

# “The 5 Laws of Sowing and Reaping” // Gal 6:6–10 // *Freedom in the In-Between* BONUS TRACK (MULTIPLY)

## Introduction

Well, I know it has been a heavy weekend, but we turn now to the one sure thing that never changes, God’s word. **Galatians 6**

**You say, “What? Back to Galatians?”** Yes, this series on Galatians is like **Nicolas Cage’s career**—just when you think it is finally over, it comes roaring back. I wanted to take some extra time on this passage in Galatians because I think it so poignantly addresses where we are in this Multiply journey.

Some of you say, **“I’ve heard you mention Multiply several times in the last few weeks... What exactly is Multiply?”** *Multiply is a 2-year journey we’ve been on as we have committed ourselves to what we see God doing here.*

**Multiply is our entire giving strategy.** If you’ve been around here you might have noticed that we don’t really take special offerings—Multiply covers all that we do here, from reaching families to building campuses or planting churches or ministering to prisoners. **Multiply is all of it.**

**Our vision as a church** is to see gospel multiply *deeper* in us and **wider in the world.** It goes back to 2002 when 300 people at this church met on a Sunday night in N. Durham and covenanted together to offer themselves fully to God—their preferences, their resources—to see the gospel **multiplied in the Triangle.**

**Here we are, 15 years later.** That **group of 300 has multiplied** to more than **11K** gathering at Summit campuses in the Triangle each

weekend. We have **sent out 448** of our members to plant churches in the United States, and another **500** have left our church to go live overseas on gospel mission.

- **BTW, we had another 111** come to our interest meeting on Monday night for our 2 newest church plants in Austin and Charlottesville. **As I mentioned last week,** our studies show that for every **1 we’ve sent out, 20** new people are worshipping in the kingdom. That’s what it means to **Multiply!**

***Alright, Galatians 6...** Paul talks about how multiplication works on the principle of sowing and reaping...*

(Galatians 6:7–9)

<sup>7</sup> Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, <sup>8</sup> because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up.

**Now, at first this almost sounds like Paul is contradicting** what he has taught us elsewhere in Galatians, doesn’t it? **Throughout Galatians Paul has explains** that the gospel, thank God, is that God gives us not what we deserve, but what Christ deserved in our place. **As a gift.**

**But these verses almost sound like** Paul is introducing the principle of karma at the end—the good you do will come back on you. So, sow good karma so you can reap good karma later or something like that.

**But that is the wrong way to read this. Paul is simply reminding us of** something we all know to be true, a principle, a law God has built into the very fabric of the universe: what you sow, you reap.

**I love how Andy Stanley** explains this,

*Paul says what we really all know intuitively: life is connected. Where you are today is a result of decisions you yesterday, and where you will be tomorrow is connected to what you do today. There is a relationship between your current irresponsibility and what you can expect in the days and weeks and months to come.*

*We must realize what Paul doesn't say here. He doesn't say, "People reap what they sow—unless they ask for forgiveness." See, forgiveness doesn't erase what you've sown. I run into this all the time as a pastor. Someone comes to me and says, "Andy, I'm doing my best." And I have to say, "I'm glad you're doing your best now, but for five years you didn't do your best. That was sowing. Now you're reaping from those years, and doing your best now doesn't erase all the sowing you did then.*

You see, you can get forgiveness of sins and still have to suffer its consequences.

- If I eat an entire cheesecake every night for 6 months, I can ask forgiveness for my gluttony, and God will give it, but that is not going to make the weight magically fall off.

**You can get forgiveness for your sin**, but you can't un-sin. Even when God forgives us our actions have consequences.

**That's what Paul is saying:** What you sow, you always will reap. **Tim Keller goes so far as to call this an "absolute" principle in Scripture.** He says it is what **underlies** the entire book of Proverbs!<sup>1</sup>

**Get this:** There are at least **66 places** in the Bible where this principle is explicitly stated, and they read like:

- **"Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them." Prov 26:27**

- **"The wicked person earns an empty wage** (IOW, if you get rich off of injustice or exploitation, you won't ultimately be satisfied), **but the one who sows righteousness reaps a lasting reward."**  
**Proverbs 11:18**
- **Throughout Proverbs, Solomon frequently applies it to money.** **"Whoever sows injustice** (injustice in Proverbs can be a synonym for selfishness) **reaps calamity... but a generous person will be blessed."** **Prov 22:8–9** And **"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new** (non-alcoholic grape juice) **wine."** **Prov. 3:9–10.\***
- Solomon even applies the **principle to parenting.** **"Raise up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."** **Prov 22:6** This is of course **not a promise, but a principle:** Sow righteousness into your child and, in most cases, that is what you will harvest later.

