

Law Seven: We Can't Do Anything About Last Year's Harvest

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Law One: We Reap Only What Has Been Sown

Law Two: We Reap the Same in Kind as We Have Sown

Law Three: We Reap in a Different Season Than We Sow

Law Four: We Reap More Than We Sow

Law Five: We Reap in Proportion to What We Sow

Law Six: We Reap the Full Harvest of the Good only if We Persevere

Law Seven: We Can't Do Anything About Last Year's Harvest

THE SEVEN LAWS OF THE HARVEST

LAW SEVEN: WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT LAST YEAR'S HARVEST (BUT WE CAN ABOUT THIS YEAR'S)

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14

**Philippians 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

One of the more difficult life's lessons to learn is that we cannot live in the past.

We cannot endlessly ride the crests of past victories, neither should we allow ourselves to be weighted down by past defeats.

This doesn't mean that we ignore what has gone before us. We cannot do that.

Dr. Wilber Penfield, director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, said in a report to the Smithsonian Institute: Your brain contains a permanent record of your past that is like a single, continuous strip of moving film... The film library records your whole waking life from childhood on.

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You can relive those scenes from your past, one at a time ... [feeling] exactly the same emotions you did during the original experience.

Although the past cannot be erased, it must be "forgotten" in this sense:

We cannot allow past failures to keep us from experiencing God's best today. (1Tim. 1:12-13)

**1 Timothy 1:12-13 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**

We cannot use past success as an excuse for ignoring present responsibilities.

Henry Ford understood the former when he said that failure is the ***"opportunity to begin again, more intelligently."***

Similarly, success is just an invitation to continue more faithfully. Neither success nor failure is the end of the road.

How we handle our victories, and our defeats is important.

In this final lesson, we will concentrate primarily on past failures.

What are we to do when last year's harvest was not so good?

Our tendency is to let prior failure keep us from positive sowing today.

What we need to understand is that we cannot do anything about last year's harvest, but we can about this year's.

This law of the harvest contains three important concepts:

The past must be forgotten (as described above)
We must view failure from the right perspective
We must not judge our harvest by the world's standard of success

I. The Past Must Be Forgotten

Whatever was done last year, last month, or even yesterday is over and past.

1. Nothing we do today can in any way alter the record of what was sown yesterday.

a. Yesterday, with its mistakes and cares, has passed forever beyond our control.

b. All the money in the world cannot buy back a single yesterday.

c. We cannot undo a single act or call back a single word.

2. It is either worthy of praise or purging fire, but it cannot be erased or changed.

a. If our harvest was mostly negative, then wallowing in self-pity or allowing ourselves to be tortured by guilt will only cause us to fail again this year.

b. If we did use the opportunities that God gave us and were obedient to Him, we still cannot afford to take our ease.

We must forget what is behind us and reach forth for those things God has set before us.

In 1955, the New York Yankees chose 22-year-old John Malangone as the probable replacement for veteran catcher Yogi Berra.

John never made it. Though he could throw a ball from home plate and hit the left field fence 368 feet away with a solid pop and had consistently batted over 300 through the minor leagues, **John had a handicap he couldn't overcome – his past.**

When John was five years old his best friend was his Uncle Orlando, age seven. The two were inseparable.

One day John, Orlando, and some other boys made a makeshift javelin out of a broom handle and an old umbrella spoke.

A pile of sand was the target. When John's turn came, he hurled the javelin farther than anyone thought he could.

It sailed past the sand pile and struck his Uncle Orlando in the head. His family thought, "He's only five. He'll forget everything if no one says a word."

John never forgot. The scene haunted his every waking moment and often tortured him through his dreams at night, for John believed he had murdered his Uncle Orlando.

That belief was literally driving John crazy. His behavior became unpredictable, and often embarrassing. After repeated stints in the minor leagues, John was finally cut from the Yankees in 1959.

For the next 32 years, John remained a prisoner of his past. He drank. He worked two full-time jobs so he would have less free time to remember.

Then, in 1991, with the help of friend Ron Weiss, John faced his past. He spoke of the accident for the first time with his 80 year-old mother.

He looked up the death certificate and read the medical examiner's report: the contributing cause of death was "Accidental."

A week later, John told Ron, "I wanna play ball with a clear mind, for the first time in my life."

