

**Why Was Jesus Always  
Talking About Plants?**



While Jesus' parables referred to everyday matters like tending sheep, catching fish, and saving money, His stories were most often based on agriculture.

# Isaiah 61:11



For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.





Just as the agricultural cycle includes soil preparation, seed planting, and the cultivation, harvest, and preservation of the crop, in the “Cycle of Evangelism” these sequential steps are essential for true success in reaching people.

# Step 1: Prepare the Soil of the Heart

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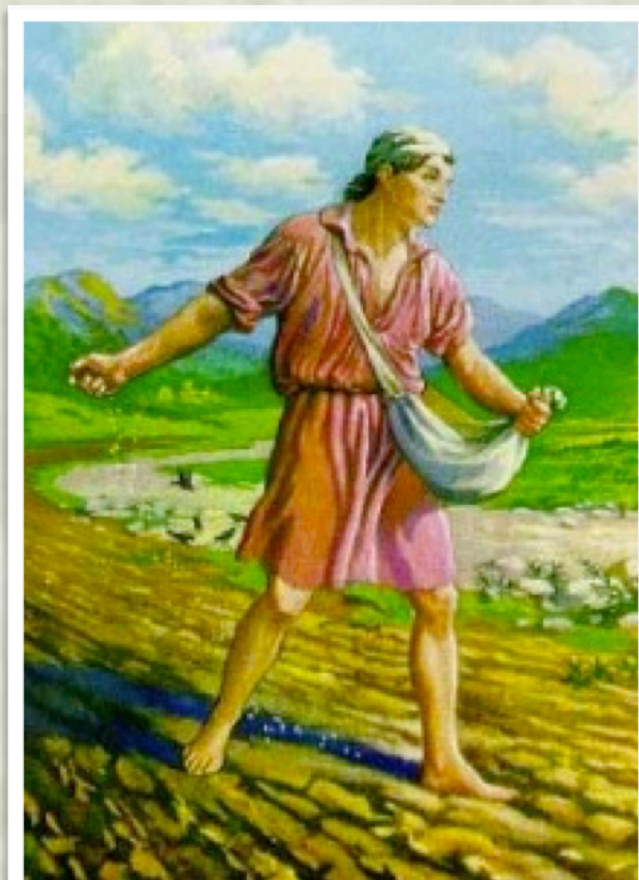


Building friendship and trust opens the heart for the reception of truth. We do this by drawing close to people through being kind, intentionally social, and ministering to practical needs.

## Luke 8:4-15



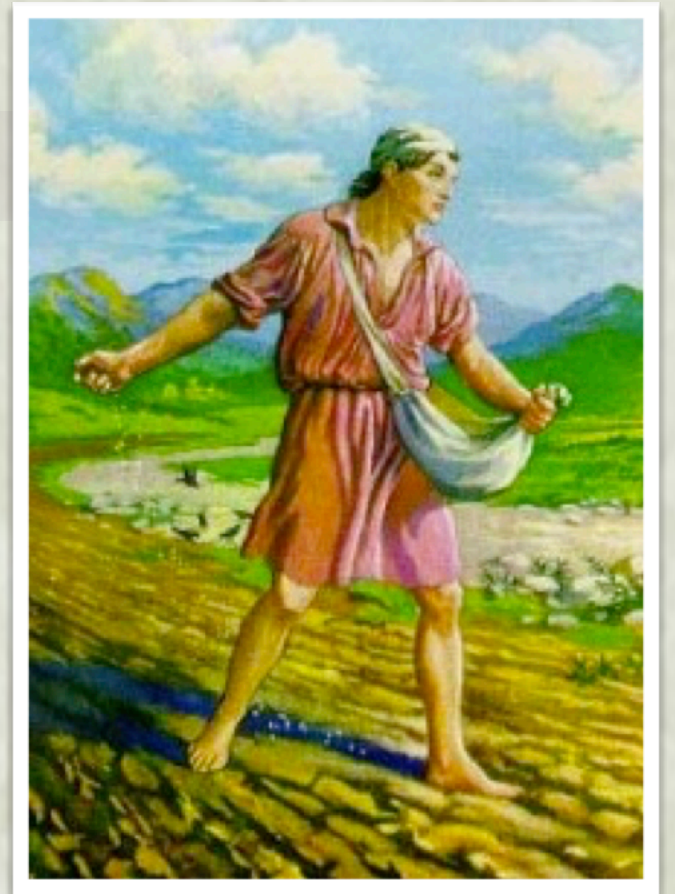
And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.



## Luke 8:4-15



“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God... the ones that fell on the **good ground** are those who, having heard the word with a noble and **good heart**, keep it and bear fruit with patience.





## ***Christ's Object Lessons, p. 57***

The sowers of the seed have a work to do in preparing hearts to receive the gospel. In the ministry of the word there is too much sermonizing, and too little of real heart-to-heart work.







## ***Christ's Object Lessons, p. 57***

There is need of personal labor for the souls of the lost. In Christlike sympathy we should come close to men individually, and seek to awaken their interest in the great things of eternal life.





## ***Christ's Object Lessons, p. 57***

Their hearts may be as hard as the beaten highway, and apparently it may be a useless effort to present the Saviour to them; but while logic may fail to move, and argument be powerless to convince, the love of Christ, revealed in personal ministry, may soften the stony heart, so that the seed of truth can take root.



# Step 2: Sow the Seed of Truth

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While building friendship and trust, we should test the heart soil by planting seeds of truth.

This is the time to share religious literature, media, or our personal testimony.

## Ecclesiastes 11:4-6



He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap... **In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand;** for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good.



# Isaiah 32:20



Blessed are you who **sow beside all waters**, who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey.



## Luke 8:4-15



“Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God...** the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.





***Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 35***

You are to sow the seeds of truth in every place. Wherever you can gain access, hold forth the word of God. Sow beside all waters.





## ***Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 35***

You may not at once see the result of your labors, but be not discouraged. Speak the words that Christ gives you. Work in His lines. Go forth everywhere as He did during His ministry on the earth. The world's Redeemer had many hearers, but few followers.







