

# SOW A THOUGHT...

## Introduction

There is an extremely important, universal principle developed by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:6-10.

### **Galatians 6:6-10**

<sup>6</sup>One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. <sup>7</sup>**Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.** <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

#### **(English Standard Version)**

This principle applies to every person in every place at all times. The Apostle Paul here applies this principle to 1) the general course of one's life and 2) our relationships with other people. With regard to the course of one's life the reality is that if we focus our energy and resources (sow) on satisfying our physical desires, we will become (reap) empty selves. If, on the other hand, we focus our energy and resources on the spiritual realm we will become people through whom God's quality of life flows. We reap what we sow. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we pay attention to what we sow.

The Apostle Paul applies this principle to the social component of our humanity by encouraging us that this principle of sowing and reaping applies to the manner in which we treat people around us. We are to do (sow) good to those around us with the confidence that in time our efforts will contribute (reap) to people's movement towards God.

In staff meeting this week we were thinking about this principle as it has been developed by Samuel Smiles in a familiar quote:

*Sow a thought, reap an action;  
sow an action, reap a habit;  
sow a habit, reap a character;  
sow a character, reap a destiny.*

This is character formation in a nutshell. And it is a solid, though incomplete, expression of spiritual transformation. As I have emphasized over the weeks, it begins with our minds and what we allow ourselves to think. What we think about over and over always expresses itself in our actions. Another way of saying this is that what we do always flows from what we are thinking or believing.

This is the reality that stands back of James 3:13-18:

**James 3:13-18**

<sup>13</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup>This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup>And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**(English Standard Version)**

What is helpful about this passage is that it actually teaches us that we can expose bad thinking and believing by working backwards. That is, by pondering my attitudes and actions, it leads me to think about my beliefs and thoughts from which an attitude or action came. A cutting remark out of my mouth was birthed in my mind. Transacting a shady business deal flows from my belief system. What we are thinking and believing always expresses itself through our attitudes and actions.

And the repetition of the same actions whether they be an expression on our face or our posture or more overt actions always become embedded habits. And the same habits practiced over and over form our character. And our character determines the legacy we leave behind in this world and determines our rewards and responsibilities in the next.

Doug Wilson gives a clear, though negative, illustration of this principle and process in his pamphlet on bitterness<sup>1</sup>:

One good rule of thumb is this: *Bitterness remembers details.* You have had thousands of conversations in your life, most of which you have forgotten. But this one took place five years ago, and you remember every single word, his intonation and the inflection of every part of his voice. You know exactly what happened – which means you are bitter.

Someone might object and say that it is also possible to have a good memory of a wonderful conversation. Is this possible? Yes, but not likely. Why is this? Because memory is helped by review, review, and more review. People do not usually mull over the wonderful things as much. But they do go over and over and over the bad things. I have done quite a bit of counseling with people who are in the process of getting divorced. I have known some since the time they were married, at a happier time in their life. But at the time of the divorce they cannot remember a single happy time. All they can remember is that which they have gone over and over. They are bitter.

This doesn't mean there were not happy times. It just means that they have concentrated on how right they were and how wrong the other person was. If someone has a sharp, detailed memory for things which happened years ago

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, James I., *How to be Free from Bitterness*, (Moscow, ID: Canon Press), 1999, p.5.

when he was a child, or a young man or woman, and that memory is at all accusative of anyone else, then it is an indication of bitterness. And the solution for bitterness is to get rid of it.

I had a wonderful experience one time in Dallas, Texas. I was speaking on a Saturday night at the home of an old friend. Because I was going to be in Dallas, I wrote notes to several people that I'd known from different parts of the country at other times, and they showed up at this home.

My host asked me to speak on bitterness, which I did. Afterwards, a couple came up to see me. I had known them eight years before in Pullman, Washington. The wife came up to me and said, "We have been married for eight years. The first year of marriage I was so bitter toward my mother that I laid it on my husband every single day. Our first year of marriage was just awful because I kept sharing this bitterness toward my mother with my husband."

She then told me that seven years ago I had spoken on bitterness and she had gotten rid of hers. One day she saw another woman who was really bitter towards her mother. She thought, "I can help that woman. I can share all the common experiences. I went to her to share this, and I couldn't remember any of the details. My detailed memory had gone. All I could tell her was I used to remember things, and I do not remember them anymore." The Lord had really taken care of her bitterness.

Another time I was teaching a four-week course on marriage. I had put a notice in the paper and did not know who would show up. A woman came who had been referred to the class by a doctor. She came in and I can honestly say that I have never seen anybody more bitter in appearance in my life. She had forty years of accumulated bitterness. She got rid of it that night and made an appointment to see me the next day at the bookstore where I worked. She came in the store, and I did not know who she was. *She looked so different.* I had just met her the night before, but she was clean inside now.

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And so once again we see how tremendously important our thought life is to the reformation of our character in Christ. Spiritual transformation cannot take place without the renewing of our minds by the Word of God. And the renewing of our minds cannot take place through a casual, occasional exposure to God's Word. God's truth must be *sown* in us. God's reality must replace the distorted picture of reality we now have.

I think the most fundamental thought that must be sown in our minds is this: *God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.* Every aspect of reality depends on this fact. Every dimension of our existence and every facet of our relationship to God and Jesus Christ is grounded in this fact.

It is this fact, that *God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them* that leads irrefutably to our great privilege and obligation to “Love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength.”<sup>2</sup>

It is this fact, that *God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them* that exposes the wickedness of our race when we “...exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Sowing this Thought:**

1. Memorize Genesis 1:1. Repeat it every day for 30 days.
2. Write Genesis 1:1 on 3x5 cards and place them in strategic places where you will see them often.
3. Start every prayer with this affirmation:  
“Father, You are the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.  
All praise and glory belong to You and You alone.”
4. Spend one entire session praising God for specific things in His Creation that you particularly enjoy or by which you are fascinated.

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 12:28-34

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:25