DARING TO PLANT IN FAITH

In part five of our *Daring Faith series,* we learned that God says you can learn a lot about living by faith by looking at two kinds of people: successful soldiers and successful athletes. We covered that in pretty good detail. Today, I want us to look at the third kind. So, I've entitled this message, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Just kidding. Actually, the title is "Daring to Plant in Faith". Based on the title, what is the kind of people I'm going to talk about today? Farmers! Because the Bible compares the Christian life to gardening over and over again.

In Genesis 8:22, the Bible says, *"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest…will never cease."* Then, in Galatians 6:7 (MSG), it says: *"Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. Whatever a person plants,…"* he might harvest. Is that what it says? It says *he will.* Count on it. Note that word, "will".

Today what I want to dare you is to plant in faith. And specifically, I want to teach you God's laws of planting and harvesting. Or in the olden days it was called the laws of sowing and reaping.

Now, if you ignore the laws of sowing and reaping in your life it's going to hurt you. It will harm you. If you wisely use the laws of sowing and reaping in your life you're going to be blessed by it. You can use the laws I'm about to teach you literally in every single area of your life. You can use the laws of sowing and reaping in relationships. You can use the laws in your health. You can use it in your finances. You can use it in your career. The point that I want to make before I get into these laws is this: Whatever you need more of in your life, you need to plant in faith.

So, if you feel like you need more appreciation, you need to start appreciating other people. Plant seeds of appreciation. Let's try that. Say to the person next to you. You look good today.

If you feel like you need more talent, you need to start using the little talent you've got and God will give you more. If you need more time, if you need more money, if you need more energy – whatever you need more of you need to learn the laws of planting and harvesting or sowing and reaping. You need to plant what you need.

There are 12 Laws of Sowing and Reaping. Let me go through these laws pretty quickly.

Number one, write these down.

1. EVERYTHING STARTS AS A SEED.

Everything starts as a seed. That's the first law of the harvest. Every idea started as a seed idea. Every dream started as a dream seed. America started as an idea, a seed idea of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This church started as a seed. Your life started as a seed. Literally everything that's living on planet earth came from a seed. If it didn't come from a seed it's not alive. So everything starts as a seed.

In Genesis 1 God says this: *"Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so."*

So it all starts as a seed. It could be time, money, appreciation, wisdom, energy, whatever.

By the way, words can be seeds. Words can be seeds that you plant in people's mind. And they can grow, they do grow and they bear fruit. So you need to choose your words wisely. Especially when you're talking with people that you love – children, your husband, your wife, your friends. Those are seeds.

Let me just ask you: What kind of seeds are you planting in your relationships? Are you planting seeds of trust or are you planting seeds of distrust? Are you planting seeds of kindness or are you planting seeds of crankiness?

And anger and bitterness, meanness? Are you planting seeds that build up or are you planting seeds that tear down? You will reap whatever you sow.

Number two, law number two:

2. NOTHING HAPPENS UNTIL THE SEED IS PLANTED

Nothing happens until the seed is planted. It must be given away. It can't do any good in a bag. Jesus used this principle to explain why he came to die. In John 12:24, Jesus says this: *"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."*

Imagine a farmer going to a feed store, buying a big sack of seed, or some crop he's going to grow and then he puts it in his barn and then he's afraid to give it away. "I'm going to hold on to it. I might not have enough." We would say that is foolish – seeds are meant to be planted. Seeds are meant to be given away.

What I'm teaching you is that planting or sowing is an act of faith. It's an act of faith because it's saying when I plant the seed, I believe that something great is going to happen because I plant this seed. Something great will happen because I'm going to give away what I've got. I'm not going to keep it in my bag. I'm going to give it away. And I believe it's going to produce some fruit.

Planting seeds is also risky. Because you can't see what's happening under the dirt.

Most of you don't know I'm a farmer at heart. When I graduated from college and I had a lot of time in my hands because I was still waiting to be hired, I turned our backyard into a garden and planted different kinds of vegetables. I planted bitter melon, tomatoes, string beans, squash, at saka meron pa, labanos, mustasa. Sibuyas, kamatis…

Now, planting needs patience. I couldn't go out to my garden and every day dig it up and see if it's growing.