The two joined a New Jersey league for men over 40. John's strong arm and accuracy won him a job as a pitcher.

In 1994, they were playing in the Roy Hobbs World Series. **John won two games** on the mound and singled home Ron for the run that won their team the national title. (Sports Illustrated; October 13, 1997; pages 114-132)

John's past kept him from the positive things he could have obtained. His freedom came through "forgetting" what lay behind and reaching forth for those things that were before.

I. The Past Must Be Forgotten

II. We Must View Failure From the Right Perspective

All men fail, even Christians.

1. There is a difference, however, between failing and being a failure.

a. Failing is a condition that can be changed.

b. Being a failure means that I believe there is something wrong with me that cannot be changed.

2. When a person believes he is a failure, or that his defeats (evil sowing) forever ruin his chances for success, it keeps him from the good things God has for him.

Failure serves a function: to remind us of the source of our sufficiency.

1. We learn by failing and sinning that we cannot trust ourselves. See Jeremiah 10:23

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

2. When faced with the hard reality of our own inadequacy, it demonstrates our need of total dependence upon God.

a. Through confessing our failures, we receive God's forgiveness. 1 John 1:9

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

b. By resting in the fact of our forgiveness, we free ourselves to experience the transforming work of God's grace. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:28-29

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

c. By forgetting the past, we can press on for the future with renewed dependence upon God's sufficiency.

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14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

I. The Past Must Be Forgotten

II. We Must View Failure From the Right Perspective

III. We Must Not Judge Our Harvest by the World's Standard of Success

The world's definition of success is getting what you want out of life.

1. Typically, people measure success by who they know, what they possess, or what they have done.

Someone has defined success as "**being able to hire someone to mow the lawn while you play golf for exercise.**"

2. By the world's standard, success is equal to achievement and accolades.

God defines success in terms of dependency.

1. Success comes from being faithful to God's call – yielding our lives to Him, following His will, and trusting Him with the results.

Clarence Jordan was a man of unusual abilities and commitment. He had multiple Ph.D's.

Many prestigious positions were available to him, but in the 1940s, he founded a farm in Georgia.

It was a Christian community for poor whites and poor blacks. Such an idea did not go over well in the Deep South of the 1940s.

The local people tried everything to stop Clarence. They tried boycotting him and slashing his workers' tires when they came to town.

For fourteen years, they continued their opposition.

Finally, in 1954, the Ku Klux Klan decided they had had enough of Clarence Jordan.

They came one night with guns and torches and set fire to every building on his farm except his home.

His house they riddled with bullets. They chased off all the families except one black family that refused to leave.

The next day, the local reporter came out to see what remained of the farm. The rubble still smoldered, and the land was scorched, but he found Clarence in the field, hoeing and planting.

"I heard the awful news," he called to Clarence, "and I came out to do a story on the tragedy of your farm closing."

Clarence just kept on hoeing and planting. The reporter kept prodding and poking, trying to get a rise from this quietly determined man who was planting instead of packing his bags.

Finally, the reporter said in a haughty voice, "Well, Dr. Jordan, you got two of them Ph.D's and you've put fourteen years into this farm, and there's nothing left of it at all. Just how successful do you think you've been?"

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Clarence stopped hoeing, turned toward the reporter with his penetrating blue eyes, and said quietly but firmly,

"About as successful as the cross.

Sir, I don't think you understand us.

What we are about is not success **but faithfulness."**

Beginning that day, Clarence and his companions rebuilt, and the farm is going strong today. (Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel, 1987, Word Books Publisher, Page 188-189)

2. We can possess none of the world's standards of success, and yet be successful in the eyes of God **if we have been faithful.**

Faithfulness affects every relationship we have. The Bible says it is a gift from God.

When we receive Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit indwells us and brings the blessings of love, joy, peace, and faithfulness

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

The fullness of these blessings depends on walking with God and yielding to His Spirit. We should be faithful to read and abide by God's Word and to seek the Lord in prayer

Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

² But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Ephesians 6:18 ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The Old Testament taught that **“the just will live by faith”**

(Habakkuk 2:4 ⁴ Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

and that truth is quoted, amplified and illuminated three times in the New Testament.

We obtain that faith, and our faithfulness, by the grace of God.

He is faithful to His children, and by His grace we will one day hear the words,

“Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Matthew 25:23 ²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

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