

## The Principle of Sowing and Reaping 2 Corinthians 9:5–11 (ESV)

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION:** History is filled with a number of radical, global, paradigm shifting discoveries. One such paradigm shift occurred in July of 1687, when Sir Isaac Newton published “Principia Mathematica”. A section of that work called “Discourse concerning Gravity and its Properties,” was read to the Royal Society on April 21, 1686, in preparation for the publication of the book.



Newton suggested that there are certain MATHEMATICAL PRINCIPLES that properly understood could unleash a myriad of possibilities.

Gravity was one such principle. Newton’s Principle of Gravity produced precepts that effect our lives on a daily basis.

**ILLUSTRATION:** *Gravity* is a principle that is properly understood made thousands of precepts possible, Flight, Tidal system, Seasons, and Space Exploration could be understood because the Principle of Gravity was codified.

The Core Reality is the Principle  
The Emerging Implications are the Precepts

Well in just as there are SCIENTIFIC principles and precepts, there are also SPIRITUAL principles and precepts. They are powerful, they are eternal, they are predictable.

NOW -

- Was the Principle of Gravity in effect before the apple fell on Newton’s head? Of course!
- If Newton had never understood the principle of gravity would it still be in effect?
- If Newton didn’t believe in the principle of gravity would it still be true?
- Does gravity work for people who do not understand it, or believe in it?



Well in the same way - there are Spiritual Principles that are woven into life that are true whether you ever know them or understand them.

They are true whether or not you believe them.

They are in effect regardless of your belief, understanding, or practice.

- **PRECEPTS** are the commands or rules of scripture - “thus saith the Lord”, “Thou shalt”, or “Thou shalt not”. Sadly, most christians see the Bible as a list of rules.

**PRINCIPLE**

AN ETERNAL REALITY OR PRIMARY TRUTH

- But behind every precept is a larger and more powerful **PRINCIPLE**. A Principle is a primary truth from which precepts emerge.

**PRECEPT**

A RULE OR LAW THAT EMERGES FROM A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF A PRINCIPLE

The Bible is filled with PRINCIPLES that God is bound by His very nature to honor. Early in my life, I focused on the PRECEPTS. What are the clear cut, non negotiable laws that we better not violate. But as I’ve gotten older, my focus has shifted to not only preaching PRECEPTS, but also understanding and communicating PRINCIPLES behind them.

**EVANGELISM** - BTW, this is a powerful evangelism tool. Suppose a non-christian comes to church here or listens to our sermons online or on the radio... the sermon may share a PRINCIPLE about family, or finances, or work. The unbeliever gives it a shot, they try out the principles... and guess what! IT WORKS. Remember, that is the nature of principles, they work whether you understand them and believe them or not. Well, when the unbeliever discovers that we have access to a few principles they were not aware of and those principles work... they want to know more... and ultimately they discover the ultimate principle in the PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.

NOW - a Principle I want to teach you today is found in **2 Corinthians 9:5–11 (ESV)**

**CONTEXT:** Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and as he concludes the letter he says a few words about generosity.

**TEXT: 2 Corinthians 9:5–11 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for **the gift you have promised**, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

Now remember - context is King. The Principle that the Apostle Paul is about to unpack is related to a FINANCIAL GIFT TO FURTHER THE MISSION OF CHRST.

<sup>6</sup> The point is this: ***whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.***

Now, there is the SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE - sowing and reaping. Or planting and harvesting. In this context the SEED is money. SOWING or PLANTING the seed is the church at Corinth giving money to Paul in order to further the work of the Gospel.

WHAT DOES THE PRINCIPLE SUGGEST?

- You reap **WHAT** you sow
- You reap **MORE** than you sow
- You reap **LATER** than you sow
  
- You reap **WHAT** you sow - earlier this year someone planted a tomato seed. A plant came up, and now on that plant in my back yard are little green tomatoes. I don't like tomatoes. I was hoping it would bear limes. But no luck this year. WHY? The principal of sowing and reaping - you reap what you sow, you harvest what you plant.
- You reap **MORE** than you sow - That whole tomato plant sprang forth from ONE SEED. It would seem more than fair if TWO SEEDS grew on the plant. That's a pretty big return for my work, doubled my investment. But no, that plant that came from one seed is already bearing several tomatoes, each packed with seeds. Dozens will be harvested before the season is over.
- You reap **LATER** than you sow - My wife likes tomatoes, I was hoping when I planted the tomato plant, maybe I could make her a nice tomato sandwich later that day. But it didn't work like that. It actually has taken days to produce fruit, now they have to ripen. What if I visited the plant that first evening and said, "ah, didn't work...", and uprooted it? I would have violated the Principle.

Ok, so Paul is saying that if we give a financial gift to the work of the Gospel, we can expect to reap **WHAT** we sow - money. **MORE** than we sow - more money. **LATER** than we sow - it may take some time to see the results. Fair enough?

Well, if we are understanding it properly the context should bear it out. I mean, maybe Paul is saying if you **SOW** money, you will **REAP** spiritual blessings like joy, contentment, something like that.

<sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Oh so there is another part of the Principle - this must be done from a spirit of joy. We can't make you give and the principle work. You have to want to do this. What will happen if you give from a joyful heart?

<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make **all grace** abound to you.

Grace in this sense means Divine enablement.

8b. so that having all sufficiency in all things

So this is about divine enablement in ALL THINGS. Does that include finances? Yes, but so much more.

I shared this with someone a couple of days ago and they said, “well I’m sure that means when we get to heaven right?” Look at the next part...

8b. so that having all sufficiency in all things **at all times**,

So is he talking about life here and now or in heaven? YES!!! Both.

