



In the movie, *Second Hand Lions*, the two adventurous uncles want to settle down for the sake of their nephew, whom they are now raising. Part of this “settling down” was to take up gardening. One of the traveling salesman who made it to their front steps sold them lots of different packages of seed. But when the crop came up, the little boy asked why all the different crops looked like the same thing.

TR: The seeds had looked strangely similar but these men of action seemed oblivious to the law of . . .



... sowing and reaping.

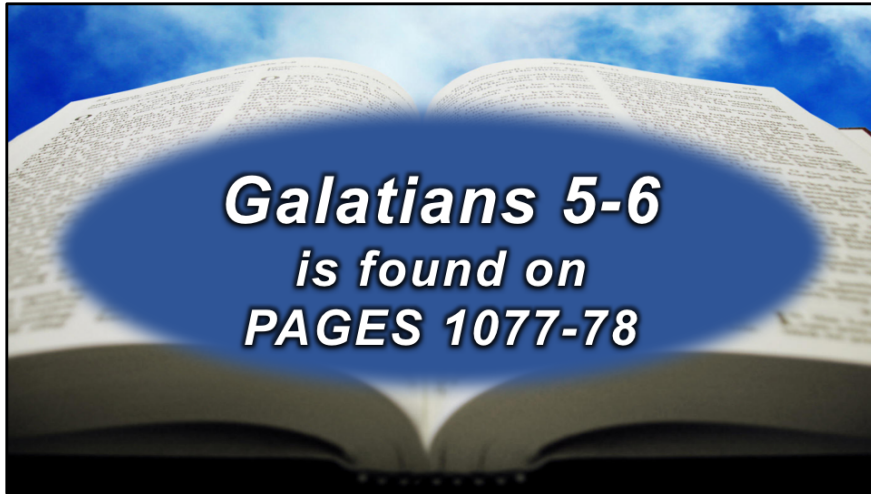
TR: Even if we understand, out in the garden, that what you plant is what you harvest ...

THE CORE PRINCIPLE:
SOWING & REAPING

. . . we easily fall prey to a slick satanic salesman, who says we can violate the law of sowing and reaping.

-- We can state the principle in lots of ways: “garbage in, garbage out; you get out what you put in; no pain, no gain; you get what you deserve; you can pay me now or you can pay me later”

TR: The most extensive treatment in the Bible on this critical topic is found in . . .



. . . Galatians 5-6

-- Sermon Notes Page

TR: Galatians 6:7-8 gives us the summary of the teaching on this core principle . . .

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For 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.

ESV

5

READ SLIDE

TR: God is not mocked . . . not ultimately.

THE CORE PRINCIPLE:
SOWING & REAPING

- This is an irrefutable law because it is based on God's character

This core principle is an irrefutable law because it is based on God's character of justice.

-- No one will get away with anything . . . every sin will be paid for . . . every debt to God's holiness will be collected.

TR: And as the uncles who were newbie gardeners learned . . .

THE CORE PRINCIPLE:

SOWING & REAPING

- This is an irrefutable law because it is based on God's character
- The seeds we plant determine the harvest we bring in.

... READ SLIDE

TR: Every act of hope is based on this law.

THE CORE PRINCIPLE SOWING

- This is an irrefutable principle because it is based on the natural law of sowing and reaping.
- The seeds we sow in the spring are the harvest we bring in the fall.
- We must be willing to have the hope that let's us delay gratification.



... the same hope that we have when we send money in January to seed companies.

-- It won't be until summer when we have a harvest, but we are stirred to hope . . . and to therefore delay gratification.

-- An incredible amount of the pain we face in life is harvesting the crop that comes from planting the seeds of immediate gratification.

TR: This core principle leads us to a choice . . .

THE CHOICE:

DEEDS OF THE **SINFUL** NATURE
OR **FRUIT** OF THE SPIRIT

... a choice of sowing to the flesh as manifested in the deeds of the sinful nature,
-- OR sowing to the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit.
TR: The deeds of the sinful nature, or literally translated, "the flesh" are listed for us . . .

