

Growing Families

Two Kinds of Seed

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Parenting is a challenge. In fact, it might be one of the most demanding aspects of the Christian life because the potential ramifications are so great. And, when we consider the condition of our world and the deterioration of our culture, the task is even more daunting.

If we look at the research concerning children, we could become awfully discouraged. Psychiatrists and psychologists tell us we are approaching an epidemic of childhood mental illness. Learning disabilities, clinical depression, attention deficit disorder, bipolar conditions, violent assault, disregard for authority, suicide, sexual promiscuity, and teen pregnancy are all on the increase according to the professionals.

And what explanations do the experts offer? They tell us that there is an explosion of biochemical imbalances, genetic vulnerability, and organic illnesses to blame.

Their answer: medication management. Today, 40 out of every 1,000 children are taking anti-psychotic medications to control their behavior. And this doesn't include the millions who are taking medication for depression and anxiety! Notice I said medication management not medical cure. In truth, psychiatry and psychology has never cured anybody. The best they can offer is to help someone remain comfortably sick while subduing their behavior.

But Scripture offers a very different explanation, and a different answer, for these problems. In God's Word, there is a precise order for the home. There is a clearly defined role for the husband and father; an explicit function for the wife and mother; and a system of training and structure for the child. Scripture even goes so far as to prescribe a cure for disobedient, sinful conduct...His name is Jesus Christ!

But let's be clear about something. The spiritual condition of the parents, will determine their capacity to place the home in order, advance God's structure, fulfill their roles, and lead their children to the Lord. Parents can take their children only as far as they have gone. The heart of a child will eventually dictate his/her behavior; but the heart of the parent, will define the heart of the child.

Ultimately, a child's spiritual, emotional, and behavioral orientation to life, will reflect the harvest of the parental testimony. It is perhaps the simplest of all biblical truths. Paul wrote this warning to the church at Galatia:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap (Galatians 6:7).

This is the unchanging economic system of God's Kingdom. One cannot plant corn and expect beans to come up. Likewise, parents cannot sow toxic emotion and a rebellious attitude into their own hearts, and expect their children to bear a harvest of peace and stability. What goes into the soil will always determine the crop and dictate the abundance of its yield.

As Christians, we have the pure, unadulterated seed of God within us. The Holy Spirit is our seal of truth and assurance; and He is undefiled. But when we begin to cross-pollinate; when we begin to mate with the oppositional seed of the world; our hearts are corrupted and God's Spirit is quenched.

This fundamental truth of reaping and sowing is prevalent throughout the Bible. Consider God's instruction to Israel concerning "two kinds of seed":

You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest all the produce of the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard become defiled (Deut. 22:9).

Here the Lord gives a law related to the literal farming of the land—but the application of this passage is far reaching. Parents may not see themselves as farmers—but in reality, the soil a parent turns, and the produce it yields, are much more critical. We must realize:

- The soil is the parent's heart.
- The seed is their spirit.
- The vineyard is their home.
- And the produce are their children.

God's seed always bears fruit. It is totally dependable and abundant in every way. It has no need for enhancement. But once we merge the incorruptible nature of God with the corrupt nature of man, we become farmers with inferior seed. We end up with a hybrid version of faith that has characteristics of the truth and characteristics of the lie. It is more palatable to the flesh, but totally contrary to the Spirit. This hybrid seed offers tremendous promise, but in fact, produces nothing beyond the first generation, because its seed is considered "unreliable."

Whenever two diverse plants are cross-pollinated, something unnatural occurs. Their seeds, while incompatible, produce a third plant that bears a *resemblance* to the first two. But the new plant is unable to reproduce because its seed cannot be saved and used again. So, with cross-pollination and a hybrid seed, there is a one-time harvest. The seed will never produce again.

Now apply that truth to the family. If we join darkness with light; if we hold communion between righteousness and lawlessness; the children grown will have a yield of one generation. As it says in the Scripture: **“...the produce of the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard become defiled.”**

Is it possible that our farming technique has something to do with the harvest in our home? Scripture demonstrates that our adultery with the world and the idolatry of our hearts, explain not only our spiritual suffering, but our physical illness as well. God, speaking through His prophet, had this to say to a rebellious Israel:

For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god. In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; But the harvest will be a heap In a day of sickness and incurable pain (Isaiah 17:10-11).

We have “forgotten” the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) and planted “vine slips,” of a strange God. Right next to God’s unblemished and “delightful” plant, we have sown the seed of idolatry. We “fence it in.” We hide and believe no one sees. But in the light of day, when the harvest matures, it is filled with “sickness and incurable pain.”

