



The Where and How of the Father's Field!

Bible Study

[Please provide: musical accompaniment if singing; Bibles, hymnals, and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

One of the objectives of the LWML Convention in Des Moines, Iowa (June 25-28, 2015) was:

➤ Convention attendees will be "Equipped to sow, nourish, and reap in the Father's field."

So "where" is the Father's field and "how" does the Father sow, nourish, and reap His harvest of believers? The following study of God's Word will attempt to answer those questions as we look at "where," in the four arenas (i.e. mission fields) given to us by Jesus from Acts 1:8, and the "how," with seven mission responses. This is a result of showing our faith by what we do from James 2:17-18.

Opening Prayer: God of truth and love; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, hear our prayer for those who do not know You, that they may come to a saving knowledge of the truth through Your Holy Spirit and that Your name may be praised among all peoples of the world. Sustain, inspire, and enlighten Your servants, like us, who bring them the Gospel. Bring fresh vigor to wavering faith; sustain our faith when it is still fragile. Continually renew missionary zeal in us and in the Church; raise up new missionaries in our Church who will follow You to the ends of the world. Make us witnesses to Your goodness; make us full of love, strength, and faith – for Your glory and the salvation of the entire world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The "Where" of the Father's Field

Let's take a closer look at Acts 1:8 to understand "where" to sow, nourish, and reap. "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*"

Jesus talks about four places, regions, or arenas (i.e. mission fields) where witnessing will take place and sowing, nourishing, and reaping through the Holy Spirit will happen. This was Christ's mission plan for His disciples. Where are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

And the sowing, nourishing, and reaping happens only when whose power is in us? _____

Have you ever thought about how these four places, regions, or arenas (i.e. mission fields) differed from one another at the time of Christ? List some of those differences here:

To give a witness of one's faith through the Holy Spirit by sowing, nourishing, and reaping the same way in each place, region, or arena (i.e. mission field) would be difficult because of the language and cultural differences in each location as well as the location itself. Let's look at some of those differences.

“... my witnesses in Jerusalem ...” (Acts 1:1 to 6:7) A city many scholars say had a population of 40,000 to 50,000 people on a daily basis at the time of Jesus and would swell to 250,000 people during festival times like Passover. The people living in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus were people:

1. who in general spoke the same language and had a culture similar to the disciples; and
2. who lived in the same neighborhoods.

What are some of your Jerusalem opportunities for witnessing today? To sow, nourish, and reap empowered by God's Holy Spirit where you live and share the same language and culture with people?

“... and in all Judea ...” (Acts 6:8 to 8:3) It designates the part of Palestine adjacent to Jerusalem and inhabited by the Jewish community after their return from captivity. The evangelization of Judea began during the earthly life of Christ, who journeyed through the land more than once and had friends there. It was one of the first provinces to benefit from the preaching of the Apostles. Judeans had heard the discourse of St. Peter, when he went forth from the upper chamber. (Read Acts 5:16.) The people living in Judea during the time of Jesus were people:

1. who in general spoke the same language and had a culture similar to the disciples; and
2. who lived farther away in other towns and cities.

What are some of your Judean opportunities for witnessing today? To sow, nourish, and reap empowered by God's Holy Spirit in other towns and cities farther away from where you live, but with people who share the same language and culture as you do?

“... and Samaria ...” (Acts 8:4 to 9:31) Samaria extends for about 40 miles from north to south and 35 miles from east to west. It is bounded by Galilee on the north and by Judea on the south; on the west is the Mediterranean Sea and on the east the Jordan River. In New Testament times

Samaria was under Roman control and was to some extent a center for Hellenistic culture. Jesus had little to do with the Samaritans, but, in the apostolic age, Greek-speaking Christians preached to them; this preaching marked a transitional stage in the extension of the church into the Gentile world. The people living in Samaria during the time of Jesus were people:

1. who spoke a different language and had a different culture than the disciples and those in Jerusalem and Judea; and
2. who could live farther away in other towns and cities; however, many also lived in Jerusalem and Judea.

What are some of your Samaria opportunities for witnessing today? To sow, nourish, and reap empowered by God's Holy Spirit where you live (and maybe in other towns and cities) but with people who speak a different language and have a different culture?

"... and to the end of the earth ..." (Acts 9:32 to 28:31) The Church's mission is headed to Rome and beyond. Dr. Martin Luther wrote these words, "This promise is to be found in all the prophets, namely that through the Seed of the woman the blessing will come upon all nations; . . . the Holy Spirit is given through Christ to all who hear the Word of Christ and believe in Him" (AE 8:254) (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1831). The people living to the end of the earth during the time of Jesus were people:

1. who spoke a different language and had a different culture than the disciples and those in Jerusalem and Judea; and
2. who lived in other countries far away.

What are some of your end of the earth opportunities for witnessing today? To sow, nourish, and reap empowered by God's Holy Spirit to people in other countries far away and who speak a different language and have a different culture?

The "How" of the Father's Field

Now let's take a closer look at James 2:17-18 to understand "how" to sow, nourish, and reap. *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

James is speaking here about, "Faith cannot be separated from the response of works because the works naturally flow from the faith God plants" (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 2137). So flowing from the faith that God plants in us is the "how" to sow, nourish, and reap through seven mission responses (add your own thoughts in the blank spaces):

1. **Learning** (Through the reading and study of Scripture)
 - about God’s view of the world
 - about God’s mission for the world
 - about God’s church and what it is doing in the world
 - _____
 - _____

2. **Praying** (Read Matthew 26:42, Ephesians 6:18-20, James 5:16, and Philippians 4:9-11 for examples of prayer.)
 - for unbelievers you know
 - for yourself, to be a better witness
 - for missionaries, national workers and leaders, and their families
 - _____
 - _____

3. **Giving** (Read Mark 12:41-44 and/or Luke 21:1-4, the widow’s mite.)
 - to LWML mites for mission projects
 - to your congregation, district, and Synod mission work
 - _____
 - _____

4. **Telling** (Read Acts 14:24-28, Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch.)
 - fellow members about God’s mission
 - what you’ve learned by being involved in God’s mission
 - _____
 - _____

5. **Sending** (Read Acts 13:1-3, Barnabas and Saul are sent.)
 - by identifying family, friends, and other people you know who might have the gifts to serve as missionaries
 - by caring for missionaries and their families through writing, hosting, and asking for other ways to help
 - _____
 - _____

6. **Going** (Read Matthew 28:16-20, The Great Commission.)
 - wherever the Lord leads you in your four arenas (i.e. mission fields), to your neighborhoods, cities, and towns, and to the end of the earth

- “Send us Lord, to make disciples in Your name in accordance with our callings in life” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1650).

- _____
- _____

7. **Celebrating** (Read 1 Peter 2:9, a holy people.)

- that Jesus is alive ... He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!
- that we are the children of God, His chosen people!
- that through the power of His Holy Spirit, He uses us in His sowing, nourishing, and reaping!
- _____
- _____

Closing Hymn: Sing or read “Lift High the Cross” LSB 837, LW 311.

Closing Prayer: O God our Father, as You sent Your Son, send us into Your mission fields with Your compelling love. Help us by Your Spirit to share Your Gospel of love and forgiveness, of mercy and peace, of compassion and care, by using us to sow, nourish, and reap. Revive Your Church and save Your people through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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