

Fil-Am Community Church

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26 January 2013

Financial Fitness (Part 3)

“THE LAWS OF SOWING & REAPING “

We're on the third part of a series that we started a couple of weeks ago. It is a series about becoming financially fit. This series is for every one of us who is affected by the economic downturn. Anyone who is not affected raise your hand and we're gonna borrow money from you.

In this series we're looking at God's laws of money. We're looking at the laws of wealth. We're looking at the laws of prosperity. But we are not a “prosperity gospel” church. We do *not* believe that God wants everybody to be a millionaire. In fact, Jesus taught the exact opposite. Jesus said a man's life consists not in the abundance of things you possess. And it's not about the acquisition of things. But God has given certain laws about finances in his Word – laws of spending, laws of saving, laws of investing, laws of managing and using, laws of insuring, laws of giving.

These laws of money are just like the laws of nature. For example, there is the Law of Gravity and the Law of Motion. I can't explain how they work. Even Einstein didn't know. But we all know they work and if we go against them, it will spell disaster for us. So, if I jumped from a 20-storey building, I cannot expect to fly like Superman but I will surely plummet to earth.

Likewise, if a moving train loses its brakes, it cannot stop instantly even if you apply the emergency brakes.

So, the laws about money are just like that. Whether you understand them or not, they're there. They will work for you or against you. You cooperate with them and you'll get blessed by them. You don't and you're in trouble. So we're looking at them in this series.

There are two books in the Bible that deal a lot with this – the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes. These books were written by King Solomon who became the wisest man who ever lived and he also became the wealthiest man. These two books he wrote have a lot to do with money management .

In this series, week one, we started looking at these laws. First we looked at Jesus' laws of wise money management – seven laws of wise money management. If you missed that you're going to want to go back and read the sermon that Pastor Dave sent out two weeks ago. Or you can go to our web site to read that sermon. Then last week, we looked at the law of contentment. Pastor Dave talked about the five reasons why we need to learn to be content and the four ways to enjoy more on less.

This week, we're going to look at a third foundational law of money management. And it is called the Laws of Sowing and Reaping. We're giving you all these laws in preparation for the last two messages wherein I'll give you some practical steps you can take which apply all these principles you're learning.

This morning, the first verse we look at is Proverbs 11:18. In this verse we have one example of the law of sowing and reaping. It says *“The wicked man earns deceptive wages, [in other words, he earns them dishonestly] but he who sows righteousness will be certain to reap a reward.”*

Notice the word “sow” and the word “reap.” What’s he talking about here? This obviously is a verse about money. He’s talking about wages here. He’s talking about your income. And he says there are dishonest ways to make money and there’s an honest way to make money. And he says if you sow honestly you are going to reap a reward. What is he talking about?

For thousands of years the only way people did farming is what was called sowing. They didn’t take a single seed and put it in the ground, dig a hole and cover it up, put a seed in the ground, dig a hole and cover it up. Nobody did that. And they certainly didn’t have machines that could poke holes and automatically seed like they do today. For thousands of years, people would wear a little knapsack filled with grain or corn or seed or whatever. And then as the farmer would walk through the field he’d sow – which means he’d grab a handful of the seed and throw it. Some of that seed the birds eat and some of it lands on rock and some of it actually gets planted and it begins to grow. The principle we can learn from this is: whatever you sow you will reap in life.

I want us to understand that this principle applies not just in your money. What we’re going to look at today – these seven laws – will apply in your relationships, in your time, in your words, in your talents, in the way you use your energy, and every other area. Seven laws of sowing and reaping from the Word of God.

1. Everything starts as a seed.

Everything in life starts as a seed. Every idea is a seed. Every dream is a seed. Everything starts as a seed on this planet.

God created the world around what he calls the seed principle. In the very first chapter of the Bible God calls this to our attention. Genesis 1:11 God said *“Let the land have seed-bearing plants and trees that bear fruit with seed in it according to their varieties.”*

Everybody’s heard of the old cliché that anybody can count the seeds in an apple, but only God knows the number of apples in a seed. Because a seed has exponential potential. You take one seed, plant it in the ground. That seed grows into a giant tree which produces fruit which has other seeds, which creates more trees and more trees. And over thousands of years, you can have an entire forest of hundreds of thousands of acres from one single seed.

Right now, because it is winter, our backyard is dead and empty. It is snow-covered in fact. Nothing is growing there. But come springtime when Nanay Monet is back home and she starts putting a seed here and there,

that backyard will become alive again, transformed once again to a beautiful garden that is teeming with flowers and vegetables so large and abundant that they even encroach on our neighbors’ property. All because of one seed. Well, a few seeds. But you get my point.

