

“THE LAWS OF SOWING AND REAPING”
Galatians 6:7-10, Mark 4:1-9, 2 Corinthians 9:6-12
February 17 & 18, 2018

Have you ever taken the time to think how the universe works? Have you ever stopped what you were doing and wondered how the earth works? Have you ever taken a moment and looked at your hand and asked, “How do I do that – wiggle my fingers?” Take just a moment and look at your hand. Now wiggle your thumb. How did you do that? Now wiggle your first finger. How’d that happen? Amazing isn’t it! It didn’t just move; there are a whole series of events that take place in order for your fingers to move. We take them all for granted, but we’re sure glad they work. It’s called the law of nature.

God has so organized this world to the very minutest detail, and yet so often we just overlook the glory and majesty of it. The ecosystems of the earth work to coincide with each other, enabling life to exist here on earth. God has established physical and spiritual laws to move the universe. We don’t have to understand all the laws of the universe to benefit from them; we just have to cooperate with them.

It’s like this: I don’t understand the law of magnetism, but I use a compass when I need to find directions. I don’t understand the law of electricity, but I sure do enjoy turning on a light switch in the night. I don’t understand the law of gravity, but I am sure glad it’s there. Wouldn’t life be interesting without gravity? The Olympics sure would be a lot different!

In this series of Financial Fitness, we’re looking at God’s laws of money. God has established laws that guide us in the use of money, the acquisition of money, the managing of money and the investing of money so that we might benefit by following them. We may not understand those laws, but if we cooperate with them, trusting that God knows what He’s talking about, then we will ALWAYS benefit from having them in our lives. And All of us could use some help in the area of money management. RIGHT?

The first week we looked at Jesus’ 7 laws of Wise Management; we called them the Foundations of Financial Fitness. God has blessed us all with opportunities to use His resources

to accomplish His work here on the earth. We need to manage those resources to bring about the best results.

Last week we touched on the Law of Contentment, and we talked about the five reasons why we need to learn to be content and the four ways to enjoy more on less. If we are content with what God has given us, we don't have this desire to acquire, and we're not likely to be as stressed because we are able to enjoy life without overextending our financial resources.

This week we're moving on to the third foundational law of money management. This foundation is called the LAWS OF SOWING AND REAPING. We start with the first verse on your outline, **Proverbs 11:18** which reads, "*The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness will be certain to reap a reward.*" Take a moment and circle the words "sows" and "reap." This verse is obviously talking about money, about gaining an income, and Solomon lifts up two different ways of gaining money – dishonestly and honestly. It's all about putting something out there in order to get something in return. The concept comes from the way that farmers back then planted their fields.

The way farmers planted their fields then was to carry a sack of seed and grab a hand full at a time and broadcast the seeds onto the cultivated ground. They didn't have the modern machinery that we have today that individually makes a hole and then insert a seed into it and then cover up the hole. The seed was spread out onto the ground by throwing it. Some of the birds ate some of the seed, but there was enough that landed on the ground that it sprouted.

This concept of sowing and reaping does not just apply to money, or farming, but to many other aspects of our lives. Today we'll look at nine laws that applies sowing and reaping in our lives – our relationships, our words, our talents, in our energy and every other area as a part of our lives. Nine laws of sowing and reaping from the Word of God.

1. The first law is **EVERYTHING STARTS AS A SEED**. Everything starts as a seed – a dream, a concept, a building, a thought even our very lives. Everything on earth starts with seeds.

God used the seed principle to establish the earth. Right from the beginning, in **Genesis 1:11**, we hear God say “*Let the land have seed-bearing plants and trees that bear fruit with seed in it according to their varieties.*” Everything according to its kind.

Likely you’ve heard the saying, “Anybody can count the seeds in an apple, but only God knows how many apples are in a seed.” That means that every seed has a huge potential to produce so many more seeds that we will not be able to count them all. One seed planted grows up to produce more fruit with more seeds, which in turn produces more seeds – it is an explosion of seeds. Over the years, whole forests can be planted and grow up because of one seed.

To illustrate the potential of a seed, look at the redwood tree. If you would look at the size of the seeds from the cones of the redwood, you would hardly believe that one tiny seed – almost the size of a grain of sand – could grow up to become a tree over 340 feet tall. Yet that is the great potential that God has put into the seed principle. Seeds start out small, but produce so much more. **Job 8:7** says it well, “*Though what you start with seems small and insignificant, you’ll end up in the future with much.*” A business that starts in the garage grows up to become a major corporation that influences the world. It’s that kind of seed mentality. Everything starts with a seed.

