

# How Does Your Garden Grow?

*Reaping  
What Others  
Sow*

1 Corinthians 3:6  
John 4:37

*70075*



## 1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV)

**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it *grow*.**

## John 4:37 (NIV)

**Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.**

**Special Music: "Planting Seeds" India's Maya Musical with Nimo Patel**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x60RnpN8bTg>

## THE APPLE

Eleven-year-old Johnathan liked the walk from the bus stop to his house. It wasn't that far of a walk on the old country dirt road, just a little over a mile. This was like any other day, with the sun shining, a gentle breeze in the air and shade from the trees almost all the way home. But today, he decided to do something a little different. He decided to take a short cut through Doc Johnson's apple orchard.

He hopped the fence and took a minute to admire the apples trees, all planted in straight rows. Doc Johnson took excellent care of his orchard. He had already harvested the apple crop for this season, but Johnathan could see stray apples hanging from limbs here and there.

He puckered up his lips and started to whistle as he sauntered through the orchard. Occasionally, he would hide behind one of the trees pretending to be a spy. Then he would do-si-do in between the trees in step to his whistling.

Then he saw it. Up ahead of him. Hanging low on the tree. The brightest, most beautiful red apple he had ever seen. He took a bee line straight for it. When he found himself right under the apple, he realized that it was just out of his reach. He tried to jump up to it but could only touch it with his fingertips. Then he took ten steps back and with a whoosh, he took a flying leap towards the apple. And missed. He hit the ground hard and did several summersaults before coming to a stop.

Next to one of the trees was an old apple crate with a hole in it, which was probably why it had been discarded. Johnathan grabbed the crate and placed it upside down under the apple and then used the crate as a stool. He climbed onto the crate, balanced himself, and found he could easily reach the apple. Plucking it from the branch gave him a feeling of elation and accomplishment.

Jonathan stood on that crate for a moment, then polished the apple with his shirt. He could actually see his reflection in the red dappled skin of the apple. Unable to contain himself any longer, he took a large bite, juices running down his chin and shirt. It was better than delicious. Cool, fresh, sweet.

It was about then that he realized that he wasn't alone. Not more than ten feet away stood Doc Johnson. Johnathan didn't know what to say and was grateful when the good doctor spoke first. "Come here, boy. Aren't you John Talbert's son?"

"Yes, sir," Johnathan replied, minding his manners like his mama had taught him.

"That's a mighty-fine looking apple in your hand."

"Yes sir, it sure is." Replied Johnathan saying it in the same way as when he got his hand caught in the cookie jar.

"Well, boy, what makes you think you can take my apples?"

"I'm sorry, Dr. Johnson," the boy stammered. "I knew you had already completed your harvest. I watched your workers last week. It looked like you had a great

harvest this year. I just figured that whatever was left, you didn't want," the boy said nervously.

"I want you to think about this son. Did you plant the apple tree? Did you nurture it and water it? Did you take time to chase off the birds? For what reason do you think that that apple in your hand belongs to you?"

"I really am sorry, sir. I truly didn't think you would mind. Can I pay you for the apple? I don't have much, but maybe I can work it off?"

The boy waited patiently for Doc Johnson's reply and when it finally came, it was not at all what he expected. The man smiled at the boy. "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.' That's from the Bible young man. Matthew 12:1."

The doctor continued, "You see, son, while the lesson being taught in this scripture is about working on the Sabbath, it doesn't change the truth that the disciples picked and ate grain that didn't belong to them."

"But it wasn't theirs to take!" the boy stammered. "Isn't that wrong? Just like I shouldn't have taken the apple."

"God provides for us in many ways, Johnathan. He blessed me with an overabundance in apples this year and it isn't even my primary source of income. I will always have more than I need. I didn't plant these trees either. My great grandfather did. And if my father had not continued to nourish and care for them, they wouldn't be here today for us to enjoy the fruit that they bear. There are

plenty of apples left. Here's a bag. Why don't you pick as many as you like and share them with your family and friends?"