THE CHOICE:

DEEDS OF THE **SINFUL** NATURE

- Four categories of these deeds:
 - ❖ Sexual immorality
 - ❖ “Religion”
 - ❖ Relationships, esp. conflict
 - ❖ Excessiveness

... in four categories: READ SLIDE
TR: Let's pick it up in Galatians 5:15 ...

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

ESV

READ SLIDE
TR: V. 17 . . .

Galatians 5:17

17For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- there is a battle going on
 - there will always be weeds cropping up
 - As someone once said, "Where there is no gardener, there is no garden."
- TR: Verse 18 continues . . .**

¹⁸But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions . . .

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 20 continues . . .

. . . divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Note the flow of thought . . . when we sow to the flesh → deeds of the flesh → not inherit the kingdom of God.

TR: Jump down to verse 25 . . .

If we **live by the Spirit**, let us also **keep in step with the Spirit.** ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- So, we've seen "walk by the Spirit," "led by the Spirit," and here, "live by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit."
- In contrast to these positives, that we will focus on in a moment, we also saw the "deeds or works of the flesh"
- When we sow to the flesh we walk in the flesh, we are led by the flesh, we live by the flesh.
- **HOW DO WE KNOW** if we are sowing to the flesh? Not by looking at the envelopes that hold the seeds but by looking at the crop that grows.
- TR: These works seem to fall into four categories of sin . . .

Sexual Immorality: immorality,
impurity, sensuality

“Religion”: idolatry, sorcery

Relationships: enmity, strife,
jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries,
dissentions, divisions, envy

Excessiveness: drunkenness, orgies

READ SLIDE

-- Most of us would readily admit that the first two and the last category are works of evil.

-- BUT the majority of the list is focused on our relationships.

-- Follow along with the items on the list as I read how Eugene Peterson renders them in his paraphrase of this passage:

repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community.

TR: While he seems to take some license, Peterson certainly paints an ugly picture of harvest time. That's what happens when we sow to the flesh.

THE CHOICE:

DEEDS OF THE
SINFUL NATURE

OR **FRUIT** OF
THE SPIRIT



But, we have a choice. We can choose to sow to the Spirit and reap the fruit of the Spirit.

-- We imagine that it should read "fruits" but all of these together show us what the harvest can be.

TR: Look again in your Bibles at Galatians 5:13 . . .

Galatians 5:13-14

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Through Christ we have a freedom to love . . . and that love is demonstrated by serving each other.

TR: If we fulfill the law of Christ we will be seeing the yield described in verses 22-23 . . .

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This is the other side of our choice.

TR: When we remember our summary verses, we realize . . .

THE CHOICE: OR **FRUIT** OF THE SPIRIT

- The fruit of the Spirit are the blossoms along the way to the ultimate harvest of “**eternal** life”

20

... that the fruit of the Spirit ... **READ SLIDE**

-- Remember the negative progression we just saw: sow to the flesh → deeds of the flesh → not inherit eternal life

TR: Look again at Galatians 6:7-8 ...

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For 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.**

ESV

... where we read, “but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

-- So, the ultimate harvest is eternal life.

-- Do you want eternal life? I hope your answer is yes.

-- YET, this text is not just teaching us about the final harvest but also about the blossoms along the way.

-- We’ve been faced with the choice to “walk by the Spirit,” “be led by the Spirit,” “live by the Spirit,” and “keep in step with the Spirit.”

TR: How can we know that we are doing that?

THE CHOICE: OR FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- The fruit of the Spirit are the blossoms along the way to the ultimate harvest of “**eternal** life”
- We can use the “Fruit-tester” to help see whether we are walking in step with the Holy Spirit

One way is to use the fruit of the Spirit as the identification guide to tell us what the blossoms in our garden tell us about our crop.

-- OF COURSE, if the deeds of the flesh are cropping up in our lives, then we certainly are not walking in step with the Spirit.

-- BUT, it is not just about not doing bad things, like the deeds of the flesh . . .

