

Lesson 105: The Principle of Sowing & Reaping

It is said in the Scriptures that “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7, KJV). Unfortunately, the reaping can manifest as undesirable consequences that are sometimes difficult to overcome. Some undesirable manifestations can last a short time, whereas others can last for years and in some cases, an undesirable manifestation can last a lifetime. Therefore, paying close attention to the seeds you are sowing today will be well worth the effort when it comes time to reap the consequences. Reaping whatsoever a man sows and then suffering the consequences is a cognitive ditch of error best avoided by understanding how the principle of sowing and reaping operates on the mental plane. Thus, the discussion in this lesson will focus on the many fundamental aspects of sowing and reaping as a means to avoid undesirable consequences that can adversely affect your reality, as well as that of others.

As thoughts, especially those with intent, do materialize when acted on, it is the action that follows the thought, as well as the thought itself that can cause you to fall into mental ditches of error from which you will incur the wrath of the inevitable consequences reaped that you did not necessarily intend to manifest in your reality. As the scripture, quoted above, stated that whatsoever you sow, that shall you also reap, Buddhist psychology takes the principle of sowing and reaping a step further by describing four potential consequences that may or may not be desirable as the result of thought, which is the first cause of all the effects that follow afterwards:

*Sow a thought and reap an act
Sow an act and reap a habit
Sow a habit and reap a character
Sow a character and reap a destiny*

Examining the fundamental aspect of sowing and reaping from this perspective opens your mental door to a more meaningful way of thinking. When you are engaged in a state of “right mindfulness” with “right intention” this cognitive state of mind will predispose an act that otherwise would reap an unwanted consequence in your reality that ultimately becomes a destiny. When you are mindful of your own thoughts, you are much more aware that as you sow a thought that you intend to act on, the thought not only reaps an act, it also reaps a consequence, which may or may not be desirable. Such mindfulness not only affords you an opportunity to reconsider your thoughts, as well as how you are likely to act in response to your thoughts, but to be mindful of the quality of your thoughts too. The quality of your thoughts is worth examining because they serve as a predictor of a future behavior and thus future experiences. This is so because the quality of your thoughts involves “right view, right speech, right effort and right concentration,” all of which leads to “right action.” Thus, the means of avoiding unproductive action is to examine the quality of your thoughts before they reap an unproductive act and thus a destiny. When a thought corresponds to a predominant mindset or is a thought pushed with intent because a particular outcome is desired or the thought is in response to an adverse situation, the thought will reap a predictable

act, and depending on the quality of the thought, it will produce a desired or undesired result. Repetitive thoughts and their subsequent actions will inevitably reap a beneficial or non-beneficial habit. The habit itself intertwines with neural processes, which means that every time a similar situation arises in your reality, a corresponding neural profile in the brain activates, thus the more that same neural profile activates, the more the thought and its action habituate. Hence, you keep falling into the same ditch of mental error over and over and no one person, place or thing did this to you.

Reaping a character is a very important fundamental operation of sowing and reaping with respect to the type of character reaped that may or may not be a trait you really want to possess, which too intertwines with the same neural processes that not only affects behavior, but is also a predictor of your future behaviors. To avoid falling into character related ditches of mental error is to be mindful of the kind of character traits you are reaping, not just as the result of habituated behavior patterns, but also by the actions you take as the result of the kind of thought patterns you are inclined too. Introspection is the key to examining your thought patterns as a means to discover why you are prone to such cognitive patterns in the first place. If they are problematic to the extent that they continually manifest consequences that are not the least bit desirable or beneficial, these self-destructive thought patterns are well worth the investment of your time and effort to investigate the cause of them, especially because they do relate to your expectations that may in turn be realistic or unrealistic. There are many effective approaches that can help you unravel the layers of your thought patterns and the ways you are inclined to act and react to your thoughts, which of course, has everything to do with the behaviors you may be habitually exhibiting and perhaps don't know why. Self-introspection is indeed a good place to begin the unraveling process to reveal any mental or emotional obstacles that are acting as hindrances to developing character traits that are not adversely affecting your reality that are also setting up your expectations.

