

Praying for harvesters means paying for harvesters.

>>How did the apostle Paul deal with the churches he shepherded? Answer: They were consistently called to progress and grow.

>>Should we coast, as if we have entered into retirement, enjoying all the good things the Lord has done? Answer: No church that pleases the Lord has a reputation of coasting or slowing their pursuit of the Gospel ministry.

**6 Churches Scripture Gives Goals to: to Strive, Excel, Develop, and Keep on Building:**

1. **Corinth:** recently saved pagans. 1 Cor. 1:5 “enriched in Him,” V7, “not lacking in any gift,” V7, “eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Goal #1: To put their money where their mouth is. 2 Cor. 9:1-5, Paul is reminding them to prepare the gift they promised to Jerusalem. V8, grace would abound to them in everything. Goal #2: Clean the church from unholiness. 2 Cor. 12:20-21, Paul wanted the church to repent of sin and to end immoral practices. This is a call to the leaders to insist on purity, Titus 2:15. Goal #3: Be more orderly. 2 Cor. 13:11, “be restored,” is to “put yourselves in order.” 1 Cor. 14:33, God is not a God of confusion but of peace. The church should be orderly.
2. **Galatia:** Goal #1: Repent and defend the Gospel. Gal. 3:1, Paul concerned that they were bewitched by a gospel of works. Gal. 5:7, they started well and must go back to salvation by faith in Christ alone. Goal #2: Stop fighting. A self-righteousness of rules rather than walking in the Spirit. Gal. 5:15, stop devouring one another. Goal #3: Walk in the Spirit, Gal. 5:16-17 and please the Lord, 5:22-24.
3. **Philippi:** they supported Paul while in prison, Phil. 1:5, 4:14-15. Goal #1: love one another more and more, 1:9. Abound in the knowledge (word of God) and discernment (wisdom to live it out). Goal #2: stop selfishness in the church. Phil. 2:1-5, fulfill Paul’s joy by having the mind of Christ and preferring others more important than yourself. Be unified in the work of the Gospel, Phil. 4:2, Euodia and Syntyche. Goal #3: trust God to provide all your needs, the Philippians supported Paul while in prison, Phil. 4:15. God would provide for them, V19.
4. **Colosse:** In chapter 1 the church is commended for their faith, love for all the saints, fruit they are bearing and multiplying in, and love in the Spirit. Goal #1: grow the church, 1:9-10. To walk worthy (1:10), have full knowledge of God’s word (1:10), and multiplying. This word “multiplying” is in reference to size, number, influence, and impact. Goal #2: Disciple the church, Col. 2:6-7. Being rooted = growing deep. Being built up= growing high and tall. This is knowing the Scriptures as it comes in exposition (Biblical Theology). It also means knowing topics that are spoken of throughout Scripture (Systematic Theology). Goal #3: leverage the church. 4:2-3, be devoted to prayer for an open door to preach/share the Gospel and walk in wisdom to persuade outsiders to come to Christ.
5. **Thessalonica:** They are a model to the other churches in their labor of love (1:3), willingness to suffer (1:6), and an example to all the churches in the Roman Empire (1:7). Goal #1: greater knowledge of the truth, 3:9-10, providing them what is needed to complete them. Goal #2: greater love for one another, 3:12, “abound in love for one another... and for all people.” To excel all the more, 4:9-10. Goal #3: greater efforts at obedience, 4:1. As they left their idols (1:9), they should excel still more, never coasting.

6. **Philadelphia:** Rev. 3:8, they have little power and have kept the word of God and not denied the name of the Lord. There are no admonishments, but they are given one goal. Goal Given: V11, to “hold fast to what you have, so that no one would take your crown.” They are to be given an open door for the Gospel, V8.

#### Applications from this Sermon

1. Elders are seeking the Lord’s will in adding harvesters. Way #1: Giving a jump start or initial offering to cover a small drop in giving and shore up the general fund. Way #2: Giving more on top of current giving for the purpose of adding a full time elder in 2025 who would oversee discipleship and counseling.
2. Regarding More Harvesters. Way #1: that men (young and mature) would desire to be trained to be shepherds. Pray for a new crop of men. Way #2: For young women to marry these men and to make and keep a godly home for the glory of God.

#### **Further Discussion and Application**

The church can take two very powerful steps in the Gospel ministry. One is offensive. The offensive church is training men and sending them out to proclaim the Gospel. The other is defensive. The defensive church is growing harvesters from within to keep and establish a faithful church. With many elders holding each other accountable to the Gospel and providing sound teaching and leadership, a church can flourish for generations. In these two aspects what has been your passion to see God do in the churches you have attended? Can a church do both? How does a church pass from one generation to the next? What is your part in that work and honor for God’s glory?

How is sin and self-seeking poison to the church? How is unity developed in a church? What principles of unity are necessary and godly for the church to practice and hold to in order to have and keep a healthy church? How is discipling and discipline useful in guiding the church? What are Christ’s commands for the members and elders in the church? How can we grow in unity and purpose? How does Phil. 2:1-18 help us make a list of attributes of a faithful and a trusting servant in God’s will for my life? How can I have confidence in His work in my life?

How can men and women prepare the younger boys and girls to prepare themselves for a life of ministry and to live godly lives in the church? Titus 2 gives the “to do” for teaching in the church between members. What should we be teaching men and women to do?