When you plant a seed, it's covered up and it's buried and you don't know what's going to happen. Is that thing going to sprout or not? That's where "faith" comes in because you can't see it. What if it doesn't sprout? You're tempted to dig it up. What if it fails? What if I give my seed away and nothing comes of it? That's where faith comes in.

Jesus said it like this: Mark 4:26-27, *"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."*

He can't see it until it sprouts. And that's the element of faith.

Number three…

3. WHEN I HAVE A NEED, I SHOULD PLANT A SEED.

When a farmer looks out on his barren crop, a barren field, and he sees no crops in his field, he doesn't gripe. He doesn't complain. He doesn't even pray. He just starts planting.

There are times you should *not* pray. There are times you should plant instead of pray. The farmer can look at a barren field and go, "Oh, God, please make my corn crop grow." And God says, "Did you plant any seed?" No. It isn't going to happen. Sometimes you don't pray, you just plant. This is the law of sowing and reaping.

The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 11: *"Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well."*

Have you ever heard of the phrase, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket?" Yeah, that's what investors say. By the way, that idea is from the Bible. It's from Ecclesiastes. But here's another example. He says when you sow, sow in a bunch of areas. Plant in a bunch of areas. Do your planting all the time.

You should be planting good seeds all the time with your life. Because you never know where it's going to grow.

Let me just be real honest. Some of you think you're waiting on God. And you're not. He's waiting on you. Some of you think you're waiting on God for a job or for a miracle or a spouse or something you want. God is waiting on you. He's waiting on you to start planting seeds. When I have a need I plant a seed. If you don't make a deposit there is no return.

So whatever I need more of I need to give it away. If I need more energy, I use the energy in a gym to get more energy. If I need more talent, I give away what I've got and I get more talent by using what little I've got. Time, money, anything. Whatever I need more of, I give it away. When I have a need I plant a seed.

Number four…

4. WHATEVER I PLANT IS WHAT I WILL REAP.

This is the law of reproduction. Whatever I plant is whatever I will reap. If a farmer plants a field of beans, what crop should he expect to get? Watermelon? No. If I plant corn in the ground do you think I'm going to expect zucchini? No. You're going to get in life whatever you plant.

This is an inviolable rule of the universe. It'll either work for you or against you. You don't wonder about what's going to grow. You don't doubt what's going to grow. If you plant corn, you're going to get corn because whatever you plant is what you're going to reap. Galatians 6:7, *"A man reaps what he sows."* There's a phrase in Genesis over and over and over that's used. It's the phrase "after its own kind." A man reaps what he sows.

Again, this works both ways. It can either work for you or it can work against you. Whatever I dish out is what I'm going to get back in life. And the Bible talks about this a lot.

Let me show a couple of verses on the screen. These are negative examples.

Job 4:8, *"Those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it."*

Proverb 22:8, *"Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity."*

Now let me show you a couple of positive examples.

Proverb 11:18, *"The one who sows righteousness will reap a sure reward."*

Hosea 10:12, *"Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love."*

Are you getting the idea that this is not some minor message of the Bible? The laws of the harvest. You will reap what you sow with your children, with your wife, with your business. It'll either work for you or it'll work against you. You sow anger, that's what you're going to get – angry kids. You sow patience that's what you're going to get – patient kids.

You will reap what you sow. And you get exactly what you put out. I cannot sow irresponsibility and reap success. I cannot sow laziness and reap reward. I cannot sow stinginess and reap a blessing.

The Bible is full of examples of this. Both negative and positive.

Let's look at Jacob. Jacob, his name is "supplanter," it meant he was going to cheat people. And Jacob cheated his brother and cheated his dad. So you know what happened? His father-in-law cheated him. He reaped what he sowed.

Haman was a man who reaped bitterness. He built these gallows to kill a guy named Mordecai. He ended up being hung on his own gallows. This happens all the time.

Let's look at Galatians 6 again. Verses 7-8. It says this: *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."* Folks, you're going to harvest whatever you plant.

Everything starts with a seed, nothing happens until the seed is planted, whenever I have a need I plant a seed. And whatever I plant is what I'm going to reap.