The resulting destiny, reaped as the result of thoughts, acts, habits and character traits are indeed pre-determined and are so with respect to cause and effect. Your thoughts are the first cause; your actions are the effects of your thoughts, which in turn are both the cause and effect of the making of your habits that in turn develop into specific character traits, which ultimately reap a destiny, manifested in your reality as a desired or undesired consequence. To say that because an undesirable situation manifested in your reality that it was your destiny and therefore, your cross to bear is an inaccurate statement, as well as a disabling belief. A radical change in your thinking, if necessary will eliminate the mental limitations of this disabling belief, as the consequence manifested in your reality was not your destiny per se, but became your destiny in response to your own thoughts and actions, which are the mental basis for what becomes a pre-determined destiny. Therefore, when you put the cart where it belongs, which is behind the horse and not in front of it, you can begin to look at destiny a little differently and see it for what it really is and not what it appears to be. The bottom line is that every thought you act on, as well as the quality of the thought will reap a habit, a character and finally a destiny.

You will always reap exactly what you sow because sowing and reaping are a fundamental operation of the Law of Cause and Effect, as well as the Law of

Manifestation, among other natural universal laws that govern the plane of human behavior, including attraction. However, there is another aspect of sowing and reaping that cannot be overlooked because it has everything to do with what is in your heart, which of course connects to the quality of your thoughts, actions, habits and character, as well as your destiny. To this extent, the Scripture is clear, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7, KJV). Just as your character is the sum of all your thoughts, the kind of thoughts you hold in your heart as truths manifest as your reality, as duality does not exist on the human plane anymore than it exists in nature. For example, if your heart is hardened, your thoughts will likewise manifest the truths you hold in your heart that, of course, correspond to the nature of your hardened thoughts and that same hardness, by way of governing principles, will manifest in your reality in exact measure. As these thoughts and the quality of them are contained in your heart, you are both the maker and master of your own reality in accordance with your actions, habits and character, as one builds on the other, which do indeed manifest a like-kind destiny.

In Buddhism, as well as in Christianity, the greatest worth is that of self-mastery. But how you sense or experience this highest level of worth and self-mastery is not something that is achieved externally. It is an internal state of mind and heart that can only be transcended by a mindful awareness that you are indeed the master of your own thoughts and that your thoughts, over time shapes and molds your actions, your habits, your character and consequently, your destiny. When you are mindful of the fact that you are the master of your own destiny, you will act and react differently and you will begin to shape and mold new habits that are worthy, which over time and with practice will lead to higher levels of self-mastery. If you are willing to look deep within yourself, you will find that the keys to self-mastery are contained within you; however, such a search requires honest self-examination, reflection and introspection, not avoidance nor an attitude of blame.

When you reflect on the quality of your thoughts from an introspective and reflective state of mind, you can trace the effects of your thoughts and the impact of them in your reality. However, you should not attempt to trace back every thought you have ever had to see how they did or did not adversely affect your experiences in the past. Not only would such an undertaking be psychologically overwhelming, it would also be very defeating, as you are likely to encounter a fair amount of mental self-resistance and even self-opposition. Unfortunately, the dominant thought patterns you are acting on today are the cumulative result of all your past thoughts and actions, as well as the subsequent character traits developed along the way that are indeed shaping and molding your current reality, which of course, is shaping and molding your future destiny. It is important to note that you are not likely to encounter one ultimate destiny in the course of your life, but that you will encounter many a destiny that will unfold along the path of your life. However, each destiny encountered will always be in response to the nature of your own thoughts and actions, regardless of any external influences, as adverse as they may be. Even when these influences threaten to undermine your personal world in some respect and even appear to do just that, no person, place or thing can ever permanently disable your power to think. However, in as much as you are empowered to think, the ability to think with clarity can be overridden by strong emotions,

especially when faced with a stressful or very undesirable situation. The Buddhist based philosophy/psychology of non-attachment can become a very powerful tool that will sustain your mental and emotional well-being, even through the worst of times, if you can cognitively process non-attachment.

The human concept of mental and emotional attachment, while it constitutes the overall human experience, leads to many personal and social problems. By the nature of being human, it is very easy to become attached to people, places and things and of course, the moment any one of these attachments are threatened in some manner of speaking, there typically is a strong emotional reaction, which ultimately makes separation from someone, someplace or something that much harder to overcome. Thus, mental empowerment is lost to the expression of strong emotions, which all by itself creates mayhem where mayhem does not really need to occur, but does so because there was a break in the attachment. The situation, now compounded, is even more difficult to overcome the undesirable effects, especially when further agitated by even more negative thought patterns, actions and reactions that can quickly become habitual. If such a situation arises in your life, it truly does leave no one at the helm capable of clarified thought, consequently, chaos is the result. Needless to say, the situation at hand will remain chaotic until you can get a grip on your emotions, otherwise you will not be able to think with clarity, which is key to dissolving the chaos. Here again, is an example of just exactly how thought patterns reap overt actions and how repetitious thoughts and actions reap habitual reactions that in turn reap character, which in the end reaps an undesirable destiny. Over time, the sowing and reaping process becomes a mental and emotional cycle of never ending undesirable causes and effects. This ongoing cycle hinders your cognitive ability to apply the psychological principles of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path of right mindfulness with right intention along with the right view and the right speech, right effort, right concentration and inevitably right action and even right livelihood where and when it applies.

