

BREAKING THE
CURSE OF
POVERTY

Dr. Wayne C. Gwilliam

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

Breaking the Curse of Poverty

ISBN 0-9631477-7-3

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Hyde Park, New York 12538

Published by

Destined to Win Publications

P.O. Box 149

Winnsboro, South Carolina 29180

(954) 254-6568

Cover design and book production by

Destined to Win Publications

P.O. Box 149

Winnsboro, South Carolina 29180

Printed in the United States of America

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Introduction

Contrary to many different opinions that are being negatively expressed, the prosperity message is a genuine doctrine that has its origin concerning the New Testament Church locked tightly into the life of Christ and sealed by His blood at the Cross.

Whether the “heresy hunters” want to admit it or not, the prosperity message is not a “new” doctrine invented by Kenneth Copeland or Kenneth E. Hagin. As a matter of fact, the prosperity message can be traced as far back as the Garden of Eden.

In this book, “Breaking the Curse of Poverty,” you will come to the revelation that God sincerely wants you to *“prosper and to be in good health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).*

~ Dr. Wayne C Gwilliam

**BREAKING THE CURSE
OF POVERTY**

Chapter One

Obedience Vs. Relationship

“...choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

~Joshua 24.15

Some people are under the impression that because they have a relationship with God in the realm of the emotions, they should prosper. This is not so. As you grow in your Christian walk, you will soon find that a genuine relationship with God can only come out of a life of obedience to His will in whatever you set your hand to – whether it be a marriage, developing a family, starting a business, making your way in the corporate world, or just everyday life.

This “theory of relationship,” rather than the truth of obedience to God’s will and to the various principles that the Holy Spirit has laid down with the Word of God, is a delusion that has been propagated throughout the Body of Christ. This delusion has brought much hurt to the Church, both on a local and a trans-local level, and needs to come to an end.

However, this hurt can only be ministered to when we develop a maturity that comes from a life of obedience to His will. It will be then, and only then, that all the hurt that has been caused by people who have never taken to heart the true Gospel message, can truly be ministered to and the Church can, once again, rise to the former glory of its origin.

“Relationship” Produces Striving

This festering sore in the body of Christ that grows worse on a daily basis is constantly irritated by the doctrines of immature leadership that teach *emotional relationship* rather than *relationship developed through obedience* to the will of God. This type of teaching can only produce a striving within the hearers. The end result will be a people who genuinely love the Lord, but the type of love that they experience will be an immature love. This will then cause them a life of striving to gain acceptance from a Father who already loved them enough to give His Son for them. The people who are a product of this delusion truly believe that by punishing themselves—they can build a better relationship with Jesus that will prosper them spiritually. If only they could understand that a poverty mentality, coupled with a *dead works program*, is the recipe for a life of religion that will bind them and cause them to grow into a retarded state of mind, and will

not produce the life of maturity and freedom that comes from the knowledge of imputed righteousness.

Acceptance into the Kingdom of God comes from a faith walk, rather than a works doctrine. This type of mentality didn't work for Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. His whole life was spiritually dormant until he discovered the truth concerning "justification by faith." A dead works program never prospered him in the sixteenth century, so a dead works mentality will never work for you in the twentieth century.

Actually, the Bible, in Hebrews 6, commands us to repent from a dead works mentality.

"Relationship" Won't Bring Healing

My friends, let's call a spade a "spade," and not a "farm instrument." A poverty and dead works mentality can only produce death! I have personally witnessed the death that a dead works mentality brings when I have come across the negative fruit of the people who hold to this type of philosophy.

For example, I have been called to visit people in hospitals and homes to pray for loved ones with terminal illnesses. Before I pray for healing for these afflicted people, I talk to them for a while to find out what type of doctrine they hold to in their hearts, because the Bible says that as a man believes in his heart so is he. This is why the book of Proverbs warns, in chapter 4:23, to "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life".

However, in the majority of cases, it is very clear that these afflicted people really do love Jesus Christ, but their love is a very young and immature love, and is not the love that has been perfected by obedience. It is only the love that is perfected by obedience that will stand the test of time and overcome all the trials of life.

There is no doubt about it. These afflicted people are *soft* in the realm of their emotions -- just mention the name of Jesus and they get teary-eyed. But this soft, emotional love will not develop the "steel" deep down within them that produces the "violence" that is needed to overcome the onslaught of the devil they face. They may have even been believers for many years,

but it is plain to see that they have never become true disciples by allowing the Holy Spirit to get deep down into their lives and become their Teacher.

Tragically, because these believers have only known the Holy Spirit as their Comforter, I have witnessed the death of many of these wonderful saints. They truly do love Jesus with all their hearts, but they love Him in the way that a five-year-old child would love his parents.

Growing Up by Obedience

It is so sad to see that so many who are born into the Kingdom never progress past the age of infancy to go onto become a young man or young woman in Christ in the way that First John 2:13-14 declares that they should:

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the work of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

John is simply explaining, in these two verses of Scripture, that there are three stages of growth for the Christian: *children*, *young men* and *fathers*. First, he declares that “children” have an emotional relationship with the Father.

Next, Paul goes on to mention that “young men” are those who have set themselves aside to learn to allow the Word of God to dwell in their hearts richly. He refers to these “young men” as those that have overcome the devil. In other words, they do not have to wake up every morning and make a vain attempt to beat the devil off just so that they can make the ends of their finances meet. These “young men” are those who are destroying the works of the devil wherever they find them -- plundering hell, to establish the rule of God once again in the realm of the spirit upon the earth.

Lastly, Paul mentions “fathers,” those who have actual life-experience in walking in total victory for a lengthy period of time before they take on the responsibility of instructing others.

You see, it is virtually an impossibility to get afflicted people to realize, especially when they have been deformed in their spiritual growth, that their sicknesses, and not just their sins, were dealt with at Calvary. They

have never been taught, from infancy, that just as their sins have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary, so has He purchased for them healing with the thirty-nine stripes He bore in His own body.

The writer of the book of Hebrews is referring to these types of Christians in chapter 5:12a when he says,

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

“Relationship” Leaves You Starved

The true fact of the matter is, that in many cases, these Christians have been spiritually starved. They are the product of some ignorant mentor who has convinced them that it is the will of God for sickness to come upon them -- for the purifying of their souls and the development of their Christian walk. Sadly, they go to the grave believing that their sickness was sent by God to perfect their relationship with Jesus.

When a person has been convinced that God is behind their sickness, there is nothing that anyone can do for them. This doctrine, which they so dearly cleave to, leaves the person with no “deliverer,” because there is no one more powerful than God. It is truly a shame when the afflicted never come to the truth that they already have a perfect relationship with Jesus—because of His shed blood, not because of some “dead works doctrine.” This understanding would be the only adjustment that would have to be made within the heart of these precious saints so they could receive their healing and go on to run their race. But for many, it is like the old saying, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Jesus put it this way, *“You can’t put new wine into old wineskins.”*

I have also seen Christians, who function under this same type of emotional love, end up in bankruptcy court. Again, this is because some mentor has never taken the time to expound on the fact that Jesus became poverty so that they may be freed from the curse of poverty. Second Corinthians 8:9 clarifies this:

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

There is no doubt in my heart that these people had a child-like love for Jesus, but this type of relationship will never bring about healing or prosperity.

God Watches Over His Word—Not Personalities

Let's go to the Word of God to clarify what I am saying here. The Lord never instructed Joshua to go up on top of the mountain for three hours every night for a month, and subsequently he would miraculously prosper him. Likewise, Jesus did not say, "If you will religiously pray for two hours every day, I will prosper you." Or "If you fast for forty days, I will prosper you".

But instead, God said to Joshua in Joshua 1:8:

"This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall deal wisely and have good success."

It is quite clear from God's instruction to Joshua, that it is obedience, not emotional relationship, that brings prosperity and success. God is saying to Joshua, "There is a race to be run and a victory to be won, but there are spiritual laws that must be observed within this race." This is why God told Joshua to meditate within His law day and night, so that he "*may observe to do all that is written there.*" Then Joshua, not God, would make his own way prosperous and have good success.

As a matter of fact, not too long into Joshua's leadership he found out that God watched over His Word, and not personalities. This is a revelation that every believer needs to come to if they are to walk in God's best for their lives.

Joshua 5:13-15 (Amplified), "When Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up, and behold, a Man stood near him with His drawn sword in His hand. And Joshua went to Him, and said to Him, Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"

And He said, No (neither), but as Prince of the Lord's host am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to Him, What says my Lord to His servant?

And the Prince of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Loose your shoes from of your feet; for the place where you stand is holy. And Joshua did so."

These Scripture verses paint a picture in our mind of Joshua about to make war on the city of Jericho, but he was intimidated by the fierce reputation of the people and by the "seemingly" unconquerable structure of the city. This caused Joshua to cry out to God for help, and to Joshua's surprise the Captain of the Lord's host (that is, Jesus) turned up at the battle front.