Too many people make the mistake of not sowing the seed of truth because they're afraid they'll do it poorly.



While we never want to approach someone with Bible truth in a careless manner, we far too often go to the opposite extreme of being so cautious that we never actually sow the seed.



It is better to **risk** failure because of a poor approach than to **guarantee** failure by making no approach at all!

# Step 3: Cultivate through Bible study

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When someone responds positively to spiritual seed, that interest needs to be cultivated by the Word of God. This is best accomplished through weekly personal Bible studies.

# 1 Peter 2:2



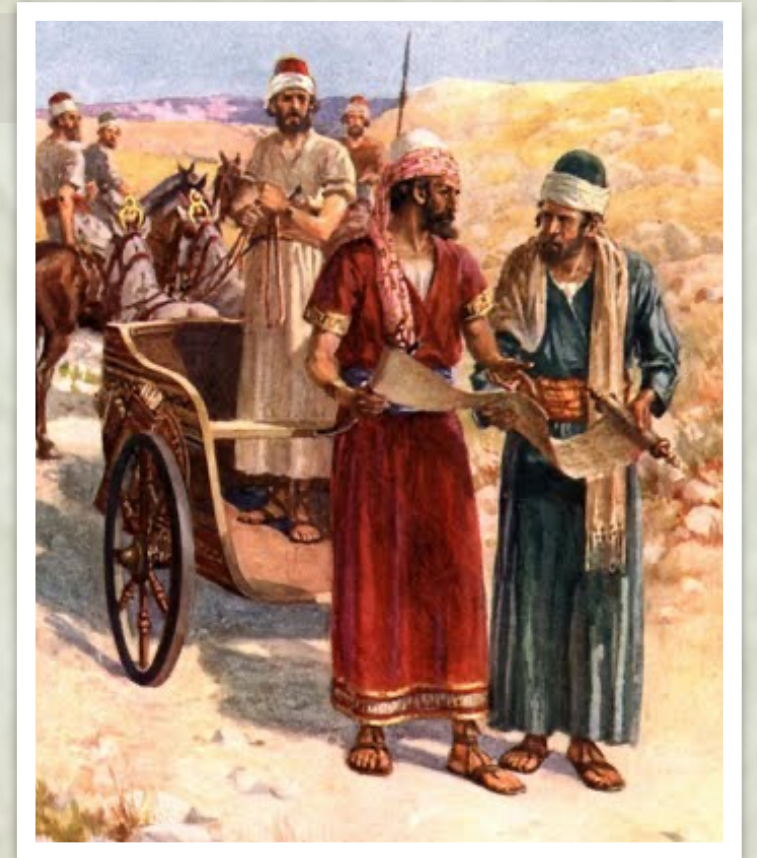
As newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby**, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious



## Acts 8:30-35



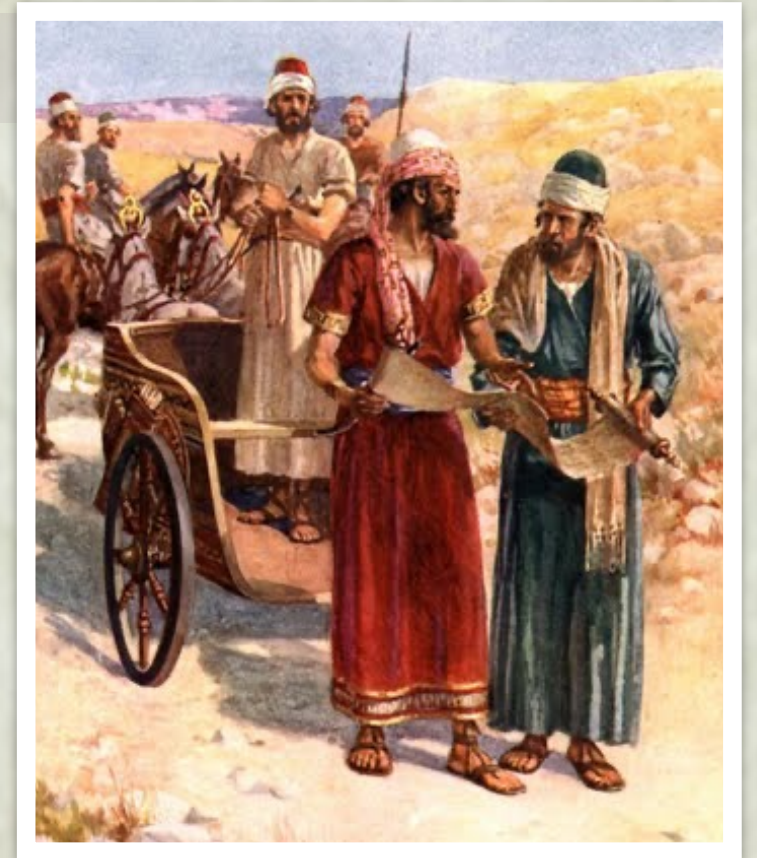
So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, **“Do you understand what you are reading?”** And he said, **“How can I, unless someone guides me?”** ...Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.





