

CHAPTER SEVEN

STRATEGIES FOR SPIRITUAL HARVEST

PART II

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter you will be able to:

- Explain spiritual parallels of the natural principles of plant development.
- Apply these parallels as strategies for spiritual harvest.

KEY VERSE:

**For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.
(Isaiah 61:11)**

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the study of strategies for spiritual harvest. It concerns a final principle of harvest: Seeds develop in response to certain external conditions.

In the natural world there are certain conditions required for growth and development of seeds. These natural conditions are parallels of spiritual factors necessary for development of the seed of the Word of God in order for it to bring a spiritual harvest.

CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH

LIFE:

Growth is impossible without life. There must be life in the seed, or it will not grow. Jesus was the visible revelation of the Word of God, the Seed, and in Him was life:

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. (John 5:26)

Jesus came to plant this seed of life in you to make you reproductive:

I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

His life is in you. When you plant the seed of His Word, you know that...

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

PROPER SOIL:

You have learned in this course, that uncultivated ground prevents abundant harvest. Proper soil is necessary for a good harvest:

And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. (Mark 4:20)

When you harvest in the spirit world you must concentrate your efforts on good ground. You must prepare the ground and sow the seed of the Word properly. Both are necessary if harvest is to come (Hosea 10:12; Jeremiah 4:3).

According to the parable of the sower (Mark 4:3-20), if there is no harvest then the variable is the ground. This is an important principle of harvest. Unresponsive ground should not be neglected. Someone should sow, cultivate, and recognize when it is time to call in harvesters (Luke 13:6-9). But this is not the place to concentrate the spiritual forces. Jesus never said there would be a lack of sowers but a lack of harvesters. The spiritual labor forces should be concentrated where the ground is responsive and yielding a harvest.

Timing is of great importance in harvest. Harvesters are not needed when the seed has just been sown or when the crop is still green. But there is that brief, strategic moment in which the harvest of the good soil is ripe. It is then that many harvesters are needed. If all the laborers are busy with unresponsive spiritual fields and there are no harvesters available, then the opportunity is lost forever.

WATER:

Water is necessary if a seed is to germinate and produce in the natural world. God promised:

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. (Isaiah 44:3)

This pouring out is an anointing of the Holy Spirit of which water is a symbol:

I will pour out of my Spirit upon your seed. (Isaiah 44:10, The Amplified Bible)

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)

The water of the Holy Spirit causes the seed of the Word of God to take root in the hearts of men and women who are dead in sin:

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;

Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. (Job 14:7-9)

LIGHT:

It is response to light that stimulates plant growth in the natural world. It is the light of God that results in development of the spiritual harvest:

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

The light of God brings spiritual life.

AIR:

An important substance called carbon dioxide is drawn in by the natural plant from the air which surrounds it. Air is necessary for plants to grow. In the Bible the Holy Spirit is compared to air or a wind:

The wind breathes where it will and thou canst hear the sound of it: But knowest nothing of the way it came or the way it goes. So it is when a man is born of the breath of the spirit. (John 3:8, Knox Translation)

The Holy Spirit breathes life into the seed of the Word which results in spiritual growth.

SPACE:

In the parable of the sower, competition for space caused some plants to die:

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the Word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22)

The competition of the things of the world can choke the seed of the Word of God and prevent spiritual fruitfulness.

ROOT SYSTEM:

Roots are necessary to anchor and supply nutrients to the plant. Psalms 1 tells how to develop the root system in your spiritual life:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth

forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalms 1:1-3)

REST:

The plant rests during a period called "dormancy." Dormancy is a period of rest for the plant. Dormancy usually occurs right before a period of very rapid growth. The plant looks like it is dead. But it is not dead. The seed of life is still alive within.

When you plant the seed of the Word of God in the lives of men and women there is often a period of dormancy during which you can see no growth. You may think you have failed in your mission. But the seed has not died.

Just as in the natural world, spiritual dormancy precedes the period of rapid growth and development of spiritual harvest. Wait patiently for the harvest:

**Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.
(James 5:7)**

ATTACHED TO THE VINE:

In order to bear fruit in the natural world a branch must be attached to the main plant. If the branch is broken off from the main life-giving vine or trunk it will not bear fruit.