Number five, here's a big one…

5. I'M NOT THE ONLY SOWER.

You're not the only planter in the universe. Other people are planting all around you. And, by the way, you are reaping, both good and bad, from those who went before you.

Some of you may have grown up in families with a history of abuse. And a history of alcohol. And maybe a history of gambling. And you have to decide – the chain breaks *now*. I can't control the past, but I'm going to break the chain *now*.

You are harvesting both good and bad from your past because you're not the only person sowing. Everything you do has consequences. And by the way, your life is going to affect future generations. So you need to take it very, very seriously.

Do you know Jonathan Edwards? Edwards was a Puritan Preacher in the 1700s. He was one of the most respected preachers in his day. He attended Yale at the age of thirteen and later went on to become the president of Princeton college.

Now, an American educator, A.E. Winship decided to trace the descendants of Jonathan Edwards almost 150 years after his death. His findings are remarkable, especially when compared to another man from the same time period known as Max Jukes.

Jonathan Edwards' legacy includes: 1 U.S. Vice-President, 1 Dean of a law school, 1 dean of a medical school, 3 U.S. Senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 60 doctors, 65 professors, 75 Military officers, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers, 100 clergymen, and 285 college graduates.

How may this be explained? Edwards was a godly man, but he was also hard working, intelligent and moral. Furthermore, Winship states, "Much of the capacity and talent, intensity and character of the more than 1,400 of Edwards' family is due to Mrs. Edwards." So, behind every successful man is a woman, Amen?

Now, Max Jukes' legacy includes: 7 murderers, 60 thieves, 190 prostitutes, 150 other convicts, 310 paupers, and 440 who were physically wrecked by addiction to alcohol. Of the 1,200 descendants that were studied, 300 died prematurely.

These contrasting legacies provide an example of what some call the five-generation rule. *"How a parent raises their child — the love they give, the values they teach, the emotional environment they offer, the education they provide — influences not only their children but the four generations to follow, either for good or evil."*

We don't know whether anyone of Jukes's descendants ever broke the chain. Maybe or maybe not. But one thing is clear: there were others who sowed before you and you will also be the start of a new generation who will trace their lineage back to. The question is: What kind of legacy are you leaving?

Jesus says in John 4:38, *"I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."*

I'm not the only one sowing.

Number six…

6. I ALWAYS REAP IN A DIFFERENT SEASON THAN I SOW.

Plants take time to grow. There's no instant maturity. So you don't plant today and this afternoon get the fruit. There's always a delay.

That's true when you plant anything in life. There's no such thing as instant success. There's instant fame but no instant success. It takes time to gather wisdom.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3:1, *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."*

In other words there's a time to sow and a time to reap. Fruit ripens gradually. And by the way, it doesn't all ripen at the same time. You just need to understand: When you plant a seed you don't get the harvest immediately. There's always a delay.

Banana trees bear fruit between 9-18 months. The apple tree, meanwhile, takes 2-3 years to start bearing fruit. Some things take time. But they're worth it.

Number seven…

7. I MUST BE PATIENT AND NOT GIVE UP

As you're waiting on the seed you planted, don't become impatient. I must be patient and not give up. Because you reap in a season that's different than you sowed in.

Galatians 6:9 tells us this: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

We have to be patient.

Number eight… This is a big one.

8. I ALWAYS REAP MORE THAN I SOW.

I will always reap more than I saw. Again this can work for you or against you. I will always reap more than I sow. This is the law of multiplication.

So, years ago, I planted some tomato seeds. Sometime later, all those seeds bore so many tomatos. I mean, just one seed produced numerous tomatoes. And if you cut a tomato, you'll find countless tomato seeds, right? One tomato, in fact, contain anywhere from 20 to 300 seeds.

One little seed doesn't give me back one little seed. One little seed will give me back hundreds of seeds. You always reap more than you sow.

In the parable of the soils, Jesus said it this way. Mark 4:8, *"Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."*

Again this will work for you or against you. It depends on what kind of seed you're planting. If you plant gossip you're going to get a lot more gossip about you. If you plant criticism, you're going to get a lot more criticism about you. There is an exponential potential in every seed. As that old line, that old cliché says "Anybody can count the seeds in an apple but only God can count the apples in a seed." Because one seed can produce an awful lot of apples.