-- . . . sin includes NOT DOING GOOD, like the fruit of the Spirit.

TR: As a special insert in your worship flier, I’ve given you “A Spiritual Fruit Tester.”

A SPIRITUAL FRUIT-TESTER (Galatians 5:22-23)
 How's your harvest today? Does it evidence walking in step with the Holy Spirit?

LOVE	Seeking to give, irrespective of merit	<--- -->	Sought to possess only the worthy
------	--	----------	-----------------------------------

I deserve only the best
I deserve to at least get something out of this
OK, I'll give something, but only to those worthy
I will sacrifice and give to even the unworthy

A--AFFIRM WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST
E--EXPECT A STRUGGLE
I--INSPECT THE FRUIT
O--OPERATE IN THE SPIRIT
U--USE THE TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

A SPIRITUAL FRUIT-TESTER (Galatians 5:22-23)
 How's your harvest today? Does it evidence walking in step with the Holy Spirit?

LOVE	Seeking to give, irrespective of merit	<--- -->	Sought to possess only the worthy
JOY	Finding deep- seated happiness in God's presence	<--- -->	Dependent on external circumstances
PEACE	Enjoying a sense of harmony, wholeness	<--- -->	Manifesting discord
PATIENCE	Longsuffering, bearing up with others	<--- -->	Anxious and testy
KINDNESS	Judging others' motives with charity	<--- -->	Judging others' motives with hostility
GOODNESS	Generous and benevolent	<--- -->	Stingy
FAITHFULNESS	Reliable	<--- -->	Irresponsible
GENTLENESS	Strong, but under control	<--- -->	Harsh and abrasive
SELF-CONTROL	Controlled by God's calling	<--- -->	Driven by my passions and circumstances

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By defining the nine aspects of the fruit we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us be honest with ourselves.

-- In addition to the deeds of the flesh, this fruit tester can help us examine ourselves before we partake of communion.

-- We must also be wise enough to receive the rebuke of others when they point out rotten fruit in our garden. We must not so quickly get defensive but rather make sure we've gotten right with God.

-- For example, take the fruit of love. The scale reads, "Seeking to give irrespective of merit . . . sought to possess only the worthy."

-- Starting at the sinful nature side of things, in the red, we really don't love when we imagine we "deserve only the best."

-- It is a bit better, but not much, when we say . . . READ SLIDE

-- We imagine we've loved when we give to someone else . . .

but then we remember that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son . . .

-- . . . and we realize that Spirit-empowered love gives even to our enemies.

-- Perhaps this would be a good discipline for the rest of the summer . . . to check the fruit at the dinner table with our family or friends.

TR: Some of us may be saying to ourselves . . . sure, that's great BUT you have no idea of the stress that I'm under.

THE CHOICE: OR **FRUIT** OF THE SPIRIT

- The fruit of the Spirit are the blossoms along the way to the ultimate harvest of “**eternal** life”
- We can use the “Fruit-tester” to help see whether we are walking in step with the Holy Spirit
- Galatians 6:1-6 helps us see what fruit is being produced under the **stress** of a conflict situation.

The context of this teaching shows us that the stress of conflict is **EXACTLY** what Paul had in mind.

TR: Look at just the first two verses of Galatians 6 . . .

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This is talking about dealing with stress . . . the stress of broken relationships caused by sin.

-- It is so easy to just let someone face it alone . . . leave them in the trap . . .

-- OR to harshly and judgmentally rip their leg out of the snare.

TR: It is into this environment that we are called to choose to sow to the Spirit . . .



. . . when everything is haywire . . . not when we think we can “manage” dealing with it ALL.

-- How many excuses we are fed by Satan and his forces . . .

“Now is not a good time.” “I think I just need a fresh start.”

“No one can expect me to do this with what I’ve gone through.” “You don’t know how long this has been going on, it is more than I can handle.”

-- It is the stress that shows us what plants have deep roots and which ones don’t.