2. Law number two is **NOTHING HAPPENS UNTIL A SEED IS PLANTED!**

Nothing happens in our lives unless we plant the seed. The other day I was putting away our Christmas tree, and I came upon a small box I didn’t recognize right off. I looked into it and there in plastic bags were all of the garden seeds that Linda and I had purchased when we were living in the parsonage. There was garden space there, and we had gotten those seeds in anticipation of growing vegetables of our own. But now that we have moved to our house across the street, we don’t have a garden, so the seeds were stored away. Those seeds that have such great potential didn’t produce anything, because they weren’t planted in the ground so that they could not produce. A seed that is stored on a shelf is worthless. Seeds need to be planted.

Say a farmer goes out with his savings in the spring and buys seed for his empty fields.

When he gets home, sees all the seed in his grain bin, and then looks out at the field, he may think, “What if I plant all these seeds and nothing happens? Then what will come of all of my savings? I could lose my shirt on this.” We’d think that this farmer is being foolish because that’s what he bought the seeds for in the first place – to plant. But unless the farmer puts the seed into the ground, nothing will ever come back to him. It will just sit there. Seeds don’t grow unless they are planted in the ground. If there is no deposit into the ground, if there is no sowing being done, there will not be any reaping, because nothing will have grown. No sowing – no reaping; no harvest.

Quite often we act like this farmer, though. We’re out of work, our finances are barren, and there’s an empty field. The farmer looks out and there’s no crop, there’s no produce, there’s no income. He has a field that is producing no income in his life. What does he do? He doesn’t complain about it being dry or not the right environment. He doesn’t gripe about it being a bad economy with him not making any money. He doesn’t even pray about it! He can pray all he wants to about having an empty field that is not producing anything and it will not do any good. He has to plant some seeds to get a harvest.

We’re the same way. Are you waiting on God for that job? Are you waiting on God for that husband? Are you waiting on God for that big deal? Are you waiting on for that windfall of huge income? God says, “You’re waiting on me for that? I’m waiting on you! I’m waiting on you to plant some seeds. Plant the seeds first and then see what happens!”

Planting is done in faith. I take what I have and I give it away, I put it into the ground, I bury it! Planting seeds is essential! God says that planting is an act of faith and that brings glory to God. But we have to plant to reap.

Jesus said this in **John 12:24**. He says, “*Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, it cannot produce. But if it dies it will produce much fruit.*” He’s talking about the result of His dying on the cross, but the principle is the same – unless a seed is planted there will be no reaping. Wherever you have a need, plant a seed. Whether it’s time, energy, money, support,

relationships, wisdom, if you want a resulting harvest, you first have to plant a seed in order to get the process started. When you have a need, plant a seed! It's that simple, because unless you plant the seed, nothing will happen.

3. Now here's the third law – **WHATEVER I SOW IS WHAT I WILL REAP.**

Whatever you plant is what you will get. This is the law of reproduction. If a farmer goes out into the field with a load of bean seeds to plant, what fruit will he expect to get? Watermelons? No. Cucumbers? No. Candy canes? No. Horses? No. If he plants beans, he's going to get beans. Whatever you plant is what you will get back – no questions, no doubts. You reap what you sow, and it applies to every area of our lives. Everything reproduces ACCORDING TO ITS KIND (Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24,). Tomatoes will never produce potatoes! Apples will never produce pears. Grapevines will never produce corn. That's because in God's creation, everything produces its own kind. And this works both positively and negatively.

Galatians 6:7 says it this way, *“Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes a fool of God. You will reap exactly what you plant.”* This is both negative and positive. What Paul is telling us is that whatever we dish out, we'll get in return. What goes out comes right back. So I plant seeds of kindness, guess what? I'll get kindness in return. I plant grace and mercy and I'll get grace and mercy shown to me. I forgive others and they will forgive me in return. If I'm generous, others will be generous with me, too. What I sow, I will reap.

But the opposite is true, too. If I'm angry all the time, I'll get shown anger right back. If I'm critical with others, they will be critical of me. If I'm judgmental with others, they will be judgmental of me. If I cheat others, they are going to cheat me right back. If I gossip about others, then I can expect them to gossip right back at me. And remember this, whatever you sow, you will reap the same thing. **Proverbs 26:27** says, *“He who digs a pit will fall into it. And he who rolls a stone, will have it roll back on him.”* If we desire to do something bad to others, it will come right back at us and treat us the same.