I'll always reap more than I sow. Number nine…the ninth law of sowing and harvesting…

9. I INCREASE MY HARVEST BY PLANTING MORE SEED.

I can always increase my harvest by planting more seed. This is the law of proportion. That we always reap in proportion to what we sow.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7. We actually looked at this verse last week. It says this: *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

What that verse says is this: You get to choose how big the harvest is in your life. You get to choose how much God blesses your life. Don't blame anybody else. You sow sparingly you will reap sparingly. You sow generously you will reap generously. That is the Word of God. That is the law of the universe and it applies in every single area of your life.

The law of generosity works for anybody who follows it. It works for non-believers. Just like gravity works for believers and non-believers. It's just the law of the universe.

Proverb 11:24, *"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty."*

Number ten… the tenth law of the harvest…

10. THE MORE SEED I PLANT THE MORE GOD WILL GIVE ME.

The more seed I plant, the more God gives me. God is looking for givers to bless. He doesn't look for stingy people to bless. He looks down and goes, Is anybody on earth like me who wants to be generous? Who wants to be unselfish? Who wants to think of other people?

The Bible says this: 2 Corinthians 9:10, *"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness."*

That verse is a promise about being generous with money. It's specifically about money. That's what God says.

Number eleven…the eleventh law of harvesting…

11. I PLANT BY FAITH, NOT BY MY FEELINGS.

I plant by faith not by my feelings. That's a very important point. I plant by faith not by my feelings.

When the farmer gets up in the morning do you think every farmer expects to feel good about going to work on his farm? No. It's just hard work. If a farmer only worked his crops when he felt like it, not much would get done. He doesn't want to get up early. He doesn't want to go harvest and plant and weed and do all those things. No. He does what he doesn't feel like doing. And he's planting when he doesn't feel like it.

You don't go by your feelings. You go by your faith.

I remember the story of this guy who woke up one Sunday feeling grouchy. He went downstairs and saw his wife preparing breakfast. His wife said, "Hi Honey, good morning! Come sit down and eat breakfast before we go to church." He

replied, "I'm sorry sweetheart. I don't feel like going to church today. I feel lousy." His wife said, "A sip of coffee will take that lousiness away. Come have some coffee." "Sweetheart, I think I'll pass today." "No, you can't," the wife said. "Give me one good reason I can't," he said. And the wife said strongly, "You're the pastor."

Sometimes I do feel that way. I need coffee right now.

Anyway, I don't happen to live by my feelings. I happen to live by faith. Sometimes I plant when I'm tired. Sometimes I plant when I'm distracted. Sometimes I plant when I'm stressed out. Sometimes I plant when I'm in deep, deep grief. And I move ahead in faith in spite of my feelings expecting God to act.

I remember the time I was invited by a pastor-friend in the Philippines to speak at a youth camp. That was like 20 years ago and we were still living in New York. I was excited at first, but as the day drew nearer, I became nervous. Actually, I thought there would be only less than a hundred students and I told myself that I could handle it. But once we arrived in the Philippines and my friend said that the preaching would be held in a gym because there would be hundreds of students, I felt sick to my stomach. My wife realized what was happening to me and she encouraged me to go on. I said, "I think I'm not going." She said, "Go ahead." And we prayed together.

When the day came, my friend fetched me and I was thinking of excuses not to come with him. Maybe I'd just say I have a toothache, or I have a bad headache and it wouldn't go away after taking 4 extra-strength Tylenols. I went anyway, just praying and praying. In his car, I wanted to jump out.

We arrived at the camp site late afternoon. It was at Boso-Boso in Antipolo. I almost fainted when I saw a huge crowd of students at the camp. What will I do now, God? My friend took me to a tent just outside the entrance of the gym and introduced me to an American missionary who was actually the organizer of the

event. He said, “You know, you’ve got to get the attention of these kids. They will ignore you. They will be busy doing other things. You have to be animated and make them really interested in what you’re talking about. You’ve go to connect.” I said to myself, “Oh, my. How do I do that? This will be a disaster.” You know me, I’m not animated. I read my sermon. Sometimes I couldn’t connect. That’s why I see some of you nodding your head during my preaching because you’re sleepy, not because you were agreeing with what I said.

