

**“Sowing & Reaping God’s Word”
Isaiah 55:10, 11; John 4:37**

Big Idea – Sharing the Good News means sowing seeds of God’s Word.

Luke 8:4 One day Jesus told a story to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him:

5 “A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it.

6 Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture.

7 Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants.

8 Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!” When he had said this, he called out, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

Luke 8:11 “This is what the story means: The seed is God’s Word.

12 The seed that fell beside the road is like the people who hear God’s Word but the devil comes and takes it away from them so they cannot believe it and be saved.

13 The seed that fell on rock is like those who hear God’s Word and accept it gladly, but they don’t allow the teaching to go deep into their lives. They believe for a while, but when trouble comes, they give up.

14 The seed that fell among the thorny weeds is like those who hear God’s Word, but they let the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life keep them from growing and producing good fruit.

15 And the seed that fell on the good ground is like those who hear God’s Word with good, honest hearts and obey it and patiently produce good fruit.”

Isaiah 55:8 “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

10 “The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to

water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry.

11 It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

Note these principles of sowing and reaping God's Word

1. The power is in the "seed" (the Word)

The "Word of God" has always been capable of influencing people, accomplishing its intended purpose

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Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Heb 4:12 says it is both "alive and powerful" now look what verse 13 says in the Message,

Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing and no one is impervious to God's Word. We can't get away from it—no matter what."

Note what Paul said about the gospel of Christ, the "power of God unto salvation"

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

If people are going to be truly converted, it will not be through smooth speech or fancy presentations involving "hi-tech" equipment, but through the life-changing truth of the gospel. We can certainly use modern aids to present the gospel, but we must make sure that they are faithfully communicating the Word.

True conversion (which involves a spiritual regeneration) will occur only if we plant the proper "seed."

What are some practical ways to sow seeds of God's Word?

Gospel tracts – small leaflets given out or put in bill envelopes or bulletin boards

Gospels of John – Pocket Testament League has a great variety

Social media – post Bible verses on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

Word of mouth – quote them in conversations

But even when we plant the proper seed, we often do not see the desired results. Understanding the reason why, helps one to maintain the right perspective...

2. The results depend upon the type of soil

In the Parable of The Sower, we see that the same seed, when sown, produced different results. One result was no reaction whatsoever. Two others had only temporary success. Only one out of the four resulted in bearing fruit! Where does the blame lie?

- Upon the SEED? No!
- Upon the SOWER? No!
- Upon the TYPE OF SOIL? Yes!

This illustrates where the area of responsibility lies. The SOWER fulfills his responsibility by sowing the seed (Eze 3:17-19). The prophet says if you “warn the wicked you have delivered your soul”

If the SOIL rejects the seed, the soil is responsible; the sower should not feel accountable

Matthew 10:14 “If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave.

15 I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.”

Acts 13:44 “The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord.

45 But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles.”

The positive implication is this: Every time we sow the seed, we are successful! If a person rejects it, we have not failed, they have!

What is the significance of this perspective of evangelism? We need to learn the JOY of sharing the Word for its own sake! There is joy in sharing Christ with others (we've got GOOD NEWS!), whether or not people accept Him (we are glad to serve our Lord in this way!).

Be like JEREMIAH...who at first made excuses (Jer 1:6), but as he fed upon the Word found great joy

Jeremiah 15:16 When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies.

So much so, that when ridiculed for speaking, he first tried to refrain, but found that he just couldn't keep it in

Jeremiah 20:9 Sometimes I say to myself, "I will forget about the LORD. I will not speak anymore in his name." But then his message becomes like a burning fire inside me, deep within my bones. I get tired of trying to hold it inside of me, and finally, I cannot hold it in.

10 I hear many people whispering about me: "Terror on every side! Tell on him! Let's tell the rulers about him." My friends are all just waiting for me to make some mistake. They are saying, "Maybe we can trick him so we can defeat him and pay him back."

11 But the LORD is with me like a strong warrior, so those who are chasing me will trip and fall; they will not defeat me. They will be ashamed because they have failed, and their shame will never be forgotten.

Another significance of this principle concerns our GOALS. They should center on how many are being TAUGHT, NOT CONVERTED! Too often, we make the number of conversions the measure of success or even faithfulness on the part of the teacher. But even the most faithful teachers may find themselves in circumstances like JEREMIAH or JESUS, where very few people gave heed to their message. Shall we count them failures? Rather, let us count them faithful, if they have faithfully sowed the seed!

