

How Does Your Garden Grow?

If We
Don't
Sow

Galatians 6:7

70075



Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps *what* he sows.

Special Music: "The Garden Song" David Mallett

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1oiVEWFHrs>

The Sower

God rolled out the land
Laid it at my feet and said,
“This is yours.
Provide the toil
And Till the soil
Plant the seed
And root the tree.
By sweat of brow
Each hanging bough
Will nourish you
And keep you fed.”

I stood my ground
And did as bade
I placed my spade into the dirt
I turned the mud
Amidst the flood
Planted seeds
And roots of trees
Through heat and cold
Watched the land unfold
And with the yield
My stomach filled
With nourishment
Which kept me fed.

I gazed beyond my crop
And noted with a single thought
The thistles growing at the edge.
Without the care of a tender hand
They flourished in the desert sand
Without a drink
Their roots still slinked
Beneath the ground
Purchase found
Thriving in the baking sun
Not willing to be outdone
By the stature of my farm
In all their wicked, wildly charms
Absurdly savage
Completely free.

Jealous, I stood
And viewed the vines
Standing stately without the work
I gave this all a careful thought
And then the thought became, "Why Not?
I'll just plant weeds
And thistle seeds
I won't have to nourish
And they will flourish
Leaving me time and fun
To frolic and enjoy the sun.
That is truly how to be.

And so, I planted thistles
And seeds of weeds
Tossed about so carelessly
And watched them claim
The earth that I worked so hard to tame.
And thrive they did
Without my care
As I engaged my
Laissez Faire,
Came time to reap
My soul asleep,
I realized to my chagrin
That I really didn't win.
There is no nourishment in thistles,
Weeds meet no needs
I had raised up a fool's garden
And I starved.

Farming is a hard life. Being an independent farmer is even harder. You truly have to love farming to be a farmer. Think about these things:

- 1. A farmer's day begins before sunrise**
- 2. A farmer's day doesn't end until after sunset**
- 3. Even with modern irrigation techniques, a farmer is still at the mercy of the weather.**
- 4. A farmer is caught in an endless financial loop. He must plant, in order to harvest. He must get enough financial gain from that harvest for his family to live on, buy seed and fertilizer for the next crop, as well as purchase and maintain the equipment that is necessary for his work.**
- 5. He must be a skilled craftsman in order to keep things repaired.**
- 6. He has to have the skills of a plumber, carpenter, mechanic, horticulturist, and engineer.**
- 7. He has to be able to make focused decisions with regards to what to plant, the conditions for planting, the chemistry of the soil, and also be a prognosticator regarding the commodities market a year in advance in order to be able to stay afloat.**
- 8. It truly helps to be a skilled welder.**
- 9. He has to be skilled in the care of animals.**
- 10. He has to be fearless.**
- 11. Hard work has to be his mantra.**
- 12. He has to keep his body in shape physically because of all the demands placed upon it.**

And even with all those tools, he still faces great odds, each and every year, that he will be able remain financially above water. Farming is beyond hard work and you really have to be dedicated to it be willing to subject yourself and your family to such conditions.

But I want you know that the farmers that I know personally, would have it no other way. It is the life that they have chosen, and they love every moment of it. It is in their blood and if they were unable to farm, they simply would not know what to do with themselves. It is definitely a calling and a lifestyle choice.

A farmer's world is built around faith. Faith is integral to their being. Much of the cynicism of the world today is lost on them. With so many unknowns and questions, they embrace God's promises in their lives. I cannot say that for each and every farmer, but the farmers that I know have a trust in their heavenly father that is seldom matched by any other profession, including ministers.

A good farmer plants intentionally. He prepares the soil so that it is right mixture for what he is planting. And yes, we should not ignore the fact that a farmer does not plant one thing expecting to reap something different. He doesn't plant carrots planning to reap cotton or plant watermelons expecting to reap wheat. And once something is planted, it is nurtured as intended until it is reaped. A farmer can't change his mind mid-process.

The Bible talks a lot about the intentionality of the farmer. Mostly because the best analogy for the life pleasing to God is the life of a farmer. Listen to these verses:

Hosea 10:12

**Sow with a view to righteousness,
Reap in accordance with kindness;
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.**

Ecclesiastes 11:4

He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.

Psalm 97:14

**Light is sown like seed for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart.**

James 3:18

And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

And then, of course, there is the parable of the sower where some of the seeds fell on the path, some on the rocky ground, some among the thorns and some on good soil.

All of these passages are using the farmer to explain that this is how the Word of God is sown among the nations, and why it sometimes fails to find fallow ground. The sowing of the Word has to be intentional. It cannot be passive. That passage in **Ecclesiastes 11:4** really hits home with me.

He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.

