

God is Doing Just What Jesus Said!

About four months ago I wrote an article entitled, Does it Seem Like No One is Interested? (see article just above or see it as a blog post [here](#)). I explored some key phrases from John including, “my Father is working until now, and I am working,” “no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,” “they will all be taught by God” and “everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (John 5:17; 6:44-45). I noted that, even though we sometimes think not many people are interested in Christ, the Scriptures say God is constantly working on people, and those who hear and learn from him are drawn by him and do indeed approach Christ. My purpose was to encourage us when it seems no one is interested and also to discourage us from contriving unhealthy means of bringing people to Christ. I suggested that, in light of these sayings in John, a healthy approach is to “prepare ourselves, watch, and pray for opportunities” in hopes that God may entrust into our care some of the precious people he is drawing to Christ.

While I was reflecting on those Scriptures four months ago, the truth of God’s working became more vivid to me. That led me not only to write the blog post but also to “continue steadfastly in prayer ... that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ” (Colossians 4:2-3). On multiple occasions I prayed specifically that God would connect me with some of those people he is drawing toward Christ so that I could tell them the good news about his Son. It is very clear that God has connected people like that in the past, sometimes in quite involved ways (such as Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10). Based on all this, I started praying more consistently that he would give me such an opportunity and that I would make the most of it (Colossians 4:5). Today I’m happy to report that God answered those prayers! God is doing just what Jesus said!

About three months after I wrote that post and started praying as described above, a couple visited our church one Sunday morning. They didn’t know anyone, and no one invited them—they just showed up. The man had been baptized at a nearby church many years before, but that church is no longer meeting. The woman noticed our congregation, and they just decided to come. After the service, several of us met and visited with them, and they told us she wanted to get baptized. They weren’t able to join us for lunch that day to discuss it further, and it ended up being two weeks before we could get together again to talk about it.

When we met at that time, I learned the woman had no church or religious background at all. Yet when I asked why she wanted to be baptized, she said it was so she could be saved and go to heaven. When I asked how she knew about such things without any religious background, she said she reads her Bible (a KJV!) and understands some of it, though not all. She has also watched some movies about Jesus, and I’m sure her boyfriend has also shared some things he knows with her.

So, based on my understanding of what the Lord wants us to do, I told her the good news about Jesus! Since we were meeting to discuss her request to be baptized, I began there by saying baptism is actually more like the middle of the story. I then “backed up” to the

beginning and told her the good news about Jesus. I did so in the way I have started telling **NEWS** over the last couple years: I **N**-arrated Jesus' life story (his miracles, death, and resurrection), **E**-xpressed the point of the story (that he is both Lord and Christ), told **W**-hat the significance of his identity is (that he is willing to forgive, provide his royal counsel, and give power for us to follow and obey him), and **S**-tated what God told us to do in response to who Jesus is [namely, put our trust in him, change our thinking and attitude toward him (repent), and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ]. That takes us up through the "middle" of the story. The rest of the story is that we learn to live our lives loyally under his lordship until he comes back again. Another couple from the congregation was in on this discussion, and they added some very helpful thoughts along the way. The gospel part of our conversation took about 10-15 minutes, and the entire conversation was about an hour.

After telling her the good news I asked if any of it was unfamiliar and whether she had any questions, but she seemed to understand it pretty well. I told her that, if she understood the message and was willing to follow Jesus as her Lord, we'd be happy to help her with her request to be baptized into Christ. Then she would be blessed with forgiveness of sins, guidance from Christ, and the life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit. I told her she could get baptized that day or next week or anytime—whenever she was ready. She ended up being baptized into Christ the next Sunday!

Based this experience, I believe this woman is an example of the things I discussed in the above-mentioned blog post. She has been "taught by God," has "heard and learned from the Father" and is one of those the Father "draws" to Christ. As I mentioned before, the passages in John don't specify exactly how God teaches and draws people, but I speculated about a variety of ways he might do so. This woman had indeed experienced two of those ways (reading the Bible and someone talking to her about Christ). I didn't think to include Christian movies in my list of possible avenues in that blog, but it certainly seems God taught her in that way also.

