

# WHAT IS LABORERSHIP?

## *Why Jesus Called Laborers Not Just Leaders*

by Charlie Marq

What does it mean to be a laborer for Jesus—and could you already be one without knowing it? Laborership is a word we use at Forge for a calling that belongs to every Christian: the everyday, everywhere mission of loving God and loving people right where you are. If you've heard this word at a Forge event or in a conversation and wondered what it really means, this is your starting point.

## WHAT LABORERSHIP ACTUALLY MEANS

Jesus said it plainly in [Matthew 9:37–38 \(ESV\)](#): "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."

A laborer is not a title or a position. A Kingdom Laborer is an ordinary person who actively loves God and loves people every day, everywhere. That means Laborership isn't reserved for the bold extrovert. It belongs to the quiet encourager, the faithful giver, the parent discipling their kids at the dinner table, the coworker who prays for the person in the next cubicle, and the neighbor who notices.

(Not sure if you're a Kingdom Laborer yet? [Here are the four characteristics that define one](#)—and how to grow in each of them.)

## WHY "LABORER" AND NOT "LEADER"?

Leadership is one spiritual gift among many others found in Scripture. Not everyone has it, and Jesus never asked everyone to pursue it. What He did ask—of every single follower, without exception—was to labor. The difference between leadership and Laborership is worth understanding: one includes everyone and the other doesn't.

The word "laborer" doesn't rule anyone out. The quiet person qualifies. The artistic person qualifies. The person who will never stand on a stage or lead a team qualifies. Every Christian, in every season, in every station of life, is called to Laborership.

## LABORERSHIP HAPPENS IN ORDINARY MOMENTS

When people ask, **'What is Laborership?'** I tell them it starts with this: paying attention, staying close to Jesus, and refusing to talk yourself out of a moment.

Forge founder Dwight Robertson tells a story about a roofer named James who came to fix his storm-damaged roof. James spoke openly: "My desire is to serve God every day by serving my customers with kindness and respect. I treat every roofing job as a daily assignment from God." He shared that he regularly prays for his customers by name, asking God for opportunities to minister to them. One of those opportunities came while working on a roof in inner-city Denver when a gunshot sounded from inside the house. He found an older man dying on the floor. With no time and no platform, James knelt beside him and, using yes-or-no eye movements, led the man to Christ. He died moments later. That's Laborership.

Then there's Grace—an elderly widow who lived in a farmhouse in rural Indiana. One day she read an open letter in a prison ministry magazine from an inmate named Bobby who had just given his life to Christ and was asking for a "godly grandmother" to disciple him. She started helping Bobby through a Bible study correspondence course. Bobby led his cellmate to Christ. That cellmate led others. Years later, Grace had a world map on her wall covered in dots—each one a person she was discipling or had disciplined. Last she counted, there were more than ten thousand. That's Laborership.

## WHAT IS LABORERSHIP IN PRACTICE?

Forge has a simple framework for what Laborership looks like in practice:

### SEE. STOP. SPEND TIME WITH. SHARE.

#### SEE.

Ask God to show you the people around you the way He sees them. Be creative and look around. People are waiting for hope: they're sitting next to you on the bus, working beside you, living three houses down. The harvest is plentiful.

#### STOP.

At some point you have to interrupt your own agenda and respond to what God puts in front of you. That might mean continuing a conversation you were about to walk away from or staying a few extra minutes. It might mean praying and asking God what to do in a situation.

#### SPEND TIME WITH.

Advancing God's Kingdom in everyday life often looks less like a dramatic event and more like showing up again and again for the same people. Invest in the person in front of you. Ask questions, listen, and let them know they matter.

#### SHARE.

Out of that time and trust, share what Jesus has done in your life. You don't have to have all the answers or preach a sermon. You just have to be willing to say: This is what He's done for me—and He can do the same for you.

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THE LABORERS ARE STILL TOO FEW.  
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