



Faculty Work Comprehensive List


---

6-27-2023

## We Need Faithful Farmers

Dale E. Vos

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty\\_work](https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work)

 Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

---

## We Need Faithful Farmers

### Abstract

"A faithful farmer who cares is performing worshipful work."

Posting about the calling of agriculture from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/we-need-faithful-farmers/>

### Keywords

In All Things, farmers, care, agricultural innovations, planning

### Disciplines

Agriculture | Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt University](#).

# We Need Faithful Farmers

Dale Vos

**June 27, 2023**

I've seen a thing or two in 40 plus years of being in agriculture. My career path has not been what anyone would call "normal". I farmed for nearly 20 years on a grain and livestock farm in Central Iowa, worked in retail agriculture, was a pastor of a church with many members who were dairy farmers in Southern California and of a rural church in Central Wisconsin, where I also worked in secular higher education and managed sales for a major seed company, and finally, now teaching agriculture at Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Today, more than ever, we need faithful farmers. Three broad essentials of a faithful farmer are Care, Curiosity, and Contingency. Most readers will be able to make a far longer list of essential traits of those working in agriculture. The business of farming is complex and far reaching. My purpose is to focus on the faithfulness of the faithful farmer, recognizing that these traits fit well for all faithful Christians. However, I'm addressing the context of farming as my area of expertise. At Dordt University we teach faithfulness in addition to the functional aspects of agricultural business. It is what differentiates us from other universities' agriculture departments.

## Care

When we permeate every course we teach with the need to care, we are following the biblical mandate given in Genesis 2:15. Prior to the fall God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to "work it and keep it". The Hebrew behind the latter term "keep" also entails the notion of protecting it against enemies. Elsewhere in Scripture, the words work (to serve) and keep (to guard) are used in combination to describe the duties of those who served in the tabernacle. A faithful farmer who cares is performing worshipful work. We often put the label of "stewardship" on the care a faithful farmer has for the land and livestock we are given dominion over.

Faithful care points us toward eternity as we will perform work in eternity. Work is instituted before the fall and is part of God's good creation indicating that labor itself is not part of the curse on creation. Prior to the return of Christ, we perform faithful work as a foretaste of eternity. The creation story points to Christ as written in John 1, "In the beginning was the Word...All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made." Stewardship is not a word we take lightly in the Dordt Ag Department. Faithful farmers care.

## Curiosity

We teach that faithful farmers are curious. At Dordt University, we are always working toward improving and making things better. The business of agriculture is always innovating. Curiosity is at the heart of innovation. We are delighted as professors when our students are curious. Discoveries begin with asking good questions.

Curiosity is common in Scripture. The early followers of Jesus were a curious bunch. Great crowds of people followed Jesus to hear him teach and be healed. The early church generated a lot of curiosity as it spread throughout the known world. It often caused problems among the establishment. Often, the curious, faithful farmer attracts unwanted attention too. How we handle the attention is where the truly faithful farmer is different. We don't innovate just to get an advantage over the competition. The faithfully curious farmer remains humble as he or she innovates because we are called to feed the world with less land and more regulations than at any time in history, all at a cost to consumers that is affordable.

The faithfully curious farmer is always asking, "How can we improve how we farm?" The faithful farmer realizes that we never arrive, yet we must always be curious so we can fulfill our calling as those who feed the world. If there is one thing I have learned in my short 40 plus years in agriculture, it is that methods and processes change in how we do agriculture and a faithful reformed curiosity fuels needed innovation.

## Contingency

For the faithful farmer that cares and has a reformed curiosity, we teach there is one more essential trait they must possess; they will always need to have a contingency mindset. No farmer operates without risk. Accepting risk requires faith. Farmers understand faith in ways that most society cannot grasp. God's promise in Genesis 8:22, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" is a promise every faithful farmer knows very well. The faithful farmer believes God's Word and it is counted to them as righteousness.

The faithful farmer has a contingency plan based on the promises of God, not just on their circumstances. I farmed through the farm crisis of the 1980s along with three major drought years, government policy changes, price and market fluctuations, variable weather and weather disasters, family drama and tragedies, insects and diseases, the list goes on and on. These are all the realities of being a farmer in agriculture today. We teach these things at Dordt University. We give students tools and processes to mitigate the negative impact of these environmental elements nearly all farmers experience in their careers. Yet no farmer is completely immune from these and other areas of risk. What makes us different at Dordt University?

We reinforce the need to trust God above all else. James 5:7 tells us, “Be patient, therefore, brother, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.” James 4:15 tells us to plan but know that it is the Lord who ultimately determines the outcome. “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” The faithful farmer has his or her contingency plans rooted in the promises of God. We plan—we even have multiple plans—but more than anything the faithful farmer has their plans rooted in the promises of God.

We not only need faithful farmers, but also need to be faithful in our chosen vocations as a means of loving God and serving our neighbors. Care, curiosity, and contingency are essential traits in all our lives. What is distinctively different from a generic worldly basis of these traits is the foundation for them. In the faithful person, these traits are based on God’s Word and the promises in them. May God find us faithful!