## *Acts of the Apostles, p. 109*

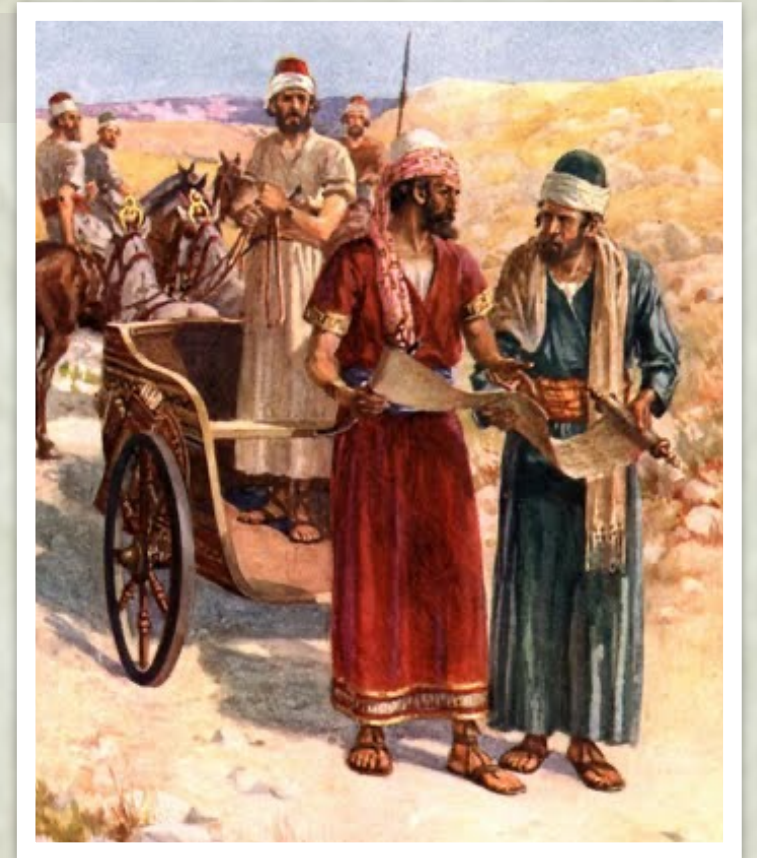
This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them. **There are many who are reading the Scriptures who cannot understand their true import.**





## ***Acts of the Apostles, p. 109***

All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.







## *Evangelism, p. 338*

It is not preaching alone that must be done. Far less preaching is needed. **More time should be devoted to patiently educating others, giving the hearers opportunity to express themselves.** It is instruction that many need, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little.





This nurturing work is by far the most time-consuming, labor-intensive, and potentially disappointing phase of the growing cycle.

Where soil preparation and seed sowing may take a day or two, cultivation requires continued effort over weeks or months. **This is the greatest need in soul-winning today.**



# Step 4: Harvest decisions for baptism

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After cultivating interests with Bible studies, lead those embracing the truth to make decisions for baptism.

# Step 4: Harvest decisions for baptism

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Decisions for Christ are most often made in personal Bible studies or public evangelistic meetings followed by a baptismal preparation class.



Crops never harvest themselves.



## *Evangelism, p. 283*

If there is not a decided application of the truth to their hearts, if words are not spoken at the right moment, calling for decision from the weight of evidence already presented, the convicted ones pass on without identifying themselves with Christ,





## *Evangelism, p. 283*

the golden opportunity passes, and they have not yielded, and they go farther and farther away from the truth, farther away from Jesus and never take their stand on the Lord's side.







***Review and Herald, April 24, 1883***

The salvation of sinners requires earnest, personal labor. We are to bear to them the word of life, not to wait for them to come to us.





## *Review and Herald, April 24, 1883*

With personal piety and a consistent course of life our earnest heart-felt appeals will be, through God, as sharp arrows of the Almighty to pierce the sin-hardened heart, as sharp sickles to reap a precious harvest for the heavenly garner.



## Psalm 126:5, 6



Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.



# 1 Corinthians 3:6-8



I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the increase**. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, **and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor**.



# Step 5: Preserve new members through systematic discipleship.

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After baptism, new members should be led through a systematic discipleship plan. It is here that the disciple is trained to make other disciples, thus adding to the growth of the church.

# Isaiah 55:10, 11



“For as the rain comes down,  
and the snow from heaven,  
and do not return there, but  
water the earth, and make it  
bring forth and bud, **that it  
may give seed to the sower  
and bread to the eater,**



# Isaiah 55:10, 11



so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”





## *Evangelism, p. 351*



After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after. The zeal of many ministers seems to fail as soon as a measure of success attends their efforts. They do not realize that these newly converted ones need nursing,—watchful attention, help, and encouragement.







## *Evangelism, p. 351*



These should not be left alone, a prey to Satan's most powerful temptations; they need to be educated in regard to their duties, to be kindly dealt with, to be led along, and to be visited and prayed with.



# John 4:14



“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”





## ***Review and Herald, December 3, 1908***



It is an eternal law of Jehovah that he who accepts the truth is to make it his first work to proclaim the truth. But who is it that makes the burden of perishing sinners his own?





## ***Review and Herald, December 3, 1908***



Among God's people today there is a fearful lack of the sympathy that should be felt for souls unsaved. We talk of Christian missions, the sound of our voice is heard; but do we feel Christ's tender heart-longing for those outside the fold?





## ***Christian Service, p. 58***

It is evident that all the sermons that have been preached have not developed a large class of self-denying workers. This subject is to be considered as involving the most serious results...





## ***Christian Service, p. 58***

The churches are withering up because they have failed to use their talents in diffusing light. Careful instruction should be given which will be as lessons from the Master, that all may put their light to practical use.





It is little wonder that retention rates of newly baptized church members is so poor. If the excitement of a public campaign fades and the truth has only been accepted in theory but not in practice—what else should we expect?