Is it possible that what the professionals now call *mental illness* is really a byproduct of contradictory seeds that have defiled the soil? Does the harlotry of sin and disobedience really produce such a powerful ripple effect through a family? Interview any biblical counselor; any pastor; and they will give testimony of the misery that exists within the Body of Christ. Christian hearts are hard. Their soil is almost impenetrable. They are frustrated, tired, discouraged, fearful, and angry. Often, their anger is directed toward God. In their desperation they cry out:

- God promised me abundance...
- He guaranteed me fruit...
- Why is my home suffering?
- Why is my heart breaking?
- Why is my family coming apart?
- Why are my children angry and disobedient?
- Why aren't they coming to Christ?

But if we really listened to God...if we could quiet our voices and listen for His...God might ask a very direct question...

“What other seeds have you planted?”

“What has taken root in My garden that is contrary to My seed?”

So much of the misery within the Body has grown from the merger and tolerance of two diverse versions of life. We have attempted to join scriptural truth with secular notions. Rather than use the Bible as our singular template and guide, we have inserted humanism—contemporary psychology—personal desire—selfish intent—and moral relativism. Scripture takes a lowly assessment of such intelligent thought. Paul wrote:

The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God (1 Corinthians 3:19).

But as this foolishness fills our hearts; it goes forth sowing seed in our relationships, our marriages, and especially our children. In a very short time, the nature and product of our hearts will be mirrored throughout our homes. The concessions a parent makes; the family will make. The compromise the parent tolerates; the children will tolerate. The moral standard kept by the leaders of the home; will be kept by everyone in the home. And the Spirit conveyed from the top, will be returned in like form.

But that isn't the end of the story. Scripture goes further and warns that the allowances we make, and the ignorance we embrace, will not only be replicated: the chaos will grow exponentially—in fact it will explode in the next generation. It says in **Hosea 8:7**:

**“They sow the wind,
And reap the whirlwind.
The stalk has no bud;
It shall never produce meal.
If it should produce,
Aliens would swallow it up.”**

You see in sowing the wind (the foolishness of the world), we don't just get wind. We can tolerate a little wind! No, we get a whirlwind...we get a full-blown tornado...a category five hurricane! In time, the seeds that seem so wise and so reasonable...the seeds that seem to enhance the garden and cause no harm...the concessions and the sin that no longer bother us because our hearts are hard...will bring a storm we did not anticipate.

And remember, even though the wind cannot be seen...we will see the damage it leaves behind. It only takes a single tornado about five seconds to totally destroy a home, take a life, and cripple a family.

Parents believe they are invisible like the wind. We believe no one sees our true condition. But the Lord knows. As Paul said: “God is not mocked...” (Gal. 6:7). But those closest to us know the truth. The Bible teaches that “...the deeds of the flesh are evident...” (Gal. 5:19): they are obvious.

- Children know if their parents love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

- They know if fathers love their wives just as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25).
- Children see clearly if mothers have the gentle quiet spirit that is precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4).
- Children know if their divorced parents have forgiven each other as Christ forgave them (Eph. 4:32).
- They notice when parents are reviled that they do revile in return (1 Peter 2:23).
- They also recognize when their leaders return evil for evil (1 Thess. 5:15).
- And even little ones can sense if the marital bed has been defiled (Heb. 13:4).

Jesus said:

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

Children are excellent fruit inspectors...

God is clear: Plant only what is compatible with His Spirit; sow only the seed He has given; protect the soil; preserve the produce; sustain the increase from generation to generation.

Remember, our God is a generational God. He described Himself as the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex. 3:6). As parents, we are required to produce a godly inheritance: one that can be reliably reproduced within our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. To accomplish this, we must guard our hearts and protect ourselves from deception.

Before we can sow health, prosperity, obedience, and Spirit-filled living into others, we first have to sow our hearts with the single, unblemished seed of Christ that requires no further enrichment. If our heart is divided, our home will be divided. Jesus clearly warned:

“Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls” (Luke 11:17).

Satan is a divider, a liar, and a thief. He wants nothing more than to steal future generations by keeping them from Christ. To accomplish his goal, he has produced a counterfeit version of sowing and reaping. According to the devil, you are entitled to ingest any seed, you wish without consequence. Remember what he told Eve in the Garden about the effect of his fruit:

“You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4).

He is the designer of this “hybrid” seed, the merger of truth and lie, that promotes the promise of a bountiful yield. Remember what he told Eve about adding his fruit to her diet:

“...your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...”(Gen. 3:5).

You are going to be wise...you can discern good and evil...you will be powerful and self-sufficient...you won't have to depend on God because you will have all the attributes of God...everything you need. It was an easy sell because the nature of our flesh is to turn to our “own way” (Is. 53:6).