My point in all this is that I believe God has been working for some time to draw this woman to himself, and that he also recently answered my prayers to connect us together so we could tell her the good news about Christ. When you pray repeatedly for something to happen and then it happens, you don't ask questions like, "Would she have showed up at our church anyway, even if I hadn't been praying?" Questions like that reflect unbelief. Instead, when God does something you have been praying for, faith leads us to just acknowledge him and thank him. I believe I have experienced the very thing I wrote about four months ago. God is doing just what Jesus said! To avoid miscommunication, however, I want to make a few disclaimers.

First, I do not believe this woman came to church because I "prayed enough times," "prayed so good" or "prayed right." I do believe God has been drawing this woman to himself and that he answered my prayers to connect me with such a person. And I do think it was good and right for me to "continue steadfastly" in prayer. But the focus doesn't belong on my praying but God's working. Instead of saying "prayer works," I prefer to say "God works." Besides, as you may know from your own life, our prayers are not always earnest and steadfast. Even though I continued (and continue) to make my request, I don't feel it was always as steadfast or

earnest as it could have been. Nor do I think the key to prayer is doing it “good enough.” So please do pray, but please don’t read this post as the “pray steadfastly” method or focus your attention on praying “right.”

Second, I think it was totally good for us to notice, meet and visit with the couple after church that first Sunday. Obviously those are good things for Christians to do any time, but these were also a very specific way of “being watchful” in prayer (Colossians 4:2). I was watching to see if God was answering my prayer to bring us open-hearted people. If we are going to pray for opportunities, we definitely need to watch for answers (v. 2) and then make the most of them (v. 5). Although my primary point in this post is that God is indeed at work in his mission, he has nevertheless chosen to involve us in it too, and so it is right for us to be alert and do our part.

Third, I think it was totally right to tell her the gospel. That may be obvious as well, but I mention it because I do not get the sense that my telling her the gospel that day was the catalyst for her to embrace Christ and be baptized in his name. Her understanding of God’s message was better after hearing it than before, to be sure, because afterward she gave more attention to the need to follow Christ as King than she did initially. As far as her will, however, I think she was already wanting to become a follower of Jesus Christ when she first walked into the church building. That’s another part of the reason it seems so clear to me that this was a matter of God working and is also why I am writing this blog. Still, it is right to tell people the good news about Jesus. It is a key part of what God has asked us to do. If I had it all to do over again, I would have done just the same.

Fourth, this story is far from finished. She is now a disciple of Christ in a beginning sense, but not in the fully mature sense (cf. the post on the senses of discipleship [here](#)). We are already seeking and planning ways to help both of them continue their growth toward becoming like their Teacher (Luke 6:40). Likewise, we have already been praying for their maturity (Colossians 4:12-13).

Fifth, I don’t have enough stories like this! Though I believe God has answered a number of my prayers over the years, I can’t give as many specific examples of it as I feel like I should be able to. Part of the reason is that I intentionally resist “stretching” situations so I can count them as answered prayers when that may not actually be the case. I want my faith-walk with God to be authentic. The reason I mention the relative scarcity of answered prayer stories is that I don’t want you to walk away thinking I have experiences like this all the time. Some people seem to; others of us don’t. Indeed, I think the rarity and clarity of this answered prayer is part of the reason I am writing this.

Related to this fifth point, I desperately hope this post doesn’t sound like I think I am something unique or special. As you read that disclaimer, perhaps “youthinks I doth protest too much” (with apologies to Shakespeare). That may be right. I confess I have struggled with exaggerated notions about myself over the years. Thankfully, however, through my hardships,

weaknesses and sins God has gradually taught me the painful truth that I am just another ordinary human being.

Instead, my sincere intent for this post is that it be a verification and full-fledged endorsement of the truth that God is indeed drawing people to Christ, connecting them to believers who will tell them the good news, and answering prayers about people coming to the King. It is the kingdom "of GOD," after all, and he is the one who makes it grow (Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 2:44; Mark 4:26-29). I hope that by attesting to how God answered these prayers, all of us will be encouraged to "always be prepared," "continue steadfastly in prayer," be "watchful," and "make the most of every opportunity" God gives us. May his kingship increase and may he be glorified.