**Well here, Paul picks up on this principle and applies it to our life in the Spirit.** What you **sow to the Spirit** you will reap from him.

This is not in contradiction to the gospel; it is how we apply the gospel.

**This is similar to the metaphor he used in chapter 5:** where he told us the quality of our fruits is determined by the depths of our roots: Drive your roots deeper in the gospel, he says, and you'll bear the fruits of righteousness.

In the same way, sow to the Spirit in your life, he now says, and from the Spirit you'll reap a harvest of the Spirit.

**This is true regarding:**

- **What we put in our minds.** If you sow the word of God into your heart, the fruits of righteousness will grow in you.
  - **Peter says it is like how a baby grows. When you have a baby**, for the first 6 months, parenting is basically a pass-fail.

<sup>1</sup> Keller: "The whole book of Proverbs is summed up by Galatians 6:7-8." *Galatians For You*.

You don't have to think about how to make it grow. If you keep the baby fed with milk, it will grow. If they are deprived of milk, they will not (**1 Peter 2:2**).

- The principle is true regarding **what we do with our habits**. When you participate in a sin, you are sowing into your life the appetite for sin that will result in a greater craving for sin.
  - You know **how an appetite works. An appetite doesn't go away when you feed it. You may satisfy it for a little while, but ultimately it comes back stronger.** Ever **go to a restaurant and just gorge yourself?** Bloomin' onion, rib-eye, dessert... and you think, "I'm never doing that again... I never again want to eat anything fried; no more carbs; no more sugar." **But like 4 hours later what are you doing?** Scrounging around in the pantry for some chips to snack on. Feed an appetite and it grows.
  - **Sin works like that, too.** When someone looks at pornography, the appetite for pornography grows stronger and darker with each indulgence. You can get forgiveness, the harvest of sin remains
  - **That's going to be true for...**
    - **...lying**—every time you do it, it gets easier to do.
    - **...pride...** every time you act on pride, it feels more natural, until you are basically a ridiculous narcissist who doesn't realize how ridiculous you sound to everyone else. **I've heard it said pride is a strange disease...**
    - **That's true for any sin: Act on it**, and it becomes even more a part of you.
- **Righteousness works this way also.** The more you act on righteousness, the more it becomes a part of you.
- **Listen, there are lots of motivations not to sin.** But one of the most compelling for me is that every time I sin, that sin becomes a deeper part of me. **Sometimes we think, "Yeah, but if I sin I've always swipe the heavenly Visa card of Jesus' blood** and I can get forgiveness and come back to 0." Well, obviously that is a wrong way to think about grace, but what you also have to keep in mind

is that even after you get forgiveness, the seeds of that sin are still germinating in you and become increasingly difficult to weed out.

- **You can get forgiveness for sin, but you can't un-sin.** Even after forgiveness, the fruits of sin remain.

**Now, here in Gal 6**, Paul thinks about the principle specifically in regards to money and our attitude toward money.<sup>2</sup>

- **How do I know that is the context?** If you **look at the surrounding verses (vv. 6, 10)**, you'll see that he is thinking specifically about money.
- This is **not the only time** Paul does this. **Remember the verse we used at beginning of our Multiply journey?** Paul said: **"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6).**

*Let me give you...*

### The 5 Biblical Laws of the Harvest

...based off Paul's teaching here in Galatians and 2 Corinthians.<sup>3</sup>

**We will apply it to our finances**, but you can also apply to everything else in your life, too.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Verse 9 draws out the concept of sowing in the Spirit—doing good. The Greek conjunction *de* ("then") connects verse 9 to verse 8 ("let us, then, not become weary in doing good..."). The doing good is "identical with the concepts of the 'fruit of the Spirit' (5:22–23) and of 'following the Spirit' (5:25) ... In particular, it has reference to those matters commanded in 6:1–6: restoring someone entrapped by sin, bearing oppressive burdens of others, and sharing materially with those who teach the gospel message (v. 6). (Longenecker, *Galatians*, 281).

