

Discussion Guide: Spiritual Harvest

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NIV)

January 5, 2003: "Laboring for a Spiritual Harvest" by Anatole Gloukhovsky, Rector for Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary. Brother Anatole began his sermon with an update on the progress of God's blessings upon the ministry and outreach of the UETS. In his update he commended the people of College Park Church for their willingness to pray, to give and to go so that the ministry of Christ might be strengthened in the Ukraine. We were richly blessed by God through our partnership with you as you prayed for our ministry, gave generously to meet our financial needs, and your willingness to give of yourselves and send people to visit, encourage and help us in our ministry.

Brother Anatole then read and preached from Matthew 9:35-38, challenging us to continue in our efforts in reaching the world for Christ.

Anatole pointed out how Jesus went through *all* the towns and villages and that the historian Josephus (~ 37-100) had determined that there were 204 such towns and villages in which Jesus visited during his ministry. As Jesus went out into the world around him, Anatole described the work that is before them in the Ukraine and challenged us to look around in our home town to see where God might be leading us in our "labor for a spiritual harvest."

As Jesus had compassion on the people he saw in the crowds, we should also have compassion upon those who are "harassed and helpless" without Christ or struggling in living their life for Christ in a meaningful and fulfilling way. Many people today are perplexed, downcast and distressed in their lives and looking for answers.

We need to be more than just followers of Christ. We need to be fully functioning and effective disciples for Christ who put what they learn into practice.

Anatole challenged us that as we look out upon the harvest we should pray, give and go.

- *pray* for God's leading and direction in reaching out to others
- willingly *give* of ourselves and invest ourselves in the lives of others
- *go* into the harvest fields and bring them into fellowship with Christ.¹

Discussion Questions:

1. As we survey our local harvest area, who are the people of our Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria to which God may be leading us in our "labor for a spiritual harvest?"²
2. Who are these people, where do they live and how might we go about compassionately reaching out to them?
3. What are the characteristics of a fully functioning and effective disciple for Christ?

¹ John 20:21

² Acts 1:7, John 20:21

Editor's Note

Here are several resources that you might find helpful in your search for characteristics of fully functioning and effective followers/disciples of Christ.

Resources - Books

World's Bible Dictionary - Student Edition, written by Don Fleming³ and published by World Publishing 1990 (ISBN 0-529-07309-9). In his definition for *disciple*, Don states...

"True disciples of Jesus Christ put into practice what they have learned from him and maintain a consistent obedience in doing what he had commanded them to do (Matt 11:29; Eph 4:20; John 8:31). They also give visible proof that they are Jesus' disciples through practicing genuine love towards each other and through bearing spiritual fruit in their lives (John 13:13-15, 35; 15:8). This practical love extends beyond the group of fellow disciples to *all* people everywhere (Matt 5:44-46). Jesus' disciples are, therefore, to take his message to others in order to make more disciples, no matter who the people are or where they live (Matt 28:19-20)." Don Fleming (1990)

The Connecting Church - Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community written by Randy Frazee, Senior Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Published by Zondervan Publishing House 2001 (ISBN 0-310-23308-9) and copyright by the Willow Creek Association. Randy describes 10 beliefs (what we need to know), 10 practices (what we need to do), and 10 virtues (what we need to be) that are descriptive of those who desire to follow Christ. When asked, "Does it really make a difference?" He replies...

"The answer is most definitely yes! Consider a study by George Gallup Jr., who randomly polled a cross section of people regarding their feelings about twelve Christian beliefs and practices.⁴ He then asked a series of follow-up questions about Christian virtues, such as experiencing joy, forgiving others who deeply hurt you, and showing compassion. His findings were shocking. Those who said they strongly embraced these twelve beliefs and practices showed a significant increase in personal joy, the ability to forgive others, and a willingness to show compassion when compared to the people who said they strongly disagreed with these beliefs and practices. When the Christian life is tried, it work!" Randy Frazee (2001)

Resources - Internet Links

Core Competencies:

<http://pub43.ezboard.com/ftthedialogueboxfrm19.showMessage?topicID=59.topic>

<http://www.pantego.org/resources/30core.html>.

³ Page 97 *World's Bible Dictionary* Published by World Publishing in 1990 (ISBN 0-529-07309-9). Don Fleming has had wide experience as a missionary and Bible teacher both in the West and in the East, and is well known for his ability to explain the Bible writings concisely and simply. He has over twenty books to his name, and his writings have been published in almost a dozen languages. His home country is Australia, where he is engaged in teaching and evangelism ministry that extends overseas, chiefly to the countries of Asia and the Pacific.

⁴ See George Gallup Jr. and Timothy Jones, *The Saints Among Us* (Harrisburg, Pa.; Morshouse, 1992), 10.