There is never a time when the external conditions of your life do not match your internal conditions, harmoniously or inharmoniously, depending on the state of your internal mental and emotional condition. Therefore, the seeds you sow will always be proportionate to the experience you will eventually reap, whether the effect occurs now or at some unexpected time in the future. As time and space are influencing factors, these factors should not be taken lightly nor should they ever be disregarded. Just because you sowed a seed in the past, but did not suffer the consequences immediately does not mean you will escape the law of cause and effect. Somewhere along the path of your life, the effect will manifest and will do so either subtly or blatantly. The problem is not relative to the consequence that manifested, but rather it is relative to the fact that over time not only do you lose track of time, you also lose track of the seeds sown. Then when the undesirable effect finally shows up in your life, it catches you off guard, leaving you to wonder why this undesirable thing has occurred in your reality, and then question what you did to deserve it. Thus, tracing back your own thought patterns answers the why did this thing happen question. Some effects can be traced back to a specific thought or thought pattern that led to a specific action or reaction, regardless of whether or not the thought or the action was habitual. However, not all effects are easily traced back to their specific causes, especially when they manifest much later in life.

Because it can be difficult to trace every effect back to its original cause, it is well worth the effort to think clearly before acting in the first place. This is how you can avoid reaping unworthy acts, habits, character and consequently, reap an undesirable destiny.

As undesirable encounters experienced in the past or in the present are not failures, they should not be measured or evaluated as failures, anymore than you should be embittered by your experiences, as an attitude of embitterment will not set the cognitive record straight nor will it bring about any internal healing. If anything, an attitude of failure or embitterment will only bring about more internal unrest, which will become your predominant state of mind. Consequently, this self-defeating state of mind will reflect itself in the seeds you sow now and in the future, which will just keep manifesting more of the same undesirable experiences, as like does attract like and thoughts really do become manifested things. Either you will continue to feel like a failure or you will become that much more embittered, the thoughts of which remains connected to your heart and thus your reality will epitomize the contents of your heart.

When reflecting on your undesirable experiences, it is important to remember that each of those experiences were temporary at best, although they may have felt as though they were going to last a lifetime. As the winds of change closed the doors to those experiences, the same energetic winds open the doors to new experiences. However, whether you learned from those experiences at the time they occurred or not, you can still learn valuable information – a kind of personal feedback, though it might be more biased than not. The idea is to filter through any personal biases that relates to thoughts, beliefs, perceptions or expectations, as this is the path to revealing the truths about those experiences, which in turn will affect your current experiences and can also safeguard your future experiences, but only to the extent that you can filter your own biases. As the principle of sowing and reaping is relative to the nature of your thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and expectations, the biases you form with respect to these internal influences will indeed shape and mold your reality and are the very catalyst from which you will either sow positive or negative seeds and, therefore, will reap the consequences.

There are various philosophical, psychological, scientific and even religious schools of thought, both Eastern and Western, that take similar approaches to the principle of sowing and reaping and, of course, the consequences thereof. However, there are also holistic approaches proclaiming that their holistic or spiritual magical wands will eradicate the undesirable effects of all past causes without giving thought to the internal mechanisms that created both the causes and the effects to begin with and promise to do so without an ounce of cognitive effort, which is very misleading. The Bible states: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...” (Hosea 4:6, KJV). It is clear that the rejection of knowledge serves no valid purpose and that ultimately; knowledge is the key to avoiding the pitfalls encountered from sowing the kind of thought seeds that will reap an act, a habit, a character and consequently will reap an unwanted or undesirable destiny. Not only is knowledge the antidote to self-destruction, it is also the key to mental and emotional liberation, which in turn eradicates the false mindset of failure and dissolves embitterment and most definitely fear. Without knowledge, cognitive processes would

be limited at best, as would be the personal empowerment to effect positive changes in your reality.