Hosea 10:13 says, *“You planted wickedness and now you have reaped evil.”*

So many in our world would love to sow one thing and get another thing back. It doesn't happen that way. What we sow we will reap. I remember some guys in college who would go out on Saturday nights and sow their wild oats. Then on Sunday mornings they'd go to church and pray for crop failure! But it doesn't work that way, no matter what you pray. You're going to reap what you sow. You cannot sow irresponsibility and expect to get success in life! You cannot sow laziness and expect rewards in life. You cannot sow stinginess in your life and expect to have people be generous with you. Whatever is sown is what will be reaped.

You sow a thought and you reap an act. You sow an act, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. You sow your character, you reap a destiny. Whatever you give out you're going to get back.

So everything starts as a seed, nothing happens until the seed is planted, whatever I sow is what I'm going to get back. The next law might take you by surprise.

4. I'M NOT THE ONLY SOWER. What that means is that you are reaping both good and bad from what other people are sowing around you. Those who live before you have planted seeds, good or bad, and that will reap a harvest, either good or bad.

We enjoy many things that we have not work for. We enjoy freedom in America that we might not have fought for. Others have fought and died in wars in order to bring freedom to us. They sowed with their very lives that we might reap freedom. You came to church on roads that you didn't pave, in a car that you didn't design, with gas you didn't get out of the oil yourself. Someone else sowed their time, energy, creativity, invention and ideas so that we might have the things we often take for granted. They are ours because they sowed themselves into that thing, and we reap the benefits from it.

But the opposite is true, too. Some of you have been hurt by others who have sowed before you. Some of you have grown up in generational abuse. Some of you have grown up in families with history of alcoholism. Some of you grew up in bigotry and hatred. Some of you grew up with generational divorce. Even though we cannot control what others have sown in the

past, we can make up our minds to stop the cycle and begin to sow something completely different – things that are good and supportive and healthy. Everything has consequences, and what we choose to sow will affect future generations for so many years to come. We can either stop that evil that was sown into our lives, or we can perpetuate that evil to pass on to other generations.

Your faithfulness as a Christian can influence your family line for generations to come. Your line of work and your general attitude on life can be passed on to the many generations that come after you. We can either be a positive influence in generations in the future, or we can become a negative influence in the generations in the future. What we sow does not only affect us, but all those around us even into the next generation.

Start a good heritage right now! Right here in 2018 start that positive heritage in your clan, your tribe, your name, your family by following God's ways. Your life will influence generations to come after you. It's not your life to do with what you want to with! Your life will determine those who come after you. Your choice determines the harvest that others will reap.

Jesus told his disciples about this in **John 4:38**. He said, "*I sent you to reap where you did not plant; others had already done work before you and you will gather the harvest.*" You get to reap the results of what others have already sown with their lives. And others will reap what you sow with your life. Everything starts with a seed; nothing happens until the seed is planted; whatever I sow is what I'll reap, and I'm not the only sower.

5. The fifth law of sowing and reaping is **I ALWAYS REAP IN A DIFFERENT SEASON THAN FROM WHEN I SOW**. There is a time delay between the sowing and the reaping. You know this to be true. You don't plant a seed today and go out tomorrow expecting a mature plant overnight. There's no such thing as instant maturity. You have to let the seed germinate and develop, and that takes time.

There's no such thing as instant success. Instant fame, yes, but not instant success. Scientists will be working for years on a product in the quiet of their laboratory. Then suddenly

that discovery or products will become famous because of the years of study and trial and failure. It took Thomas Edison over 2000 tries to get the right filament for the incandescent light bulb. But once he found it, SUCCESS! It takes time to grow in wisdom, it takes time to gather, it takes time to build skills, it takes time!

Ecclesiastes 3:1-5 tells us about the seasons in life. It says *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...”* then it lists eight or ten different things. There is a time for this and a time for that, and three of those things are *“there is a time to plant and there is a time to harvest...a time to scatter, there is a time to gather...a time to sow and a time to reap...”* Each has a different season, each with a different time line and different maturity rate. It’s so hard for us in our instant gratification society to wait for the result. We make a deposit, make an investment or make a plan and we want it to happen real quickly. But it takes time.

That is the principle of money management, too. We will always reap in different seasons than what we sow. And it all won’t ripen at the same time. Fruit trees produce fruit for a long time because each apple or pear or peach ripens at its own rate. The harvest comes little by little. So if you start planting and sowing and following God’s money management principles today, you’re not going to get a windfall tomorrow. You won’t win the lottery. It will happen over time, a little at a time. And sometimes you might even think that nothing is happening, but just as a seed takes time to germinate and sprout and develop to maturity, so it is with those financial practices you are beginning to put into play in your life. While you’re waiting, God is working. If you have patience and remember that there is a time delay between sowing and reaping, you will eventually receive the harvest you have invested in.

