



By MAXINE WILLIAMS

DID YOU PLANT A GARDEN and watch over it week after week, only to end up eating canned corn instead of the roasting ears you had dreamed of?

If you will analyze your gardening methods, perhaps you will find you failed to keep the laws of the harvest. There are fixed laws for growing things. One cannot break those laws and still reap a good harvest.

Similarly, there are laws in the spiritual realm and we must follow them if we wish to reap a good spiritual harvest. The Bible says, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6). Let us consider some of the laws attached to bringing in the sheaves.

GUIDELINES ON SOWING

Seed must be sown before a crop can be harvested. One does not have a harvest merely by owning a farm. A beautiful church and Christian education plant cannot guarantee a harvest of souls!

In the parable of the sower, Jesus made it clear that

seed must be put into the soil before there can be a harvest (Luke 8:4-15). To sow the soil of the unsaved requires diligence in getting them to church or reaching them in other ways.

Grain lay in the tomb of Tut-ankh-a-men for thousands of years, but there was no harvest. When the archaeologists found it and planted it centuries later, it germinated and yielded a harvest!

God's Word must be planted—not only in the soil of the sinner but also in the soil of Christians. Have we wondered why we keep records at Sunday school, why we urge faithful attendance, or why Bible reading is encouraged? The purpose is to sow the seed, for without the planting there can be no harvest of the fruit of the Spirit. "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8).

A harvest requires a sower. God is depending on men and women to sow the Seed. There is a popular saying, "If you can't go, you can send," but this is not entirely scriptural. We may both go and send, but every Christian bears a responsibility for making God known, wherever he is. Some of us may be allotted more time for sowing than others, and some may have more skill, but if all of us will be diligent to do all we can there will be a vast amount of seed sown.

A good harvest depends on good seed. In gospel work we have the best seed in the world—the Word of God which lives and lasts forever. The seed contains the germ of eternal life. The life is in the seed, not in the sower. Human ideas do not have life and cannot produce life. To sow something else than the Word of God is like sowing pebbles. The seed determines the nature of the harvest. Only the Word of Life can produce a harvest of redeemed souls having the life of God in them.

An abundant harvest requires abundant sowing. The Bible says, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly..." (2 Corinthians 9:6). My father once sent out his hired man to plant corn. He gave him instructions concerning the thickness of the planting, but the man thought he knew better and could save my father some money, so he planted the seed much more sparingly. The crop was so spotty that it amounted to a financial loss!

To have an abundant harvest, one must take some risks. Ecclesiastes 11:4 reminds us that "he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The one who waits and waits until everything is favorable will never have a harvest. It is inevitable that some seed will be lost; it will be affected by rocks, weeds, and pests. There may be floods, hail, erosion, and other problems but the farmer cannot let this stop him from planting. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall alike be good" (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

The harvest may depend on whether the seed is sown at the right time. "Right time" depends on the soil, the seed, and the weather. Seed sown on frozen ground will hardly sprout! My mother, in her garden in North Dakota, planted the corn and beans so they would not burst through the soil until after June 5, for we nearly always had a killing frost the first week of June.

After the Sunday school class, a Junior boy said to

his teacher, "I wish I knew how to be saved." She let the opportunity go by. Afterward she said: "I didn't know how to tell him, so I just let him go on into the church service. He has never shown the same interest since that time. Now he's an adolescent, and no one has been able to reach him for Christ." There are right and wrong times for sowing.

TIPS ON CULTIVATION AND GROWTH

Growing plants must be cultivated to produce a harvest. Seeds which lie dormant for a long time may, with proper cultivation, moisture, and warmth, suddenly spring up. The poorer the soil, the harder it is to get a good crop, but work will do it. We are not responsible for the original condition of the soil, but we are responsible to do everything we can to get the soil to produce.

The farmer goes to great lengths. He practices crop rotation, lets land lie fallow, chooses rust resistant or hybrid seeds, picks rocks out of some areas, or clears trees and stumps from others. He spends money for fertilizer to improve the soil, invests in expensive equipment, goes to the cost of terracing or drainage, all for the sake of the harvest. Do we place enough value on a harvest of souls?

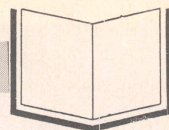
The work is not done by God alone. The apostle said that man may sow, and man may water, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). Conversely, the Lord does not give the increase without man's help in sowing and watering. Sometimes we may be tempted to excuse our lack of effort by saying it is God's work and He will make sure there is a harvest. Or we may be tempted to wish we could do the reaping instead of the sowing and watering. It is more glamorous. When results are reported, the spotlight is on the reaping. But the sowing and watering are indispensable.

Time is required for growth. Seldom does the sowing and reaping occur the same day. It requires patient waiting. John Kolenda told us of a great revival he witnessed as a missionary in Brazil. He said the secret was that all the believers were continually talking about the Lord, not from a contrived effort to pressure others to accept Christ, but from hearts of abundant joy and gladness over their own salvation. This gospel seed eventually sprouted; the neighbors and friends came to church prepared to give their hearts to Christ. The pastor did not have to sow and reap the same day; he merely reaped the harvest from the seed that had been sown by the church members. We have need of patience. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it..." (James 5:7).

Understanding is required for proper cultivation. Corn must be cultivated a while, and then "laid by." Beets are cultivated, then thinned. Celery and lettuce must be killed or tied up. Wheat is neither hoed nor cultivated. Fruit requires spraying. Tomatoes are often started in the house and then transplanted. The Holy Spirit will give wisdom and understanding concerning the proper attention needed for those in whom the Word has been planted.

THE CERTAINTY OF A HARVEST

"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:8). There will be a harvest. The nature of the harvest will be according to the seed we have sown, and the amount of the



MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

Sons of God

By GLENN M. HORST

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

FROM THE MOMENT I WAS SAVED, I was uniquely aware that I was God's son. I knew I had been born into a family as a babe and that I was as much a son at that moment as I would be 20 years from then. There are no degrees in sonship!

Nearly 21 years ago, this text took on a new meaning for me. It was six minutes before midnight and I was standing in a hospital corridor in Gary, Indiana.

As a boy, I had always wanted a sister. To my horror, I had seen unwanted girl babies in the Far East thrown away. Now I was secretly hoping our addition would be a girl.

When I heard the nurse say, "It's a girl," my joy knew no bounds. I was wholly unprepared for the thrill of being a father. "Yea," I hollered in spite of the late hour. "I'm a dad!"

One of the nurses shook me and said, "Hush, it's late." I replied, "I know it's late, but I'm a dad."

Almost angry with me, she said, "You are not the first dad we've had around here."

I nearly shouted it as I replied, "I know I'm not the first dad you ever had around here, but after nearly 13 years of waiting, this is the first time I've been a dad."

Then I understood in a new way what the Bible means when it says there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. It means a new child has been born into the family of God. Just think, our relationship to the Father brings joy to His heart!

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harvest will be in proportion to the sowing and tending.

In the Christian life, sowing and harvesting occur concurrently, as we sow for the future, we simultaneously are reaping what we sowed in the past. We must never be content with today's crop, but keep sowing for tomorrow.

We want revival. We are praying for a harvest of souls. Let us remember that we only reap what we sow. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5). God is the great Husbandman and He longs for revival more fervently than we do. "The labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest..." (Luke 10:2). Let us pray for it, and let us also be diligent to sow the seed from which revival springs up.