As there are both external and internal factors that over time form thought patterns, nonetheless, these self-defeating thought patterns can be identified, changed or altered regardless of how they were formed and even why. This is accomplished by way of cognitive processes, which enables existing thought patterns to evolve into positive patterns of thinking. As these evolving thought patterns affect internal changes, the affects become visible externally to the extent that a change in thinking sows seeds that reap desirable consequences, as opposed to relying on holistic magical wands that may only amount to short-term forms of relief. The fact that thought patterns are intricately connected to neural and cellular processes, the awareness of this scientific knowledge should serve as a mental and emotional initiative to preserve one's state of mind in order to maintain a neural, biological, physiological and psychological state of ongoing equilibrium. These are very important aspects of your well-being that cannot be attained and maintained without some effort on your part. There simply are no shortcuts, potions or magical wands that can assure the longevity of your mental and emotional well-being. Well-being is a state of mind that you chose to be cognitively mindful of every single day or not.

This is not to say that cognitive processes need to be difficult, but it is to say that the process is relative to the complexity of the thought patterns that are embedded in your subconscious mind, as well as in your conscious mind, which over time have shaped and molded your reality. Thus, the more complex and deeply embedded your thought patterns are, the more effort it will take to unravel the tightly woven threads. If you seek professional help, such as psychotherapy or cognitive behavior therapy or any other therapeutic modality, administered by a licensed practitioner or therapist who is trained in the ways of objective observation and assessment, you must be willing to commit the time and effort needed if you wish to see desirable results. If you seek a more holistic approach, keep in mind that there are many holistic healing modalities and so-called spiritual healing methods that promise instant gratification without effort. Needless to say, there are also countless holistic gurus claiming that their healing modality is "the one" when in fact it is one of countless others also laying claim to the very same quick fixes, of which there are none.

Every secular, holistic or spiritual healing modality worthy of investing your time, effort and financial resources stands on the principle, now proven by scientific fact, that unless you are willing to make internal changes, i.e. change your thoughts – change your life - there really is no other means of changing anything in your reality. Changing your reality begins with your thought patterns that reaps an act, which reaps a habit that reaps a character and inevitably reaps a destiny, desired or undesired. To change your destiny, just as it is right now, is to change how you think, because without a change in your thinking, you cannot expect to feel or express your emotions in a non-reactive way that will not wreak havoc in your life and perhaps in the lives of others. There are biological and neural processes that affect your emotions with respect to how the brain feeds and even generates emotions, thus knowledge about these matters too also

empowers you to reconsider the state of your emotions and the importance of keeping them in balance.

You may have noticed the omission of the words good or bad as they pertain to the kind of seeds sown, whether in your past or present reality. To say that you sowed good or bad seeds relates to your level of awareness, which affects the way you evaluate your experiences, past or present, as well as how you evaluate your future experiences. To say then, that you sowed bad seed in the past and have suffered the apparent consequences is to inflict a form of unnecessary self-punishment rather than granting yourself perhaps much needed mercy and self-kindness with respect to the level of your awareness and degree of knowledge at the time those seeds were sown and perhaps are still being sown. But as the level of your awareness increases, the seeds you sow are proportional to the increase of your knowledge, which of course, corresponds to the increased level of your awareness. This is why it is always unproductive to blame yourself or others for any perceived shortcomings or perceived wrong doings. Every decision you act on are choices you make relative to the degree of your understanding in accordance with how you cognitively process internal stimuli and external influences. Although certain circumstances and events will always occur in your life in response to the choices others make that cannot help but to affect your reality or even natural causes, your most current level of awareness will always correspond to the seeds you continue to sow that will likewise affect your current and future reality in desirable or undesirable ways. The means by which you evaluate the seeds you sow will always correspond with your thoughts, feelings and emotions, as well as your beliefs, perceptions and expectations. In addition, the seeds you have sown in the past have played a role in shaping and molding your most current thought patterns. Thus, the role you play as the maker and master of your life's experiences – in response to the circumstances and events that play out in your life are all interconnected. Although others play a role in shaping your reality, it is really you who has the final word every time you respond to external influences, which you do by way of your own internal processes. Ultimately, no matter how things play out in your life, you are always empowered to change the course of any influences, whether they are your own internal influences or they are the result of external influences. Not only are you the captain of your own ship, you are empowered to take control of the helm and steer your ship into the safety of the harbor by way of your thoughts, which serves as your compass.

In closing, we hope that we have not only brought the principle of sowing and reaping to your attention, but that we have done so in a way that will cause you to rethink just how this principle is at work shaping and molding your own reality. With increased awareness comes the empowerment to sow seeds that will manifest right thought, right action, right habit, and right character and above all, right destiny. Knowledge is empowering! As always, please feel free to share your thoughts and comments.

Many Blessing,
Linda, Z and the Collective We