In Job 8: 7, it says, *“Though what you start will seem small and insignificant, you’ll end up in the future with much.”* That’s what happens. Everything starts as a seed.

2. Law number two is this: Nothing happens until the seed is planted!

Nothing happens in your life until the seed is planted. Imagine a farmer going out and spending his life savings to buy a bunch of seed and he's got it in his barn. And as he gets ready to start springtime he's looking out on a barren field and he's bought all this seed and all of a sudden he goes, "I don't know if I should plant this or not. Because all my life savings is tied up in that seed. And if I plant it I might lose it and if I lose it I've lost my life savings. I'm not going to plant my seed; I'm simply going to hold on to it."

We would call that farmer a fool. Because seed is worthless unless it's planted. You've got to put it in the ground. You may pray but all the prayer in the world is not going to produce fruit unless you accompany it with action. You've got to plant some seed.

Some of you think you're waiting on God. You think you're waiting on God for that job. You think you're waiting on God for a husband or a wife. You think you're waiting on God for the big deal. You think you're waiting on God for the windfall, for the income to come in that's there. God says, You think you're waiting on me? I'm waiting on you! I'm waiting for you to plant some seed.

You want a job? Send out your resume. Nobody's gonna call you unless they see your resume. You want to get married? Date a girl. A Christian girl, that is. You want a raise? Ask your boss.

You want to get in your high school basketball team? Join the try-outs. You want to get out of debt? Stop buying stuff you don't need. Then save.

It isn't going to happen until you plant some seed. Everything in life starts as a seed – a relationship, a marriage, a business, a church, everything starts as a seed. And nothing happens until the seed is planted.

Why does God wait on us? Because planting is an act of faith. I take what I've got and I give it away. I put it in the ground and I let it grow. That takes an act of faith. It takes what I've got and I let go of it. God says that planting is an act of faith and that brings glory to him.

Jesus explained this principle when he was trying to explain why he came to earth to die on the cross. He used the principles of sowing and reaping. John 12:24 Jesus said "*Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, [He's talking about his own death] it cannot reproduce. But if it dies it will produce much fruit.*" Jesus is saying millions of people will be saved and get to go to heaven because of his death, burial, and resurrection. He says, "I'm going to plant a seed and the seed is going to be my life."

Here's the principle: Whenever I have a need, I plant a seed. Because nothing happens until a seed is planted.

Here's the third law of sowing and reaping...

3. Whatever I sow is what I will reap.

Whatever I sow, whatever I put in the ground is what I'm going to reap. This is the law of reproduction.

If a farmer goes out and he's got a trailer load of beans – red beans, kidney beans, lima beans, whatever – and he goes out and he starts planting beans in a barren field, what fruit does he expect to bear? Watermelon? No. If he's planting beans, is he going to get cucumbers? No. He's going to get beans. Whatever you plant is what you're going to get back.

There's a phrase that's repeated over and over in the book of Genesis. It is the phrase where God says "*Each is to reproduce after its own kind.*" In other words, tomato plants bear tomatoes, not potatoes. Apple trees bear apples,

not pears. You're never going to see corn growing on a grapevine. Cows produce baby cows and chickens produce baby chickens and human beings produce baby human beings. Because in God's economy we reproduce after our own kind. We reap in the same kind as we sow.

This can work either positively or negatively in your life. It can be for you or it can work against you. Whatever you sow in life you're going to reap. Galatians 6:7 says *"Do not deceive yourselves. [in other words, don't kid yourself] No one makes a fool of God. You will reap exactly what you plant in life."*

Let me show you a couple of positive ones. Every night, I ask my children to pray. So they pray. Afterwards, while they are lying down, I tell them, "Good night, Eze" and Eze says, "Good night, Daddy" and the same goes with Ally. Then, I say, "I love you, Eze" and he says "I love you, daddy" and the same goes with Ally. So, I give them love and they love me back.

Another example is when you smile at someone, more likely than not, that person will smile back. You can try that experiment in your office. Smile at every person you meet in the hallway. They will smile back. You may even gain new friends. There's a saying, "To have a friend, be a friend." You reap what you sow.

Now, it can also work negatively. Proverbs 26:27 says *"He who digs a pit [in other words to hurt somebody else] will fall into it himself. He who rolls a stone will have it rolled back on him."* What goes around comes around. What you give out you're going to get back. And another one, Hosea 10:13, *"You planted wickedness and now you have reaped evil."*

You're going to reap what you sow. I cannot sow irresponsibility and become a success in life. I cannot sow laziness and be rewarded in life.

