

Sowing Well

I grew up in a small town in North Eastern Ohio. My parents moved from the city to an 80 acre farm when I was only 5 years old. We did not know much about farming, but the friendly farmers around us took time out of their busy schedule to teach us a few tricks of the trade. Living and working on the farm was truly an adventure. I would never change it for the world. Every year we would plant a huge garden. I did my share of complaining when it was time to pull weeds, but all the work seemed worth it when it was time to feast on the fruits of our labor. There is nothing like fresh vegetables from the garden. I still remember taking the salt shaker out to the garden and eating cucumbers and tomatoes straight off the vine. At the time, I thought that having a garden was a relatively easy endeavor, except for the weeding part.

Fast forward to today. I have my own garden, although on a much smaller scale. And I am learning that reaping a good harvest is not as easy as I once thought. One of the things that I took for granted as a child, was rich soil. We had plenty of fertilizer from the cow manure which we spread on the garden every spring. We also had a huge plow that cut deep into the soil to loosen it so that the root systems of the plants could grow strong. My parents also had the cumulative effect of continually working the soil year after year. As a kid, I just figured soil was soil.

So, I am learning. If I want the joys of a good harvest, I am going to have to put in the effort long before harvest. There is really no way around this. If I do not sow well, I will not reap well. In the same way, our lives and the lives of our children are like a garden. If we sow well, we will also reap well. But if we sow poorly, or not at all, we will only reap the weeds of destruction. The Bible says it this way, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Sowing is work, whether it be in the garden or in our lives. Because it is difficult and we do not see immediate results our tendency is to become lazy and slack off. The end result is that we do not bear much fruit. Let me give just a few examples where I have been challenged to sow well.

Let's begin with our devotion to know and obey God's Word. Jesus is clear that apart from him, we can do nothing of true value. And it is by feeding upon his Word that we abide in him. If we want to reap the fruit of a good character, we must read and study and meditate upon God's Word daily. And we must become doers of the Word and not hearers only. Reading books and magazines or going fishing will not have the effect that we want. We must sow well in the Bible.

Husbands and wives, we must sow well in our marriages. If we continually sow such things as criticism and harsh words, we will reap divorce or at best a marriage devoid of any true love. But if we sow with words and actions of kindness to one another, then we will in due time reap a good marriage. Husbands, sowing well means pursuing your wife more than your hobbies. It means turning off the TV and going outside after the kids are bed and talking under the stars, listening to her concerns. Wives, sowing well means honoring your husband and looking to him to be the leader of your home. Sowing well means forgiveness and not holding grudges. It means going on dates after the honeymoon is over.

Parents, we must sow well into our children. We must work the soil of their hearts. Sowing well means time spent with them. But it means much more than this. It also means teaching them to respect authority, by faithfully disciplining them. Telling them “no” and then failing to follow up with consistent discipline is sowing seeds of trouble down the road. We cannot expect to see good fruit produced in our children when we only see them for a couple of hours each day and that is watching them at some sporting event or extra-curricular activity. We must take time with them as a family: eating meals at home together, talking around the table about the things which God is teaching us, going for walks as a family, singing hymns together in worship of God.

Nothing in life is easy. The grace that comes to us in Jesus Christ comes to us freely, but it doesn't make life easy. That power of God works in us to enable us to sow well, not to make it so that we do not have to sow at all. Young people especially, learn the lesson early that if you live each moment to please your own desires, you will reap a harvest of destruction. But the promise is also true: If you, by the Spirit, sow well, you will reap a good harvest, both in this life and for eternity.