

Think Like a Farmer
Galatians 6:6–10
July 27, 2025

Not too long ago, I saw a simple graphic making the rounds called, “Think like a farmer.” On it were listed seven statements, each one much too basic for *actual* farmers, but seemingly intended for fewer-acre’d folks trying to produce something. For example, one was, “Don’t shout at the crops.” Another: “Don’t blame the crops for not growing fast enough.” Another: “Don’t uproot crops before they’ve had a chance to grow.” Then there was, of course, counsel to irrigate, fertilize, and to do something about those weeds. And the list ended with the “common” sense assertion, “Remember you will have good seasons and bad seasons – you can’t control the weather.”

Simple, for sure. But that list got a good bit of traction. And, if I’m being honest, I found it helpful myself. Because “think like a farmer,” isn’t just good counsel for those leading an organization. It’s good counsel for those trying to follow Jesus. And for those trying to understand His Word.

With that in mind, we might say a book on spiritual disciplines in the year 2025 could/should include a chapter entitled: “Go outside.” And maybe even “Plant something,” with subheadings like, “Consider the lilies,” and “Look at the birds.” Because God’s created order—what we call general revelation—actually pairs quite nicely with the Bible.

A Bible that actually *assumes* you’re paying attention to what God’s made—as well as how He works in what He’s created. All that is quite clear here in Galatians 6. In fact, to grasp what Paul’s talking about here at the close of the letter, we need to think like a farmer.

1. **The Principle** (vv. 7–8)

Verse 7: **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.**

That last clause—about sowing and reaping—is the undeniable truth of agriculture; year after year, in crop after crop, it’s been proven true.¹ That is, should a farmer desire a harvest in August, in April he must plant the seed. Now, I don’t want to make this *too* simple. But I also don’t want us to miss the simplicity of it. To reap one must sow.

But, also, *whatever* it is that a man sows, it’s **this he will also reap**. You don’t plant rows and rows of soybeans and expect cotton in the fall. There are, of course, *unintended* consequences. But most often consequences come about with a good bit of intent. Do *that*, and *this* will happen.

This *broad* principle is the kind of thing you and I have tried to tell teenagers for well over a decade. That is, right now—even if you’re 14—you are becoming something. And the things you’re doing—your habits in these moments—are *some* (I said, “some”) of what determines who you’ll become. You’ve heard the escalation, “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.”² We might edit that slightly, but it’s pretty close to true.

One way we might edit that is to differentiate this principle from karma. What Paul describes in Galatians 6 is *not* some *impersonal* cosmic law of cause and effect. The reaping Paul describes in verse 8 comes about because the sowing is a sowing to the Spirit. The principle is attached to a Person, the third Person of the Trinity.

¹ David DeSilva, *Galatians*, Baylor Handbook, 136.

² Quoted in John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, BST, 170.

And, further, what comes about comes about because, verse 7: **God is not mocked.** To “mock” means to sneer at, to turn up your nose at, or to treat with contempt.³ You can imagine this kind of posture. We might not say it out loud, but it’s clear in the mindset, “I can do this. I can do this repeatedly. I’ve gotten away with it. He won’t do anything.”

Verse 7 begins: **Do not be deceived.**⁴ Paul warns those that turn up their nose. God is not mocked. Whether it’s today, in a decade, or in the age to come, there will be a judgment.

Now, I don’t think we should always over-hurry to blunt the edge of a warning. And yet, to differentiate this from karmic thinking, we should *also* say the book of Galatians has been quite clear about grace.

We’ll read more about that in the verses ahead. But not before we read how this agricultural principle is applied in verse 8: **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.** Back in chapter 5, Paul portrayed the Spirit and the flesh as a battleground: **these are in opposition to one another** (5:17). But here in chapter 6 Paul portrays the Spirit and the flesh as if they’re two fields on an estate, two fields on a farm in which we might sow seed.⁵

Here’s a clarification we make often, though I think this kind of repetition is good. In the New Testament, the theology is often in the verbs. And, here, the “one who sows” is a present tense verb describing ongoing action—a *continual* investment of time and resources.⁶ Paul’s speaking of something habitual.

Again, think like a farmer. One doesn’t “find themselves” standing out in a field unawares casting seed “hither an’ yon” without intention. No, seed isn’t free, or even always cheap. Certainly not in that era. With a harvest ahead, the farmer decides with intention *where* to scatter seed.

With that in mind, we can better understand the first example of this principle. There is one that decides to sow seed in the field of **his own flesh**. We’ve said this repeatedly, but “flesh” does not mean the body alone. It means the sinful nature. And instead of crucifying it, as 5:24 instructed us, *this* person coddles it, panders to it.⁷ The “flesh” is the seed plot they cultivate. “I’m going to put a fence around *that* field. I’ll empty bags and bags of seed into it. Then I’ll water it. And then I’ll do it again.”

Paul writes in verse 8 the consequence of doing so: **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.** As we noted repeatedly in the book we studied on evil schemes, sin doesn’t announce itself. Though the bait looks nice, the hook is hidden. But Paul makes it clear. To seek self or sin is to seek self-destruction.⁸

Paul’s applying the principle of sowing and reaping. And *this* is what happens when one sows to the flesh. He or she reaps corruption.