Joshua then asked the Lord this question, “Are you for our enemies or are you for us, the people of Israel?” The Lord replied, *“I am not for either one of you, but as Prince of the Lord’s hosts am I now come.”*

In other words, Jesus was saying to Joshua, “I cannot watch over you just because you are the army of Israel. The reason that I am here is to watch over the purpose of God. If you will observe and do what God has told you to do, then you will have good success.”

All too often, people facing difficult circumstances, are under the deception that God will bail them out of their situation just because they are a Christian. However, if God could do that for us now, then wouldn’t He have done it a long time ago for Adam and Eve in the Garden?

You, the reader, must understand that if God turns a blind eye to the spiritual laws that He has instated for us to live under, then He Himself would become a law-breaker. Consequently, He could never judge His people for the sin of rebellion against His will.

Let the Word Make You Strong

Jesus made a statement concerning God’s viewpoint on deliverance from a broken marriage, depleted finances, or any negativity that has come into our lives through bad instruction or a complacent spirit. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6:46, the Lord confronted Israel by asking them why they called Him, “Lord, Lord,” but were not willing to implement His instruction into their lives. In verse 47-49 He offers further guidance, by saying,

“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

The point that Jesus is trying to communicate to us in these verses of Scripture, is that a true and lasting relationship with God cannot be built upon the foundation of emotion. Our relationship with Him must be built upon a foundation of obedience, and when it is, circumstances will not control and undermine our walk with Him, no matter how negative they may be.

Good Intentions are Not Enough

Many people make the mistake of judging themselves by their *intentions*, and other people by their *actions*. In doing this, they forget that the road to poverty, divorce, and death are paved with good intentions. One must realize that a good intention is actually the voice of the Holy Spirit communicating to our spirit the will of God in a certain situation. Then our spirit communicates with our intellect, and our intellect agrees that the instruction that it has received from the spirit is the right way to act in order to illuminate God's character to a world that is seeking workable truth.

James declares in chapter 1:22 that when we fail to follow through with corresponding actions to God's instructions, we deceive ourselves. We do not, however, deceive those who we are trying to convince that the way of God is a better way of life than anything the world can offer.

Friends, instruction or knowledge can only benefit us when we are willing to act upon it. I have met many so-called wise men who are poor and wretched. In their own mind they truly believe that they are legendary. Yet, they have very little or no fruit within their lives to back up their so-called wisdom.

Laziness: The Enemy of Obedience

King Solomon gives a tremendous illustration of people who have all the potential to become a success but became failures because of laziness and a lack of knowledge within their lives.

Proverbs 24:30-34, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

Here we find Solomon seemingly taking a walk in the country. He arrives at a field that could have had cows, horses, or sheep grazing upon it; creating some type of income for its owner, or perhaps the field might have been cultivated for some type of crop in order to produce income. But it had no industry at all! Even though the property had the *potential* to have some type of industry to produce income, it was laying dormant. It had become a

liability, rather than an asset for no other reason than that of the laziness of its owner. Solomon probably thought to himself, “What a shame!” and went on to imagine in his mind’s eye what he would have done with the land if he had owned it.

This type of thought pattern is no stranger to me. Many times I see people who have the assets to get out of tight financial situations, but because of laziness or fear, they never use the leverage of their assets to make the corrections that are needed to continue their prosperity. Then poverty and want come upon them like an armed man, and in the process of time they end up with nothing.

Solomon then walked a little further and came across a vineyard that was over-grown with weeds and in want of repair. As he observed the owner working hard within the vineyard, he came to the conclusion that the owner didn’t know what he was doing. He had bought this vineyard and had never taken the time to find out how to operate it.

I have seen this, too, happen so many times. A person will buy into some type of business, and they will put in long hours trying to make it work. Yet they seem to be taking one step forward and two steps backward. You see, they had never developed a knowledge of the industry or of the product they were selling. Then, because of this, and this alone, they wind up bankrupt.

The sad thing is, when this happens, the Christian will blame the devil and the unsaved will blame the economy. However, it does not matter who they blame for the situation. The truth is that they lacked understanding about how to make their business venture work. This becomes quite evident, when some entrepreneur, who does have an understanding of the basic principles that cause a business to flourish, will come along and buy that business, and then make a “killing” off of it.

Obedience: The Formula for Success and Prosperity

The conclusion to this chapter is found in Proverbs 4:20-22:

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.”

These three verses of Scripture contain *four steps* to walking in the God-kind of life that produces prosperity and success.

1. It is our responsibility to find the Covenant principles and instruction that will bring success to the venture that we want to embark upon.
2. We need to attend to that instruction by applying corresponding actions to it.
3. We need to keep our eyes steadfast on what God says our actions will produce, rather than what someone or some circumstance says our actions will produce.
4. We need to enshrine His words in our heart as something that is holy, rather than something to be trampled under foot by the swine.

Chapter Two

Jesus Broke the Curse of Poverty

“Christ hath redeemed us...being made a curse for us...” ~ Galatians 3:13

When believers become aware of the fact that there are forces other than the Spirit of God at work within their lives, they immediately seek to break those negative influences. Commonly called curses, these forces have prevented them from obtaining or maintaining a sufficient level of victory within their finances, their marriage, their healing, or in any other area that has been negatively governed. If the believer is to break these negative curses, he must learn how to build his life on the solid doctrine of Christ and have a genuine desire to work out the truth of that doctrine within his everyday life. This is true spiritual warfare.

James, chapter 4, verse 7 instructs us to “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” In other words, the best way for us to defeat the devil and to break his negative influence over our lives is to find the will of God and then submit to it. But all too often, Christians just scream and shout at the devil in the hope that he will go away. When this doesn't work many of these screaming, shouting Christians will then try to build their lives on charismatic personalities who speak with conviction about things they know nothing or have very little understanding about. But it is not very long before they find out that this doesn't work either.

While I was recently in Australia crusading for five months, the church where I pastor in Hyde Park, New York, invited a minister to do a crusade. This man was a very mystical, charismatic man who, without a doubt, loved the Lord. But obviously, this man did not have the Word of God in the right perspective in his life.

Let me explain. During the meetings he made statements like “the Holy Ghost is stuck in this particular area of the church.” At a fellow minister's church he declared “the Holy Ghost is stuck on the wall.”

The Holy Spirit is never stuck anywhere! He is omnipresent, omnipotent, and all knowing. I don't care what type of explanation any preacher offers for the Holy Spirit being stuck on the wall or in a particular area of the church. This is clearly a wrong teaching that was designed to invent an excuse for someone's unbelief and critical spirit which have been

causing a dead spot in the way the anointing should be flowing, and, thus, preventing the meeting or the prayer line from reaching the ultimate goal that the Holy Spirit had in mind for the people. But I can assure you, the Holy Spirit is never stuck anywhere.

Can you imagine the Holy Spirit saying, “Wayne, I would love to help you by breaking the curse of poverty over your life, but you see, I can’t. I’m stuck on the wall and I can’t get off!”? This sounds absurd, but that is the only conclusion to these types of statements. In reality, the only way the Holy Spirit can move over a person’s life to break any curse, is for him to agree with the Word of God and to prove that he does with corresponding actions. This will be the catalyst that will release the Holy Spirit to break the yoke of bondage in any area of our live – whether we are in a church meeting or at home on our bed praying.

Health Food Gurus

We also had another minister come to preach. The man is the pastor of a large church, a very powerful man in his own right. But when he addressed our congregation, instead of preaching Jesus, he taught on a recipe for healthy living by preaching certain foods to eat and others to avoid. He even went as far as to instruct the congregation about how to sit on the toilet seat in order to empty their bowels totally!

I guess it all made sense to some degree, but the foundation of his message was not faith in what Jesus had purchased for us on the Cross of Calvary. Actually, Jesus was hardly mentioned. The totality of his message was that you can obtain health by what you eat. I guess that was a nice way of saying that Jesus went too far at the Cross! Because if we can obtain health by what we eat, then there was no need for Him to be whipped so that we may obtain healing. It’s the same thing as saying that we can obtain righteousness by the way we live rather than by the Blood of Jesus. Actually, you did not have to be a prophet to realize that the man was suffering the realm of finances within his ministry and had found a way to financially supplement his ministry by marketing “healthy living” –complete with a line of health foods that went along with his philosophy!

The sad thing is, many Christians cling to every word that these preachers teach. But, in the realm of the Spirit, there is no workable truth contained within their doctrine that can develop the God-kind of faith that is

necessary to learn how to walk in the spirit. Every believer that is going to be successful in anything that God has called him or her to, must be able to discern between the spiritual and the natural worlds. That is the only way that true victory can come. Galatians 5:16 teaches us “Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

However, these kinds of Bible instructors teach out of the wisdom of man rather than the wisdom of God and seldom enter into the realm of the spirit because of their natural knowledge. You see, the carnal man wars against the spirit man, and the “works theology” that these teachers impart will produce a striving. Eventually this gives way to fear rather than produce faith in the finished work of the Cross.

These teachers mean well when they instruct people to eat certain meats and vegetables and to avoid others. This is good teaching for the unsaved or for those weak in faith, but Romans 14:1-3 instructs us not to preach in an absolute way concerning food and drink:

“As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him [into your fellowship], but not to criticize his opinions *or* pass judgement on his scruples or perplex him with discussions.

