

Keep Our Eyes on The Ball

by

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“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” Matthew 9:35-38

Well, we are in that time of year that most men live for in this Country, which is playoff time for the college and NFL teams. I don't think there are many men out there who don't have an interest in the outcome of certain games. One of the things that frustrates us the most is when there is a very easy catch to make and take it downfield for a good gain, or even a TD, and the receiver takes his eyes off the ball and starts to run too soon. He drops it, and we then hear a large number of groans, or boos, while the receiver wishes to crawl deeper into his helmet. Poor guy. If only he had kept his eye on the ball.

Then there are those people who are so focused on their point of view, and due to limited exposure outside their personal experiences, they feel that the rest of the world should handle things as they do. My family has relatives who we say about them that they have a “peep-hole” perspective. What they've seen in life is very limited, but in their mind, it is all they need to evaluate the rest of the world, its people, and all circumstances. They are very critical of most everyone and cannot understand why people cannot see the answers as clearly as they do. They see life through a “peep-hole” and see clearly only a small portion of their world. They are ignorant of the plight of people other than their own “kind,” and little wonder they have no interest in being a “*Laborer*” for Christ. Why do I say this? I think a “*Laborer*” becomes a “*Laborer*” because he learns to look at the world through the eyes of Jesus, and see what He sees. At least that is true for me. But I also hear a clear exhortation from the Lord to keep my eye on the ball, for the “ball” for me is to go and make disciples. I am to never forget this. My mission, and the mission of Influencers is to make disciples of Christ. It is as simple as that, and it is as important as that. How so?

A disciple of Christ is a ***learner and an imitator*** of Christ. A disciple of Christ by default becomes a “***Laborer***.” A *laborer* engages him or herself in being a servant for the needs of the harvest. There are evangelists, exhorters, teachers, hosts, organizers, builders, givers, and every spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit that serves the needs of the harvest, by disciples investing their spiritual gifts there. It is the *laborer* who is able to look around and see the needs and opportunities that abound. But the eyes to see it requires that we keep our eyes on the “ball” and see it as Jesus does, or else we will become distracted and drop it.

A friend of mine has given me a book to read about the persecuted Christian Church in Muslim countries. There are very few people around the world that know the extent of it, or even show concern about it. They have a “peephole” perspective. And yet there are millions of starving children, orphans and homeless people dying by the thousands each day in those countries that are trying to genocide them. Christians are the biggest target. I read this information lately and it brought a sorrowful, frustrated feeling that I can do so little about it. To appease my guilt, I go and watch a football game on TV. But, during a commercial I hear this beautiful, sad music that precedes the camera's focus, as it

looks into the eyes of a dog or cat that doesn't have a home or needs food and shelter. I hear the celebrity spokesman tug at our hearts that we have an obligation to do something about it, and oh, don't forget the whales, and the polar bears with their melting icebergs? I think to myself, "Why do these celebrities not protect the unborn child as much as a dog? Why do they not see the poverty and starvation of babies and children in those countries in Africa? The food budget for dogs in this Country would sustain those people, and to simply eat what our dogs are given in this Country each day would be a life sustaining feast for those bloated bellied, starving children. Here's a relevant question? How does Jesus see this? What would He have His disciple do about it? How would He dispatch His *Laborer*? Would He give these needs and those like them as an example of a ripe harvest field in our own time? Are there examples like this in our own country ... in our own neighborhoods? Could not *laborers* be dispatched to meet these needs while communicating the Gospel of Christ, if they have been raised up?

Sometimes, like most pastors and ministry leaders, I become frustrated that we somehow take our eyes off the ball and forget our mission. I'm as guilty as anyone else. But there is no comfort in finding that there are a lot of us dropping an easy pass the Lord is throwing to us. I feel compelled that God would have me exhort us to make disciples as fervently as ever, and even more so in 2014. As a ministry, we must understand that God has given us an anointed tool to make disciples and raise up *Laborers*, using *The Journey*. Men and women who go through the process will then infiltrate locations and places that most of us will not be able to go to, and that is why they need to be raised up and equipped and supported by our prayers and resources. I am praying that in 2014 Influencers will use all our resources of men and women and our spiritual gifts to make disciples, and raise up *laborers*. I pray that God will raise up visionaries and the financial resources to allow this ministry to penetrate every opportunity given to us to make disciples. I pray that this year will be the most fruitful that we have ever seen, and that God will get His glory from it. Will you pray with me for this objective?

The last few months, I have seen the greatest spiritual oppression come at me that I have ever experienced. I think some of our other leaders have likewise seen it in their lives as well, or they will. It is to be expected, for a battle line has been drawn against us, and our mission to make disciples. This in itself says that we must be doing something good. But, God walked me through the oppression, and out of it will come the good things that He had in mind by allowing the trial by furnace. I'm already seeing the fruit of it. I think our other leaders will process through it similarly and there will be great fruit because of it. But, this process of pruning serves to remind me that we must be united with each other, and as a ministry to keep our eyes on the target. The distractions and the way the enemy preys on our embedded insecurities causes us to take our eyes off the "ball" and look at issues that are unimportant and self-centered. As a result, we drop an easy pass that we should be taking in for a score. The year of 2014 is dedicated to keeping our eye on our mission to make disciples, and leave behind those things that keep us from it. That is our objective as a ministry. That is my prayer.

Now, what about your personal objective? Have you been taking your eyes off the "ball" and allowing distractions to take you away from your mission as a husband, a dad, or a man of integrity? Now is the time to turn that around. Now is the time to declare who you are, and how you are going to play your game for the Lord. He will set you up to catch some easy passes, and even help you become a hero to those who love you. But, you've got to keep your eyes on the ball, and not be distracted by the enemy of your soul. More clearly said. **Keep your eyes on Jesus.**