6. Here’s the next law: **I ALWAYS REAP MORE THAN I SOW.** This goes for good as well as for bad – you will always reap more than what you sow. It’s the principle of multiplication. If you plant one kernel of corn, you will never get just one kernel of corn in return. Each kernel of corn will produce a plant with several ears, each with many more kernels.

This is the law of returns – you always get more out of it than what you put into it because what you sow you’re going to reap and you always end up reaping more.

Jesus tells this in His Parable of the Sower in **Mark 4. In verse 8** He says, “*Some seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty and even a hundred times.*” Not every seed will produce the same end result, but you will get an increased amount to what you sow.

Again this works on whatever we sow. If we so gossip, guess what? It’s going to multiply generously in return. If you complain, it will be returned to you in much greater amounts. But if you bless others, that will bring you abundant blessings. If you support others, you will get an abundance of support. If you love others, you will get an abundance of love in return. If you show gratitude to others, that gratitude will become abundant to you and to so many more. What you give, you will get back IN GENEROUS AMOUNTS. We always get back more than what we have put in. We always reap more than what we sow.

7. I CAN INCREASE MY HARVEST BY PLANTING MORE SEED. This is the law of proportion, meaning that we always reap in proportion to what we sow. That means if we sow a bunch of seeds, we’ll get a bunch of crops. If we sow a little seed, we’ll get only a little in return. If we so no seed, we get no crops. This is true in giving, it’s true in tithing, it’s true in energy expenditure, it’s true in talent, it’s true in intelligence, and it’s true in every area of your life. We can increase the harvest by planting more seeds.

Listen to **2 Corinthians 9:6-12**. Paul says “*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each one should give what he’s decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” Though Paul is talking about money here, it goes way beyond money. It’s basically saying that we can never out-give God. You can give all you have to God and He will always bless you with more. Play this little game with God; God says, “Hey, you give to me and I’ll give to you and let’s see who wins.” The more you sow the more you’re blessed and the

more you reap. And if you keep on giving that way, God will continue to bless you. You can never out-give God.

Now the word that Paul uses here for the word “cheerful” is the Greek word “*hilarios*.” It’s where we get the word hilarious from. Why? Because God loves your heart attitude. God doesn’t need your money! He wants what it represents - your heart, your attitude. When you give hilariously, God rewards it with His own hilarious giving back to you. And since we can never out-give God, guess who wins?

This law of generosity works for everyone, believers and non-believers. If we plant more seeds, we’ll get back more of that seed. The seed is anything that we value that we give away. If we give wisdom away then we will get more wisdom back. If we give love away, we’ll get more love back. If we give our energy away, we’ll get more energy back. If we give our money away, God makes sure that we’ll get more back. If we give our time away, we’ll get more time back. As seed is anything that I sow, that I give away, that I let go of instead of holding it all to myself.

Just like the law of gravity works for all people, so the law of generosity works for everyone. If you run your business with integrity and with generosity and with humility and with the laws of the harvest, you’re going to be blessed. The same goes with your family, with your finances, with your relationships and with everything in your life. The laws of the harvest, the laws of sowing and reaping, work for everyone. **Proverbs 11:24** spells it out nicely: “*The world of the generous gets larger and larger; but the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.*” So now it’s time for the eighth law.

8. IT’S TIME TO START PLANTING NOW. The time to start planting is NOW. It all starts as a seed, nothing happens until the seed’s planted, whatever I sow is what I’m going to reap, I’m always going to reap more than I sow, and I can increase the harvest by planting more seed. But the time to plant is right now! Don’t wait for a better time. The sooner the better.

It’s so easy for us to think, “Oh I’ll start that one of these days, after ...” We make great plans to serve, or go on that mission trip, or retire, or start supporting the church, or whatever,

but we always seem to say, "...only after that or this or the other thing happens." If a farmer waited for the right weather conditions to occur to start planting, he probably would never get around to planting, ANYTHING! Don't wait until it seems right to start planting your seeds. Right now is the best time to start sowing that seed so that you can see the benefits sooner.