-- Wouldn’t it be great if the Christians in West Central Michigan had stories of cooperation and not conflict, like . . . Bob Richards (only man to win Pole Vault in two Olympics) and Cornelius “Dutch” Warmerdam. Bob had reached plateau and couldn’t go beyond. Finally, he humbled himself and did the most incredible thing, asked the current record holder, Dutch, if

he could come and help him. Even more incredibly, Dutch came and the barrier was broken. (Maxwell, 69-70)

TR: Our text has shown us . . .

THE CORE PRINCIPLE:

THE CHOICE:

THE CHALLENGE:

READ SLIDE

TR: . . . and now it gives us THE CHALLENGE.

**THE CHALLENGE: TO PERSEVERE—
REAPING IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP**

Will we persevere?

-- It is easy for us to imagine that we can break the law of sowing and reaping . . . at least a little bit, with our little choices . . . but we can't.

TR: Galatians 6:9-10 . . .

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, **if we do not give up.** ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- As we “do good” we are serving one another and loving our neighbor as ourselves, as Galatians 5:13-14 told us.

-- This doing good must especially happen to those who are fellow believers because we have an eternal kinship relationship with them.

TR: We must continue to . . .

**THE CHALLENGE: TO PERSEVERE—
REAPING IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP**

- Growing weary of “doing good” and “doing right” is part of it.

. . . do good and do right, especially to those who are fellow Christians.

--

TR: BUT that's not the whole of it . . .

**THE CHALLENGE: TO PERSEVERE—
REAPING IF WE DO NOT GIVE UP**

- Growing weary of “doing good” and “doing right” is part of it.
- But the context makes clear that “doing good” is “sowing to the Spirit” . . .

READ SLIDE

-- This is not just about my doing good outweighing my sowing to the flesh, that is, my old nature.

TR: Doing good, sowing to the Spirit, is so hard, especially over time, because . . .

➤ But the context makes clear that “doing good” is “sowing to the Spirit,” which can be wearisome because:

- ❖ it is hard to put off the old nature, the flesh
- ❖ it is hard to work through the conflicts of relationships
- ❖ it is hard to “be converted and always converting”

READ SLIDE

-- To mortify or crucify the old nature, to put it to death, is brutal.

-- To work through the conflicts that bring enmity, strife, rivalries, dissensions and divisions can be overwhelming.

-- Cf. my discipline not to check emails while on vacation . . . but then when I did, Kathy could immediately tell.

-- We must be “converted” but then always be “converting.”

TR: These first three dynamics can become a disaster if we forget the fourth one, the caveat about . . .

THE CORE PRINCIPLE:

THE CHOICE:

THE CHALLENGE:

THE CONFUSION:

... a common confusion.

-- Cf. reading about the history of the Reformation ... it had many facets but at its core was the question of how we are justified before God.

TR: The church had fallen into the confusion ... the confusion of ...

THE CONFUSION:

LEGALISM IS SOWING TO THE FLESH

- In the context, “sowing to the flesh” is legalistically following the Law, even to the point of being circumcised, in order to earn some or all of our righteousness before God.

... legalism.

-- Legalism isn't me wearing a tie while visiting other churches, even when I'm the only one.

-- Legalism is ... READ SLIDE

-- The core of the Reformation question that hit Martin Luther 500 years ago as he studied the Bible and not just theologies was ... is Christ ALL of my righteousness?

TR: As those living in the shadow of the Wittenberg Door, we often give lip service to this liberating truth ... but ...

THE CONFUSION:

LEGALISM IS SOWING TO THE FLESH

- Legalism is an “**easier** crop to farm,” but the harvest is bitter.

. . . it is so easy to think about sowing and reaping in terms of our own strength . . . “I will do this, I will not do that.”

-- We can put in any of the fruit of the Spirit and do this . . . and be so wrong.

-- Yes, we have a choice. But, it is not one of independence. Rather, one of inter-dependence upon the Spirit of God.

-- Next week we’ll talk about how easy it is to be a parent who sows in such a manner that what we reap is good, little Pharisees who would warrant the harshest of words from our Savior.

-- It is so easy to do.

TR: Let me remind you about Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares . . .



