

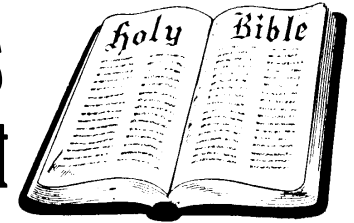
The planter and waterer both must preach the word of God. As noted above, the reason it says that “*God gave the increase*” is because God’s word was preached by both men. This is just as important today as it ever was. Preaching that leaves people in the sins that God calls them to repent of is not the word of God (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30). Specifically, in our day much preaching done to those in adulterous marriages does not call them to repudiate such marriages. (By contrast, Paul’s preaching called people at Corinth out of adultery, 1 Cor. 6:9-10.) Others are saying that those who preach such teaching are not to be treated as false teachers, thus muddying the water on what should be a matter clear to all (Isa. 5:20). Neither of the brethren in the previous sentences are preaching the word of God on the matters in question (cp. Matt. 19:9; 2 Jno. 9). Let us all recognize that if **God** is to give the increase, his word must be preached. It is good and right for brethren everywhere to earnestly desire and even demand that God’s word be preached on all subjects in every place (Matt. 28:19-20).

God is the judge of the planter and waterer. “*Each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor*” (1 Cor. 3:8). All workers should look for the reward that God gives. This is the surest guard against preaching to please men — whether it be one’s hearers or the brethren who read his reports. This is the best assurance that our studies with contacts or our sermons will be from the book of God. It will help us keep the proper perspective: “*But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord*” (1 Cor. 4:3-4). God’s judgment will not be based on how effective a given laborer is or how productive he is. (God gives the increase, not man.) It will be based on that laborer’s work in harmony with the will of God (1 Cor. 3:8;.

CONCLUSION

Mission work can take one to strange, exciting, and dangerous places. It can bring him into contact with literally all kinds of people (such stories would fill a book). There are a variety of methods one might use. One might go as a planter or a waterer. He may go as a planter and, with time, do the work of a waterer. Let us all resolve to think of ourselves as ministers of God and, as such, serve him as preachers and teachers of his word. Therein will he receive the glory he deserves. Therein will we receive the reward he has promised.

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Planting and Watering

Steve Wallace

What would a farmer say is more important, planting the seeds in the spring or watering them during the time they are growing? Obviously one could argue that it is important that you get the crops planted while another could say that sowing was meaningless activity without the important work of watering and nurturing.

What is more important in our work of preaching the Gospel? Converting people to Christ or working with them to put off the old man and put on the new? (Col. 3:5-10) If a person is baptized and then not taught “*to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you*” (Matt. 28:20), what does it profit him? By contrast, our denominational friends show the uselessness of nurturing unsaved people when they teach error on how one is saved and then work to cause their “converts” to grow. What profit is there in such nurturing if their students never obeyed the true Gospel in the first place? (Matt. 23:23) Indeed, both works are equally important.

Paul, in the midst of showing the Corinthians their error in following certain preachers, wrote: *What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.* (1 Cor. 3:5-8)

Paul was a “planter.” He went to places wherein no church existed, converted people and established churches (Acts 18:5-11; 19:8-10; Rom. 15:20). Apollos was a waterer. He followed Paul in the work in Corinth and established brethren in the faith (Acts 18:27). The type of work they did is especially similar to that done by missionaries today. In saying this we do not wish to slight anyone planting or watering in a place where long established works exist. Having said this, let us note some pertinent applications of the above text to those involved in or aspiring to do work in foreign fields today.

Planters and waterers fall into the same class. They were both “*ministers through whom ye believed*” to the church in Corinth. To ele-

vate one work above another will bring rivalry, faction, envy, and jealousy. One who is the first preacher known to have worked in a certain country or city may be tempted to esteem himself in some special way because of his efforts in getting there and making the first contacts. Another brother may follow him in the same place and stay for 4-5 years and be tempted in other ways. Likewise, brethren might tend to elevate one man above another. In truth both are doing the work of bringing people to final salvation through the preaching of the word of God. As such they are both simply “*ministers of Christ*” (1 Cor. 4:1). God gives the increase through the power of his word (Rom. 1:16; Isa. 55:10-11). “*So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth increase*” (1 Cor. 3:7). Glorifying God through our common efforts and brethren glorifying God for such efforts is the proper reaction to both the work of planting and watering (1 Cor. 9:16; Gal. 1:23-24).

Planters and waterers are both necessary. It is futile to argue over which work is more important. In our day the danger exists that one might gain ascendancy in his own mind or among brethren by being one of the first to go to a certain country to preach the Gospel. While all of us hope and pray for the spread of the Gospel to all the world, the simple truth of the present situation in Eastern Europe, which may be a helpful mirror in which to view other foreign works, is that there is as great a need for men who will move to places where churches already exist and work on establishing them in the faith. Both planters and waterers deserve commendation for their work today.

One kind of preaching is not more important than another kind. There is the danger that brethren might emphasize the preaching of first principles to the exclusion of preaching that causes converts to grow (Heb. 6:1-2). The errors that young Christians believe or sins that they practice can remain in their lives in the absence of serious “watering.” The whole counsel of God must be preached in every church today just as Paul preached it at Ephesus (Acts 20:26-27; cp. 1 Cor. 4:17). Likewise, positive preaching, while being easier on the preacher and more pleasing to many listeners, is not more important than negative preaching. Each must be given its place if God’s word is to be preached. One sins through negligence if he does not preach negatively (2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 2:3). If a true church is to be established in any given field one kind of preaching cannot be elevated above another.