



# Christian Report

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## FIELD HANDS NEEDED

**J**esus went through all the towns and Villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” *Matthew 9:35-38*



The fields are white unto the harvest...

Jesus’ statement to his disciples in the above passage that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few brings to mind at least three questions:

1. Where is the harvest?
2. What is the harvest?
3. Who are the laborers?

### Question 1: Where is the harvest?

If we are to use Jesus’ example in this passage to define the location of the harvest, we must include first of all, towns and villages, along with their synagogues in which Jesus taught both religious leaders and the ordinary people in attendance (v 35). Second, we should conclude that there is a harvest wherever Jesus saw crowds of needy people (v 36). Third, the harvest field might be described as being ‘out there’, since Jesus spoke of ‘sending’ laborers into the harvest field. In other words the ‘harvest’ is wherever there are people.

### Question 2: What is the harvest?

On a macro level, the harvest is defined as a ‘field’. It’s interesting to note that in the passage, the terms

harvest and field are singular. Perhaps Jesus was referring to God’s called out remnant people as a single entity, what we might call the universal invisible church. If so, it’s a really BIG field!

On the micro level, we can say that it’s a ‘people’ field, in the same way we might be driving through Illinois and see miles and miles of corn fields. The harvest Jesus spoke of is made up of people – people who are ‘harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.’ Where there is no shepherd to protect and care for the sheep, they are harassed by the wolves and are often become lunchmeat, as it were. In spiritual terms, everyone living apart from Christ (the good Shepherd) is being constantly ‘harassed’ by sin and ‘helpless’ to do anything about it. The difference between sheep and wolves on one hand, and people and sin on the other is that sheep are afraid of angry wolves and people apart from Christ love their sin.

### Question 3: Who are the laborers?

Our passage from Matthew ends with Jesus telling his disciples to ‘ask the Lord of the harvest (God) to send laborers (field hands) into his (God’s) harvest field.’ Jesus didn’t tell his disciples that he would be sending them (which he did), he told them to pray that more laborers be sent! It seems to be a given that field hands be sent by God. Jesus didn’t say ‘pray for more workers’, he said ask the Lord to send more. *(Cont. on Page 3)*



Following Jesus is countercultural in every society, though often in different ways.

In some cultures, it's the Scriptures' teaching on marriage and sexuality that offends the culture. In others, it's the emphasis on grace and generosity and giving away power. Sometimes it's Jesus' emphasis on the equality of all peoples as made alike in the image of God. Sometimes it's God's authority over His creation, defying our innate desire to be our own gods.

As I've heard it said, Jesus is an equal-opportunity offender. But He offends each society in unique ways.

One way to think about this struggle is through the biblical metaphor of "Babylon." In Scripture, "Babylon" doesn't just refer to an ancient Near Eastern city. It represents the spirit of defiance against God. The spirit of Babylon is alive in every nation on earth.

One of the great tragedies of the church in the West is how often and consistently we have conformed to Babylon.

Consider, for instance, slavery. I'm thankful to live during a time in which slavery seems unthinkable horrific. But historically, slavery has been alarmingly common. Nearly every culture in history has practiced slavery—because every culture in history was led by sinful, fallen people. And sinful people use power to exploit others. It is difficult to comprehend the moral horror of the tens of millions of people—people, those made in God's image—who have been bought and sold as property.

But what makes the tragedy of slavery in the West particularly shameful is how Christianity was often used to defend it. The gospel undermines the very nature of slavery. To participate in slavery, Christian slave traders had to willfully blind their eyes to the faith they professed. Our gospel teaches that all people are equal because they are made in the image of God, that Jesus died for all equally alike, and that it is the responsibility of the strong to lift up the weak, not oppress them, like Jesus did for us.

And yet, we find that Christians in the West were not only complicit in slavery but a defender and proponent of it. In conforming to Babylon, the church left a legacy of damage to both our society and the church. We still haven't fully recovered.



**It's easy, today, to look back and condemn slavery. Well, you think, we learned our lesson there. We're not going to do that again. It's much harder to see the church today making many of the same mistakes in new ways. Babylon is still around.**

There's a famous line attributed to the Reformer Martin Luther:

*"The courage of the soldier is tested in how well he stands where the battle is the hottest, not in how brave he postures himself where the battle has passed."*

We must be prepared to take our stand—not at those places where we are celebrated, but where doing so puts us most out of fashion with the culture around us. We must be prepared to be told that we are "on the wrong side of history." How? By caring less about what side of history we're on and more about which side of Jesus we're on. By listening to his loving, offensive, countercultural rebuke to all of us.

