

The Harvest

Once upon a time there was a rich nobleman who owned much land. One day he called his servants to him and said, "The grain is ripe. I want you to go out into my fields, harvest the grain, thresh, winnow, grind it, and make it into bread that it may feed my household."

These servants did as they were told. There was a great harvest. Many loaves of bread were made and the household prospered.

But as the years went on, the nobleman acquired more and more land and increased his number of servants as well. There were too many servants and too many fields to all work together in one place so they separated into groups to get the job done. At first, this seemed to work and each group produced loaves of bread for the household.

But then as the years passed, the groups began to change and to specialize in one area. Often, the leaders of a group were very talented in one area. They began to see their talent as the most important job to be done. Soon, they influenced the whole group to see that job as the most important one. Those in the group who had that talent were looked up to and those who didn't were made to feel guilty or inadequate.

Many groups had leaders that were good at reaping and so put the emphasis on that. Their leaders told them, "We are all called to go and harvest. That's what our master said. What are you doing to harvest grain?"

But some in this group were not gifted in reaping and no matter how hard they tried, would spill the grain heads, or gather a lot of weeds, or even cut themselves on the sharp sickles. Others just couldn't get the hang of swinging the sickles and the grain would be knocked down and not cut. Some of them, feeling they were of no use to their master, became very discouraged and gave up or left to join another group.

The reaping groups produced huge piles of grain heads, but because there was no one to do anything with it, much of it eventually rotted.

Then there was the group who said, "Our master told us to thresh and winnow." So they threshed and threshed and threshed the same small amount of grain that the few of them in the group had managed to harvest.

But some people in this group got so tired of always threshing the same stalks of grain. They wanted to go out and get fresh grain, but they were discouraged by their leaders. "This group is called to thresh. Either do that or find another group."

And some tried to thresh, but no matter how hard they hit the grain head, they just couldn't seem to hit it the right way to get the grain to come loose. And when they tried to winnow the chaff, it either stuck to the grain or the wind blew both the grain and chaff away.

So the threshing group threshed and winnowed until there was not one piece of grain left on the stalks or any chaff left with the grain. But they had only a small basket of grain and it was never made into bread.

Another group said, "Our master has called us to grind," and they concentrated on grinding. A few in this group complained to the leaders about the quality of the grain and instead of grinding kept trying to pick out the pieces of chaff that had been left in the grain. They were told by others in the group, "This group is called to grind. A few pieces of chaff won't hurt anything."

So this group ground and ground and ground the small amount of grain they had managed to reap, thresh and winnow. But they ground it so much that it became too hot and some of it was scorched and ruined.

Yet another group emphasized making the bread. They felt themselves to be somewhat superior to the other groups because they are, after all, the only group truly obeying the master. They were the only group actually producing bread. Their specialty was kneading and they kneaded it over and over

and over again, never letting it have a chance to rise.

A few in the group suggested, "Didn't we knead enough? Can't we let it rise now?"

But it was so fine a texture there were no air holes and when they finally did make it, it was hard and tough and inedible and had to be thrown out.

The master came back to visit his servants to see how they were doing. He found in each field a group of his servants well organized, but all concentrating on one aspect of his command. Those who were talented in that area were usually in control of that group and those who were not gifted in that area, felt worthless or unimportant or even guilty as though they had been disobedient.

The master did not like this state of affairs, so he told each group, "Your total job is to do all I have commanded you to do. One person cannot possibly do all these things well. Find out in what area or areas your giftings are and do those things, working with others who have complimentary giftings. Each group must have reapers to insure a steady supply of grain. Others are needed to thresh and winnow, others to grind and others to bake. Sometimes you may need several groups to work together to get the job done, especially in the large fields. Remember, you are all my servants. You are not competing to see who can get the most done. If you get your field finished, help another group that does not. You are all to work together until all the harvest is complete and all the bread is made. Then you may rest and enjoy the fruit of you labor. Do not look down or up to one who is not equipped to do the same job as you. You all need each other and each one must do his part to get my work finished.

The groups began to take their master's words to heart. In the larger groups, each one was allowed to find his best place. One who couldn't make a loaf of bread found out he excelled at swinging the sickle. One who couldn't reap, found out he was an expert at separating grain from chaff. One who couldn't tell grain from chaff, could make the finest, silkiest flour. And one who couldn't grind, had the knack of knowing just how much to knead the bread and how long to let it rise. He baked the most delicious bread, crisp on the outside and tender, moist, and light on the inside.

Some of the smaller groups combined so they would have workers for each part of the work. So the fields were harvested, the bread made, and the master's household prospered.