So, that was my predicament. I was so nervous I went to the bathroom twice and did not eat the food that was given to me.

Then, the worship started. All the while, I was praying. “Lord, help me to get through this. I don’t want to bomb.” As the music went on, an idea came to my mind. In fact, a song came to my mind. It was a song by Maria Cafra, a rock group that was famous in the Philippines back then. The song was “Kumusta Mga Kaibigan?” Do you know that song?

After the singing, I went to the stage. And I said, “You know, guys (I was speaking in Tagalog), that was a great praise and worship time. I was so inspired that I want to sing a song right now.” The kids shouted and clapped their hands. So, I sang a capella. “Kumusta, mga kaibigan. OK ba kayo Riyan? Tagal ng di pagkikita, kayo’y miss na miss ko na. Kaya ako’y narito, sa piling nyo. Maghawak-hawak ng kamay at lilipad tayo.”

And you know, while I was singing, the kids were nodding their heads and tapping their feet, and even snapping their fingers. They were singing too. I connected! When I was done, they clapped so hard. Then as I started my message, another idea came to my mind.

You see, my message was about friendship. That’s why the song I sang connected with them right away. Now, I was going to start my message with these words, “What is a friend”. Then, I would give them a textbook definition of a

friend. But instead, after saying, "What is a friend?" I followed it up with, "Meron ba sa inyong maaaring magbigay ng definition ng friend?" "Is there anyone here who would like to give the definition of a friend?" One girl raised her hand and answered the question. Then, another one. Then, another one. They were responding. I connected again!

That's when I realized it was God who gave me those ideas. It was God who moved that evening. Because I asked for his help. Because I put my faith in him and not in my feelings. My feelings said, go back. My faith said, go ahead. God is faithful, Amen?

Now, here's the thing. I spoke for about an hour. And all through that time, it was quiet. All were listening intently. All eyes were glued to me. At the end, when I invited them to give their heart to Jesus and stand if they wished to, almost everyone stood up. And I thought, maybe they misheard. Maybe they thought I was also inviting those who were making a recommitment. And so, I said that those who were making a recommitment could sit down. Nobody sat down. So, I prayed and as I was praying, I saw some were crying. Even counselors who approached them were crying. Even the American missionary was crying. Just kidding.

Folks, I would have missed God's blessing that night if I followed my feelings.

I plant by faith not by my feelings.

And finally, number twelve, the twelfth point is this…

12. THE BEST TIME TO PLANT IS NOW.

The best time to plant is now! You don't wait for a better time. The sooner the better. You don't say, "When I retire, I'm going to get serious about God." No! Then you'll be worthless. You won't have any energy to do anything.

Ecclesiastes 11:4, *"Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap."* If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never

accomplish anything. You have to start it. You have to do what God asks you to do in faith.

In three weeks, we have the *Daring Faith* offering and commitment day. It's about making a pledge to support our building project. You don't want to miss it. God did not bring you here to watch history happen. He brought you here to make history happen.

And you know what, God will never ask you to do anything by yourself. Never! Never! Never! He will always do it with you. Just have faith in him. Let's bow our heads.

Are you going to do anything about this message? If you don't like the kind of life you are reaping, change the way you're planting. Whatever you need more of, you need to give away. When you have a need in any area, plant a seed. Would you pray this prayer? Dear God, thank you for creating the universe on universal laws. You have said that no one makes a fool of you, that whatever a

person plants he will harvest. And Lord, I realize I can use that negatively or positively in my life. Help me to practice these twelve laws of the harvest. Help me to plant good seed in abundance in every area of my life. Help me to be patient and realize that I reap in a season different than the one I sow in. But it is inevitable – the fruit will come. Help me to remember that I always reap more than I sow. That I can increase my harvest by planting more seed. And the more seed I plant the more you will give me. Help me to not live by my feelings but to live by faith. Help me to realize the best time to plant is right now. We give you honor and glory in Jesus' name. Amen.