

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

What is the law of sowing and reaping?

A) Paul said in his letter to the Galatians: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary” (Galatians 6:7–9, NASB).

B) This passage teaches that each of us is a “sower” who will reap a harvest of his own planting. If you sow to the Spirit, you will reap a harvest of blessing. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap a harvest of sorrow and adversity.

C) Ignorance of the law of sowing and reaping lies behind such trite phrases as, “We all have to sow a few wild oats,” or “Oh, go ahead, God will forgive you.” The world is full of heartbroken “reapers” who thought they could sow one thing and reap another. All too often comes the anguished cry, “Why didn’t someone tell me about reaping? Tell everyone it’s not worth it!”

What does it mean to sow to the Spirit?

A) The immediate context of Galatians 6 gives several examples of sowing to the Spirit. When you bear another’s burdens, you are sowing to the Spirit (6:2). When you financially support teachers of God’s Word, you are sowing to the Spirit (6:6).

B) The larger context of the book of Galatians teaches us other ways to sow to the Spirit. Obedience to Scripture is sowing to the Spirit. Expressing Christ-like attitudes is sowing to the Spirit. Manifesting love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control is to sow to the Spirit (5:22–23). To be led by the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit is sowing to the Spirit (5:16, 25).

C) When you choose to forgive and not harbor resentful feelings, you are sowing to the Spirit. When you bring your imagination and thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ, you are sowing to the Spirit (2 Corinthians 10:3–5). When you refuse to tell something negative about another person (even though it is true!), you are sowing to the Spirit. Every time you speak the truth, honor your word, pay your bills, offer praise to God for His goodness, you are sowing to the Spirit.

What does it mean to sow to the flesh?

A) Paul lists many practices that illustrate sowing to the flesh—adultery, sexual impurity, indecency, sensuality, involvement with the occult, hatred, quarrels, fits of temper, selfish ambition, dissension, envy, drunkenness, and carousing (Galatians 5:19–21). Sowing to the flesh begins in the mind. Every time you hold a grudge, entertain an

impure fantasy, wallow in self-pity, speak ill of another person, or fail to carry out your responsibilities, you are sowing to the flesh. To be self-centered, critical of others, or envious of others is sowing to the flesh (Galatians 5:15, 26).

(1) As a parent, you can sow a critical spirit within your children by finding fault with others. When your children grow up and begin to criticize you and reject your values, consider that you are reaping what you sowed.

What are the ultimate results of reaping what we sow?

A) Paul states that if you sow to the flesh, you “will from the flesh reap corruption.” The word “corruption” signifies the moral decay that ultimately leads to eternal death in Hell. If you sow to the Spirit, you “will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” The essence of eternal life is to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ His Son (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11). As believers, we will enjoy this relationship throughout eternity on the New Earth.

B) The Christian is not exempt from the law of sowing and reaping—there will be reaping in this present life: some sins lead to disease, some sins lead to imprisonment, and some sins permanently destroy marriages and families. But the good news is that God has graciously pardoned you from the penalty of eternal death, and He wants you to begin sowing to the Spirit! God forgives sin, and He deals with His children in love. Even when He chastens us, He does so in order to bring us back into a right relationship with Him (Hebrews 12:9–12).

What are some principles of the law of sowing and reaping?

A) You reap what you sow.

(1) If you sow wheat, you will reap wheat. If you sow a kindness, you will reap a kindness. If you sow a lie, a quarrel, or a slander, you will reap the same. The warning, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap,” should make you very careful of what you sow.

(2) Jacob deceived his father Isaac and stole his brother Esau’s blessing. Years later, Jacob reaped this deceit when his own sons convinced him that Joseph was dead (compare Genesis 27:9–29 with Genesis 37:31–35). Jacob’s heart was broken and he mourned the loss of his son. Without knowing the cause-effect relationship, he was reaping what he had sowed!