Again, while there’s a lot more asphalt in our day-to-day than for those Paul wrote, we still need to think like farmers. But not just in a negative sense. The principle goes both ways. *Whatever* a man sows, *this* he will also reap. There’s another field on the farm, we might say. Verse 8 continues: **but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

To hear this rightly, we need to emphasize the same things we did regarding the other field. First, “the one who sows” speaks to habitual action. In neither case is it a one-time thing. You’re not a farmer if you only farmed once, threw out a little seed on a Tuesday one time. This sowing is

³ Curtis Vaughan, *Galatians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary, 111; Stott, 166.

⁴ “Men may fool themselves, but they cannot fool God,” Stott, 166.

⁵ Stott, 169.

⁶ DeSilva, 136.

⁷ Stott, 170.

⁸ This kind of corruption is akin to post-mortem decay.

something done continually. With a harvest in mind, the farmer decides with intention *where* to scatter seed.

And in *this* case, the tractor drives out to a different field, to plant in different soil—sowing, not to the flesh, but **to the Spirit**. The investment of time and resources goes into, not self or sin, but to Him. The Spirit and the flesh might sound like abstract ideas; but they're not. They're two plots on the farm of your life.

What does it mean to sow to the Spirit? Verses 9 and 10 will detail it in a way we might not expect, but in this context, simply, it means to walk in Him. To think even more broadly about Galatians, it's to live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself up for you (Gal. 2:20). And as you know, *that's* a completely different way to live—a different field, with different soil, that produces a completely different crop.

So, while the flesh brings about corruption, verse 8 ends, **the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap**. So that—rather than immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, enmities, strife, jealousy, and so on—our lives might be marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness.

There are two fields in which to sow. There are two fields from which we might reap.

This is the principle, proven on acres and acres, and in life after life.

And it's a principle intended to help you press on. Note verse 9: **Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary**.

2. The Perseverance of a People (vv. 9–10; v. 6)

I haven't finished Matt McCullough's book yet, and he might mention this verse, but it certainly *seems* like Paul's attempting here to help us with life “in the meantime” by looking to something in the future.

And it's implied, both in the phrase, **let us not lose heart**, and **if we do not grow weary** that the task will be tiresome. It seems as if the Galatians either did, or were tempted to, lose enthusiasm for the work.

It might be helpful to, once again, think like a farmer. Because the work of sowing is almost always invisible. It's beneath the surface, the work of the seed hidden.

And it's helpful to think like someone that works in a field because on the list of “cush” jobs, you won't find farming. It's *hard* labor—exacting, tiring, and for a season “hidden” work.

If I'm ever in one of those group things where they say, “Tell us your name, favorite ice cream flavor, and something interesting about yourself,” the thing I generally say is that I used to sell cattle. I'm guessing that surprises you as well. But that's just the lede. The actual story is that when I was in high school, while my friends slept in, for well over a year I went to my grandfather's forty-acre farm every Saturday to re-build a very long fence, post by post.

My dad was kind enough to tell me along the way that when we finished this fence, he'd give me a cow. How do you think a 15-year-old responded to that? Every Saturday for weeks and months on end. At the end—a heifer.

But what I didn't see at the time, at least I don't recall it, was the ROI on a “free” cow. Because you know what happened in the years ahead? That cow had multiple calves. And being the cattleman I am, I sold them. And my senior year of high school that money bought my 1993 Emerald Green Gibson Les Paul guitar.

And because I ended up minoring in jazz guitar, I spent a *lot* of time with that instrument. It enabled all kinds of rich musical experiences. I used it on the audition that paid for room and board for years. It ended up helping me get the degree that got me the job that allowed me to meet my wife. I could go on. If I wanted to, I could connect a post-hole digger to me standing in this pulpit.

Today, 25 years later, I'm able to zoom out. The fence building was monotonous, exacting, and tiring. But would I do it again? A million times.

You have your own version of that story, maybe on a farm, maybe not. But farmers think of August when they're up before the sun in April. It's some of what keeps them from giving up.

In verse 9, Paul—*knowing* their weariness—references “in due time.” He's saying, in part, that there are seasons. There are seasons of sowing.⁹ And those seasons are particularly challenging. Because, again, one of the defining characteristics of a season marked by sowing is that what the seed does, in the soil, is hidden. We do not, *can* not, observe the organic realities occurring under the surface. One of my favorite authors on this subject has a short, simple three-line poem that goes like this: “The seed is in the ground. Now may we rest in hope. While darkness does its work.”¹⁰

There are seasons marked by the hard work of sowing. I'd imagine some of you feel this way in this or that relationship. You labor, over and over. You pull weeds, as it were. There's no obvious fruit. Maybe this is at work, maybe it's in the neighborhood, maybe with family, maybe it's with a church member.

Parents of young children, I don't want to speak *for* you, but I'm fairly confidently you *often* feel this way. There are seasons—seasons where you sow seed—and wait.