8b. so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

Now, in case you are still not convinced that God is trying to incentivize you to give generously and joyfully with the promise that He will provide you with far more than you give... look at the next verse.

<sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower

What did we say that meant? Money to the giver.

<sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food **will supply and multiply your seed for sowing** and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

So if you give faithfully and cheerfully - you will have more than you could possibly ever need.

<sup>11</sup> You will be **enriched in every way to be generous in every way**, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

**NOW, if this is truly a SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE that God wants us to know, understand and practice... we should expect it to be found all throughout the Bible. If it is not found anywhere else, there is a possibility that we have misunderstood the principle. So let’s zoom out and look at a few more texts.**

**DOES THIS TRUTH ECHO THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE?**

Look with me at Proverbs.

### Proverbs 11:24–26 (ESV)

24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. 25 Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. 26 The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.

### Proverbs 3:9–10 (ESV)

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Do we see Evidences of People who Honored the Lord from their wealth, increasing in their wealth?

- **Job** made daily sacrifices to the Lord and became the greatest of all the people of the East.
- **Abraham** gave to the Lord through Melchizedek and we are told in **Genesis 24:1 (ESV)** 1 ...the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.
- **King David said**, “I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing” Not only did David become great, but his son after him became one of the wealthiest men to ever live.
- We see many others - Joseph of Arimathea, Dorcas, Lydia, Jason, Aquila and Priscilla, Mnason of Cyprus who testify to God’s faithfulness when we give.

Someone might say, “But Pastor, that was back in the Bible days. Things were different then, seas parted, bushes burned... what about in regular history?”

**R.G. LeTourneau** at the Age of 30 deeply in debt - he made the conscious decision to make God his business partner. He decided to not only tithe but to go far beyond and fund dozens of Christian ministries as God gave the increase in profit.

Things began to change, with no more than a 7th grade education, he taught himself engineering and eventually built a manufacturing empire. His earth-moving machines helped win WWII and construct the highway infrastructure of modern America. By the end of his life he held more than 300 patents. <sup>1</sup>



LeTourneau ended up giving away 90% of his wealth and living on 10%. When asked why he gave so much to Kingdom work, **R.G. LeTourneau** replied, *“I just can’t seem to*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/billpeel/2016/03/discover-why-rg-letourneau-gave-90-percent/>

*outlive God, I keep shoveling out and God just keeps shoveling back, and it turns out God's got a bigger shovel."*

FOLKS, this is an eternal, irrevocable spiritual principle.

In **Acts 20:35 (ESV)** we find an short little enigmatic quote, attributed to Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul writes, "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Now, if you have a red letter edition, you see that quote is in red. The words of Christ. But the question is, WHERE did Jesus say that?

I've read the Gospels over and over, and not one time can I find a place where Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

Theologians are in near universal agreement...this particular quote from Christ was **so common** that it was readily accepted as being original to Christ that it not necessary for Paul or Luke to attribute the quote.

This passage is one of those, "many other things that Jesus did." That were not recorded in the Gospels.

It's like those little things your parents said growing up... dad always said... or mom always said... it becomes part of the fabric or your family.

So Here is how I imagine it...

- **Jesus turned the water into wine**, saving the host family from absolute humiliation in the first century Jewish culture. Afterward as Jesus watched the guests enjoying the feast - Perhaps, Jesus looked at Mary (his earthly mother) and asked, "Isn't it better to give than to receive?"
- **Imagine as Jesus took a little boys lunch**, blessed it, broke it and with it fed over 5,000 souls - on the walk home that night perhaps Jesus looked at Peter and said, "It's so much better to give than to receive".

This saying was frequently on the lips of Jesus that everyone looked at each other and said, "*yeah we know Jesus said that a lot*".

Two words in that verse really got my attention, "**more blessed**". I began to think through the implications of those two words. In what way or ways is it more blessed to give than to receive?

- See this PRINCIPLE clearly taught in the text of 2 Corinthians 9.
- See this PRINCIPLE taught throughout all of scripture.
- See this PRINCIPLE demonstrated by the heroes of the faith both in the Bible and in church history.

**And most importantly see this principle demonstrated by Jesus Himself.**

**Did Jesus believe that if he sowed He would also reap?**

**Well, that's a difficult question - for you see Jesus owned nothing he was basically homeless.**

**Matthew 8:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

So in what way did Jesus SOW with the expectation of REAPING.

**John 12:23–24 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He was the seed. He believed that if He gave His life for you and for me, it would produce a Harvest greater than Heaven itself.

**Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

When you give, give like Jesus... anticipate a harvest, imagine the joy.

As you give, you will find that much of the Joy comes from seeing how God will fulfill His promise.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** My daughter Carly, now a college student, has always been a faithful giver, since she was a little girl she gave from her increase back to the work of God.

Earlier this year she got scammed and a thief stole about \$1500 from her. Unexpected bills came due from another \$1500. So now she was broke and had lost a total of \$3000 which for a college student was significant.

I began to pray... I knew this was an opportunity for God to work, so I resisted the temptation to bail her out. I told her to pray as well and let's see what God will do. Later that day, I received a text from one of the Attorney's here at church.

He reminded me that several months ago Carly had been in a wreck and the insurance owed us about \$800 in medical expenses that we had to pay out of pocket. To be honest I had forgot about it. But the attorney hadn't. He kept working, writing letters, and that very day he texted me and said, the insurance company agreed to settle for... can you guess the amount? \$3000.

Can you imagine the JOY in my heart as I shared with her how God had worked? Can you imagine how her faith grew?

I so want you to have stories like that... it begins by sowing a seed.