

Open Hands: Stewardship with Kingdom Vision

Stewarding Crisis: Faithfulness in the Fallow Seasons

Good evening everyone,

Today we are going to talk about something every believer experiences but few people like to talk about called seasons of crisis and waiting. In agriculture, farmers understand something important about the land. There are times when the field is planted and producing fruit, but there are also times when the field is fallow. It is a season when the soil rests and nothing seems to be growing. Spiritually, many of us experience the same kind of seasons. There are times when our lives seem fruitful and everything is moving forward. There are seasons when progress slows down, resources are limited, and it feels like nothing is happening. I think about those people at homeless shelters looking to get back on their feet to be back part of the labor market and work. I am thinking about those people that the process for them could be slow. It could not be their season for stuff they are doing to get back on their feet that moving faster they hope to be. The Bible teaches us that even in those seasons, God is still working. The question is not whether the season is difficult. The question is whether we will remain faithful while we are in it.

When I think about the Great Commission, I remember a very difficult but important turning point in my life in 2011 while I was attending DePaul University. I witnessed a temporary and personal collapse that became a wake up call for me. During that season, I could not get financial help from my family and I found out for the first time in my late twenties that I found myself with stable housing while pursuing my higher education in Chicago. I eventually stayed at Pacific Garden Mission. At the time it was a very humble experience. It became a moment where God drew me closer to him. I started to reflect deeply on my faith and purpose. What felt like a setback became a moment of spiritual awakening. God is reminding me that in our lowest seasons, he is still working in our lives. God can use our struggles to prepare us to serve people who are facing the same challenges. The season in 2011 taught me humility, compassion and dependence on God. It helped me shape my heart for serving people who are struggling with homelessness and hardship. I think about my time in 2023 at Star of Hope Mission in Houston. During that time, I was able to meet people easily and build connections with others who are seeking spiritual growth and encouragement. I was able to meet people easily at Riceville Mount Olive Baptist Church in Houston in 2023. One thing that God showed me during that season is the importance of fellowship. When believers come together in prayer, worship and spiritual gatherings, it creates an environment where people can grow stronger in faith and support one another. Building relationships with people who are seeking God is one way we help strengthen our mission. We can help people grow spiritually and stay focused on a life that honors God. Those experiences reminded me that God often places us in environments where we can connect with people who are searching for hope, healing and spiritual direction. Friendliness and support can open the door for meaningful conversations about faith and purpose. Something powerful happened in my life at Star of Hope Mission in Houston because God allowed me to meet many people and build real fellowship. I found out that I can easily talk with people, encourage people, and share faith with them as we move through the programs together. I met people and friends with people in the Men at Work program that was a three month program while I was in the Spiritual Recovery Program. I met my Elder name Brandon on the first day when I got admitted to Star of Hope Mission in Houston on May 2, 2023. I believed I became friends and met eight people in the Spiritual Recovery Program. That is why I started having a social life at Star of Hope Mission in Houston. I still communicate with those people today. I met my friend Bufus at Star of Hope Mission in Houston when I was at level 1 in the spiritual recovery program. All of these people are spiritual because the Star of Hope Mission transformed them to live obedient Christians and disciples. I met my friend Kevin Provost when I was in level three and he started in level one in the Spiritual Recovery Program. I met a lot of good people because all we did was fellowship and provided encouragement to one another in a