One [man’s faith permits him to] believe he may eat anything, while a weaker one [limits his] eating to vegetables.

Let not him who eats look down on or despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains criticize *and* pass judgment on him who eats; for God has accepted and welcomed him.” (Amplified)

So, I am not saying that this type of teaching is wrong, because it isn’t. As we’ve just read, the Bible states that it is advantageous to certain parts of the Body. But as I’ve said before, so say I now again, it should never be preached as an absolute way of life.

My personal opinion is that this “health food” doctrine became obsolete forty years ago. Today, it is the pesticides sprayed on the vegetation and the hormones injected into livestock to bring rapid growth, that are causing most of the sickness within the world.

When it comes to health, we are funny people here in the United States. We will go on strike so the boss will put in an elevator, and then go out and buy a *Stair Climber* exercise machine. We will even put *Sweet 'n Low* in our coffee to lose weight, even though there is a warning on the packet that says saccharine causes cancer. Can you imagine your husband or wife saying, "Honey, I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that I lost 60 pounds. The bad news is I've got cancer."?

God's Promise of Health

No, the real answer to staying healthy in today's world is to learn to live by the God-kind of faith. You cannot develop the God-kind of faith by following a spiritual guru. It can only be developed by good, sound teaching from the Word of God.

This is the type of faith that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had when they were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar. As children, they were brought to Babylon and placed on a special diet for three years so that they would be nourished and then presented to the king for the purpose of working in the administration of his kingdom.

However, the people that push certain health foods will tell you that the diet the king placed them on was a diet of "junk food" and that was why the Hebrew children refused to eat it. This is not correct. Actually, it does not even make sense. Why would King Nebuchadnezzar go to all the trouble of plundering Israel to take captive children "in whom there was no blemish, but well favoured and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge and understanding science," and then feed them on a junk food diet? Let's face it, this does not make sense. Does it?

When Daniel requested for the Hebrew children to go on the diet of their own choosing, he did this, not for them to "eat better," but rather as a well-thought-out way for them to prove the power and faithfulness of the God they served. If this was not the true reason, then why did the dietician who was placed over them become scared of losing his head? I'll tell you why. He feared that their diet would not work and would cause them to become weak and lose color. And the penalty he would have to pay for this would be his death.)

Daniel knew that the only hope that he and his kinsmen had for survival was to show his captors that they had something far superior to anything that the people of Babylon had—something that could not be learned or taught. They had a God who loved and cared for them, even in adverse conditions, and Who could supply their every need. This was the sole reason why they desired to eat a vegetable mash and drink water, rather than to eat the nourishing diet that was prepared for them by their captors.

Friends, I don't care how bad the food supply on planet Earth becomes. Those who love the Lord and are not intimidated by the power and influence of self-appointed or man-appointed leaders within the Church or within this world's system will be free from the various curses that will come upon the children of this world's system. Daniel said in chapter 11:32, "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." He did not say "the people that know Ronald Reagan, George Bush or President Clinton or Oral Roberts or Kenneth Hagin or Jerry Falwell will be strong and do exploits." He said "The people that *know their God* will be strong and do exploits."

Superstar Shams

Satan knows this to be true. That is why he tries to undermine solid Bible doctrine that produces faith in the finished works of the Cross. He does this by raising up superstars -- charismatic personalities with no substance to their message -- within the world system and even within the kingdom of God. This will become more and more evident in these last days. The Apostle Paul foresaw this happening when he wrote to Timothy in the fourth chapter of his first epistle, verses 1-10, to warn him and all who are to follow:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and *commanding to abstain from meats*, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the works of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

There is no truth like an old truth. Stop looking for some “spiritual guru” to straighten out your life. Instead, develop good, solid, sound doctrine, because it is only good, solid truth that will set you free. Jesus emphasized this when He said “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” The reason the Lord gave us this instruction was to break the various curses over our lives. Don’t look for some man or woman to wave “a magic wand” for you in the realm of the spirit to set you free, because you will only be disappointed.

The Cross is the Hub of Sound Doctrine

At this point you may say, “I agree with what you are saying, but how do I develop sound doctrine?” Well, I’m glad you asked this question.

You see, all New Testament doctrine must tie into the Cross of Calvary. A well-known Bible scholar teaches, “The Cross of Calvary is like the hub of a wheel. As all the spokes tie into the hub, so must all New Testament truth tie into the cross.”

You have to make sure that the scripture you are going to stand upon, to break the adverse situation that you are experiencing, is a genuine promise: with its origin in the life of Christ and sealed by His blood at the Cross. This scripture must not be just a wise saying that was quoted by one of the great men or women of the Bible. It must be a genuine promise with its origin in the Cross of Calvary.

God’s Promise or Man’s Opinion?

Let me illustrate this by giving you an example of a statement made to a body of believers by a great man of God that would have actually been fatal if acted upon. In the Old Testament, Moses made a promise to the people of Israel that he had no right to make. In the fourteenth chapter, verses 13 and 14, of the book of Exodus, Moses said to the people, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

Now, these particular statements recorded in Scripture read like they are sound Bible promises. In fact, I have seen many dear brothers and sisters stand on these promises in the hope of experiencing the same

deliverance that Israel experienced from the hand of their enemies. But instead of deliverance, their situations grew worse and finally overcame them.

Friends, this is exactly what would have happened to Israel if they would have stood on the promises that Moses made. As we shall clearly see, this was Moses' interpretation of the situation, rather than God's direction for the people of Israel.

Chapter twenty-three of Jeremiah, verses twenty-one through twenty-three, gives solemn warning about advising people using our own interpretation of their situation, rather than finding out what the will of God is, so that they may be truly delivered.

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

It is very plain, from these scriptures, that God's desire is to deliver us. However many times it is impossible for His deliverance to come to us because other people are expressing their opinions about the situation, rather than seeking God's will for the situation as it is confirmed within the New Covenant context.

Far too many people read verses 13 and 14 of Exodus 14 and run with these so-called promises, believing that God gave them to Moses for the deliverance of Israel. They never read on, to verses 15 and 16, to see where God rebuked Moses for making false promises to Israel.

You see, God said unto Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

After reading these two verses, you do not have to be a rocket scientist to realize that the promises Moses made to Israel, on God's behalf were not valid—even though they sounded valid.

It is quite clear from verses 15 and 16 that it was not God's responsibility to divide the Red Sea—it was Moses' responsibility! God had clearly placed the task of delivering Israel out of Egypt into Moses' hands, and He wasn't changing His mind just because there was an ocean in the way. You see, God had placed into the rod that He gave Moses, whatever authority that was needed to deliver His people from the hand of their oppressors. It is definitely not God's fault that Moses did not understand the full power of the rod entrusted to him.

Many genuine Christians are just like Moses. God has given them 8,886 promises, yet they do not understand the power to deliver that is contained within these declarations. When they are applied in the context of His will, these promises will release an authority to make a way where there seems to be no way and to bring deliverance.

The rod of Moses had the appearance of any other stick picked up off the ground, and yet it contained all the authority of heaven. Likewise, the promises of the new Covenant can seem to be mere words, empty of real power. But believe me when I say, they carry all authority of heaven. And, just like Moses' rod, they will only release their hidden power when used in faith.

The Curse Removed by the Cross

My friends, when stepping out in faith in any area of our lives, it is necessary to ensure that the Word and the Spirit are in complete agreement with the will of God, so that they may release their full power to deliver. Therefore, we must first find the root promise that ties into the life of Jesus in the New Covenant for the area that we are going to take our stand in. When we have this surety, we then can begin to grow "the tree of blessing" by taking a firm stand upon the promise.

The foundational promise for financial freedom is found in Second Corinthians 8:9 (Amplified), "For you are coming progressively to be acquainted with and to recognize more strongly and clearly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ – His kindness, His gracious generosity, His undeserved favor and spiritual blessing; [in] that though He was [so very] rich, yet for your sakes He became [so very] poor, in order that by His poverty you might become enriched – abundantly supplied."

This verse of Scripture is the axe that we lay to the root of poverty, which has plagued mankind since the fall of Adam. It simply means that when Jesus went to the Cross of Calvary, He did not just forgive man's sin by becoming sin, He also became poverty, so we might have the right to walk in prosperity.

When you view with hindsight the creation of man, God did not place him in the desert, or even on uncultivated land to fend for himself. God placed him in the garden and told him that he may freely eat of every tree in the garden except one. God told him if he were to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, the result would be separation from His divine supply.

Regrettably, my friend, this is exactly what happened and the curse of poverty came upon mankind. Man could no longer live freely in the garden and have all the benefits that came along with a sinless relationship with God.

Now, because of this curse, Adam had to live by the sweat of his brow: cultivating the land to grow his food, making the materials to build a home for his wife and himself, not to mention the many other aspects of striving that resulted from excommunication from the presence of God.

Then when Jesus became poverty, He took our punishment into His own body so that man would be freed from the curse of poverty that had come upon all mankind through Adam's sin.