Jesus told of enemies who came in and sowed tares among the wheat.

-- When asked, the master said to leave them alone because the wheat would be hurt by the efforts to remove them.

TR: But the time will come, at the harvest, when it will be easy to tell them apart . . .



... and then the tares will be bundled up and thrown into the fire.

-- The world and even the church will always be a mixed multitude until Jesus returns. But, everyone will reap what they have sown.

TR: In our personal lives we must not allow . . .

THE CONFUSION:

LEGALISM IS SOWING TO THE FLESH

- Legalism is an “**easier** crop to farm,” but the harvest is bitter.
- We must not be fooled by “tares” but live in the dynamic of faith and trust in Jesus and in the Spirit. We must not allow the disciplines to make us into “tare farmers.”

... the “tares” of just doing good in our own strength to fool us.

-- The standard of Christ, of loving like God loved, is only possible if we live in the dynamic of faith and trust in Jesus and in the Spirit.

-- What I’ve witnessed in my years is a swing . . . from legalism to license. Being “good” doesn’t mean that we deserve or have earned God’s blessing. Not does walking in step with the Spirit mean that there are no means to tell if we are bearing fruit.

-- Haven’t we all witnessed those who were such good people then making the most foolish of choices, even with a high hand of rebellion?

-- Haven’t we heard folks say they live by the Spirit and they have “peace,” so that their violation of the law of love is OK?
TR: The law of sowing and reaping . . . we must choose to . . .

SOW TO THE SPIRIT . . .

plant faith-trust in Christ for all of our salvation,
cultivate a desperate dependence on the Spirit by prayer,
and water the deep change of being truly converted and always converting.

READ SLIDE

-- My temptation is to organize my life to be stress-free by having only shallow relationships, by letting someone else take the load of shepherding Jesus' sheep . . .

-- . . . BUT it is these stressors that show me that my self-discipline is only that of a 98 pound weakling of a Pharisee.

-- It is these very stressors that force me to pray and to abide in prayer . . . to always be converting. To choose Christ alone, again and again.

-- Let us sow to the Spirit and acknowledge that apart from Him, nothing good comes to harvest.

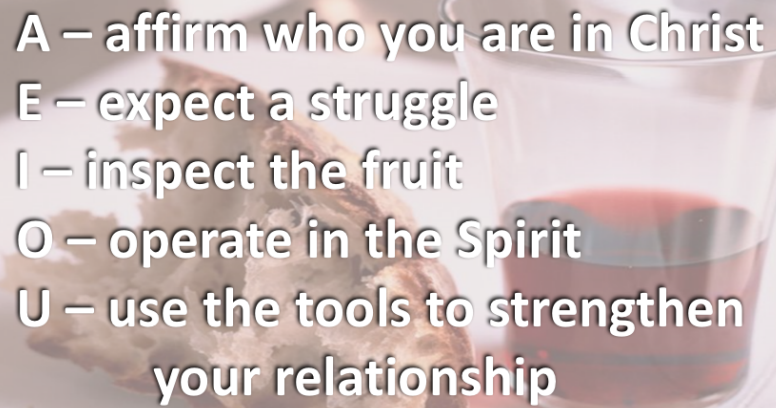
TR: Yes, we must choose to sow to the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the old nature . . . but we can only do this depending on the "wind of God" . . .



. . . the Spirit Himself.

-- EX: of boy who pumped the organ and world-famous organist. Boy: "We had a good concert, didn't we?" Strong retort by organist. Next night the boy stopped pumping in the midst of the concert and all that could be heard was the clicking of the keys. He stuck his head out and said, "We aren't having a very good concert tonight, are we?"

TR: Won't you make it part of your daily path to do the AEIOU?

A photograph of a glass of red wine and a piece of bread on a white surface. The glass is partially filled with red wine, and the bread is a round, golden-brown loaf. The background is slightly blurred.

A – affirm who you are in Christ
E – expect a struggle
I – inspect the fruit
O – operate in the Spirit
U – use the tools to strengthen
your relationship

READ SLIDE