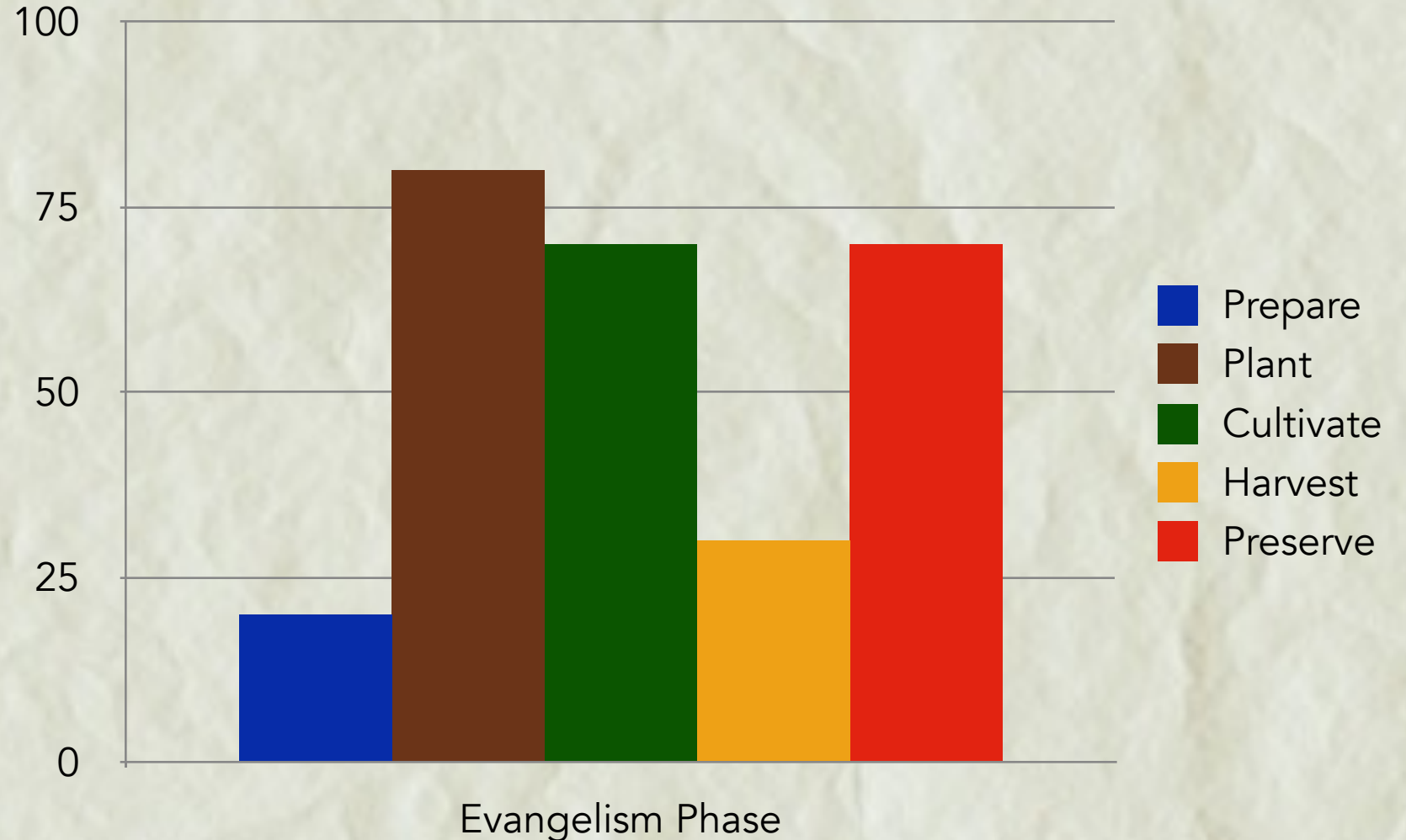
To make genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to embrace the full cycle of evangelism—individually and corporately.



# Local Church Growth Potential

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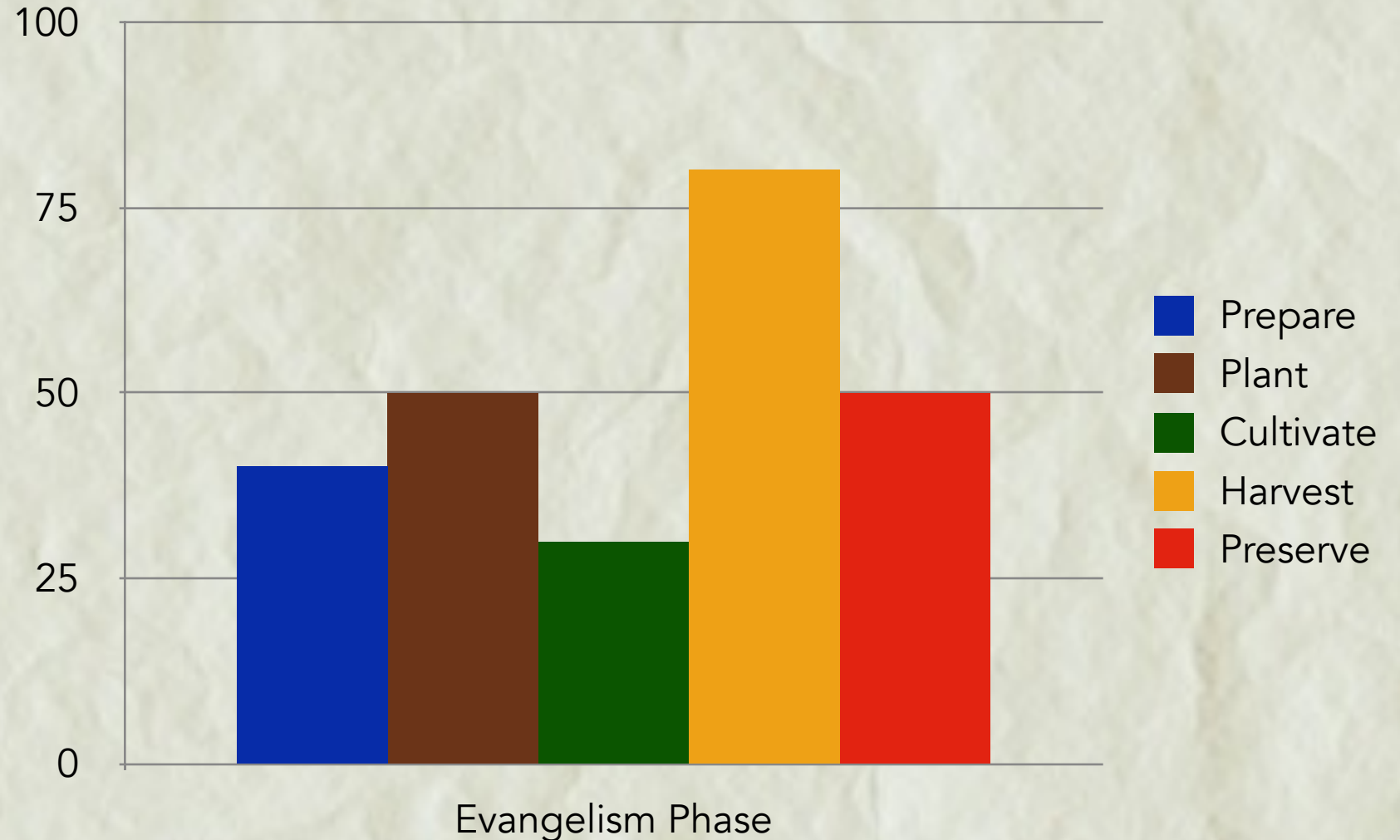
Every church has different strengths & weaknesses.