This is again made very clear when you read Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

There is much controversy throughout the Body of Christ about the prosperity aspect of Christianity. If Christians, who have condemned this aspect of doctrine, would allow the offense to be removed that was, actually, inflicted by the *perversion* of the prosperity doctrine, they would see that this is a genuine truth and enter into God's best for their lives.

The Devil's Plan

The devil has a plan, and that is to blind God's people to the many different truths contained in the New Covenant that are established through the "great exchange" of Calvary. He does this by causing an offense to be established in the mind. It is this affront that has caused many Christians to believe that prosperity is wrong.

If only these folk would realize that you cannot receive a miracle unless you believe in miracles. Likewise, you cannot be prospered if you do not believe in prosperity.

I have counseled many Christians battling with financial pressure, and the first question that I ask them is this: "Do you believe in prosperity?" It is truly amazing just how many say "No." And yet, they are somehow convinced that if I pray some spiritual prayer over their poverty-stricken circumstances, their problem will disappear and they can go on their merry way—living the way they were, and, without having to change one thing.

At this point, when I discover this attitude, my friends, I know there is nothing that I can do for them unless I can get them to change their line of

thought, because “as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” And sadly for some, there is no point in even trying to convince them that Jesus became a curse to free them from the curse of poverty. They will become offended, brand you as a “get-rich-quick, prosperity preacher” and leave the church – slandering you to all of their friends. If only these people would realize that poverty is from the devil, and not from God, and that the only way that they will be free from the curse of poverty is to agree with God’s Word in the light of redemption.

Principles of Prosperity

However, once a person has come into full agreement that Christ has already broken the curse of poverty, and that it is His will that they should prosper, they will readily grow into financial freedom by applying three basic principles that are very evident in Scripture.

These three principles can be found wherever you look in creation.

- (1) The first principle is *the preparation of the ground*.
- (2) The second principle is *sowing the ground*.
- (3) The third principle is *reaping the harvest*.

Now, let’s discuss these three principles at length.

Chapter Three
Preparing the Ground

“Behold, a sower went forth to sow...”

~ Matthew 13:3

In this chapter I want to explain the difference between the principles of *sowing the ground* and *the preparation of the ground*. Both procedures are necessary in order to expect a harvest as they are dependent upon each other. There has been much taught concerning the way the seed should be sown, but very little about the preparation of the ground, the most important procedure to successful farming.

Jesus stresses the importance of preparing the ground in the Parable of the sower. Matthew 13:3-9 says, “Behold, a sower went forth to so;

And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them:

But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus concluded the Parable of the Sower with the statement, “Who hath ears to hear, let hi hear.” Clearly the parable contains a great truth, and this truth is that there was nothing wrong with the seed! The problem was in the condition of the soil.

Only one portion of the soil was prepared to receive the seed, and that was the portion of ground that the farmer had prepared by removing the rocks and the thistles, and by breaking up the hard ground to receive the seed.

The other seed fell by the wayside in unprepared ground. This is the type of soil that can be likened to many Christians in their giving. They sow their seed by the wayside, and this does not mean “shallow ministries.” It simply means that they are not giving in the divine order that God has placed in His Word. They then wonder why they don’t reap back a harvest.

The answer is quite simple -- we have got to prepare the ground and sow our seed God’s way and not the way we think is right in our own hearts. The book of Proverbs actually declares, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12).

The Plow that Breaks Up the Ground

There is a scriptural way that the Lord has set down in His word to prepare the ground so that the seed will yield its full potential. In Malachi chapter 3 we find the plow, sitting in the farm shed of God's Word, that is used to break up the spiritual ground.

Friends, some of you are thinking at this point, but this is Old Testament. Let's get back to the New Testament. Well, you're wrong! In fact, the Old Testament actually terminates at the book of John. Therefore, the New Testament begins at the book of Acts.

The New Testament could not begin until Jesus had sealed the covenant with His blood! First Corinthians 11:25a (Amplified) makes this quite clear,

“He took the cup also, saying, This cup is the new covenant [ratified and established] in My blood.”

Therefore, this means that the books of Matthew Mark, Luke, and John should be considered as Old Covenant books, because Jesus came to fulfill the law, not condemn it. He fulfilled the Old Testament law, as an Old Testament prophet, for the thirty-three years that He walked this earth as a man.

This may be difficult for you to accept, but Jesus called Himself an Old Testament prophet when He said, “A prophet is without honor in his own country, and in his own house”. Jesus was speaking of Himself!

It is quite clear in First Corinthians 11:25, that the New Covenant was ratified and established only after the shedding of Jesus' blood. So it is safe to say that no one could enter into, and commence living under, New Covenant grace until Jesus had shed His blood on the Cross. We know that He did not go to the Cross until the end of the Gospels, thus, making the Book of Acts the beginning of the New Covenant.

Now, I said all of the above to say this, we certainly don't write off the Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ as incidental teachings, so we also should not write off the book of Malachi. With these facts in mind, let us take a look at Malachi 3:6-12:

“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinance, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.”

From examining this text in Malachi, we see two principles, one cannot successfully operate without the other.

The offering is our seed, which is the amount that we purpose in our hearts to give. The tithe is the set amount of ten percent.

Second Corinthians, chapter nine, proves that the offering is our seed, and not the tithe. Verses 6 and 7 of this chapter say,

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

You cannot help but notice that the Apostle Paul refers to “sowing” or “planting” as an amount that is not a set amount, but that each man should purpose in his heart the amount to give. So at this point it is safe to say this type of giving is what the Bible refers to as “seed,” or “the offering.”

Purpose for Tithing

After having established the fact that the offering is the seed, you have to ask, “What purpose does the tithe play in our giving? What is it for?” Again, I am glad you asked this question, because the tithe is obviously the plow that breaks up and prepares the ground for sowing the seed, or offering.

If we know how to use the plow, rather than seeing it as an unusual and awkward object sitting in the farm shed of God’s Word, it will work because God’s Word works. He actually watches over His Word to perform it.

When we give the way that He wants us to, He releases His angels as a protective guard around our fields: our lives, our families our ministries,

our businesses, and all of our ventures in life. We, therefore, have the assurance of the protection of God's angels because we are walking in obedience to His principles.

Tithing is a Way of Life

In Malachi 3:6, the Lord makes a profound statement. He says, "For I am the Lord, I change not!" In other words, "What I am about to say is from everlasting to everlasting. It is not just for today or tomorrow, but rather, it is a way of life that you and I have made a covenant to live by."

However, the next verse reveals that it was a way of life that Israel had long forgotten. Verse 7 says, "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

Clearly, we see by the above verse that God's people had lost the truth of tithing, because they had not walked in this truth from the days of their fathers—a generation had now passed, which is around forty years. It was the loss of this truth that caused a famine in their finances. They were suffering and were calling out to God to help them financially.

My friends, I have witnessed this same predicament in the lives of many Christians in the twentieth century Church. They have the desire to provide for their families in the way that the Scripture compels them to, but they have no finances to do it. The reason that they have no finances is the same reason that Israel had no finances. They have lost the truth of tithing.

Notice in this verse, that God does not strike a deal, by some form of compromise, with His people because of their ignorance. Actually, He is very direct with them. He lets them know that they have broken their covenant with Him, the ordinances that they had agreed to live by, and that they will not move Him by prayer, fasting, or "spiritual tantrums."

He says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." In other words, "I'm still here. I haven't run off and left you. All you have to do to find Me is to return to our covenant, because this is where I live to watch over My Word to perform it."

Not only did God not make an excuse for their ignorance, in verses 8 and 9, but He calls them thieves and lets them know that because of their dishonesty, they had placed the whole nation under a curse.

Verses 8-9 say, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

In verse 10, the Lord makes it quite clear that the only way Israel would break the financial drought and experience His blessings once again, was to, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Friends, the next verse, verse 11, is the key to tithing and gives us a firsthand look at the spiritual plow. The Lord says, “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground: neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Let me ask you this question, “What is done to prepare the ground?” First, the ground is broken up and any parasites are removed from the soil so that the seed is not devoured. Then the soil is checked for any chemical imbalance to see if an additive is required to make the soil more productive and to prevent the plants from dropping their fruit before time.

This same preparation is what the tithe does. It is the spiritual plow that prepares your field to receive your offering, or seed. If you tithe according to the way that God has meant it to be applied, the conclusion to your actions will be verse 12, “And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.”

You will notice that I said that this will be the outcome *only if* you apply the tithe in the way that God meant it to be applied.

What if...?

At this point, I am going to answer some of the more common questions that I am asked when I teach on the subject of the tithe.

The first question usually asked is, “Do I pay my tithe from the gross amount or from the net?” To answer this question, let’s go to the Bible. Proverbs 3:9 says,

“Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.”

As believers, we must never forget that when the Lord asks us to do something, it is for our benefit, not for His benefit. When the Lord asks for the “firstfruits,” you can be sure that He has a reason for doing so. His reason is found in the very next verse, verse ten,

:So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

Let me explain the spiritual reason for the tithe in a simple parable. Say, for example, that I rented a house from you. We come to the agreement that you will let me live in your house for the sum of one thousand dollars per month.