It's the law of compounding interest. If you start saving as a young person and you put little by little away, it multiplies and by the time you get out there it's really big. That seed starts out small, but given time and growth, it explodes. The sooner you start planting seeds, the sooner you're going to start reaping the harvest.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 says it really well; *"Those who wait for perfect weather will never plant seeds; and those who look at every cloud will never reap a harvest."* Why is this true? Because if we wait for the perfect time, that time will never come. Right now is the time to start planting those seeds you want to get a harvest from.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 says *"Do your planting in the morning and in the evening, too! You never know whether it will all grow well or whether one planting will do better than the other."* Begin planting those seeds wherever you are, whenever you can, to whomever you are with, in every situation you find yourself in, for as long as you can. What seeds can you sow today? Seeds of love; seeds of grace; seeds of money; seeds of energy; seeds of wisdom. The trick is to think of planting seeds like a farmer, planting in every season, every day, in everyone's life today!

2 Corinthians 9:10 is spot on. *"For God, who supplies seed to the farmer and bread to eat, will give you more and more seed to plant and will make it grow so that you can give away more and more fruit from your harvest!"* While this has much to say about money, it also has far reaching implications to other areas.

Think for a moment how you plant seeds with your words. If your words are seeds, what are you planting? Are your words being planted in your children? Are your words planting seeds in your spouse? Are your words being planted in the lives of your friends? And what are your words planting? Trust or distrust? Kindness or meanness? Anger or apathy? Are you

sowing words that build up or are you planting words that tear down? Our words are so important, and they are seeds of the attitudes that we have toward others. What we sow is what we will reap. And our words can either be seeds planted to bring good or bad results. Please be careful of the word seeds that you plant. They will produce a harvest of abundance in the proportion that you give them.

9. The last law of sowing and reaping is **TO REAP THE HARVEST I MUST BE PATIENT AND NOT GIVE UP.** To reap a harvest that God wants me to have I must be patient and not give up. Remember there's always a delay between sowing and reaping, sowing in one season and reaping in another. Jesus said it like this in **Mark 4:26-28**, *"This is what the kingdom of God is like: A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head."*

Jesus is saying that the results will come and they will come slowly and they will come systematically and they will come as a process. We may not realize what is happening in the time between the sowing and the reaping, but God will direct the process.

Galatians 6:9 tells us, *"We must not become tired of doing good. We will reap a harvest at the right time IF we do not give up!"* The key word here is "will." It's a promise that we will reap a harvest of good if we do not give up.

But what about last year's failed harvest? What about those times that we've planted seeds of evil rather than seeds of good? What about those times when we have not planted seeds but kept them to ourselves? Folks, there's nothing we can do about it. We each have had years of crop failures in our lives. We've wasted years. We've wasted words. We've wasted money. We've wasted relationships. We've wasted goodwill in people's lives. But we can't do anything about the crop failures of the past. We have to live with the consequences of our failures, BUT we can start looking at the long term harvest of those successful crop years. We can start planting new seeds of goodness and generosity and love and kindness and support and we can

determine that from now on, we will plant good seeds in the good soil of the lives of those people around us so that an abundant harvest will begin right now. If we make up our minds not to give up, the harvest that we plant today and on into the future can become one that can bring glory and honor to the Lord our God.

Our current situations didn't get here over night, and our failures have probably brought plenty of tears into our lives. You may be wondering how you're ever going to make it through this season of trouble and trial and financial stress and tremendous heartache. You may be at the point of giving up any hope of making it right again. But folks, don't give up. Though life can get tough, and though it may get to the point of hopelessness, DON'T GIVE UP! We have the promise that we will receive a reward from the Lord if we do not give up.

Psalm 126:5-6 is a promise to us. *“Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they to plant their seed, BUT they sing as they return with the harvest!”*

What loss has you grieving? What lack has you grieving? What need have you been grieving over? Maybe you've lost your job. Maybe you've lost a loved one. Maybe you've lost your savings. Maybe you've lost half of your retirement over the years. Maybe you've lost your dream. Maybe you lost your marriage. Maybe you lost your health.

It's ok to mourn the loss of those things. Jesus said in **Mathew 5:4**, *“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.”* It's ok to grieve, but seek the Lord's presence and promise. Keep planting the seeds of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and you will find hope. Keep planting the seeds that will bring about an abundant harvest of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, and in time, they will grow to touch the lives of generations beyond you, for the glory of God. Just don't give up!

Let us pray. Father, you know where we are and what we've done. You know Your desire for us. Gently encourage us to keep planting Your seeds of hope and love and peace so that we might see a harvest in Your way and in Your time. Give us the confidence we need to remain faithful to You in all that we do for the glory of Jesus Christ, in whom we pray. AMEN.