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. In order to bear spiritual fruit, you must maintain your relationship to Him:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (John 15:1-4)

PRUNING:

Pruning is necessary in the natural world if a plant is to remain reproductive and bear fruit. When a farmer prunes a plant he cuts off the unproductive branches in order to make the plant produce more fruit. He removes everything which would hinder the growth of the plant.

Pruning is also necessary in the spiritual world. Spiritual pruning is correction by God. The Bible also calls it chastisement. When God prunes, He removes from your life everything which would hinder your spiritual growth. This process is necessary if you are to bear spiritual fruit:

**Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
(John 15:2)**

Sometimes you do not reap the benefits of pruning because you blame Satan when God is actually the one bringing circumstances into your life to correct [prune] you. The purpose of God's correction is given in Hosea 6:1:

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. (Hosea 6:1)

The chastisement of pruning results in a return to God. Only by returning to Him will you become spiritually reproductive.

CLIMATE:

Climate is important to plants in the natural world. Sometimes plants are kept in buildings called "hot houses" at specific temperatures in order for them to grow. They are protected from the real world outside. If you take a "hot house" plant and move it outside, it will soon die because it has lived only in a controlled environment. It cannot withstand the environment of the real world.

Spiritually speaking, we do not want "hot house" Christians who look good in controlled settings but are unable to reproduce when they come in contact with the real world. The seed of God's Word sown in your own life and the lives of those to whom you minister should produce growth despite the most difficult of spiritual climates.

SUMMARY

This chapter concludes the strategies for spiritual harvest. A review of the principles reveal the following spiritual parallels of natural truths:

- Each plant is capable of reproduction.
- Sowing is necessary in order to reap.
- You do not harvest in the same season you sow.
- You must sow regardless of the circumstances.
- You harvest in proportion to the amount sown.
- You can sow where you do not reap and reap where you do not sow.
- You will reap the harvest if you are faithful.
- In order to reproduce, the seed must die.
- Seeds develop in response to certain external conditions.

Understanding and applying these strategies will result in abundant spiritual harvest. The next chapter will show you how to reap that harvest.

SELF-TEST

1. Write the Key Verse from memory.

2. What was the final principle of harvest taught in this chapter?

3. List the ten natural conditions for growth discussed in this chapter and applied to spiritual harvest:

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(Answers to tests are provided at the conclusion of the final chapter in this manual.)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

In the last two chapters spiritual parallels of natural principles of sowing and reaping have been analyzed. Jesus presented a similar study in the parable of the sower. Compare the three accounts of this parable in Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-20; and Luke 8:5-15.

1. What was the spiritual parallel of the natural seed which was sown?

(Luke 8:11) _____

2. The different types of soil represent the responsiveness of people to the Word of God. Complete the following chart which describes the types of soil and the results of sowing the seed:

Type Of Soil	Results From The Seed Sown In This Soil
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. What happens when someone hears the Word and does not understand it?

(Matthew 13:19) _____

4. What causes the seed in stony places to die?

(Matthew 13:20-21; Luke 8:6,13) _____

5. What are the things which are compared to thorns which choke out the Word?

(Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14) _____

6. What happens when the Word is choked out by the thorns? (Matthew 13:22).

He becomes _____.

7. Does the parable indicate there are different results when the seed in good ground is harvested? (Matthew 13:23) _____ What are the results? _____

8. What happened to the seed which fell by the wayside?

(Mark 4:4; Luke 8:5) _____

What is the spiritual parallel of this? (Mark 4:15) _____ comes immediately and takes away the Word which was sown.

9. What are the characteristics of people's hearts who are like the good ground? (Luke 8:15). They have an _____ and _____ heart.

10. What three responses are made by people who are like good ground? (Luke 8:15)

11. These various responses to the Word of God do not apply only to accepting the Gospel message. They apply to any truth of the Word which God plants in our lives.

The vision of the harvest has been planted in your life. Has it been planted in good spiritual ground? What will be the results of it?

Has it fallen by the wayside? If so, the vision has been snatched away by Satan because you have not made it a priority purpose of your life.

Has it fallen on stony ground? You may have received the vision of the harvest with joy but it has not really taken root in your heart. When hard times come you will fall away from the vision. Has it been planted among thorns? Are you too concerned with cares, riches, pleasures, and lust of this life? Are these temporal things more important than the vision? If so, you will never bring forth a harvest. Has the revelation of the harvest fallen on good ground? Have you received and will you keep the vision? If so, you will bring forth fruit and become spiritually reproductive.