As long as I pay you, the owner, one thousand dollars per month, I have the right to live in your house and to enjoy all the benefits, such as: the telephone, the utilities, the swimming pool, and the grounds that surround the house. Even though I live in your house and have total use of it, the rent I pay you each month acknowledges that you are the legal owner of the house.

The moment I decide not to pay you the one thousand dollars per month rent, I, by my actions deny your ownership of the house. You, therefore, have the right to evict me.

Well, this was the original purpose of the tithe. The tithe began in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and God. God is the owner of the earth, and when He created Adam, the Lord made an agreement with Adam. Adam had the right to live on the earth and to enjoy all the benefits, as long as he did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree represented the Lord's ownership. As long as Adam did not eat of the tree, he acknowledged God's ownership. But the moment that he did eat of the tree, he denied God's ownership, and was removed, or evicted.

A good illustration, that I could find in the Bible, of this principle of the firstfruits occurs with Cain and Abel. When Cain and Abel came to offer their sacrifices to God, one sacrifice was accepted, the other was rejected.

Genesis 4:1-5, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering.

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

Many Bible scholars will tell you that the reason why God rejected Cain's offering was because he brought fruits and vegetables rather than a lamb. However, if they were right, then Cain could not have brought his firstfruits because Cain was a tiller of the ground, not a shepherd. For Cain to have brought a lamb, he would have had to trade his goods for one. Therefore, his offering to the Lord would not have been a *firstfruit* offering.

No, my friends, this is not the reason why the Lord rejected Cain's offering. The real reason is found in verses 3 and 4,

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And, the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock. He brought to the Lord the very first lamb that was born. In doing so he acknowledged God's ownership of the earth.

Cain, on the other hand, brought his offering "in the process of time," which means he was living off of it for a season. That is why God rejected his offering when he did come to offer his sacrifice.

Many Christians are just like Cain. They bring their tithe "in the process of time" - - after they have paid their taxes, health benefits, or retirement fund. They will find that God has no respect for their offerings, just as He had no respect for Cain's offering and rejected it.

You see, when you pay your tithe, every demon that is around in the unseen world is watching to see if you are going to acknowledge God's ownership of the earth by the giving of your firstfruits. If you do what God has said, they cannot oppress you in the realm of finances. If you don't, they will come after you, just like they came after Cain.

This principle is backed up by what God said to Cain after He rejected his offering. Verses 6 and 7 say,

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

Notice that God did not reject Cain, only his offering. The Lord even went on to say that if Cain brought the right offering he would be accepted. He then went on to explain to Cain that the reason why He wanted him to bring the right offering was because sin, or Satan, was standing at the door of the invisible realm watching, waiting to have his way with him, just like he did with his father, Adam. The only way the Cain would ward off the evil one and have dominion over him was to bring the right sacrifice.

"It's Not Working..."

The second most commonly asked question is, "I have been paying my tithe, why hasn't it worked?" The key to answering this question is, "To whom have you been paying your tithe?"

Malachi 3:10a declares, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house.”

Clearly, you are to pay your tithe to the local church or the storehouse where the Lord has planted you. Yet many Christians pay their tithe wherever they “feel led.” This is definitely not right!

If you had a rental agreement with a landlord, you would be quite stupid to pay it to his next-door neighbor. Many Christians send their tithe to some “crying television evangelist,” orphanage, mission, or one of the other “para-church” groups. Friends, that is not what the Lord has told us to do with the tithe. He told us to bring it into the storehouse.

But, you might say, “ I don’t like the way our church spends our tithe.” Well, I have some news for you. You are not giving to your church, to your pastor or to your denomination. You are giving it to Christ, and the local church where you attend is where He told you to deliver it.

Abraham made it clear as to whom we are to pay our tithe. Genesis 14:18-20 says,

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

Who, therefore, is Melchizedek, and where does he fit into the New Testament? The Bible makes it quite clear in the book of Hebrews, that Jesus is Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:1-4, “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but make like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.”

So, if Abraham, the Father of Faith, paid his tithe to Melchisedec, in faith, to commonly receive the blessing of God, so should we.

Do I Need Faith to Tithe?

A third question that I am most commonly asked is, “Don’t I need faith to begin tithing?”

Yes, you do. But, if you are alive, you already have faith – contrary to what anybody has told you.

If you don’t believe that you have faith, consider your lack of faith the next time you are flying in an airplane – at 33,000 feet and 600 miles per hour. Do you understand what keeps the plane in the air, or whether or not the pilot is sober? He could be in the cockpit smoking dope, or knocking back a bottle of fine brandy. Friends, you better believe me when I say it takes great faith to hop on a plane, and fly across the country, or around the world!

Then, think about your “lack of faith” the next time you use a washing machine, clothes dryer, refrigerator, television, video, or any other of man’s great inventions. It takes faith to you any of these items. You don’t fully understand how the washer or dryer works. Yet, you put all your good clothes in them and then leave them and go do something else. That is faith in operation.

Also, do you fully understand how that voice gets into your radio and then comes out of your radio, and the same with the picture on your television set? Yet, you use them. Again, this is faith. Only this faith is not faith toward God. It is faith toward man’s discoveries.

You exercise great faith in man’s ability to direct your life. You do this when you go to school for 12 – 20 years of your life, or when you pick up a bus schedule. You read that a bus will be leaving for the city at noon. You hurriedly dress and then run to the corner to catch it. Why? Because some person put out a schedule for the bus company – and you believe him, didn’t you?

You can also believe your doctor, attorney, bank manager, or a friend when he or she directs you. In other words, you have great faith in man’s ability to direct your life.

You display great faith in nature. Have you ever doubted that the trees will lose their leaves in the fall? Then, regain them again in the spring? Or that it would never rain again? Or that a cloud would permanently cover the sun so it would never shine again? Let me assure you, my friend, you use faith everyday of your life.

Now consider this. If you have ever planted a vegetable garden, you have used faith. You work hard tilling the ground. Then you put in the necessary fertilizer, and plant your carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, celery, and

whatever other seeds you may have purchased. While you are planting them you can picture in your mind's eye the beautiful garden you will soon have.

Let me give you this challenge. Take a seed, cut it open with a razor blade, place it under a microscope and see if you can find anything that even vaguely resembles a carrot, cabbage, lettuce or tomato. You can't. I know because I've tried it.

But, praise God, every year when the season comes, we can dig up our gardens and plant seeds that have absolutely no resemblance to a carrot, cabbage, tomato, or lettuce, and expect them to grow into such. Now, don't tell me you haven't got faith. You have, but it is faith in nature.

In summary, we use faith in man's inventions and in man's ability to direct, and we have faith in nature.

So, the problem is, not that you haven't got faith, but you lack faith toward God. You must rid your heart of unworthy suspicions concerning God's faithfulness, and give Him the same respect that you give man or nature.

Restitution for Back Tithes?

The fourth question that I am commonly asked is, "Do I have to make restitution for the tithes that I have not paid?" The answer is found in Leviticus 27:30-33 (Amplified),

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.

And if a man wants to redeem any of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it.

And all the tithe of the herd or of the flock, whatever passes under the herdsman's staff [by means of which each tenth animal as it passes through a small door is selected and marked], the tenth shall be holy to the Lord.

The man shall not examine whether the animal is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; if he does exchange it, then both it and the animal substituted for it shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed."

The tithe is a holy thing, and should not be taken lightly! In verse 31, Moses declares that if a man wants to put his account right with God he should pay an extra twenty percent for late payment.

However, we live under grace in the New Covenant, and not law. Even so, we shouldn't get into the habit of abusing God's grace. Let me tell you what I did concerning my own situation.

After I realize that I had been abusing God's grace in several areas of my life, I made the decision to repent. Realizing that repentance is not just

an emotion, and that God demanded fruit of repentance, both my wife and I began to give a little extra each week in our tithes. It wasn't much more because we were 'maxed out' in our budget. Nevertheless, we determined between ourselves, that we would do something to redeem our name in the unseen realm – by not only just communicating the Word of God to each other, but also by living it on a daily basis.

I know this may sound silly to most, but consider for a moment what would happen if you paid late or reneged on a credit contract. You would have a bad name with Dunn and Brad Street, the credit watchers. The next time you applied for credit, you would find that you stand a good chance of refusal. The only way to redeem yourself would be to make good on your commitment plus the interest they would charge you.

Let me ask you, where do you think this line of thought comes from? It comes from Leviticus 27:31, of course: “And if a man wants to redeem any of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it.”

Building a Platform of Authority

Some people wonder why they have no authority when they pray for finances or any other thing. The answer is very simple. They have destroyed their credibility, in the realm of the spirit, by living contrary to the Word of God. The Bible declares, “A good name is to be chosen.” A good name is not inherited, because God does not have grandchildren. He has only sons and daughters who must establish their own good name in the spirit.