*Are We Conforming to Christ or Culture? Article by JD Greer in Outreach Magazine. © Outreach Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.*



A basic tenet of the Christian Military Fellowship is that God has chosen the Bible as His primary means of communicating with us -it is His Word! In the words of the Apostle Paul, therefore:



*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)*

Why? Because as he also said:

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

Key to a vibrant, robust, fruitful relationship with God is our attitude toward His Word (see Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1, 19 and 119; John 14:21, 23; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 2:1-3 and many others!).

These “Discipleship Training Objectives” (DTO’s) are intended to get us into the Bible, studying for ourselves. They can be used for personal study, one-to-one discipleship/mentoring, and in small groups.

Each lesson is a self-contained unit that discusses a specific topic, beginning with ‘Salvation’. Each lesson contains passages relevant to its topic. Each lesson has a simple and challenging study guide that helps you explore the lesson topic. Each lesson also has a study form that teaches you how to study ANY passage of scripture!

If you are asking if they really help you grow spiritually, I can tell you they really helped this old soldier grow! The first time I worked through them (30+ years ago while in Special Forces) it was just me, the DTOs, and a Bible. Maybe that’s why I STILL use them and recommend them to anyone and everyone who is serious about growing in their faith.

If you’re up for the challenge and/or want to talk about them, contact us at (800) 798-7875 or email us at [office@cmfhq.org](mailto:office@cmfhq.org).

*(Continued from page 1)*

Then there is a matter of the qualifications required for working in God’s harvest field. Well, since the job defines the qualifications, and in our passage we have Jesus proclaiming the good news of the kingdom (the gospel), might we say that God’s laborers are those who know his gospel? And since Jesus looked upon the crowds with deep compassion should compassion for the lost be the mark of the most effective worker?

Now that we have described the laborer in the harvest as a compassionate proclaimer of the gospel, we need to ask if qualified ‘field hands’ are limited to those who are specially gifted preachers, teachers, evangelists? **We say no, and here’s why:** There are at least two groups of people in the New Testament who provide us examples. The first group is includes those who personally encountered Jesus and then told others. The woman at the well, the man born blind, and the women who went to Jesus’ tomb come immediately to

mind. There are many more.

The second group would be those who, after Jesus’ resurrection, and beginning at Pentecost, heard the gospel and believed – several thousand in Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost followed by many, many more, in Judea, Samaria, and parts beyond. Read the book of Acts for an account of how and where the gospel was proclaimed, carried by gifted and empowered preachers, teachers and evangelists, but also shared by ordinary folks; Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, soldiers and civilians, male and female, who had heard and believed the gospel.

Fellow Gideons, some of those ordinary folks are US!

**One last question: Are you a field hand, or just a consumer?**

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## We’re Recruiting for Local “Field Hands!”

Christian Military Fellowship exists to help you fulfill your calling in Christ to share the hope that is in you with those with whom you interact as part of your daily life.

Briefly, CMF Local Leaders will start, and sustain a CMF fellowship made up of members of the military community in their area. While CMF is an “all ranks” ministry, our area of focus is on enlisted personnel. Local leaders institute and lead the military community in Bible study, prayer, and fellow-

ship, keeping in communication with participants. They should also seek to build relationships with the chaplains and the chaplain team. Toward that end we encourage you to study and complete the CMF briefing material:

**Orientation (Brief #1)** that shares an overview of the CMF ministry.

**Developing a Local Ministry (Brief #2)** that shares the Biblical foundation for and delineates the logical steps in beginning

your local ministry.

**Pray and Plan (Brief #3)** that shares the most important activity of all! Asking Jesus what He would have you to do and then being obedient to follow His leading in your local ministry.