This is all about how we often are waiting for the perfect time to sow the seeds of the Word of God. We want the winds and the clouds to be just right to optimize our sowing. This is why we often never get around to the sowing, because we are waiting for the conditions to be perfect.

It is simply too easy for us to procrastinate waiting on perfect conditions. I give you a gold dollar each week to give away. You truly don't have to wait for the perfect moment. When you do give the coin away, I will have another waiting for you on Sunday. You simply will never be able to out give God's abundance.

When we get paralyzed in our sowing by either our fear or by waiting for just the right moment, we often end up not sowing at all. We cannot reap what has not been sown. We can't reap cotton if we planted corn. We can't reap joy if we plant discontent. We can't reap mercy if we plant injustice. We can't reap anything that will nourish us if we fail to plant anything at all. We can only reap what is sown. And, sometimes, we plant the weeds of selfishness and self-destruction and when we reap those weeds, we find no purchase for our souls, only sadness and hardship.

I'm sure that you know this, but I am going to say it anyway. It is a whole lot easier to grow weeds than to grow vegetables. But growing weeds will never meet our or anyone else's needs. Growing weeds will actually do us and everyone around us, harm. It's so much easier to grow thistles than to grow fruit trees. But we can't nourish ourselves by eating thistles and neither can the people around us.

So yes, it takes work to grow the right crops. And sometimes that work is very hard. Sometimes we have to keep plowing even when it's raining. Sometimes we have to pull weeds and remove rocks, even when the temperature reaches 110 degrees. Sometimes we have to reap when our fingers are calloused and bloody or our body is screaming with pain. Sometimes we have to go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, feed others before we feed ourselves, pray for our enemies, and

give thanks in the midst of being terrified. Farming is hard work. Spreading the Gospel is hard work. Loving people can be hard work.

But Christ calls us all to be farmers for God's Word. And yes, we often have to step outside our comfort zone to do be those farmers. When God asks us to do something outside of our comfort zone, we need to avoid falling prey to knee jerk reactions. "God would never ask me to do that." "That's simply not within my skill set." "God would never ask me to talk to someone like that, because it makes me too uncomfortable." What we should be doing is saying, "God, I am your farmer. You tell me what to plant and where to plant it and I will go there and do it. I trust that You will provide for me, as well as provide me with the skills and materials that are needed to accomplish Your will."

Jesus in our example of the farmer that God wants us to be. Even in His darkest moments, Jesus was planting and harvesting. Even on the cross, He was planting seeds and harvesting souls, just like the thief dying beside Him.

All too often we stand in the middle of the field that God has given us, our bag full of righteous seed, our ground prepared for planting and because of our fear we freeze in our tracks waiting for the perfect moment to sow those seed. All kinds of thoughts run through our heads. "Are we truly ready to do this? Is there anything we have forgotten? What if I don't have enough seeds? Spreading

these seeds takes commitment. I can't turn back once I start sowing. What if I fail? What if there isn't enough rain? What if there isn't enough sun? What if there is too much rain or sun?"

And so, we stand there with our hands in our pockets debating with ourselves, trying to work up the courage to do what is expected of us. Trying to resolve the fear to the point that we are able to make a commitment.

There are times when I am staring at the computer screen and the words just won't come. I know that I have to write the sermon, work on the newsletter, work on the bulletin, make telephone calls and 50 million other things and I just can't make a move. It happens to everyone. It usually occurs when I feel overwhelmed and have to set some priorities, and I find myself too afraid to even set those priorities for fear that I will get them wrong or let something fall through the cracks. I'm sure you have times like that as well. It is part of being human.

But I have found that the problem is temporary. God always comes to my rescue and helps me feel less overwhelmed, which allows me to set those priorities. And as that happens, the floodgates open, the words start to flow, I'm able to make those phone calls and manage to get it all done. All because God is always going to provide me with what I need to complete His work, and I am confident in that promise.

We are all called to sow the seeds of God's word. We are all given the tools that we need to do sow. They are not always the same tools. Like the Paul's letter to the Romans tells us in chapter 12

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;

8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, or to provide for others do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

We are not all the same and we are not all wearing the same utility belt. God gives us the gifts that best suit our nature and our purpose to complete His will. No one gift is greater than another. We need to use the gifts that we are given, or they serve no purpose. If we are not planting the good seeds of God in the fields that He has given us, nothing is going to grow, and we will be unable to feed ourselves or those around us.

God sees your garden. He sees what we have planted and what we have not planted. He knows when we have taken the easy road and He knows when we have leaned into Him and allowed Him to guide us and give us confidence. He also knows when we freeze indecisively in our tracks.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps *what* he sows.

What happens when we don't sow? Nobody reaps. What a sad state our garden will be in if we choose not to sow. How glorious our garden will be if we allow God to work through us and plant the seeds that He wants us to plant. That is a harvest we can all look forward to.

AMEN

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