Let me give an example. In the book of Acts, Chapter 19, the seven sons of Sceva, a chief priest, tried to cast out a devil in the name of Jesus. The devil beat them up, and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The original Greek language puts it this way, “Jesus I know, and Paul I'm getting to know.” The Amplified puts it in this context, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”

The sons of Sceva were nothing but vagabonds in the realm of the spirit. They had never taken the time to build a platform of authority in the realm of the spirit, by waling in the Word of God with integrity. The Apostle Paul obviously had because the demons were getting accustomed to his name – proving that a good name is to be chosen (in the realm of the spirit, just as it is in the natural) by the way that we live.

As a pastor, I have to build a platform of authority in the realm of the spirit for our church. Then, when the congregation prays, their prayers are

not empty words that fall to the ground, but rather their prayers are authoritative prayers that pierce the unseen spirit world.

I do this by being honest with the tithe of our church. Before one bill is paid or salaries given, we pay our tithe. Then I plant a garden in the realm of the spirit by sowing some of our seed offering into the restoration of ministers and broken families. I sow some into other churches' building funds, then I will locate a revival that is happening somewhere and sow some seed into it. I will sow some seed into the hungry and homeless. We also pay for several young Bible students to go to Bible College to perfect their ministries.

The reason why I do all this sowing is because the Word says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

No person has the right to harvest a crop that he has not planted or sown for – in the natural world and in the spirit world!

By planting a crop of restoration, I truly believe this gives our church the right to call restoration forth in the realm of the spirit for the families of our church. The same can be said about revival. I believe it is useless to have long prayer meetings, praying for revival, if we have not first planted the seeds of revival. There is no pint in me, as the pastor, preaching that God wants every family to win their own home, if I have not first established a realm of authority for them to do so by planting seeds into God's house. I can never expect the best out of our ministerial staff if I have not first planted seeds into someone else's ministry. Also, I cannot expect anyone in our church not to be in want, if I haven't first ministered to the poor by sowing seeds into their lives.

Without this attitude, as the head of your family, business or church, your prayers will be meaningless in the realm of the spirit, because the Bible says that one sows and another reaps. So, if you want your family, business, or church to be successful, walk in the realm of integrity with the Word of God by being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only, deceiving yourself and those around you.

Chapter Four

Sowing the Seed

*“...and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”
~ 2 Corinthians 9:6*

Now that we understand that the tithe is for the preparation of the ground, it is time to learn how to plant the seed. Even though I have given you an overview in the previous chapter, there is more to learn. To do this we will look at the following scripture:

Second Corinthians 9:6-7 (Amplified), “[Remember} this: he who sows sparingly and grudgingly will also reap sparingly and grudgingly, and he who sows generously and that blessings may come to someone, will also reap generously and with blessings.

Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (that is, He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, prompt-to-do-it) giver – whose heart is in his giving.”

Clearly, in reading these verses of scripture, God will not tell us how much seed we should sow into the ground that has been prepared by the tithe, because He says, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.” *We* choose the amount to be sown, *not* God. Prosperity is a non-absolute concerning salvation. It is a conditional promise that we choose to enter into. In other words, you may be saved and on your way to Heaven, but be as broke as a Savings & Loan Bank. God will leave you this way – at your choosing.

However, if we choose to enter into the realm of prosperity provided in the New Covenant (by applying into our everyday walk with Jesus the above scriptures that are found in Second Corinthians 9:6-7), then we will reap the promises that are found in the following verses:

Second Corinthians 9:8-11 (Amplified), “And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need, be self-sufficient – possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation.

As it is written, He [the benevolent person] scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his deed of justice and goodness and kindness and benevolence will go and endure forever!

And [God] Who provides seed for the sower and bread for eating will also provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness and charity].

Thus you will be enriched in all things and in every way, so that you can be generous, [and your generosity as it is] administered by us will bring forth thanksgiving to God.”

Make a Quality Decision

But be not deceived. There is no way that we are going to reap the promises for prosperity unless we are willing to walk in them. And this is done by making a calculated decision in the light of scripture and sticking to it.

God, through Moses, gave the people of Israel this same option when they were gathered at the Jordan River waiting to enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 says, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

God gave the Israelites an option. They could either enter into His promise of abundant supply or return to the desert for another forty years, as did their parents. The choice was theirs to make – just as it is ours to make. Therefore, we can’t complain to God or to our friends when we haven’t enough to live the way we would like our families to live.

I am not talking about sowing to get wealth to dominate the neighbors or our friends. So don’t misunderstand what I am saying. I am fully aware of the scriptures that say, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption”, and “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”.

No, I am not referring to the desires of the flesh or to lust. I am talking about a safe car for your family to drive in, instead of the “Fred Flintstone” version that they may be driving now. A halfway decent home that you can call your own, instead of the one that you may be renting. A decent college education that your child deserves, and occasionally “something special” so that your partner won’t feel used and abused in the

relationship. These are the things I mean when I say, “the way you would like to see your family live”.

Marriage Requires Finances

I want to tell you a story. In a church where I once pastored, a young man came into my office for marriage counseling. I reminded him, “Brother, you have only been married one year, why are you here for counseling?” He sadly replied, “Yes, I have, but we are going through it. Everyday we fight. When I got married, Pastor, I must have been deceived. I truly believed the Bible where it says, “He who finds a wife, finds a good thing.”

He continued, “Before we were married, we didn’t fight. We had no pressures, but now that we are married we fight all the time. It seems to me I have committed myself to a life term in prison.”

I asked him what he meant by this statement and he replied, “We can’t go anywhere or do anything without fighting.” I inquired, “Is your wife trying to possess you?” He said, “Oh no, she’s good like that. It’s just the financial pressure that we are under.”

Then I said, “So really, you don’t need marriage counseling because the problem in your marriage is in your finances. Isn’t it?” He said, “Well, yes, I guess so, if you want to look at it that way.”

He went on to complain, “We can’t even afford a meal together in a restaurant. As a matter of fact, we can’t even go to the next town to visit my wife’s family. There is never any extra cash to buy gas. Every penny is budgeted to be able to make it through the week. There is no quality time together as I’m always underneath the hood of the car fixing it so I can get to work each day or I’m always out looking for extra work to earn an extra few dollars. I’m a wreck. I’m always five seconds away from an argument. I can’t even enjoy myself with a game of soccer or football with the guys anymore.”

So I said to him, “Listen, it’s quite obvious that the problem is financial, not your marriage. So work on your finances and your marriage will be alright.” He said, “Yes, but how!” Then I inquired, “How much do you get each week?” He responded, “I get three hundred dollars a week.” So, we went through his weekly bills and discovered that he needed four hundred dollars a week to service the marriage in the way it should be.

Then I counseled him and said, “So what you really need is another hundred dollars a week to survive without unnecessary pressure on our marriage. So if I could give you an extra hundred dollars a week there

would be no more pressure, and then you would be able to enjoy each other's company once again."

He said to me, "Yes, that's exactly right, Pastor." But I said, "Listen, I can't give you one hundred dollars a week. The church would be bankrupt if I gave every person who needed it a hundred dollars a week to make their marriage work."

So, he said, "Pastor, what do I do?" At this point I said, "How much a week are you tithing?" He told me, "I tithe thirty dollars every week. One thing I will not do is rob from God. I put my thirty dollars in the plate each week. Contrary to what you preach, I'm just not getting it back. I'm not being blessed."

I said, "Well, are you calling God a liar?" He said, "No". I then said, "Do you think that I am ripping you off?" He again said, "No, I just don't know why it's not working for me. I have to face facts, don't I? We're just not going ahead."

"Well", I said, "You must believe the Word of God is true because you're tithing." He said, "Yes, I do." So I gave him a parable, "Listen, if you were to plow three acres of ground and then go into to the house and forget to put the seed into the ground, what type of person would you be?" He replied, "An idiot of course!" So, I said, "Look at yourself in the mirror and you'll see an idiot."

He became very quiet, so I continued, "Now listen, you need to not only give your tithe, but you need to sow an extra ten dollars a week of seed money for that promotion you need, or a better paying job so you can earn the extra hundred dollars you need to make your marriage work."

He said, "But, Pastor, I can't afford to do what you're asking." I said, "You cannot afford not to. God has set down this principle in His Word for financial growth."

This young man just couldn't get it through his head. He was blinded by fear, rather than empowered by faith. He was in desperation, even though I tried to explain to him that no one has ever moved God by desperation. So I explained to him once more that if we do what God's Word instructs us to, even though many times fear will flood into our minds, we will definitely get through.

At this point, it was very obvious that "the lights were on, but no one was home." So I said to him, "Listen, do you think it was easy for Abraham when God awoke him one night and said, "Abraham, I want you to offer your son to Me upon an altar?"

I went on to explain that Abraham, like any other person, would have warred with God's instructions. Abraham had received Isaac as a promise

from the Lord, and now the giver of the promise has “developed schizophrenia” – He wants His gift back! Not only does He require that Abraham give back Isaac, He requires Abraham to place his promised son upon an altar and stick a knife into him.