(3) Paul persecuted many Christians before his own conversion. He later reaped great persecution for the Gospel of Christ (Acts 9:16; 2 Corinthians 11:23–27). Consider the connection between Paul’s role in Stephen’s stoning and the time Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 7:58; 14:19).

B) You reap in a different season than you sow.

(1) Notice that Galatians 6:7 starts by saying, “Do not be deceived.” Why does Paul begin with this warning? The answer is found in the fact that your reaping does not come immediately after you sow. Because of this, you can be deceived into thinking that the reaping will not come. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil” (NASB). If you could see the long-term results of your choices, you would always sow to the Spirit.

(2) The harvest comes in God’s time—His appointed season. An example of this is seen in God’s judgment of Israel. They failed to obey the Sabbatical year law which required rest for the land every seventh year (Exodus 23:10–11). The people thought God’s lack of immediate judgment proved that God didn’t really care whether or not they planted crops on the Sabbatical year. They failed, however, to reckon with the nature of God: He does not lie. Whatever is sown will be reaped, and Israel spent one year in captivity for every year they ignored God’s command—a total of 70 years! (2 Chronicles 36:20–21).

C) You reap more than you sow.

(1) In agriculture, this law of surplus is what makes sowing worthwhile. For every kernel of corn planted, the farmer hopes to gain at least one ear of corn bearing many kernels. In the spiritual realm, this law also holds true. Hosea 8:7 warns, “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” There is a chain reaction that takes place when you do wrong.

(2) In the Old Testament, consider the story of Achan who disregarded the official ban placed on the spoils of Jericho. Thinking no one would know, he stole a robe, some silver and some gold. What was the result? In the next battle, 36 innocent men lost their lives (Joshua 7:1, 5–26). What happened to Achan? He and his entire family were executed, and all his possessions were burned with fire. He sowed the wind, and he reaped the whirlwind!

D) You reap in proportion to how you sow.

(1) Although you always reap more than you sow, your reaping is determined by the quantity of your sowing. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:6, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (NASB). If a person sows one acre of wheat, he will receive what one acre can produce. However, if he sows 100 acres of wheat, he will receive what 100 acres can produce. This principle operates both positively and negatively. The more you sow to the Spirit, the more you will reap the blessings of a righteous harvest. The more you sow to the flesh, the more you will reap the sorrow of an unrighteous harvest. This principle shows us why it is better to be saved early rather than late in life.

E) You reap what others have sown.

- (1) If you stop and think about it, you will realize that you have reaped things that you didn't sow. Some of us are reaping the benefits of godly Christian parents. Some of us are reaping sorrow and heartbreak because our parents sowed to the flesh. Joshua and Caleb spent almost 40 years wandering in the desert because of the other spies' rebellion and lack of trust in God (read about this story in Numbers 13–14).
- (2) It is especially important for fathers to understand this principle. God explicitly warns fathers four times that their sins will be visited upon their children unto the third and fourth generations (Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9; Jeremiah 32:18). This means that the consequences of your sins will affect not just yourself but also your descendants. If you wish to have godly children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, do not sow to the flesh—sow to the Spirit!
- (3) David coveted his neighbor's wife, committed adultery, lied about it and then murdered Uriah in an attempt to conceal his sin (2 Samuel 11:2–21). David's confession and forgiveness (Psalm 51) did not stop the harvest. We read in 2 Samuel 12:10–14: "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.' Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die'" (NASB).

What are some implications of the law of sowing and reaping?

- A) What you are tomorrow depends on what you do today. Right now you are making choices that will affect the rest of your life. It is imperative that you sow the seeds of obedience. In the future, they will bloom into a harvest of righteousness, not just for you, but also for your children and grandchildren. As the saying goes, "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."
- B) It's easy to become discouraged in doing good. The harvest often seems a long way off. But you must remind yourself of the importance of perseverance. God promises that you will reap if you don't give up.
- C) Those in positions of influence are targeted by Satan because their sowing has the ability to touch many people. Be sure to keep them in your prayers!