

# Laws of the Harvest: God Can't Multiply What You Haven't Sown

By J.D. Greear

Based on Paul's teaching in [Galatians 6](#) and 2 Corinthians, let me share with you **the five laws of the harvest**.

In [Galatians 6:7](#), the Apostle Paul highlights what I've heard called an "absolute principle" in Scripture: "For whatever a person sows he will also reap" (CSB, cf. [Proverbs 11:18](#), 22:8-9). Throughout the rest of [Galatians 6](#), Paul helps us apply this principle to our money and possessions. Paul has done this elsewhere, as in [2 Corinthians 9:6](#): "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (NIV).

## Law 1: The harvest is limited to the planting.

You can only harvest what you plant. In other words, if you haven't *sown* it, God can't *multiply* it. One of the clearest pictures of multiplication occurs in [John 6](#), where Jesus is standing before 5,000 hungry people (more like 15,000 if you include the women and children). He takes a little boy's lunch, five loaves and two fish—a Hebrew Happy Meal. You know the story: After Jesus takes the loaves and fish and blesses the food, he distributes it to his disciples until everyone is fed and there are 12 basketfuls leftover.

This miracle demonstrates the pattern of multiplication. **It's only as you put what you have in the hands of Jesus that it's multiplied.** We tend to reverse that. *Well, if God multiplies what I have, then I'll give it away.* But God says, "Give it away, and it will multiply!"

## Law 2: The harvest comes *later* than the planting.

The hard part about harvesting is that it takes time to see your efforts pay off. That's why many people never see the harvest. They start off well, but they give up too soon.

We live in a generation of instant gratification. I know I'm like that. When I diet, I want to see the results right away. I want to eat salad one time and see the difference the next morning. But life doesn't work like that. Real change takes time to grow.

This is even truer in agriculture. One of our campus pastors told me about a practical joke he played on his neighbors when he was a kid. He grew up on a farm, so he always had access to a *bunch* of seeds. So after his neighbors would aerate their lawns, he and his buddies would sneak out at night and throw random seeds into their yards. He said the hard part about the joke was that it took so long to see the results. But sure enough, within six months or so, there were watermelons and sunflowers growing in their yards! (Summit, these are the people to whom you have entrusted your souls.)

**Results take time.** What you sow today, you won't see the return of until the next season in life. Sowing is all about the future. And while it's worth the wait, we often don't act like it.

## Law 3: The harvest is *greater* than the planting.

In the harvest, what comes back to you is always greater than what you sowed. If you plant a wheat seed, it will turn into a wheat stalk that can produce hundreds of wheat seeds. The **law of greater** says that what starts small multiplies into something much bigger than what you began with. What you reap will always come back greater than what you sow. Jesus talked about a harvest of 30, 60 and 100 fold ([Mark 4:20](#)).

When Scripture applies this to money, it teaches us that the harvest is greater than the planting in both the *magnitude* of what you reap and the *kind of fruit* you reap. Paul says in [Galatians 6:8](#) that we reap eternal life from the Spirit by our sowing; in 2 Corinthians he calls this the "harvest of righteousness." God often uses generosity to give us gifts far greater than money.

Think of it this way: Which would you rather have—a lot of money or the ability to be truly happy and satisfied with what you have? Only a fool would say, "Give me the money." Why? Because the reason you want more money is to be happier and more satisfied. What if there was a better way to get to that end? In [Matthew 6:21](#), Jesus challenges his disciples to be generous with their money because "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." It's the same principle. **Invest your treasure in heaven**, and watch your heart follow it. Having your heart set on heaven is a *far* greater gift than having more cash.

## Law 4: The harvest is proportional to the planting.

Plant one seed, and you'll get one plant (hopefully). Plant a dozen, and you'll get a dozen. Invest minimally in God's kingdom, and you'll reap minimally; invest greatly, and watch as God brings in a harvest you can't contain.

Here's a startling biblical truth: *Your generosity toward God and others determines his generosity toward you.* Here's how Solomon put it: "Whoever is kind to the poor is **lending to the Lord**—the benefit of his gift will return to him in abundance" (**Proverbs 19:17** ISV). Solomon was himself a man of generosity. For example, it was a tradition for the king to sacrifice one bull during his inauguration. But **1 Kings 8** tells us that Solomon sacrificed a *thousand* bulls. How's that for giving "above and beyond"? Is it any coincidence that the only time God said to someone, "Ask me for whatever you want, and I'll give it to you," he said it to an extravagant giver? To the excessively generous, God is excessively generous. You can't out-give God!

## Law 5: We can't do anything about this year's harvest, but we can change next year's.

**You reap today what you sowed yesterday.** I know a lot of you hate that. You're living for God *now*, but the consequences of past mistakes keep rearing their ugly heads. You can't do much to change the harvest that you're reaping today—even if you pray about or if you ask for forgiveness. Yes, God forgives us as soon as we come to him. But those old seeds seem *so persistent*.

God won't always eliminate the tough harvest you're living through immediately. But he can change your life by empowering you to sow seeds of the Spirit in your life *today*. The financial difficulties you're experiencing, the materialism in your kids, the dissatisfaction in your own heart...these may be a harvest of an ungenerous past.

**We can't do anything about this year's harvest, but we can change next year's.** The old proverb states: *The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is today.* It's time to start sowing different seeds so you can reap a different harvest. What do you want to reap next year? It is only possible if you start sowing for it **today**.