

# “WE REAP WHAT WE SOW!”

{2020.17}

## **2 Corinthians 9:6-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: the one who **sows sparingly** will also **reap sparingly**, and the one who **sows bountifully** will also **reap bountifully**. <sup>7</sup>Each of you must give **as you have made up your mind**, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to **provide you with every blessing in abundance**, so that by always **having enough of everything**, you may **share abundantly in every good work**. <sup>9</sup>As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;  
**his righteousness<sup>[a]</sup> endures forever.**”

<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.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us;

*Footnotes:*

- a. 2 Corinthians 9:9 Or *benevolence*
- b. 2 Corinthians 9:10 Or *benevolence*

## **“WE REAP WHAT WE SOW!”**

**Dads can say some really crazy things, can't they?** I don't know about you, but I grew up with a father who was very well intended with his advice. Moms (of course!) always give out FLAWLESS advice....but Dads? You never know! But, the Bible provides us with direction about all of that, doesn't it? Proverbs 6:20 says, **“My child, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching.”** But, Dad's can dole out some interesting advice, can't they?

**One of the first things I ever remember my father saying** took me aback, and I really had to think long and hard about everything he said. I can't even remember the situation where he first delivered this piece of advice (this **Fred Williams Proverb!**), but here it is: **“You never get something for nothing; and you're lucky if you get what you pay for.”** Chew on that one for a while! **{REPEAT}** That's pretty sound advice, isn't it?

And throughout every generation, parents (and grandparents) have sought to teach their children well, and to provide them with sound advice. We all know this Proverb well, don't we: **Proverbs 22:6 – “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”** As parents, we seek out wisdom to share with our children – after all, we want them to grow up to be wonderful people that make this world better, don't we?!

**When Charlotte and I were raising our son and daughter, two books** stood head and shoulders above all others for me. William Bennett (former Secretary of Education (BUSH) and Chairman (REAGAN) of the National Endowment for the Humanities) compiled this incredible ***Book of Virtues: A Treasure of Great Moral Stories***. And it was just that! There were an amazing variety of offerings from Aesop's Fables, Plato, Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, William Faulkner, Emily Dickinson, Clara Barton, Abraham Lincoln...and there were also many stories from the Bible, including “Noah and the Ark” and numerous parables of Jesus. My children loved me taking out that book each night and reading all of these great stories! **{RESPONSES – Laura and Lee!!!}**

**We all love a great story, don't we?** We all love to hear how making tough choices to do the right thing is rewarded. And central to so many of those wonderful stories is the virtue of **GENEROSITY**.

We all know that being **GENEROUS** is something we must do, but it can be challenging! I mentioned my Dad's sayings; and one of his favorites was "**You reap what you sow!**" Well, I'd love to say that is a Fred Williams original, but the truth is that the Apostle Paul (and many prior to him!) had a few things to say about that, too! In our Scripture today, Paul speaks to the people of Corinth through his second letter to them. Hear these words:

**...the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.**

My Dad simply captured that in one simple phrase, "You reap what you sow!"

I mentioned earlier that two books really influenced me as we were raising our children in the 80s and 90s (and early 2000s). In addition to ***The Book of Virtues***, there came upon the scene a wonderfully simple, yet profound book that captured my (and many others!) attention: ***All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten***. It was written by a man named Robert Fulghum. And what made Robert Fulghum such an authority – where did he receive the credentials to earn the right to give us advice for our lives? How about this? He is a writer, philosopher, public speaker....OK....but! He is also a cowboy, a folksinger, an IBM salesman, a professional artist, a parish minister, a bartender, a teacher of drawing and painting, and a father! **SOLD!!!!** And, like my father, Robert Fulghum gave great advice:

**Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Wonder!!!**

**Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup – they all die. So do we. And then remember**

**the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned – the biggest word of all – LOOK!** Fulghum goes on to say that, “Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living.”

**And he’s right, isn’t he?** There are certain things that we know are good and noble and true. And one of those at the top of the list is **GENEROSITY**. And when it comes to **GENEROSITY**, we truly reap what we sow, don’t we? And being **GENEROUS** is not a simple choice – it’s not a simple virtue to put into action. And, Paul challenges each and every one of us on how we should be **GENEROUS** in response to all of the blessings that God has provided to us. I love the NIV translation of verse 7: “Each of you should give **what you have decided in your heart to give**, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” What we are to give is solely up to us.

Oh, we receive some guidance when it comes to financial giving – we have the Biblical guidance of the tithe: giving 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all we have received as an offering of gratitude to God. And I can vouch that consistently focusing on giving at least 10% of everything we earn and receive is a really good discipline. It continually forces us to acknowledge that not everything **is just about us. It continually forces us to acknowledge that God blesses each and every one** of us with skills and talents and resources to enjoy all of the things that we have! And Paul reminds us that God wants us to love one another, and God wants us to be **GENEROUS**. We are blessed, so we can be a blessing to others. We are to give out of our abundance, and Paul reminds us, too, that God loves a cheerful giver.

**And, our Moms and Dads taught us those things, didn’t they?** And, if we didn’t get everything at home, we certainly learned that in Kindergarten, didn’t we? As for me, I had those great Fred Williams Proverbs, “You never get something for nothing, and you’re lucky if you get what you pay for!” At Mrs. Walker’s kindergarten, I’m pretty sure that I learned even more that Robert Fulghum reminded me:

**Share everything. Play fair. Don’t hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don’t take things that aren’t yours. Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush....**

Yes, ALWAYS flush!!! 😊

And during these days where we reflect on our stewardship, Paul reminds us simply to be **GENEROUS**, “Each of you should give **what you have decided in your heart to give**, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Would you pray with me?

**Gracious God, we give thanks for our parents and the wisdom and lessons that they provided to us, and we pray for parents everywhere who are doing their best to raise their children to make a positive difference in this world. May we always remember that You bless us mightily, and we are to take those blessings to be a blessing to others. May we continually turn to You to give you thanks, and then may we be blessed with GENEROUS hearts to go and serve and love others. AMEN!**