# Local Church Growth Potential

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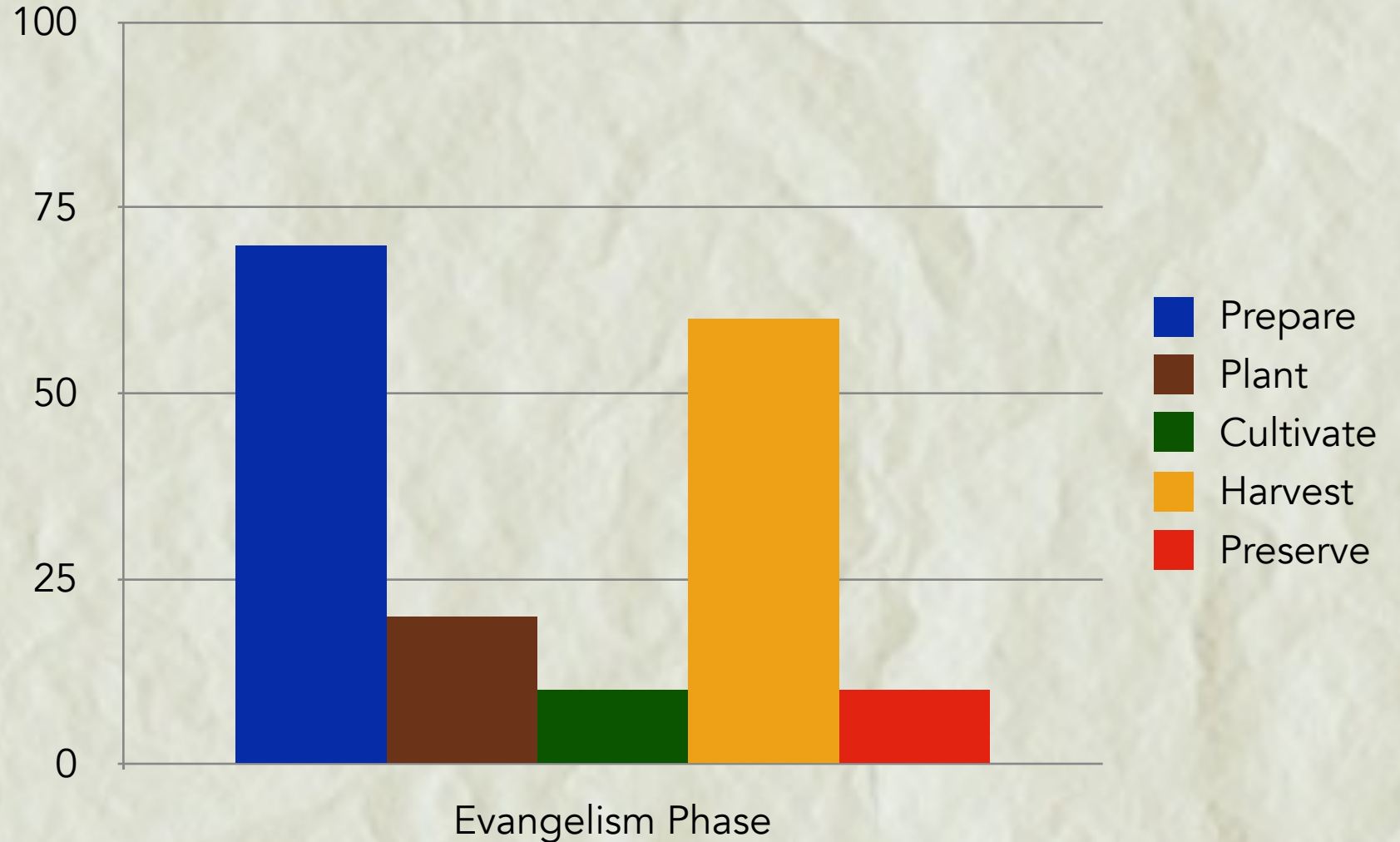
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# Local Church Growth Potential

