

The Laws of Sowing and Reaping and Spiritual Farming Considered – a Devotional by Rev. Keith Cobb

Let's begin with some Scripture – always a good place to start!

- Jeremiah 4:3: You have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception.
- Galatians 6:7-8: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.
- Hosea 10:12,13: Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. This is what the LORD says ...“Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns.”

Introduction

Bible “culture” cannot be separated from “agriculture”--- in reality, the world's oldest profession is farming. In the beginning, farming was “it,” of course. In time, skillfully developed methods increased productivity, and farming became a hobby for some (e.g., Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:10), and was only one of many occupations, but still farming remained one vocation in particular that was frequently and specifically addressed in (and regulated by) the Mosaic Law.

Farming was linked to community life in so many ways; it cannot be overlooked for its importance in the context of Scripture. For example, properties were marked by boundary stones (cf. Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10); the land was referred to in terms of how much an ox could plow in a day ---about an acre; that section was called a “yoke.” (Cf. 1 Samuel 14:14).

Farming was linked to religious law. The land was to lie “fallow” --or unplowed and unused --one year out of seven (Leviticus 25:4); the original “family” owners could sell their property, but every fifty years, that land would revert back to the original owners (during the year of Jubilee).

Farming was linked to spiritual revelation about God's love. God particularly expressed His care for “the working man.” Laborers were hired the evening before the work day, or in the morning, and paid at the end of the day (cf. Deut. 24:15, Matthew 20:1-16). In the same way, God was deliberate in expressing concern for animals, particularly farm animals (1 Corinthians 9:9 and Deut. 25:4). God cared for the poor (e.g., Ruth gleaning; cf. Lev. 19:9 and Deut. 24:19), and God cared for the land (2 Chron. 36:21).

Farming was definitely linked to spiritual principles. For example, sowing mixed seed was prohibited (Deuteronomy 22:9); harvest times were celebration times (Exodus 34:22), and Jesus spoke of areas as being fields of harvest (John 4:34ff), and Paul used the illustration of muzzling the ox to speak of caring for ministers of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:9ff); there are many other examples (including most notably Galatians 6:6-8).

We ponder these foundational things in order to get at understanding God's degree of involvement in this admirable profession and to better appreciate the metaphors He uses to

teach us about “life,” and since this devotion is about “life principles” (i.e., how to better our “lot” in life), I submit that an understanding of the following laws can be most beneficial to us:

The Laws of the Soil (i.e., the fields): what are they?

The Laws of the Seed: what are the seeds?

The Laws of the Sowers: what does one need to know?

The Laws of Certainty: despite all the variables, there are “sure things.”

1. **The Fields – the Laws of the Soil**

The Laws of the Land, or The Laws of the Soil are simple: in all places where seed can be sown, there are problems, and these problems must be at least anticipated, or we will grow weary in doing well (cf. Galatians 6:10). For instance, there are internal problems such as weeds and thorns; there are different kinds of soil (e.g., hard and stony ground, or marshy wetlands) that make sowing more difficult and specialized; and there are nutritional deficiencies that indicate the need for fertilizers.

Further, the Law of the soil recognizes there are external problems related to the soil and its productivity such as pests, droughts, floods, and windstorms.

But, to move on, a field can be any area in your life that can produce something meaningful and worthwhile to the kingdom of God: other people (our family, our associates, our church friends), or things (money, relationships).

Finally, recognize that, in almost all cases, the fields we wish to see fruitful are first “uncultivated” (i.e., “unplowed” or “fallow”) when we begin attempts to work for the Lord. These areas require the ground to be “broken up” (by prayer, loving confrontation, etc.) before we begin sowing.

2. **The Seed – The Laws of the Seed**

Let’s simply state and ponder (without much comment) the Laws of the Seed:

- Seeds were created by God.
- Seeds succeed; if the seed had failed, life would have failed, and, obviously, the seed did not fail.
- The seed’s appearance is of no value; its value is in its inherent and incredible power.
- Seeds must “die” to realize their purpose.
- Seeds have their eventual “place” –and it is not the seed bag.
- Seeds have their “time” (Ecclesiastes 3:2).
- Seeds have their “needs”; for example, they must be watered.
- Seed will not be rushed; they must be given time.

So, what are the seeds of the spiritual life?

- The Word of God.
- Things we do and say.
- The information we glean.

- The things we hear and see.
- Money.

Each (and all) these has (or have) powerful potential to affect and impact our lives favorably – IF we learn to sow like good farmers.

3. **The Laws of the Sower**

Everyone is a sower; we are each and everyone “slinging seed” all day long; not everyone is a good farmer, however.

Much of our seed is either “bad seed” or “mixed seed,” and often we are not even aware we are sowing.

“The Law of the Sower” recognizes that every person is a “spiritual farmer,” and that fruit and harvest is going to happen, and that the crop produced identifies the farmer: “By their fruit you shall know them” (Matthew 7:16). Additionally, others see our fields and make conclusions based upon their observations (Proverbs 24:30-34). But most importantly, Jesus looks for fruit in our lives (John 15:1-9; Mark 8:12-14).

Seed-sowing, however, is not all there is to spiritual farming; there is plowing (Luke 9:62), planting, watering, and harvesting, and caring for the field (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5, 6). There is both reflection (on the past) and planning for the upcoming seasons.

Really, effective spiritual farming is challenging. There are temptations of slothfulness and a proneness to neglect the required maintenance of our fields, to hold the seed, to watch the weather and stay in bed; no wonder tears are equated with spiritual farming (Psalm 126:5,6).

And then, there is “the enemy” (cf. Matthew 13:28) who is interfering with our work.

Still, effective spiritual farming can have many rewards (e.g., 2 Timothy 2:6), and these come when we recognize the next law: the Law of Certainty.

4. **The Certainties - The Laws of the Harvest**

Here they are, again, with no comment:

- We reap exactly **WHAT** we sow.
- We reap **ONLY** what we sow.
- We reap **IN A DIFFERENT SEASON** than we sow.
- We reap **MORE THAN** we sow.
- We reap **IN PROPORTION** to how much we sow.
- Since we **WILL REAP WHAT WE SOW**, little can be done about the past, but much can be done about the future.

When we grasp these principles, and can answer the following questions, we can have a God-glorifying fruitful life; so, in conclusion, ask yourself the following three questions: What am I sowing? Where am I sowing? Am I using the Laws of Sowing and Reaping to my benefit or my detriment, to God’s honor, or to His displeasure?