You've heard of road rage? That's one angry driver responding to another angry driver. Whatever you sow is what you're going to get back.

This is true all through Scripture. There's the story of Jacob. Jacob was a cheat. One of the first things we find is he's cheating his brother and his father, deceiving both of them, in order to get the family blessing. And you know what happens later on in life? Jacob's father-in-law cheats him of his own wife. What goes around comes around.

Emerson said, "Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny." Whatever you give out, you're going to get back.

Here's the fourth principle.

4. I always reap in a different season than from when I sow.

There is a time delay when it comes to reaping. You know this. It's obvious. Plants take time to grow. There's no such thing as instant maturity. No farmer goes out, plants the seed in the ground, comes back an hour later, digs it up and says, have you grown? You've just got to let it grow.

The Bible tells us that there are seasons in life. In Ecclesiastes, this book by Solomon, it says in chapter 3 "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...*" And it goes, "*There's a time to plant and there's a time to harvest... a time to scatter, and a time to gather*". And let me add, a time to sow and a time to reap.

So between the *then* and the *now*, or the *now* and the *what's coming next*, there is always a delay. Pick a fruit before it's ripe and you wouldn't like the taste. Fruit ripens slowly. If you pick it too soon you miss the flavor.

It never ceases to amaze me the people who think God is like a genie. You see, God is not your servant. You serve him. God is not a vending machine either.

In a vending machine, you put in a coin and out comes the cola instantly. God is not a vending machine. So, you cannot expect God to answer your request immediately.

But you know, while I'm waiting God is working. A lot of times when I'm waiting for the fulfillment of the efforts that I've put into something, or the money that I've given or the time or the energy, while I'm waiting for that to happen, I'm thinking nothing's happening. But it's happening. While I'm waiting God is working. And while that seed is hidden in the ground it is slowly germinating. And one day it's going to burst. And when that seed bursts God is in it, and the life there is going to start growing and growing. And one day a little shoot will stick up out of the ground and then you know it's working. But it's not instant fulfillment. There's a different season from when I sow.

Here's the next principle...

5. I can increase my harvest by planting more seed.

This is the law of proportion, that we always reap in proportion to what we sow. If I sow a bunch of seed, I'm going to get a bunch of crop. If I sow a little seed, I get a little crop. If I sow no seed, I get no crop. 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, it's true in every area of your life – that I can increase my harvest by planting more seed.

2 Corinthians 9 says this *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [In other words, in proportion.] Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

This particular passage happens to be talking about money as a seed. It's more than just money. But here it's talking about money. And it's basically saying you cannot outgive God.

What is a seed? A seed is anything that I value that I give away. If I give wisdom away then I get more wisdom back. If I give love away, I get more love back. If I give my energy away, I get more energy back. If I give my money away, God makes sure I get more back. If I give my time away, I get more back.

You say “I don't have time to help other people.” That's your problem. Whatever you need more of you need to give away. “But I don't have enough time to get what I need.” Give some of it away. Start serving unselfishly in some area where you're not getting paid back. It's a free gift of your time. A free gift of your energy. A free gift of your wisdom. You take on a younger person and you start to mentor them and you don't have time to do that but you do it because what you give, you're going to get back. A seed is anything that I sow, that I give away, that I let go of instead of holding it all to myself.

This law works for anybody. It even works for unbelievers. That's why a lot of businessmen who are not believers in Jesus Christ have actually used the principles of the Bible.

Here's the general principle, Proverbs 11:24, I love this in the Message paraphrase *"The world of the generous gets larger and larger; but the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller."*

6. 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 *now*. You don't wait for a better time. The sooner the better.

Some people say, "One of these days I'm going to ..." And then they have their idea. "I'm going to really serve the Lord... I'm going to go on a mission trip... When I retire one day... When I get to a certain economic level then I'm going to start giving. Or when this happens then I'm going to..."

One of these days is none of these days. The point is you don't wait for things to get better. You start planting now. Why? Because the sooner you plant, the longer you're going to have the harvest in the rest of your life.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 11 *"Those who wait for perfect weather will never plant seeds; and those who look at every cloud (like the stock market report) will never reap a harvest."* Why? Because perfection paralyzes potential. How many of you would agree if you wait for perfect conditions you'd never get anything done? It's obvious. So whatever you're going to

start doing, start doing it now. In the recession? Yes, in the recession. Now is when you need help. Start planting now.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 *“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.”* You should be planting all the time, everywhere you go. Every day. Think of what seeds am I going to plant today? What seeds of love? What seeds of grace? What seeds of money? What seeds of energy? What seeds of wisdom? How can I plant in other people’s lives today?