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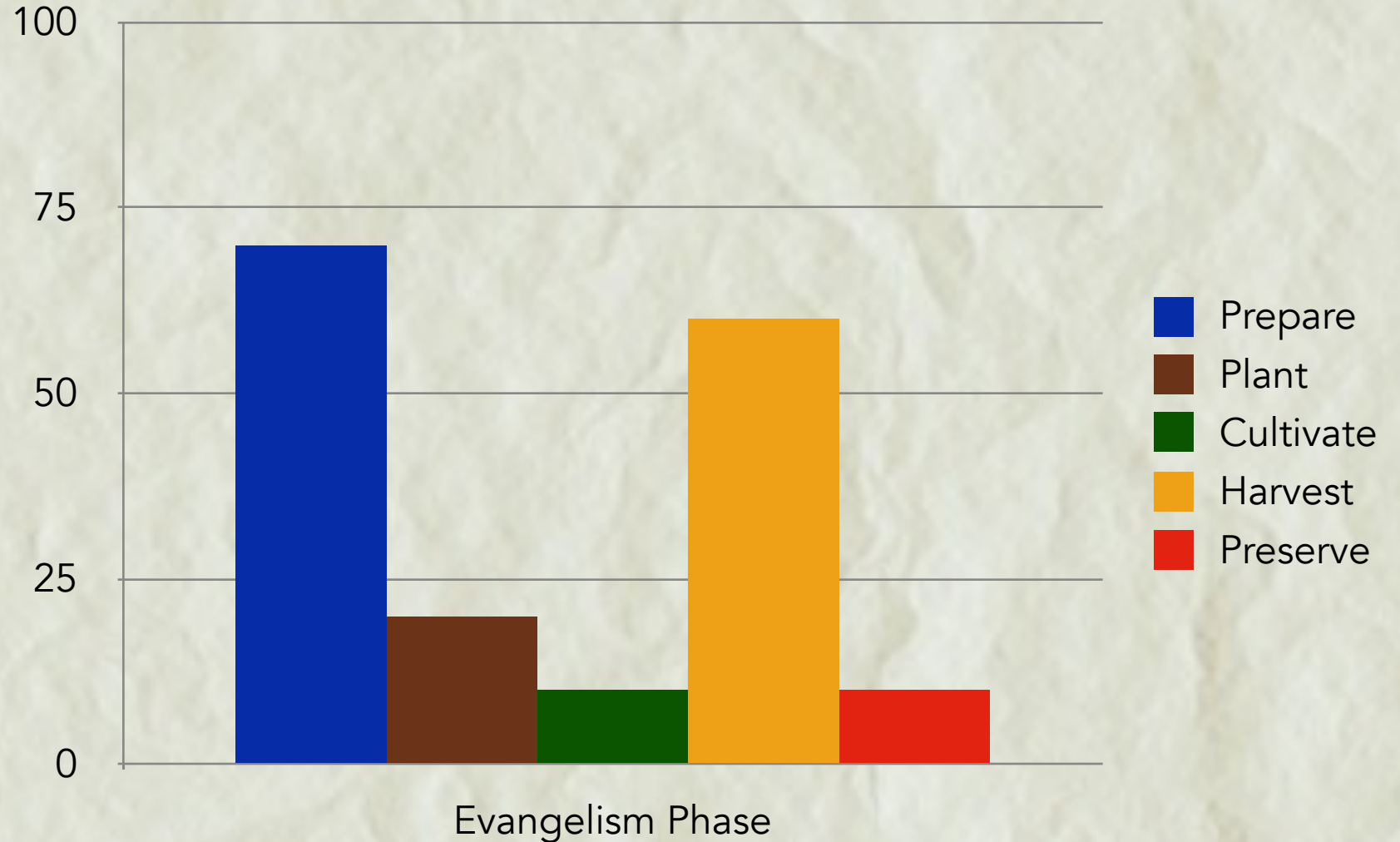
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# Local Church Growth Potential

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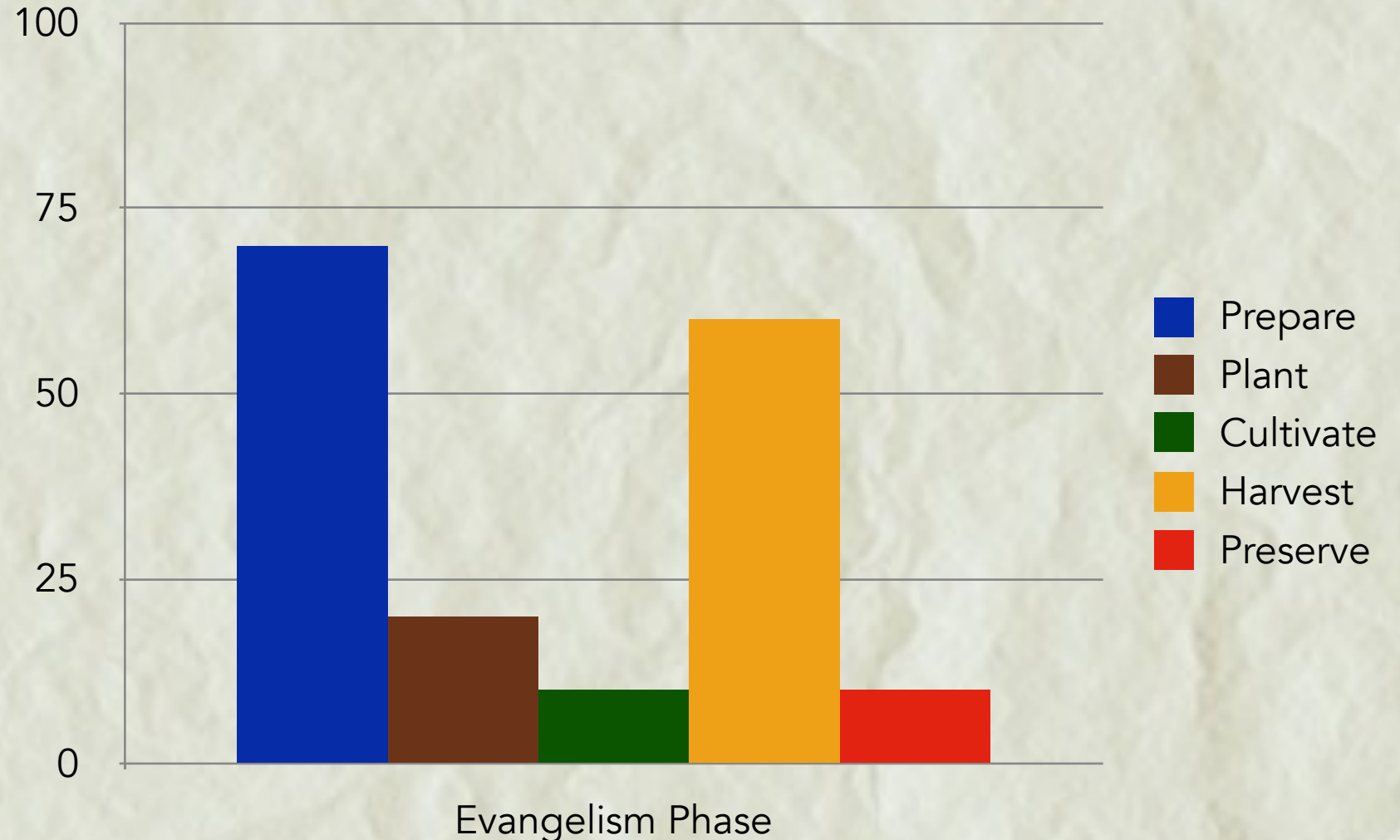
The key is to recognize that **every phase of soul-winning is essential.**