At this point I was expecting this young man’s mind to go on “tilt”, but, praise God, it didn’t. So I continued to explain that Abraham had to sow the promise so that he could get the greater promise. The greater promise was Israel in its entirety. Bible history tells us that Abraham went up to the mountain to do what God had required of him. He placed his son, Isaac, on the altar and was about to bring the knife down when the Angel of the Lord called from Heaven, “Don’t harm the boy.”

Abraham looked up, then looked around and saw a ram caught in the thicket that God had supplied for the sacrifice. Abraham named God that day, Jehovah-jireh.

I explained to this young man that the whole key to the name of Jehovah-jireh is not, “The Lord is my Provider” as some believe. Jehovah-jireh literally means this -- “God sees, and when He sees, He will provide.” In plain English it means, God saw the act of Abraham’s faith, even against the warring in his head, and seeing the act of obedience, He provided a ram for him to sacrifice instead.

I saw the young man’s tears of frustration. I said, “I know it’s tough to step out this way in faith, to reach out and to grab hold and apply this principle to your life. Your mind is telling you, no, but the Word of God is asking you to do it. I’m not asking you to trust me, I’m asking you to trust God’s Word.”

I did not have to be a prophet to realize he was warring with me. He yelled, “No, I can’t do it. I just can’t do it. I’m not able to step out in that type of faith.” But I said, “Brother, you must step out in that type of faith that you might receive the promise.”

Friends, this young man was wanting something from God, but on the other hand, he wasn’t prepared to do the will of God. I recognized the war in his heart, so I retreated to the Word in an attempt to “pull down the strongholds” gripping his mind. I quoted to him First John 5:14-15,

“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that are desired of Him.”

For the first time, I saw a glimmer of hope in eyes. He asked me, “If I were to do what the Word says, how long would it take to work?” I quoted to him another scripture in Hebrews 10:36,

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

I explained that the will of God was not just to tithe, but also to sow the field with an offering. However, clearly, fear still gripped his mind. To try to release him from the fear, I reminded him of another story from the Bible about Elijah.

Elijah was doing God’s will when he confronted a rogue king which had brought about great persecution to him. This persecution drove Elijah away from the main population to live by a brook where he was fed by a raven. When the brook dried up, God spoke to him, and said, “Elijah, I have spoken to a widow to look after you. She is down in Zarephath. I want you to go down to her house.” So Elijah arrived at the town and saw the widow collecting sticks to bake the last meal for her son and herself. He called to her, “Fetch me a drink of water.”

Now to ask for water at that time was a major request. In fact, it would have been quite heart wrenching for Elijah to ask this woman to get him water. There was a total drought in the land. Water was very scarce and as precious as gold. She looked at him, though, and said, “Yes, sir.”

But Elijah also had a second request, “Bring me a meal as well.” Now this is where it really got difficult for this widow woman. She replied, “Sir, all we have in our house is a little bit of oil and one little bit of flour, just enough for one meal. This is why I’m gathering these sticks. My son and I are going to eat then we are going to die.” He simply said, “Go, and do what I have asked you to do. And by the way, make a meal for yourself as well.”

She obeyed! Yes, it would have been difficult for her to obey and to respond to Elijah’s commands by answering, “OK, I’m going to believe you in this.” Yes, it would have been difficult for her to trust God – to do what Elijah had required of her. But she did, and because of her obedience in sowing what she had, in putting God before herself and her child, she received God’s blessing and was provided for in a time of drought.

The widow woman had wheat and oil in her house for the whole time of drought. Now the Lord did not have several angels deliver to her backyard a couple of tankers of oil and a few dump trucks of flour for her to use at will. No, this was not the case at all. But every day that she put God first there was enough oil and flour to feed her household.

I addressed the young man again, “Now, I’m telling you, what you need to do is sow an extra ten dollars a week into this ministry along with your tithe, and you will see that God will bless you.”

At this particular point he said, “Pastor, I’ve got to go away and think about it.” He left my office and came back some time later, and said, “Are

you sure?" I said, "Brother don't waste anymore of my time. I've told you what God requires of you. I can't work any great miracle for you. You can work a miracle for yourself by obeying God and doing what He wants you to do."

He said, "OK, I'll give it a go." I said, "Right, I want you to come in here every Friday and give me your thirty dollars tithe and your extra ten dollars seed offering. Now, listen to me. If God hasn't provided for you within a few months, I'll give every penny back to you." He agreed.

The first week went by. Friends, let me tell you the young man was as nervous as a mouse being chased by a cat, but he brought his tithe and offering into my office. Handing me the money he said, "Are you sure, Pastor?" I said, "Yes".

I knew I would have to carry this young man by my faith in God to bring him through. But I also knew that after I got him through, faith toward God would be produced in his life, and then he would be able to do it for himself.

The second week went by and then the third. He entered my office all flustered. "Pastor, I'm hitchhiking to work now. We just haven't got enough money to buy gas so I can get to work." I just said, "Trust God, brother, trust God. Believe that God will do what He says. It's His promise to you."

The fourth or fifth week, I'm not sure which, the young man came screaming into the parking lot of the church yelling, "Pastor, you'll never believe what happened today. God worked a miracle!"

I said, "What's the miracle that He worked?" He said, "I got a promotion today. I should never have gotten it. There were others before me for this job, but I got it, and it's worth an extra hundred dollars a week to me."

I looked at this young man and said, "No, God didn't work the miracle for you today. You worked the miracle. God worked the miracle nearly 2,000 years ago when He sent His son to die for a sinful world. He didn't have to come and die again or suffer the shame of poverty again, that you might become rich. It was established in the covenant that He sealed with His blood. When you believed Him and took Him at His Word, this gave you the right to enter into the abundant life."

Excitedly, he asked, "Will this work on a continuous basis?" I said, "Yes, as long as you keep your heart right." He did. The couple own their own home today and he is on the managerial staff of the same company.

My friends, I am fully aware that if this is a New Testament principle that I have given you, then there must be an example in the New Covenant –

an example that is in plain view for all to see, and not just an obscure verse that can be twisted.

So, I conclude this chapter with the scripture Philippians 4:15-19. I believe that it will minister faith toward God into your life, and so much so, that you will begin to engage in the principle of sowing with the purpose of reaping a harvest for your family.

Philippians 4:15-19 (Amplified), “And you Philippians yourselves well know that in the early days of the Gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church (assembly) entered into partnership with me and opened up [a debit and credit] account in giving and receiving except you only.

For even in Thessalonica you sent [me contributions] for my needs, not only once but a second time.

Not that I seek or am eager for [your] gift, but I do seek and am eager for the fruit which increases to your credit – the harvest of blessing that is accumulating to your account.

But I have [you full payment] and more; I have everything I need and am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent me. {They are the] fragrant odor [of] an offering and sacrifice which God welcomes and in which He delights.

And my god will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Often I hear Christians quote verse 19 to other Christians who are having financial problems. Those who quote this promise, I believe, do have a genuine desire that this promise would come true for the person whom they have invoked this blessing over.

But be assured, friends, none of us have the right to say to a brother who is in need, “That my God will supply your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”, if they have not done what the Philippian church had done, and that is, to open up a credit and debit account with God. We only have the authority to confirm the Word of God, not change it!

Chapter Five

Understanding Reaping

“...and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.” ~ Ecclesiastes 11:4

The key verses of Scripture to the *principle of reaping* are as follows, *Hebrews 10:35-39 (Amplified)*, “Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward.

For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and full accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away [and enjoy to the full] what is promised.

For still a little while – a very little while – and the Coming One will come and He will not delay.

For the just shall live by faith [that is, My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him.

But our way is not that of those who draw back to eternal misery (perdition) and are utterly destroyed, but we are of those who believed – who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah – and by faith preserve the soul.”

Galatians 6:9 (Amplified), “And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint.”

In the above scriptures, the emphasis is on patience. Patience simply means “to be consistently the same”, no matter what natural circumstances dictate.

Satan will come in every which way possible to get you to lose patience. He’s quite aware of the scripture that says, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, and that person should not expect anything of the Lord.”

Friends, the world that we live in, especially in this generation, is made up of quick-service gas stations, microwave ovens and fast-food joints with “drive-thrus”. This world is so structured that it is difficult to exercise any patience at all. With all of our technology to make our lives easier, we still find it difficult to wait in line at Burger King or to wait for the washing machine to complete its cycle. It would be virtually impossible for this generation to go back forty years and then have to cope with the slower pace.

The fast pace of life that we are accustomed to does not make a good environment in which to learn patience. You see, patience cannot be taught in the same manner as faith can be taught. The Bible teaches that faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God.

However, you could sit through a hundred meetings and listen to a preacher teach on patience. At the end of the hundred meetings you would know everything was to possibly know about patience – in theory. You could even enter into long discussions on the subject of patience, or even teach others. And still, you would not have an ounce of patience in your life.

The Bible teaches that it is only by *tribulation* that you obtain a workable level of patience in your life. And patience is the much-needed ingredient that we need in our lives to harvest the fields that we have planted in the realm of the spirit.