"Gee, Dr. Johnson, that is mighty kind of you. I really appreciate it. And I know my folks and friends will be grateful as well." The smile on the boy's face was a magnificent gift to the old doctor's eyes.

As Johnathan picked his way through the orchard, filling up his sack with ripe fruit, all he could think about was that maybe Doc Johnson should have been a preacher.

I have to tell on myself a little here. When I was an extremely young boy and living in Okinawa with my parents and sister, I did a very bad thing. I was about four years old. To be honest with you, I don't even remember the incident, but my mother used to regale her friends with the story. I wish she was still with us and could tell me the story again. All over Okinawa there were farmers, and the farmers were often their own vendors as well. They pushed carts of vegetables, fruits, rice, and whatever else they could grow, and would sell them to the military families on the base. As my mother told it, there was an old farmer with a cart full of apples. When my mother wasn't looking, I took one of those apples without paying for it and started eating it. My mother was furious when she discovered what I had done. Beyond my regular punishment, she made me do extra chores and save up enough money so that when we returned to the market, I could pay the farmer for that apple. Today, I understand that there are no wealthy farmers in Okinawa. All of them are poor. Though the vendor would probably have given me the apple, and my mother could certainly have paid for the apple, she let me know how wrong it was to take from the poor. Still, at the age of four, I was probably an equal opportunity shop lifter, not caring whether the vendor was rich or poor. In her story, we returned to farmer the next month and I paid for the apple. I guess I learned my lesson because I never did it again.

Think back in your life to see if you can remember a time when you reaped what someone else sowed. It is sometimes easy to forget that something that comes into our hands without cost, has been paid for by someone else's hard work. It's

human nature to be less appreciative of something that we don't have to work for. That doesn't mean that whatever it is less valuable, just that we don't necessarily give it the value that it deserves.

Think about public school teachers. Teachers work hard to meet the requirements for teaching, and then they need to maintain their credentials and any other requirements that are added to it. They are under constant scrutiny and evaluation by both administrators and parents. They are then expected to instill a thirst for knowledge in their students, while teaching them the skills that they need to excel in the world. They work long hours for very little pay. This last year has been extraordinarily hard for teachers everywhere as they have had to teach virtually, and in person, and sometime a hybrid of both. In order to continue in their jobs, they have to love what they do. They pay the price for their student's benefit. They are expected to buy many of their own supplies. Teachers are often taken for granted. But teachers should be praised because they grow and nurture their gardens so that others will benefit. And just like a farmer, they love what they do and consider it a calling.

Many parents work hard in order to have enough money to send their kids to college. And yes, I know that there are a lot of people who put themselves through college as well. But I have found that those who paid for their own

college often appreciate their degrees more than those who had to pay for by someone else.

Let's talk for a moment about what Paul is saying in our scripture today:

**1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV)**

**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it *grow*.**

Paul planted at least fourteen churches that we know about. There may have been more. Paul would come into a town like Corinth and start preaching. Some of that preaching fell on good, rich soil. People found a relationship with Jesus Christ and with Paul's help, they learned how to meet and work as a united community for Christ. They often met in someone's home.

You need to think about the fact that Paul wasn't able to give them Bibles. There was no church staff to run bulletins. The worship times that they shared were very unstructured for the most part. No one knew how to "do church." The church in Jerusalem was trying to develop this notion of elders and deacons but there were no preset standards. Each community had to find their own way and what worked for them.

Paul would stick around long enough to help them get started, teaching them about the life and lessons of Christ, in order to give them a firm foundation. But



he needed others to come up behind him and provide leadership when he God called Him to move on to the next town. In the case of Corinth, that person was Apollos.

Now let's tie some things together that we have talked about before. Apollos was an itinerant preacher who was a follower of John the Baptist. Apollos had worked with the church in Ephesus and they had sent him to the church in Corinth with a letter of introduction.