If you choose to begin this process, please reach out to us at: [leader@cmfhq.org](mailto:leader@cmfhq.org). *We’re praying for you!*

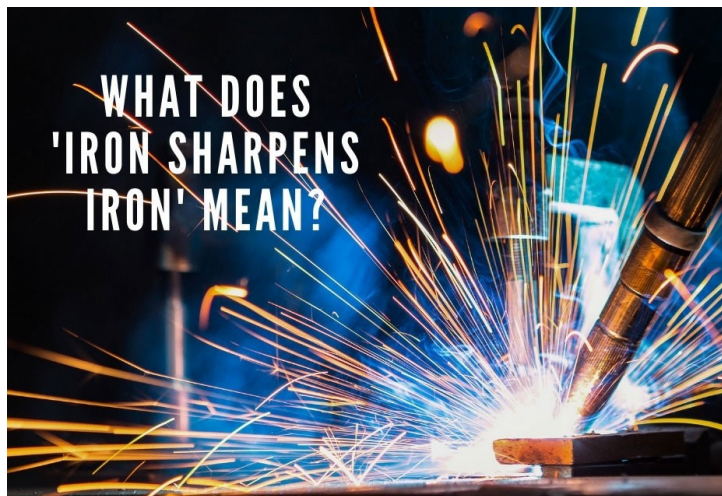
I shared last month that as hard as fellowship can be, we are told in Hebrews 10:25 to not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. The second reason, in our series, to come together is possibly one of the scariest sounding: As Proverbs 27:17 says it, iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. In many versions it stops there: one man sharpens another. In other versions it says one man sharpens the countenance of another. So why is this scary? If that's your question, then let's explore this thought.

Iron sharpens iron. I have enjoyed watching television series where iron-workers, blacksmiths, compete in their craft. Occasionally on various shows I have seen dramatic footage of iron striking iron. Sparks can fly. Iron tools can chip, at best, and shatter, at worst. That is how I envision this proverb.

He also gives various gifts to various people in our faith community and tells us to come together so that through the use of each one's gifts, we will benefit one another. So we come together. That's when it gets hard. We go into a church or a ministry with high ideals of how comfortable, easy, and peaceful it will be to work with other believers. We are all-too-often surprised to find conflict. There are heated exchanges in which sparks fly between us, often burning those around us. We can feel chipped away at—or at worst, broken. We are ready to step away, hesitant to stay, and wary to try again. We can be left possibly feeling no need to go to fellowship when we can 'get all we need at home, alone, studying the Word for ourselves and having private praise and worship.' I trust I am not just speaking of my own experiences here. But the Bible shows us the value of these exchanges as we refine each other's rough edges and sharpen each other to fine precision.



But there are two ways that have I seen iron sharpened: the metal-on-metal as we have talked about here; or metal rubbed on a whetstone. Sometimes Christ, the Rock, comes alongside us with the Living Water that He also is, and He refines us through His Word, and through other believers. As is true with all change, it can be uncomfortable. But, the stone is smooth; the rhythm controlled. The water soothing.



We are imperfect people (or as the Bible characterizes it, unfinished, incomplete). We're in process. And we can fail one another. I have been hurt in fellowship, have you? I have had a praise leader tell me to sit down and be quiet because, in his words, I'm not as good as I think I am. When I went to the chaplain's wife for advice she spoke important words to me when she said, "You have the right to be offended. I am offended for you." That day she sharpened my countenance, she was the water on the stone that soothed my heart, cooled my temper, and helped to refine my chipped-away-surface even more.

In closing I pray that God will continue to soften our hearts to the thought of drawing into fellowship. Whether we have a comfortable, joyous interaction, or a striking and heated interaction or a soothing and cooling and healing interaction. We need to come together to let God work through us to bring us closer to completion, closer to the perfection we long for.

Is there something we can be praying about with you? CMF welcomes your prayer requests at [prayer@cmfhq.org](mailto:prayer@cmfhq.org)

*Mary Heller is a Navy Veteran, wife of a retired US Navy Sailor, and a mother of four, the youngest two whom she continues to homeschool through their now-high school years. Mary has long been active in ministry and is past-president of the Ft. Meade, Maryland, Chapter of PWOC and has also served other capacities, most often Vice President of Spiritual Life. Her passion is studying and teaching God's word. Mary currently serves as Vice Chair of the CMF Board of Directors.*

## CHRISTIAN MILITARY FELLOWSHIP

An Indigenous Ministry • Discipleship • Prayer • Community • Support  
Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to announce that MinistryWatch has listed CMF as one of their "Shining Light" Ministries. To become a MinistryWatch "Shining Light," a ministry must have earned a 5-star rating on MinistryWatch's 5-star financial efficiency scale. Further, those ministries on this list have a Transparency Grade of "A." That's MinistryWatch's highest transparency grade. Out of 700 ministries, only 13 meet these strict criteria.

<https://ministrywatch.com/ministrywatches-annual-list-of-shining-light-ministries/>

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