Closely related to all this is the next perspective...

3. The sower is merely a "seed-thrower" and water-boy

1 Corinthians 3:6 "I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow.

7 It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow.

8 The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work."

One may plant the seed, another may water, but it is GOD (through His Word in a receptive heart) Who gives the increase! Because of this, there is no place for boasting about numbers of people being converted.

But there is another significance to this. God can even use "DEFECTIVE" seed-throwers

Philippians 1:15 "It is true that some preach about Christ because they are jealous and ambitious, but others preach about Christ because they want to help.
16 They preach because they have love, and they know that God gave me the work of defending the Good News.
17 But the others preach about Christ for selfish and wrong reasons, wanting to make trouble for me in prison.
18 But it doesn't matter. The important thing is that in every way, whether for right or wrong reasons, they are preaching about Christ. So I am happy, and I will continue to be happy."

Not only defective in MOTIVE (as seen in the text), but also in EXPERIENCE!
This is because the POWER is in the SEED, not the SOWER!

Therefore we should not feel like we have to be an accomplished salesman to present the Gospel. Even those who tremble and may not be eloquent can be used by the Lord to reach others

1 Corinthians 2:1 "Dear brothers and sisters, when I came to you, I did not come preaching God's secret with fancy words or a show of human wisdom.
2 I decided that while I was with you I would forget about everything except Jesus Christ and his death on the cross.
3 So when I came to you, I was weak and fearful and trembling.
4 My teaching and preaching were not with words of human wisdom that persuade people but with proof of the power that the Spirit gives.
5 This was so that your faith would be in God's power and not in human wisdom."

4. In sowing and reaping, often one sows and another reaps

Winning souls involves both "sowing" and "reaping." Jesus used these terms in talking to His disciples as recorded in Jn 4:35-38. Exactly what is the difference between "sowing" and "reaping?"

Sowing is the work necessary to one day being able to reap! In agriculture, sowing involves preparing the soil and planting the seed. In winning souls to Christ, sowing likewise involves preparation and planting:

Where hearts are being prepared for the reception of the gospel by prayer
Where the hearts are first introduced to the gospel and its principles by walking & talking the Christian life.

Reaping is the actual "harvesting" of what has been sown. In agriculture, reaping is the collection of the fruits which have produced by the sowing.

In winning souls, reaping is that harvesting which occurs when souls who have had the Word planted in their hearts decide to obey it!

What is important to appreciate is the statement quoted by Jesus in Jn 4:37, "One sows and another reaps."

Those who sow do not always witness the reaping that may one day occur. And many times those who reap are benefiting from the efforts of those who did the sowing before them. In evangelism, this means that oftentimes you will be sowing the seed and it may appear that you are not getting any results. But some time later those souls you were trying to reach may decide to finally obey the gospel and another Christian may actually do the reaping in your place! Then again, there will be times when people just sort of "fall into your lap," ready and anxious to obey the gospel with little effort on your part. In this case, you are reaping what others have sown!

The point to keep in mind is that evangelism involves both "sowing" and "reaping," and there will be times when what you sow will be reaped by someone else. Let this be an encouragement to you when it appears that you are not reaping as you would hope. You might actually be making it much easier for some brother or sister in the future!

The problem with many people is wrong perspectives and negative attitudes. That translates into failure, no matter what the task is at hand.

The person who looks for quick results in the seed planting will be disappointed. If I want potatoes for dinner tomorrow, it will do me little good to plant them in my garden tonight. There are long stretches of darkness and invisibility and silence that separate planting and reaping. During the stretches of waiting, there is cultivating and weeding and nurturing and planting still other seeds.

Size of the harvest depends on amount of seeds sown.

2 Corinthians 9:6 "Remember this: The person who plants a little will have a small harvest, but the person who plants a lot will have a big harvest."

- In SALES, the ratio of success is often one sale out of nine calls.
- In ACTING, the ratio can be as high as one job out of thirty auditions, even for successful actors.
- In THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER, only one out of four produced favorable results.

Successful people in different walks of life understand that the key to success is to increase the number of their efforts. The conclusion for us is obvious: If we desire to REAP more, we must be willing to SOW more! Many people fail in the area of evangelism because they "sow sparingly" and get discouraged by the meager results.