<sup>3</sup> This list is compiled with the help of James MacDonald, sermon on Gal 6:1–10, Robert Morris, "[The Principles of Multiplication](#)," The Blessed Life 2015, Gateway Church, accessed October 31, 2017, Charles Stanley, Andy Stanley, and Tim Keller.

<sup>4</sup> *Keep in mind, there is a natural component to this law—that works just like planting a seed and harvesting it; and a supernatural component—where God intensifies the process. A lot of times in Scripture, God's activity in our lives is merely the intensification of the results of our own choices; his judgment is just an intensification of the natural bad consequences of sin, and his rewards an intensification of the natural blessings of obedience.*

## Law 1: The harvest is limited to the planting.

You can **only harvest what you plant**. If you haven't sown it, God can't multiply it.

One of the **clearest pictures of multiplication occurs in John 6**, where Jesus is standing before 5000 hungry people. (15K)

- He takes a **little boy's lunch**—5 loaves and 2 fish, a Hebrew Happy Meal, a Levitical Lunchable—and Jesus takes it, blesses it, and distributes it to the disciples.
- **And as they gave it away** it multiplies to the point that it was enough to feed every person in the crowd and still leave 12 basketfuls leftover.

**This miracle demonstrates the pattern of multiplication.** You put it in the hands of Jesus, and as it is distributed, it multiplies.

**People have the wrong idea of this miracle:** they think Jesus took the bread and fish and suddenly there was a big pile of it and everybody came and took some. As they took it out of his hands and gave it to others, it multiplied.<sup>5</sup> Technically, the miracle happened in their hands, not his.

- **I point this out because some of you say, "If it multiplies, I'll give it away."** God says, "Give it away, and it will multiply!"

Here's a **phrase I'll come back to again and again today** that I heard from one of our **church planters**: **"Generosity is an invitation for God to infuse blessing into your finances."**

A declaration that you need his help

## Law 2: The harvest comes *later* than the planting.

The **hard part of harvesting** is that it takes time to see your efforts pay off. That's why many people won't do it. We're an **instant gratification** generation.

- **I'm like that.** For example, **when I diet**, I want to see results immediately. I want to eat one salad one time and be able immediately to look in the mirror the next morning and see the difference. I want to do 30 push-ups one time and look in the mirror and think I'm looking at the body of a Greek god. **But these results take time.** It takes time to reap the harvest.
- **This is even more true** when you think about how it works out in agriculture. You **sow in one season** and don't see the return until the next! Maybe the next year!
- **What you harvest today is the result of decisions** you made yesterday.
  - **J Muller** told me that one of the best practical jokes he played as a kid growing up was after his neighbors had aerated and fertilized their yards, he and his buddies would sneak out at night and go strew random seeds in their yards—corn and watermelons and sunflowers. **He said the hard part was you got no immediate gratification for the joke.** You had to wait 6 months before you saw any results. But sure enough, 6 months later, people had watermelons and sunflowers growing in their yards.
  - **BTW, you at NRC**, this is the man to whom you have committed the shepherding of your souls to.
  - **The "law of later" is why we so often give up on doing** the right thing. It takes time harvest—weeks, months, even years.
  - **"The law of later" is why we envy people** who are doing it wrong and still seem to be enjoying so much success. We say, "Is there any use doing the right thing?"
  - **Sowing, you see, is all about the future.**
  - That's why Paul says, vs. 7, not to be deceived about this—**Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap**,—because the fact that the harvest comes later makes it an easy principle to forget.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, "The Principles of Multiplication."