# Local Church Growth Potential

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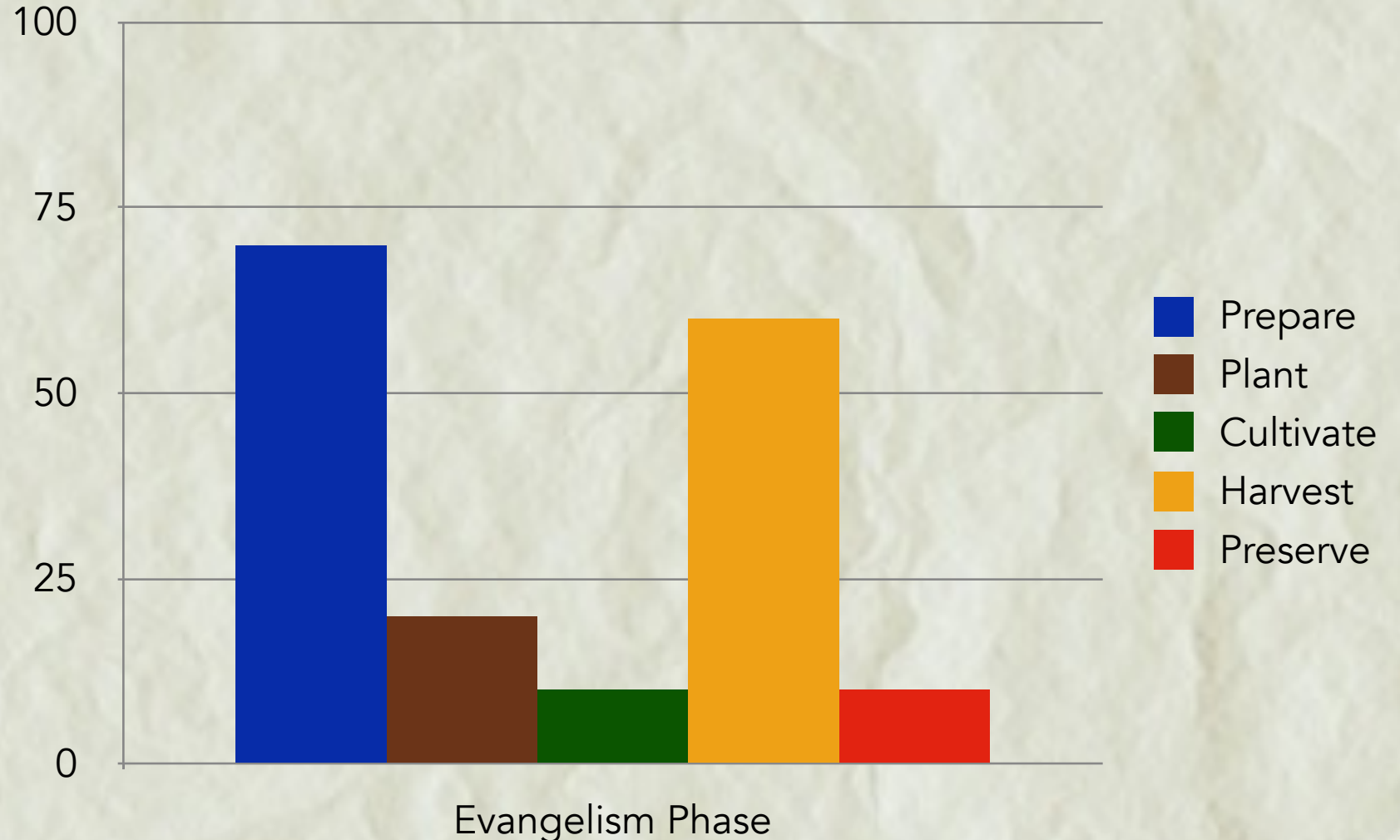
We can't just focus on one or two areas and neglect the others.