A Personal Example

Let me give an example from a time when I was trying to teach my children this principle of patience as it relates to reaping.

When we left Australia to move to the United States, we sold all of our belongings. When we arrived here, we had no extra cash to buy the children the few special things that they had given up when we left Australia. On settling in Niagara Falls, the first thing they wanted was new bikes.

I sensed the advantage in this opportunity to teach my children to walk in faith and the principle of sowing and reaping. I was totally aware that if I were taken prematurely, for some reason, I would not have prepared them for life. They were vulnerable since they completely trusted in me for everything they needed.

As their father, my responsibility is to train them up in the ways of the Lord. This is not just sitting down at our family altar and teaching them a lot of theory. I have to teach them the principles of God by getting them into a workable truth in order to build genuine faith into their lives.

So when the boys came and asked, “Dad, can we get new bikes? Summer is only two months away.” I frankly replied, “We can’t afford to buy you new bikes, our budget won’t allow it. But, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We will believe God for you to get jobs, then you can save to buy your own bikes.”

They agreed and found jobs shoveling snow. But the most that they managed to save before the snow melted was ten dollars each. The bikes

were over one hundred dollars apiece. They invented a scheme! They came to me and said, “Dad, at this rate it will take years to be able to save to buy these bikes. Will you buy them for us and we will pay you back?” I informed my dear children, “That dog won’t hunt with me!”

“However”, I said, “There is a way for you to get your bikes sooner.” With great enthusiasm they cried, “How’s that?” I said, “You can sow that money you have saved up toward your bikes as a seed offering and trust God.” They said, “Honestly?” I assured them that this is what I would do in their situation.

The following Sunday we went to church. They put their envelopes into the offering plate and watched it go down the aisles. The looks on their face revealed the great difficulty that they were having with the principle that I was teaching them. They both looked up at me as if to say, “I don’t know about this, Dad, we worked hard for that money.”

The following week the boys came to talk with me, on edge because nothing had happened yet. Their voices revealed their doubt. They asked me, “When will God give us our bikes?” I assured them that it had nothing to do with me. It was between them and God.

Another week passed. The same thing happened. Another two weeks went by. They came to the conclusion that they had been had and it wasn’t long before they had forgotten their faith venture and went on with their lives.

Then, unexpectedly, one evening the telephone rang. A pastor who lived in upset New York called and asked, “Wayne, how many children do you have?”

I answered, “I have three.”

He was quiet for a moment. Then he asked, “How many sons?”

“I have two”, I responded.

After another brief silence he said, “You know, this is incredible. One of the young boys in our church had an impression that he believes was from God. He was impressed that we should buy each of your sons a bike. The children have been collecting cans and doing odd jobs and now have the money to buy the bikes. I just needed to check to find out if you have two sons who needed bikes.”

I said, “Yes, I do”, and proceeded to tell this pastor the whole story of how my sons had sown for new bikes. Incidentally, the two bikes that my sons received were the exact bikes that they had cut out of a catalog and stuck on the refrigerator.

Friends, my sons had done the will of God, and because they did His will, God saw and provided. Now, it took some time, but God who is

faithful, was building patience into their lives -- a virtue that needs to be built into all of our lives so that we may receive.

Recognizing Divine Supply

The next area concerning harvesting that I want to address is how to recognize the divine supply of God. To do this I want you to recall to your remembrance the story of Elijah and the widow woman who God supplied to provide for Elijah's needs. In this situation we will see a divine order of supply, in which God, in most cases, will take a need to minister to a need.

When God sent Elijah to Zarephath, He did not send him to one of the local millionaires who resided there. He sent him to a widow woman who had nothing except enough food for one last meal. If ever there was a woman in need of God's divine supply for her son and herself, this woman was in need. If ever there was a man in need of God's divine supply, Elijah was the man.

However, both had to forget who they were and what their needs were. Elijah, in the natural, would have found it extremely difficult to take the last morsel from the widow woman. The widow woman would have found it extremely difficult to give her last morsel of food, that she was going to prepare for her only son, to a man she did not know.

Just as patience is an extremely important ingredient for harvesting, so is obedience to the will of God. Often it is difficult to be obedient to God's will because it goes against all natural wisdom and reasoning. Imagine the advice that this woman would have received from her friends if she had asked their counsel on whether or not she should have sown the last of her food supply to a strange man. The same can be said about Elijah. Imagine the counsel he would have received from the wise ministerial leadership of the land about whether or not he should receive the offering of the last of the widow's supply.

Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

God's ways are not our ways! If we are to enter into the divine supply of God, we have to forget our shame and the embarrassment of receiving from someone who seemingly does not have enough to make it in their own lives.

I have seen many deny themselves of God's blessings in divine supply because of a false standard of ethics. They worry about what someone will say or think about them if they were to receive an offering from someone who is in need.

Let me illustrate this point again from my own experience. When God led my wife and I to move to New Zealand to train in ministry, He told us both, separately, exactly the type of car that He was going to supply for us. However, we had been in the country for some time, and we still had not received the car that He had promised.

I was ministering in several churches and in order to get to these churches, I was dependent on others to drive me to and from the meetings. Some days I would even have to walk to the church that was allowing us to base our ministry out of their building.

It was on one of these days when I walked to church a woman came into my office and offered me her son's car. She assured me that they had been praying about what to do with the car because he was moving to Australia to live and the Lord told them both to give the car to my wife and me.

Now, this was a nice car and so, with great excitement, I received the car, knowing in my heart this was not the car that God had promised us. "But, what the hey, God can change His mind if He wants to!" I said to myself.

I received the car and the first place I went with this beautiful machine was home to show it to my wife. I couldn't wait to see the look of surprise on her face. I pulled into the driveway, walked inside and asked her to cover her eyes and come see what the Lord had done.

However, when she saw the car she was horrified and said, "This is not the car God told us He would give us." I tried to reason with her by informing her that God is sovereign and He could change His mind if He wanted to. But, there was no moving her. She only said, "This is not the car, take it back."

In my heart of hearts, I knew she was right! I returned the car to a very irate woman and went back to walking. A while passed and one day as I was walking to the church I saw the car that God had promised us in a car lot. Faith immediately rose in my heart. I walked into the office and told the salesman to get the car ready; I would be back to pick it up that night. I don't know whether or not you have ever come under the power of the gift of faith. When it is on you, you can say or do anything. But after it leaves, great fear grabs hold of your mind. This is what happened to me. I left the car lot and by the time I walked to the church office, I was "a total wreck."

I said not one word to anyone. As a matter of fact, I was afraid to because the pastor of the church where I worked out of was a friend of the man who owned the car lot. I imagined the conversation that they would have and then the conversation that the pastor and I would have.

I sat in my office thinking about these things when an elderly Maori man, named Joe, came to see me. He sat down and told me that God had spoken to him to come and give me a certain amount of money. As I listened to him he handed me an envelope with a check in it. I opened the envelope and saw the amount written on the check. It was the exact amount that I needed to secure the car.

This time though, I was not so excited. I knew the money that Joe had handed me was money that he and several other people had been saving for years in order to buy a multipurpose bulldozer to work some family land. A mixture of shame and embarrassment filled my being. I did not want to take this money so I tried to get out of taking it by making several excuses about why he should not give it to me. But, nevertheless, he insisted that I take it.

I picked up the car from the dealer and I drove it home. When my wife saw the car, this time she was excited. At this point I became angry and told her how great a price this car really cost. Much to my surprise, she wasn't at all bothered. She simply said, "God will make it up to Joe." But this did not ease the shame I was feeling. When several pastors heard that I had taken the money from this poor, helpless, old man, they condemned me. This only added to my embarrassment.

I tried to ease my disturbed state of mind by telling myself that Joe would never have been able to save up enough money to buy the bulldozer anyhow.

Then one day, about two months later, I received an excited phone call from old Joe. This is how the conversation went: He told me that he was riding a train from one part of the North Island to the other (he was a guard on the railway), when suddenly the train made an unscheduled stop in a remote area. While the engineers worked to find out what was wrong with the train, Joe walked into the bushes to relieve himself. While in the bushes, lo and behold, right before his eyes stood a multipurpose bulldozer, the exact type that he had been saving to buy. As he stood looking at it, the Lord spoke to him and told him that it was his. He then climbed back onto the train.

When Joe arrived back in Auckland, he went to the engineer to ask him about the bulldozer. Joe was told that the dozer once belonged to a company that went bankrupt while they were working on the rail line. The engineer then asked Joe what his interest in the bulldozer was. When Joe explained why he wanted it the engineer told him that if the company had no claim to it, he could have it. A short time later it was delivered to Joe's property.

The whole moral to the story is this: if I had never allowed a man with a need to minister to my need, neither one of us would have had our needs met.

Friends, there are countless stories that I could tell you concerning the divine supply of God to reinforce the fact that sham and embarrassment can stop you from moving in obedience to the will of God in a situation – and that will prevent you from reaping the harvest of blessing that He has promised. But there is one thing that I can promise you: if you will exercise faith in the integrity of God and have patience in the fact that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, you will receive the promise that you have been standing on.

God bless you.