We talked last year about Priscilla and Aquilla, the couple who traveled with Paul for a time. They were in Corinth when Apollos arrived and they had to take him aside at one point and gently help him with his theology. Apollos was a great student and became a great minister, teacher, and preacher.

It is Apollos who stays with the church in Corinth to help grow the believers there. That is what Paul is talking about when he says:

**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.**

The congregation in Corinth reaped the harvest of what Paul has sown and Apollos has nurtured. Paul is emphasizing that although he led those early believers into the formation of the church at Corinth, Apollos nurtured what Paul had sown. And God is the one responsible for making it grow. Paul is pointing out that, although he and Apollos provided the labor, without God to make the church grow, it would all have been for naught. It would have died on the vine.

**That is still the way it is with churches today. There are those who specialize in starting churches. There are those who specialize in nurturing churches. And there is God who makes the church to grow spiritually and physically.**

**I do not stand in this pulpit alone. I am well aware of those ministers and congregants that came before me and that together we form a composite of this church we see today. We are the sum of our parts. And none of those parts mean anything without the presence of God. And this congregation is a wonderful fragrance to God. This church rises and falls on the will of God and no one else. We are simply here to do our part, lead by the Holy Spirit.**

**The second scripture for today's message is spoken by Jesus in John 4:37**

**Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.**

**Jesus is quoting a Hebrew saying here. It's kind of like saying "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" or "Killing two birds with one stone." It's simply some wisdom in the form of a kind of proverb, passed from one generation to the next.**

**Jesus is explaining that the sower and the harvester may be two different people. But both should be glad at the time of the harvest, because they share in the fruits that God has grown. When a person is led into an abundant relationship**

with Christ, it is seldom just about the person that brings the message. The entire congregation is in celebration and provides teaching and support for the new Christian. And through this process, the church, as well as the new believer, grows. The abundance of the harvest is shared by all. But we always take into account that while someone shares the message and others provide the nurturing, it is God that provides the growth and the harvest.

I want to share one more beautiful example of this process because tomorrow is Memorial Day. Some people confuse it with Veteran's Day. Everyone knows that I have a deep appreciation and a grateful heart for all of our veterans, but tomorrow is a day that has been set aside for celebrating the memory and the sacrifice of those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom here in the United States. It's not about hamburgers, hot dogs, and lemonade. It's not about fanfare. It is a day for being solemn as we remember those who have gone before us to ensure that our nation remains a nation of liberty and justice.

Those soldiers, sailors, and airmen who gave their lives, paid the price up front for us to enjoy our freedom. Their families paid an enormous cost as well. There have been more than 1,354,000 US In-Service Personnel related deaths in the history of the United States. These valiant men and women planted the garden and our veterans, past, present, and future nurture that garden. We reap what they have sown and nourished.

Several years back, I had the opportunity to visit Arlington National Cemetery. It is both a glorious and solemn experience, rich with a plethora of mixed emotions. It is awe inspiring and so very beautiful. It is also a reminder to all of us, of the great cost of our freedom that so many of us take for granted. The experience is humbling. I feel that every American should feel the obligation and the have the opportunity to experience all that Arlington National Cemetery has to offer.

There were two perspectives in our story today. Young Jonathan was able to experience reaping value from what someone else had sown. And it was awesome for him as he was able to collect apples for his family and friends.

Then there was Doc Johnson who was able to provide Johnathan the ability to reap what he had not sown. He was able to do this out of his abundance knowing that it was God had been the provider for the harvest.

I want us all to understand that we have done nothing to reap the harvest of love, grace, and mercy that God has heaped upon us. He gives us love, grace, and mercy out of His own abundance, bought and paid for with the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. There is nothing that we can do to earn it. It is not based on our past, present or future. It doesn't matter what we have or haven't

**done. All God asks in return is that we believe. And if we believe, we not only will reap that harvest of love, grace and mercy, we will also share that abundance with others without constraint. That is what happens when you reap what others sow.**

**AMEN**

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