# Local Church Growth Potential

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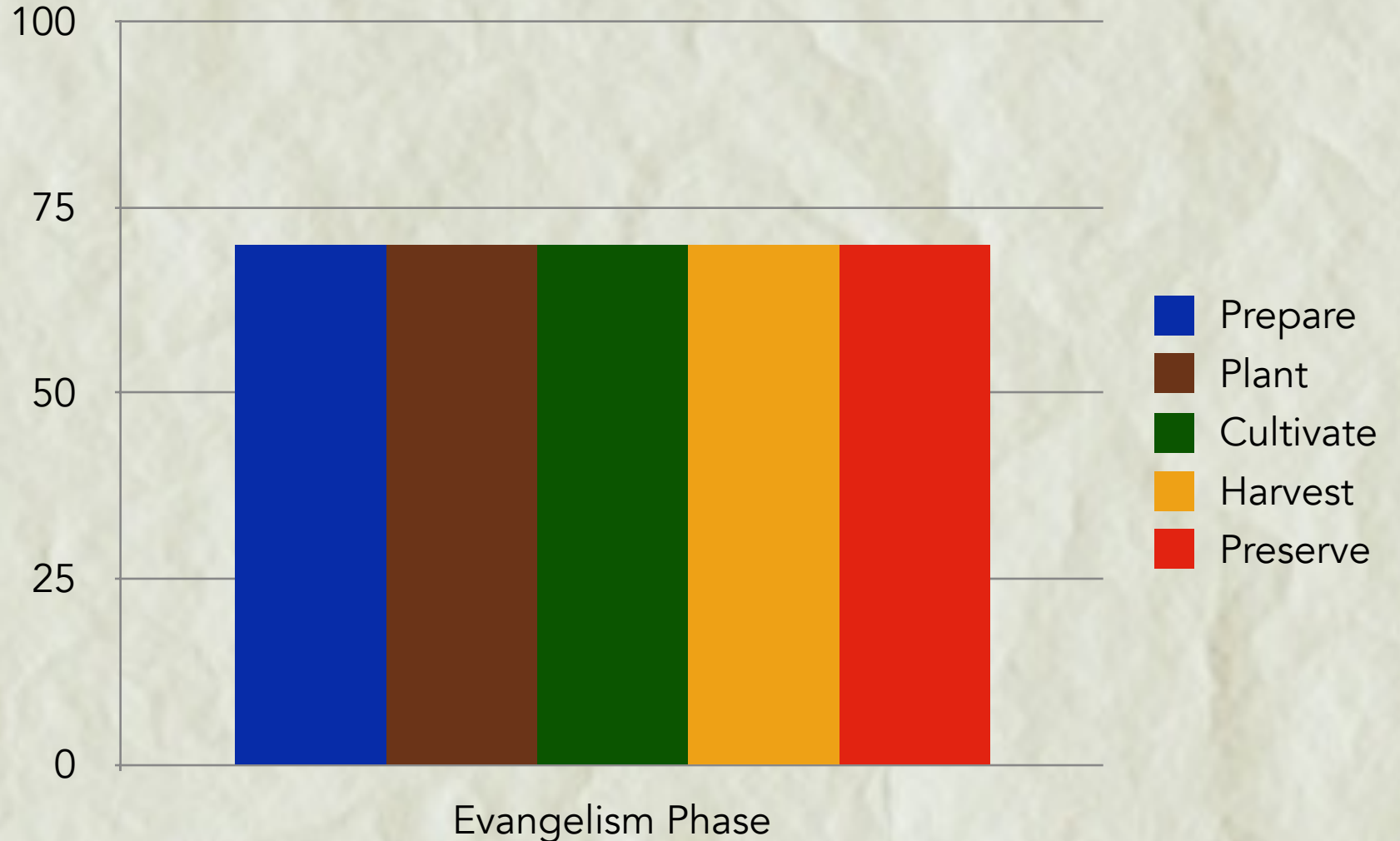
This results in a growth bottleneck that limits church growth.



# Local Church Growth Potential

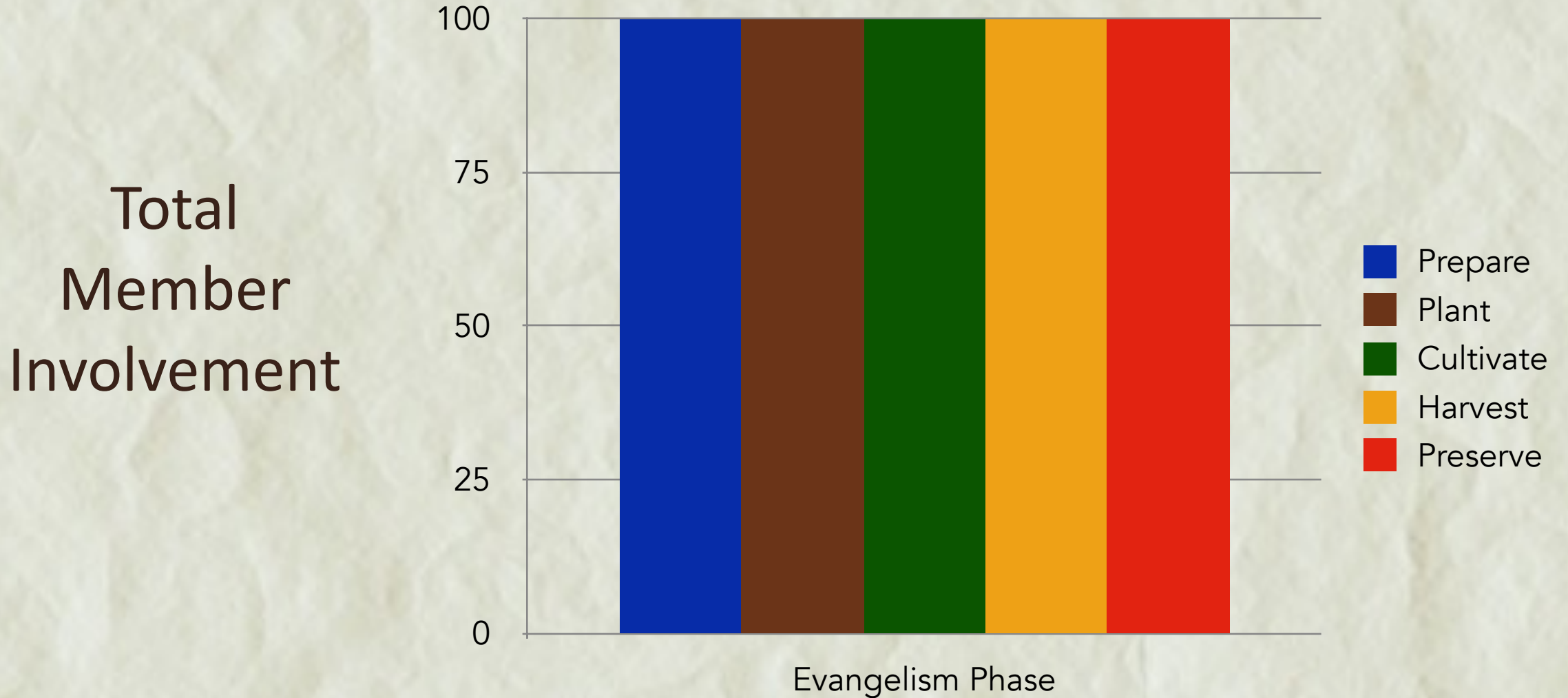
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We must  
**strengthen**  
**every phase,**  
always  
aiming for...



# Local Church Growth Potential

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If every member was involved in some form of personal outreach service, would the church grow?





**GROW**

[YOUR CHURCH]





**GROW**



[YOUR CHURCH]









**GROW**

[YOUR CHURCH]





Local churches must have **comprehensive** plans that value the importance of every phase of the soul-winning cycle.