That is why contemporary psychology and humanism carry such appeal. They teach that the human *should* go his own way.

- Have whatever *you* want.
- *You* deserve to be happy.
- *Your* needs come first.

In fact, the voice of humanism sounds a lot like the flesh, and a lot like Satan; and neither, according to Scripture, has any redeeming quality. Read what James wrote about that kind of self-centered wisdom:

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing (James 3:15-16).

In spite of this warning, many parents within the church have built a revised theology that says:

- “God doesn't want me to be unhappy. My children will be better off once I get away from that man...”
- “I love her, but I'm not in love with her anymore. I deserve to enjoy my life before I get any older. The kids will just have to adjust...”

Parents work 50 and 60 hours a week while leaving their children under the care of others, so they can provide them “the best” that money can buy. Men teach their sons to *respect* their mothers, while they ignore, discount and demean their wives. Women teach their daughters to *honor* their fathers, while they berate and undermine their husband's authority in the home. And parents require their children to *act* spiritually and obey biblical principles, while they themselves are slaves to carnal, selfish, pursuits that neither glorify God nor teach their children.

“Jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, evil things...” Can't you hear the whirlwind begin to blow.

The Christian home is under attack, but parents must not be the agent that carries the poison into the family. For too long, parents have received and feasted upon the counterfeit seed that has divided their hearts from the truth and

beguiled their families with the lie. The Body must take action to secure our territory now.

If we look around we will see that our marriages and our children are not improving under the counsel of the world. Our spiritual fruit is not the list Paul gave the church at Galatia. Increasingly we bear: anger instead of love...depression rather than joy...anxiety in place of peace, and intolerance over patience. Kindness has given way to aggression...goodness has surrendered to evil...faithfulness has been supplanted by adultery...and gentleness has been stifled by harsh words and murderous tones. Greed and impulse has weakened our self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

To grow the kind of family God requires we have to reclaim the field, purge the soil, root out the plants of idolatry, heal the land, and replant with a pure seed.

First, the leaders of the home, parents must take a thorough survey of their vineyard—examine the status of their home. But before this is done, understand that it will do no good to compare the field to the farmer's next door. It does not matter how we stack up against human measurement.

Evaluate the marriage...study the order of the family...observe the attitude and actions of the children—but do so with the magnifying glass of Scripture. Then, and only then, will we begin to see our families as God sees them.

Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” As the heart is uncovered, we must assume that everything seen in the home is a product of our spirit. It is the yield of the parent's seed. Challenge yourself not to blame biology, peer influence, a debased culture, or the nature of your circumstance. Stand accountable for the produce in your vineyard.

Second, as we make this evaluation, the location of the problem will become evident. The first parent/child relationship that needs attention, may be the one between your Heavenly Father and you. Jesus said:

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

If we are not taking our spiritual nourishment from the Vine of Christ, then we are being fed by the bitter root of the world. We cannot expect our children to crave and consume healthy fruit and vegetables while we eat nothing but junk food! If we do not reveal the fruit of the Spirit, it is because we are disconnected from the Vine. In that state we can do nothing about our hearts, nothing about our marriages, and nothing about our children.

Third, the only cure for separation is reconciliation. In order to reconcile with God, we must be willing to repent for the defilement of His temple and the sowing of a disharmonious seed. We have to be willing to confess our error and submit to His method of correction.

Speaking to a rebellious Israel, God said through the prophet Jeremiah:

“Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts...(Jeremiah 4:3-4).

“Break up your fallow ground...” That term “fallow” refers to a field that has been plowed and left unplanted for a period of time, so that it may recover its *natural fertility*. Break open your heart, tear out the crops of an *unnatural seed*.

Sorrow and repentance restores our production. The psalmist wrote:

He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm 126:6).

Repentance will bring a return of joy along with bundles of harvested plants, bearing seed that can be planted season, after season. God is amazing in His mercy!

Finally, once we have seen our heart and our home as God sees them; once we have assessed our proximity to the Vine and our potential for bearing fruit; once we have torn open the fallow ground and repented with sorrow; we will again have a seed that is pure and reliable; ready to be disseminated throughout our home. When we reach that point, we must plant God’s seed generously, freely, and with passion and zeal. Paul wrote:

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6).

The following passage provides a vision of God’s home. A family that is ordered, structured, and guided by the Spirit of the Lord, with reverence and worship for His ways:

**Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants**

**All around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you out of Zion,
And may you see the good of Jerusalem
All the days of your life.
Yes, may you see your children's children.
Peace *be* upon Israel! (Ps. 128:1-6).**