Look at the next verse. 2 Corinthians 9:10 *“For God, who supplies seed to the farmer and bread to eat... [By the way, where’s all the seed coming from? It comes from God. The seed that the farmer has comes from God.] 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 you can give away more and more fruit from your harvest.”*

This verse is a promise about being generous with money. But it applies to more than just money. The more you give away, the more you’re going to get back. This is the law of the harvest.

One of the things that seeds are, are our words. You need to start thinking of your words as seeds.

So let me ask you: Are you conscious about how you sow your seed-words? Are you really watching your words? You better say them wisely because every word is a seed. So I have to ask myself, am I sowing seeds of trust or distrust when I speak? Am I sowing words of kindness or am I

sowing words of meanness, anger and apathy? Am I sowing words that build up or am I planting words that tear down?

Why is that important? Because I will reap what I sow and so will you.

It's interesting that the Bible says that having spiritual conversations with other people is planting seeds. When you share your faith with an unbeliever, when you talk to somebody at work about the Lord, every time you share your faith, God says that's planting a seed. And you're going to bear fruit from it. There are many, many Scriptures that talk about the fact that the more I talk to other people about Jesus the more seeds I am planting and the more harvest I am going to have.

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 9:11 *"Reaping a material harvest is appropriate if we have spiritual seed among you."* He's making this point loud and clear – That I am going to reap a benefit from talking to other people about the Lord.

There's one other principle and it's this...

7. To reap the harvest I must be patient and not give up.

To reap the harvest that God wants me to have I must be patient and not give up. Why? Because remember there's always the delay between sowing and reaping. You plant in one season and you harvest in another.

The principle that we're talking about today friends is a kingdom principle. It's one of the principles that the kingdom of God operates on. Jesus said it like this in Mark 4 *"This is what the kingdom of God is like: A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he's sleeping or he gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he doesn't know how. [He can't*

figure it out] *All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.*”

What’s he saying there? He’s saying the results will come and they will come slowly and they will come systematically and they will come as a process. I don’t have time to unpack all of the meaning of this verse but he’s saying it takes time. And because it takes time... *“We must not become tired of doing good. We will reap a harvest at the right time if we do not give up!”*

Note the word “will.” *We will* reap a harvest. That’s a promise. Not we might, not we shall, not we hope, not we wish – *We will reap a harvest at the right time... if we do not give up.* You’ve got to hang on and while you’re waiting God is working.

As your pastor, who loves you, let me just say this to you heart to heart. You’ve got to forget about last year’s crop failure. There’s nothing you can do about it. You’ve had many years of crop failure in your life. You have wasted years and so have I. You have wasted words and so have I. You have wasted money and so have I. You have wasted relationships and so have I. You have wasted goodwill in people’s life and so have I. And you can’t do anything about the crop failures of the past. You’re going to have to learn to live with the consequence of your failures. And there are consequences to everything.

But what you’ve got to do is you’ve got to start focusing on the long term harvest in your life, not the short term pleasure. The long term harvest. I can help you change by applying the Scriptures to your life but you can’t do it overnight. You didn’t get the way you got financially overnight. You took

years getting messed up and it's going to take a while getting it undone. And there is a time of delay between sowing and reaping.

Some of you, your finances are in such a mess that it's probably brought tears to your eyes. And you could probably if you were honest to admit that you sat with your wife or your husband and teared up a little bit and thought,

“How are we going to make it? In fact, we're going in reverse. In fact it's getting worse. We're worse off than we were a year ago and the recession is not turning around.”

Let me give you a verse and give you a promise. Psalm 126. Let those grief tears water the seeds to plant now in the recession, *“Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go out to plant their seed but they sing as they return with the harvest.”*

Question: 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 in the last couple of years. Maybe you've lost your dream. Maybe you lost your marriage. Maybe you lost your health.

Mourning is ok; moaning is not. Grief is a legitimate response to loss. Grief is good. Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.”*

What's moaning? It's when you're griping and you're whining and you're complaining to God all the time: Lord, I don't have work, I don't have money, I don't have ... And God says are you planting any seeds or are you just going to complain? What are you waiting on? You're not waiting on

me. You can pray all you want. But you need to go plant some seeds.
Whatever you need more of you need to give away.

There's a song, an old classic song that has meant a lot to me. It's a song about just letting go and letting God. A song about giving my all to God knowing that he is an all-giving God. It goes like this. And if you know it, sing it with me.

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”