first place?

*(36) And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. (37) And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. (38) I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:36-38)*

In this case, Jesus created the opportunity by His conversation with the Samaritan woman. She furthered the work by spreading word of her interaction with Jesus. So, Jesus planted a seed, and now the plant has grown with fruit ready to harvest. If the disciples would pay attention, they would notice where they could labor in reaping the results of Jesus' initial work. Sometimes, you have to create your own opportunities. Laboring in the field is not restricted to just reaping the ripe harvest. Seeds have to be sown and some take longer to grow. Sometimes, other people have started the work and

our job as laborers is to continue it. Although we can provide the labor, God gives the increase: *“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”* (1 Cor. 3:6)

In creating, identifying, and working on the seeds or the fields, our duty is to point to the original good sowing of seed, Jesus. From the parable of the weeds, Jesus noted *“...He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;”* (Mat. 13:37). Such has been the goal of The Harvester for forty years now. This small publication started as one man’s attempt at laboring and creating an opportunity for nineteen years. There have been many changes and lessons learned about its labor in the twenty-one years since his death. The tools we use, the way people communicate, and even the number of congregations have shifted. Some fields have grown thin, some have disappeared, but some have emerged in unexpected places. Yet, the command remains the same. The harvest is still great.

The Harvester has never aimed for numbers or results, but rather laboring in the field. Looking back on my thirty-eight years of The Harvester’s forty years, it’s clear that the folding, stamping, writing, and mailing of that big box of papers were never the point. They were acts of sowing small seeds into soil that we don’t always see. Over the years, we have heard from a few who were encouraged or taught by something they read in these pages. Many others we will never know about. Much of the harvest of spiritual work is hidden from our sight. A single mailed issue may have been read once, tucked away, shared with a neighbor, or quietly thought about during a difficult time. Many issues may be immediately discarded. That’s ok. Because of the potential for a seed planted in a heart we may never meet, we will continue to labor. Not all soil is ready for seed all of the time (Mat. 13:4-9). As Jesus clarified his parable in Matthew 13:19-23:

*(19) When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is*

*he which received seed by the way side. (20) But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. (22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (23) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

The way side was the trampled ground that served as walking paths between fields. Such soil becomes packed from the amount of foot traffic, and the seed cannot penetrate. It's not impossible, but heavy tilling will be required to loosen this soil that has hardened under the weight of the world. In stony places, there is initial excitement for the Word. Without a foundation of soil in which to root, however, this seed can only grow so much. This seed will need another environment, or the surrounding environment will need drastic work. Among thorns, the heart takes in the Word but serves two masters. If serving the world (the thorns), the resources for seed growth will be overtaken by the weeds (Mat. 6:24). Herein we see many ways we can labor. Throwing seeds out indiscriminately is one thing, but we may need to loosen some ground, sift out some rocks, and pull some weeds.

Even when The Harvester was essentially a one-man opera-

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

The Harvester

141 County Road 474 \* Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221\* Email: [theharvesteronline@gmail.com](mailto:theharvesteronline@gmail.com)

Web Page: [www.churches-of-christ.org](http://www.churches-of-christ.org)

tion, the work was not done in isolation. There are many thanks to give for the past 40 years with too many to name by name. Many different printing services have printed, and several post offices have mailed this small publication. Many congregations and individuals have contributed to these printing and mailing costs. Many brethren have contributed articles. As noted, many members of congregations have directly worked on the paper over these forty years. Perhaps the largest thanks goes to the “regulars” of the monthly folding and stamping session. They were ready to labor when we were in our greatest need.

We ask for nothing other than to please provide any mailing address updates. If you think of anyone who may read even just one of these publications, we will gladly add them to the mailing list. They may not be ready to accept the messages in *The Harvester* now, but they may be one day. We never know what labor may open the door and prick the hearts of those around us, but we have to be ready with the message Peter provided to such a group in Acts 2:

*(37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

If you are holding this paper, sometime in the past forty years someone cared enough about the addressee to ask this be sent to them. Likewise, this paper was typed, folded and stamped with care and hope that it may have some effect. Labor in the Lord’s fields rarely looks dramatic or glorious. It often looks like ordinary people choosing to work quietly in whatever way they can. The harvest fields remain white. Whether we sow, water, or reap, may we enter into the labor with determination.

BEN

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<b>DATES</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>SPEAKER</b>
Jan. 30 - Feb. 1	7pm Fri. & Sat., 10am & 2:30pm Sun.	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Andrew Smith & Kyle Vinson

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which tribe of Israel looked after the religious aspects of life?
2. What did Samson find in the carcass of the animal he had killed at a later time?
3. In the parable of the grain of mustard seed, when it becomes a tree birds come and do what?
4. When Jesus told his disciples to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees", to what was he referring?
5. According to Thessalonians, what will happen to the believers alive at the return of Christ?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What did Abram do when he heard that Lot was made a prisoner of war?  
FOUGHT TO RESCUE HIM (Gen. 14:14-16)
2. Whose son did Elijah raise from the dead?  
THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH (1 Kings 17:9-22)
3. What did Jesus and the disciples have for breakfast when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection by the Sea of Tiberias?   BREAD AND FISH (John 21:13)
4. Of what did Peter and John heal the man at the temple gate called Beautiful?   LAMENESS (Acts 3:2)
5. In Revelation, what is the "number of a man"?  
666 (Rev. 13:18)