Godly way. I started to become friends with more clients at Star of Hope Mission in Houston in the Men at Work program. My social life got stronger at the Star of Hope mission. Everyone worried about themselves and not like people in Memphis. I will support the Republican candidate Michael Whatley from the great state of North Carolina. I started to meet more people and become friends with more people at Star of Hope Mission. I believe clients really got to be friends and know each other from the mandatory classes we had to take on week days including 12 step and focus group. I was able to openly go up to the podium like other clients during chapel services to give prayer and/or scripture. I had to do mandatory testimony during the October 2023 commencement. There were 17 clients in the commencement that month from Spiritual Recovery Program and Men at Work. I met my friend Paris Samuel, Tommy Williams, Jermaine Muse and others later in the program. The good thing that I like in Houston is that people are not like people in Memphis. People knew how to mind their own business. I will be moving to North Mississippi with the first lady Jennifer last week of this month. We will be moving to the Olive Branch. I agree with friends who told me that Memphis is not the place for me. I agree with them that Memphis is not the place for me. People here are envious and scandalous. People in Memphis are too much about sin, temptation and idolatry. As an independent, I support Republicans 31%, 33% unaffiliated and 35% Democratic for this midterm elections. I support Donald Trump 40% and oppose 25%. I will start an Independent campaign from 2024 called "vote for change, vote Republican." I had a stronger sense of community at Star of Hope Mission in Houston because people were seeking change, healing and spiritual direction. Those relationships did not end when I completed and left the program. I am still with some of the people I met there. That experience reminds me of the words of Matthew 28:19 where Jesus tells us to go and make disciples. God can place us in unexpected places, such as missions, shelters, schools and communities so we can encourage others and share hope. God is still using me in that season. I was able to build relationships, support others spiritually, and stay connected to people who were also seeking a better path. As I moved through different cities during difficult seasons of my life, God continued to show me something important about the Great Commission. In shelters and service programs in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Detroit Louisville, Houston and Baltimore, I met staff members that are very friendly, supportive and committed with a spiritual and positive attitude to help build their lives. Those relationships showed me that God places people in many communities to serve others. I was able to talk with staff, encourage others in programs, and stayed connected with people who are trying to grow spiritually and build their lives. I believe God allowed me to experience different cities and communities so I can see how compassion and service work together. It was an opportunity to encourage people, build fellowship, and remind others that their lives still have purpose.

God uses difficult seasons to deepen our faith. Our struggles can prepare us to serve people with compassion. The Great Commission includes reaching people in every situation of our life. Your testimony can give hope to others who are struggling. Fellowship can help build strong faith communities. Relationships can support discipleship and spiritual growth. Being welcoming can create opportunities to encourage others in their faith. God sometimes places us in communities where we can strengthen one another spiritually. God uses every season of life for his purpose. The Great Commission happens through relationships and fellowships. Difficult seasons can become places of ministry.

A fallow season is when the field is resting. It looks unproductive, but God is preparing the soil. God allows seasons of waiting. Spiritual growth often happens in quiet or difficult times. Your crisis is not punishment. Your crisis is preparation. God still shapes leaders during hardship. Stewardship is not about money. Stewardship is about how we manage hardship, waiting, suffering and opportunity. God watches us on how we behave in difficulty.

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and who is dishonest in much."-Luke 16:10.

Jesus is speaking in Luke 16:10. He is speaking about the manager who was wasting the manager's resources. The master finds out and tells him he will lose his job. The manager reduced the debts of the people who owed his master so that they will be able to help him later. Jesus used the story to talk about wisdom and stewardship. If a person is trustworthy with smaller things and responsibility, they can be trusted with larger ones. If someone mismanages small things, they will likely misuse larger things. Jesus is teaching us about character and stewardship. Faithfulness with little things leads to greater responsibility. Faithfulness with worldly wealth shows whether someone can handle true spiritual riches. If you cannot manage something that belongs to someone else, God will not entrust you with your own kingdom responsibility. You cannot serve God and money. God tests leaders with smaller assignments before larger influence. Faithfulness in small ministry work prepares you for greater responsibility. Stewardship applies to people, money, time and calling. God observes how leaders behave during difficult seasons and limited resources.

Moses, Joseph and David were prepared during the crisis. God uses the wilderness to train leaders. Faithfulness produces future harvest. Fallow land produced stronger crops. Read Galatians 6:9. Your harvest can be stronger faith, deeper wisdom, greater leadership responsibility and/or impact in the community. The Great Commission still applies in hard seasons. The mission remains while life is difficult. Read Matthew 28:19. You do not stop serving God because the season is hard. You still teach, encourage others, help the poor, and share the gospel. I strongly believe living in Houston was my season. Opening the church in north Mississippi is my season. Your crisis can become your calling. Many ministries began because someone experienced hardship. God can turn pain into purpose. Your field may look empty today, but God is restoring the soil.

1. Am I still serving God in this season?
2. Am I still faithful when resources are limited?

Heavenly Father,
Help us remain faithful during seasons of hardship.
Teach us to steward every crisis with wisdom, patience and faith.
Prepare our hearts for the harvest you have promised.
Amen.