

JCI #152 Laws of the Harvest September 2014

Knowing we're called to the harvest is not enough. We need to know the laws that govern the harvest to be effective in His work.

As I've told you many times, I was born and raised on a six-generation dairy farm in northern New York's Lewis County. Life was all about the harvest. When I was born-again at age 18, out of an unchurched background, I was surprised to discover that the Bible comes from an agricultural context with frequent mention of the principles that govern farming life. These principles are both physical and spiritual, and keys to being a faithful harvester of the fruit that comes from the seed of the gospel. Let's explore a few of them to encourage your meditation and further study in God's Word.

1) THE LAW OF QUALITY You reap what you sow (You pick *what* you plant!)

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

"Don't be fooled. God can't be tricked. Whatever you plant, you pick!" (RP - Ron's paraphrase)

If you want to pick corn...plant corn. If you want to pick potatoes...plant potatoes. You need to decide in the Spring what you want to pick in the Fall. If we don't plant the seeds of the gospel in hearts, we will never harvest that fruit of the gospel that is salvation. Only the gospel can save the soul. And only the gospel that is clearly heard can result in a new birth. (1 Peter 1:23 ...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.)

2) THE LAW OF QUANTITY You reap more than you sow (You pick *more* than you plant!)

2Cor 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. "

"Plant a little, pick a little... plant a lot, pick a lot" If we plant a seed, it produces a plant that holds many seeds. I remember having a VBS class go out into a field of corn (with the farmer's permission) and pick ears of corn and count the seeds on the cob. Our kids found the ears had 600 - 800 kernels each. All from one seed that was planted! This is a great encouragement to focus on planting and not quit!

3) THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY You won't reap if you don't sow (You plant, you pick!)

John 9:4 "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day..."

"No plant, no pick" Jesus reminded His disciples of the imperative of doing the work of the gospel. It isn't an option. It's a divine command. "You shall be my witnesses..." Acts 1:8 "As the Father sent me, so I send you."

John 20:21 "We must work..." John 9:4 "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel..." 1 Cor 9:16

No one can or will do the work of sharing the gospel that God has laid on you and me. It's not about personality, spiritual gifts, education, or anything else we may use to attempt to avoid witnessing. Every believer is commissioned to plant the seeds of the gospel in hearts by making the message known in words. For this we will each give an account.

4) THE LAW OF PRIORITY Plant in Spring or starve in Winter! (Plant now!)

Proverbs 24:27 Prepare your work outside and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house.

Both planting a crop and building a house are essential. But planting beats building on the priority list because there is only a short window in Spring when planting can be effectively done. The call to plant the seeds of the gospel now is of supreme urgency. Later becomes too late, too soon! Hear again the words of our Savior: Proverbs 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

John 9:4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

5) THE LAW OF PREPARATION You plow before you plant (Plow first, plant later)

1 Cor. 9:10 "...the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops."

Plowing is a lot of work, but planting without plowing is a waste of time. If the seed doesn't penetrate the ground, it can't sprout and the birds eat it up. The plowing work of intercession and in-depth interaction with others prepares the heart's soil for a deep planting of the gospel seed.

6) THE LAW OF PATIENT PERSEVERANCE You reap after you sow (Plant now, pick later)

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

"Plant now, pick later"

I used to plant radishes. I don't like radishes. Why did I plant them? Because they sprout in two days and I like to see something come up after I plant it! I know, I know, I am a very impatient man. That's not a surprise to anyone who knows me. But we must learn the lesson of patience. It takes time for seed to sprout, to grow, to mature, and to dry sufficient to harvest. In the same way we need to continue explaining the gospel, asking good questions, discovering what false beliefs are hindering them from trusting Christ, and waiting for the Holy Spirit to open their hearts to the truth. We shared the gospel every week for nearly six months with one couple before they came to Christ. Another family needed several years of teaching before realizing their need. I shared the gospel continually with my own parents for fourteen years before they put their trust in Christ as personal Savior. We must be patient and persistent in the process of planting and cultivating the gospel seed.

7) THE LAW OF CULTIVATION After you plant, weed! Keep weeding until the harvest!

Proverbs 24:30-34 I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest," Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.

Plowing and planting is just the start. Weeding ends only when the harvest ends. Forgetting to pull the weeds is guaranteed a minimal harvest. The weeds of deceptive false teaching, distractions, lack of contact with believers, ignoring the scriptures... all these weeds choke the seed even as Jesus warned...

Matthew 13:22 "The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."

8) **THE LAW OF INVESTMENT** Buy good seed & good equipment. It's worth it!

Proverbs 14:4 Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, But much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.

Every February we mortgaged the farm to buy seed, fertilizer, and fuel. You can't farm without investing in the essentials. Proverbs 14:4 says you have a nice clean manger if you don't have to feed the ox. The point is this: Yes, it isn't messy if the barn is empty. But if the manger is clean and empty, your own plate will be just as clean and empty. Invest in the price of the ox. It will cost you time, money, and continual effort, but if you want a harvest, spend the up-front money that you must invest to get there. It will take your time and energy, your heart and soul to reach souls. People work is messy. You may have a nice clean church building and a nice clean Day-Timer without interruptions if you never invest in people. But you don't have a harvest, do you? So pay the price of investing your life in people. It will be long, hard, messy, and all consuming. But the result is a great harvest at the end of this life's soul-harvest season.

9) **THE LAW OF DEPENDENCE** You can't make it rain!

Isaiah 55:10-11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

No matter how much time, energy, money, effort, perseverance, patience, and personal responsibility I may put forth, after it's all said and done, I can't make it rain. No rain, no harvest! And so all we do we must do with complete dependence on God to do what only God can do, make it rain! The rain of regeneration, the rain of repentance, the rain of saving faith... it all comes from God through the gospel. Pray, preach, and pray again. Pray, witness, and pray again. Pray before you share. Pray while you share. Pray after you share. This work is impossible apart of divine intervention. We are dealing with men dead in sins. We are displaying pictures to the blind and singing songs to the deaf. But God through His gospel raises the dead, restores sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. And He gets all the glory when the harvest finally comes.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Self-Check

- 1) Have I lost the passion and priority of gospel seed planting in the lives of others?
- 2) Have I given up hope that some friend, relative or co-worker will ever be saved?
- 3) Am I faithfully praying for the salvation of others before and after sharing the gospel?

For Further Study

Read Romans 9-11 and note the **power (P)** of the gospel, the **sovereignty (S)** of God and the **responsibility (R)** of the believer in making the gospel known. Put a **P, S, or R** next to each verse that emphasizes these truths.

“O God of Grace and Goodness, You have done the good work that is the subject of the good news You have given us the joy and privilege of proclaiming. Renew our souls with passion and perseverance, dependence and diligence in sowing the gospel seed in the lives of others. Bring forth fruit unto eternal life through it for Your eternal glory. For from You and through You and to You are all things. To You be the glory forever. In the name of His who is the gospel in flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN.”

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY