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Sowing and Reaping Based on a Christian Worldview

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You are familiar with the sowing and reaping principle, no doubt – you reap what you sow. The basic concept is that whatever you put out in life will be increasingly returned back to you. This principle is rather obvious as we live out our lives in the world, but is also expressed in the Bible – in both the Old and New Testaments. Some of the more prominent places you will see this include:

A faithful man will be richly blessed... Proverbs 28:20

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Galatians 6:7

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 2 Corinthians 9:6

This principle is always true. It is actually a law of the universe that applies both in the physical world as well as in the non-physical parts of our lives. For instance, if you sow a pea seed in a field, you will reap more peas which come from the plant produced by the pea. In the same way, if you sow great effort into a project, you will reap abundant results which are in direct proportion to the effort you put out.

Understanding the Sowing and Reaping Principle

While the principle is constant, there are implications which go well beyond the principle itself – particularly when it comes to how individuals apply this to life. Let's look a little more deeply at how this works.

One common example is of a particular theological position which tries to argue that if people will "sow" money into a particular ministry, they will "reap" personal wealth for their own lives. That is, God will somehow give them a financial windfall. The basis for this kind of theology is that God exists as a cosmic Santa Claus, and his purpose is to make you prosperous in your life.

Now God certainly does want our lives to be fulfilled, but to say his very purpose is to fulfill our personal desires is to take this principle and twist it in ways which are not biblical. God's purpose for us is not to make us financially prosperous. If that is his purpose, what are we to conclude as we look at the millions of people on the earth who love God and are faithful to him yet live in poverty and intense persecution. If material prosperity is God's purpose, we must conclude that either those people really are not faithful to God or that he is not able to fulfill his purpose.

No, that approach to understanding God's purpose and his ways is completely off base. In fact, even the core principle doesn't work that way. What about people who sow great effort into a project yet it fails to produce the results that were intended. It is not unusual at all for that to happen. Something is just wrong about looking at the principle in a materialistic way.

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Based on a biblical worldview, the application of this principle goes in an entirely different direction. The principle of sowing and reaping is absolutely in effect, but the focus of the sowing is not on what we can get for ourselves, but what we can do to accomplish God's purpose in the world. Let's look at this a little more deeply.

What does the Bible have to say about where the focus needs to be as it relates to how we should sow? Are we to sow in order to become more materially prosperous, or is there something else? Earlier we looked at some Bible verses which deal with this topic. But one of the big problems with the verses we looked at is that they are often taken out of context. Using our example above, we can see how people have taken "sowing and reaping" verses out of context and built an entire theology which is actually not biblical at all. Let's look at the previous verses a little closer.

A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished. Proverbs 28:20

As we see by looking at the entire verse, the focus here is on sowing faithfulness to God, not to acquiring material prosperity. In fact, this verse teaches that prosperity for the sake of prosperity is a punishable sin.

24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:24-26

Unfortunately for the prosperity gospel proponents, this passage doesn't end with verse 24. It goes on to say that the focus of our sowing is to be spiritual, not material. On top of that, the one who focuses

on the material will actually end up losing his very spirit.

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:7-10

Here is another case where the passage in context tells a different story. Biblical sowing is not to please self, but to please God and accomplish his purpose. The focus is on pleasing God and helping others, not on gaining material wealth.

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Once again, in these verses, there is no hint of sowing so that we may receive. The sowing is to please God and accomplish his purpose in the world.

Application for Life

Don't get this wrong. There is nothing inherently wrong with being prosperous. It is just that our material prosperity is not the purpose of God's work in the world and should not be the focus of our individual lives. He created mankind for relationship with himself, not so that people could become ma-

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terially prosperous. The greatest blessings God wants to shower on mankind is participation with him in the accomplishment of his purpose for the world. This means that we should devote our entire lives to fellowship with him and work alongside him to help others also enter that relationship.

Based on biblical teachings, the principle regarding resources that governs a Christian's life is that of stewardship, not of wealth accumulation. The purpose of our lives is the purpose of God, not of self. The focus is supposed to be on the spiritual and eternal, not on the material and temporal.

If you want to be aligned with a biblical worldview, then your focus needs to be on finding God's purpose for your life and fulfilling it. If God blesses you with money, it is not so that you can indulge yourself. Rather, it is so you can use his resources to accomplish his purposes. The money you get is not yours, it is God's. And the way you use it must be to discern what he wants you to support with it.

God's purpose is to bring all the people of the world into relationship with himself. He allows us to partner with him as stewards to bless our lives. If your personal purpose is other than that, you are not living according to a biblical worldview.

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