

Sow to Grow

Have you ever thought of yourself as a farmer? Well, you're a farmer of sorts if you've ever engaged in any kind of lawn care.

A little-known fact is that grass is the most grown crop in America. And as any good farmer knows, you have to sow the right seed to get the right crop. You wouldn't go down to the local lawn and garden store and come back with a bag of Kentucky bluegrass seed and a bag of crabgrass seed, now would you? That would just be WRONG.

Why is that? Because sowing has a purpose, and the purpose is to grow. We don't want to **seed to weed**, we want to **sow to grow**.

God is the **Great Sower**. All seed and all life originate with Him.

Genesis 1:11:

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth."
And it was so.

Genesis 3:15 (KJV):

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

God is also the **Great Grower**.

1 Corinthians 3:6,7:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

We may plant, we may water, but only God can make it grow. We'll reap an abundant harvest when we partner with the *Great Sower* and the *Great Grower*.

So, like our heavenly Father, we are to be *sowers* and *growers*.

However, there is also a **thief** who has his own designs on our crop. He's the one who:

- Sows weeds to choke out the good seed;
- Scatters the seed on the bare earth where it's exposed and gets devoured;
- Blows the seed onto stony ground where it can't root and grow.

One of the primary ways the thief endeavors to thwart our harvest is by *sowing thoughts* in our minds that can produce no fruit, but only barrenness. We need to recognize the kind of thoughts we are sowing in our hearts and minds so that we can:

Sow to grow, which involves:

- Cultivating godly thoughts, allowing them to take root;
- Uprooting ungodly thoughts.

Matthew 15:13:

He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.

We may not be able to dictate each and every thought that shows up at the doorstep of our minds, but we certainly can usher out any undesirable ones. That is the beauty of the free will that God gave us!

To illustrate how we can take charge and sow the right thoughts in our minds, I'd like to share a natural phenomenon with you as an object lesson.

Have you ever seen a quadruple-decker bird's nest? I haven't either. But long ago I saw a cross-sectional photograph of one, and the image has stayed with me for years.

A yellow warbler – a slight bird, about the size of a sparrow – built a nest in a tree fork, and a brown-headed cowbird – a larger bird, about the size of a bluebird – came and laid one of its own eggs in the warbler's nest. The warbler, recognizing the invasion, abandoned its first clutch and promptly built another nest right on top of it. Unfortunately, the cowbird kept coming back; but the warbler was undeterred and kept right on adding stories to the little skyscraper.

At that point a bird photographer who had discovered it and recognized what was going on, decided to document the incident by removing enough nest material from one side so that the four clutches of eggs were each exposed to the camera for all to see. The picture looked like this: amazing!

What I've just described to you is an example of a phenomenon called *brood parasitism*. What's that, you say? Let's define terms:

- A *brood* is the progeny of a nesting bird.
- A *parasite* is a creature (in this instance, a bird) that lives off another of a different species, called the *host*.

A *brood parasite*, instead of raising its own young, lays its eggs in other birds' (the *hosts*') nests so that the host will end up feeding the parasite's young in their place.

Not all host species recognize the ploy. Those who do may break or toss the egg, or abandon the clutch or the nest. In our story, the yellow warbler was the *host*; the brown-headed cowbird, the *brood parasite*.

What the host species needs to do is to recognize that the foreign egg – and once it's hatched, the foreign chick – is a threat to the host's own progeny, aiming to beat them in the quest to be fed by the host parents and possibly smothering, crushing or shoving them out of the nest. The brood parasite's objective, on the other hand, is for their little interloper to become the victor, and the native chicks the victims.

So what can this phenomenon teach us about sowing the right thoughts? If you think of:

- The nest as your *mind*;
- The eggs as your *thoughts*; and
- The brood of hatched chicks as your *character*,

I believe you can start to see a mind picture emerging.

Like the mother warbler, we are the guardians of our nest, our eggs, and our brood. We are the guardians of our *mind*, our *thoughts*, and our *character*, not the hosts for a parasite.

In like manner, when we sow thoughts in our minds, we *sow to grow*, refusing to entertain thoughts that are unproductive or unfruitful. It may take some work, but the work has its due reward.

James 3:18:

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Sowing the thoughts of God's Word in our minds yields a harvest of righteousness and great peace in our lives.

To develop this further, I'd like to share a poem I wrote called:

Sow to Grow

God sows.
The thief blows.
God feeds.
The thief plants weeds.
God blesses.
The thief messes.
To reap and not blow,
Sow to grow!

And now, we'll take that poem apart in stages, scripturally.

God Sows

Hosea 2:20-23:

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.

“And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord,
I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth,

and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel [meaning, “God sows” – God is the Source of all harvest],

and I will sow her [Israel] for myself in the land.
And I will have mercy on No Mercy,
and I will say to Not My People, You are my people’;
and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

The Thief Blows

Hosea 8:7:

For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it.

God Feeds

Matthew 6:26:

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

The Thief Plants Weeds

Matthew 13:27,28a:

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'

He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

God Blesses

Psalms 107:35-38:

He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.

And there he lets the hungry dwell,
and they establish a city to live in;

they sow fields and plant vineyards
and get a fruitful yield.

By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their livestock diminish.

The Thief Messes

Haggai 1:5,6,9:

Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.

You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

To Reap and Not Blow

Galatians 6:7,8:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he 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.

Sow to Grow!

Psalm 1:1-6:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not
wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind
drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the
way of the wicked will perish.

To close today, I'd like to share an anonymous quote on the
subject of character from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*.

Sow a thought, and you reap an act.
Sow an act, and you reap a habit.
Sow a habit, and you reap a character.
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

The joy is all ours to share with the Father as we **sow to grow!**