And even more personally, maybe you sense some of this when you read your Bible. Or as you wrestle with the same sin you thought you put in the rearview mirror. Regardless, whether personally, in parenting, or in another relationship, the work is described as sowing. It's sowing to the Spirit.

And as we do good, we're not to lose heart. In fact, we're to press on. Verse 10 continues: **So then, while we have opportunity.**

As you know, farming is often timing. If the tree starts to bud *before* the March freeze, it won't blossom. And if you plant too late, too bad. Farming is timing. And, as you know, time is not a renewable resource. Opportunities to sow don't last forever. In fact, verse 10 is one of Paul's “seize the day” verses. So, **while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

I called this section of the sermon, “the perseverance of a people,” because that's what Paul has in mind—a people. He's already told us in verse 9 not to lose heart in doing good. We're to do good to *all* people. Yet, here, in verse 10, he gives us a sphere—something of a priority—in this doing of good. We're to do good, especially, in regard to God's people. And once again, with the household language, Paul reminds them that they're family.

This is *part* of what it means to sow in the Spirit. In fact, this whole section on sowing and reaping has been in the context of a local church body. The verse that began our passage, verse 6—*before* the section on sowing and reaping—took us, practically, to doing good in the context of the local church. That verse reads: **The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.**

What I find so striking about that verse is that it occurs in this letter. Galatians is one of, if not *the*, earliest of Paul's letters. And yet it's *already* clear to him that in the church there would be some who would teach and some who would be taught. There aren't *levels*, to any degree. But there are roles.

⁹ This is, of course, how Jesus spoke as well. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden (Lk. 13:19).

¹⁰ Wendell Berry, *A Timbered Choir*, 131.

And, yet, the differing roles were *not* intended to hinder the relationship, to build fences. The ones being taught were to **share all good things** (“fellowship with”) the one who teaches.¹¹ It’s not, nor ever has been, *us* and him—or us and those guys.

It seems to me that this verse is both an expansion of the mutual burden bearing of verse 5, as well as an application of doing good to those part of God’s household. And if I might speak personally, it’s something this body is quite good at applying. I’ve known that for almost two decades. The last year has proven it in ways I’ll never forget.

There are, of course, the tangible ways this “sharing” happens, but I think those spring from a genuine unity *within*, and a love *among*, the body—from sheep to shepherd, and from shepherd to sheep.

I mentioned last week a burden my fellow elders helped me carry one time, years ago. But it’s not *just* those men. Even further back in time, *years* and *years* ago, one of our church members was working in the yard when I showed up to the office. He was pulling weeds, doing some “farm” work here at 3175 S. Germantown Road. He asked me how I was doing that day. I knew he wasn’t just making conversation. I love and trust this brother. And I told him the truth: “Not so good.”

Then, as I’m telling him of the weight of whatever that burden was, he said this strange sentence to me, “You have broad shoulders.”

Now, to state the obvious, there isn’t a long list of people that have *ever* said that sentence to me. I might’ve dug some fence posts in high school, but I didn’t play middle linebacker. This brother wasn’t speaking literally. And he *didn’t* mean I had some sort of *intrinsic* strength. I’m confident he was expressing His confidence in Christ’s work in and through me.

And I’ve held on to those words for nearly a decade. I have quite a few stories like that, of the ones being taught sharing all good things with someone that teaches.

But it’s not just in *that* relationship. There are stacks of evidence, years marked by God’s family not losing heart in doing good to one another. There are stacks of evidence here, of God’s people not growing weary, but planting seeds while we have opportunity.

And for those people, those people persevering together, there are promises.

3. The Promise (v. 8b; v. 9b)

We’ve already read them. But let’s end reading these two clauses again.

Promise number one, in verse 9: **in due time we will reap**. There is a season for sowing. It’s hard. Much of what’s happening is hidden.

But there is *another* season, a season marked by reaping. *Then*, there will be more fruit than we can pick. And the freshest we tasted in this life will be *then* considered dull, the juiciest will be *then* considered dry.¹² Everything we hear *then* will be as if we’ve never heard before. And everything we’ve seen as if we’ve always been blind. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18). Every seed sown will blossom. In due time, we *will* reap.

And here’s the grace of Galatians. This is not, ultimately, because of what we’ve done. But because of what Christ has. Everything we receive from the Spirit comes because of Him. In the end, instead of getting what we’ve earned, we receive what He has.

Which leads us to promise number two, in verse 8: **the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life**. That life is of a different quality entirely. It’s a life that begins *here* and now, a life that will one day be perfected, and will remain so, forever.

¹¹ The sharing language is the word we often translate “fellowship.”

¹² C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, 507.

Conclusion

And so, we'd do well to think like farmers. We sow, but we sow in hope, knowing the One to whom we sow.

With that in mind, hear *again* what Paul said in verse 7: **Do not be deceived.** And know that it doesn't *only* apply to those that sow to the flesh.

Those that sow *to the Spirit* ought not be deceived either. God will not be mocked. Your labor is not in vain. Nor is His Son's. What He's done *will* bear fruit. And because of that, *we* will reap.