

ARE YOU PREACHING FROM THE HARVEST?

Do your actions match your sermons?

Pastor, I want to ask you a simple question:

Are you in the harvest?

You probably believe the harvest is plentiful. You may preach about it regularly. Your church may have ministries specifically designed to reach people beyond your walls. But this question is more personal.



When was the last time you spent meaningful time with someone who doesn't know Jesus simply because you share life with them?

This is harder for pastors than we sometimes acknowledge. The gravitational pull of church leadership constantly draws you inward. Staff meetings, sermon preparation, counseling, leadership development, hospital visits, planning meetings, Sunday services, small groups, and church events can consume nearly every available hour. You can spend your entire week surrounded by Christians while preaching to them about reaching people who aren't.

Eventually, you begin experiencing the harvest secondhand.

You read the research, study the demographics, listen to podcasts about cultural change, attend conferences about reaching the next generation, and read books about people who are leaving the church. All of those things may be helpful, but they are no substitute for sitting at someone's table and hearing their story.

That is where you hear their questions. You learn their language. You encounter their pain. You discover what they actually think about Christians, church, faith, God, and Jesus. Without those relationships, it becomes surprisingly easy to design ministry for people you don't actually know.

That is why being in the harvest matters. If you are asking your people to build meaningful relationships beyond the church, they need to see those relationships in your life. If you are encouraging them to listen, cross boundaries, and reveal Jesus in the ordinary places where they already live, your life becomes the clearest demonstration of what you mean.

You can't ask people to do what you aren't willing to do yourself.

And this goes deeper than willingness. You can't ask people to make the harvest a priority in their lives when it isn't a priority in yours.

I know what some pastors are thinking.

"I don't have the time."

"I don't have the margin."

I understand.

Pastoral ministry can consume every available hour you give it. There will always be another meeting, another person who needs you, another sermon to prepare, another problem to solve, another responsibility demanding your attention. The church will gladly fill every open space on your calendar.

But if the harvest is as important as Jesus said it is, then this is important enough to make the time and create the margin.

You can't stand in front of people on Sunday and ask them to make room in their lives for relationships with people who don't know Jesus while your own calendar has no room for those relationships.

At some point, the harvest has to become more than something you believe in, preach about, pray about, and encourage others to enter.

It has to show up on your calendar.

That may mean saying no to something inside the church so you can say yes to someone outside it. It may mean protecting a morning at a coffee shop, joining something in your community, eating regularly at the same restaurant, getting to know your neighbors, or simply creating enough margin in your life for relationships that have nothing to do with your pastoral responsibilities.

Actions carry more authority than words. Your people notice what gets your time. They notice what excites you. They notice who you eat with. They notice the stories you tell. Over time, they learn what really matters to you by watching your life.

Imagine the difference between repeatedly telling your congregation, *"You need to build relationships with people who don't know Jesus,"* and simply telling them about your friends who don't know Jesus.

"I was having coffee with a friend this week, and she said something I haven't been able to stop thinking about."

"A guy I know at the gym asked me a question about faith that I didn't know how to answer."

"I realized during a conversation this week that I was answering a question nobody was asking."

These aren't evangelistic success stories. They are glimpses into a life being lived among people who see Jesus, faith, and the world differently than you do.

Now you aren't preaching about the harvest.

You are preaching from it.

There is a difference.

Before you ask your church to move toward the harvest, go there yourself. Spend time with people without turning the relationship into a strategy. Listen to them. Learn from them. Eat with them. Become a regular somewhere. Make friends. Let people who don't believe what you believe become part of your actual life.

Then stand in front of your congregation and talk about the harvest. Your words will carry a different kind of weight because your people will know you aren't pointing toward some distant place and telling them to go.

You are inviting them to join you somewhere you already are.

Your congregation doesn't need another sermon telling them the harvest matters. They need to see that it matters to you.

So before you ask, "*How do I get my people into the harvest?*" ask the question that comes first:

Am I there?