- Interestingly, this word **“deceived,”** in Greek is the word *planao* (it means “led astray”)—and is where we get our English word *planets*. **The ancient Greeks used the stars for navigation.** But **some stars were unreliable guides** because they seemed to wander in the sky. The Greeks called these *wandering stars*. It’s from here that we got the English word *planet*.
- Here, **Paul says we can look at moving circumstances and forget** that God has built a law into the universe that what you sow you will surely reap. It just takes time, but it is inevitable.
- **Could he say it any greater? God will not be mocked!**

Equally as important is **law #3, the law of greater...**

### **Law 3: The harvest is *greater* than the planting.**

**In the harvest, what comes back to you is always greater than what you sowed.**

- **Plant a wheat seed** and it will turn into a wheat stalk that can produce hundreds of wheat seeds.
- **Plant an acorn** and it can produce an oak tree that will produce thousands of acorns.
- **This also works for the things we don’t want to see multiplied.**
  - Anybody who has ever tried to grow a nice lawn of fescue knows that if you get even the smallest amount of Bermuda grass in there it will take over. Where I previously lived, my neighbor planted Bermuda grass and my dad said, “Well, unless you put down a barrier, that pretty much means your lawn is going to be Bermuda in a few years.” So, I just moved.
- **The law of greater.** What starts small multiplies into something much bigger than you began with.

**People sometimes feel like this is unfair.** They make a few bad decisions and then life falls apart and they think, *“Well, I know I haven’t always made the wisest decisions, but I don’t deserve all this.”*

- **You’re exactly right. But what you are experiencing is probably not punishment, *per se*; it is harvest.** And the law of the harvest doesn’t operate according to exact proportions. **What we reap always comes back to us greater than what we sow.**
- Jesus talked about a harvest of 30, 60 and 100 fold!
- That’s true with sinful habits you sow into your lives. It’s true with what corrupt thoughts you fill your mind with.
- It’s true with how you raise your kids.
  - **Billy Sunday—the professional baseball player turned evangelist—used to say:** For every 1 lap you take around the devil’s track, your kid will take 7.
  - **Many Christian parents** are surprised when their kids go off to college, for example, and walk away from the faith. And they always say, “But we raised them in church.” **Yes, but church and your walk with God wasn’t that important to you.** You came sporadically. You didn’t volunteer. You weren’t in a small group. You didn’t do missions together or read the Bible or pray together. Your kids weren’t involved in the student ministry. You frequently missed church for sports events or dance or trips to the beach. **You raised them around God,** but with God as only a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier priority. And that multiplied in your kid’s life, so when they went to college they left the faith behind because they figured getting up and going to church, or living a pure and God-pleasing life in the face of such a hostile culture was just not worth the hassle. **Your half-committed heart multiplied in them.**
  - (BTW, I know **sometimes a kid walks away** and it has nothing to do with that. But I am very concerned when I look at some of you because I see that what you are sowing into your kids is a little bit of Jesus and whole lot of materialism and a half-committed heart, and that is going to multiply in their lives.)

**When Scripture applies this to money,** it teaches us that the harvest is greater than the planting **in two different ways.**

- First, the **magnitude** of what you reap is greater than what you sow:

- Think about that verse we looked at first from Proverbs... about giving your 1<sup>st</sup> fruits and your barns overflowing...
- **Or, Malachi 3:10** *“Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”* Test me and see. Give it back to him!
- **We see it illustrated in John 6** when Jesus fed the 5000. **It says that there were 12 baskets left over.** Why would Jesus do that? To show us that what we sow always comes back to us greater than what we sow.
  - **BTW:** One commentator said that it was one for each of the twelve tribes. But there is no way that little boy did not get to take one home. Maybe all 12. Mom, look!
- So, the **magnitude** of what is sown is greater... But the **kind** of fruits are also greater!
  - **Paul says here in vs. 8b that we reap “...eternal life from the Spirit”** by our sowing; **in 2 Cor he calls this the harvest of righteousness.**
  - God often uses generosity to give us gifts far greater than money.
  - **Let me ask you to do a thought experiment, genie in a bottle.** Which would rather have: A lot of money, or the ability to be truly happy and satisfied with what you do have? **Only a fool would say** “Give me the money.” Because the reason you want more money is to be happier and more satisfied, and you think more money will bring that to you. What if there was a better way to get to that end? Important principle.
  - **In one of the most important passages in the Bible about money (Matt 6),** Jesus said, *Be generous with your money, because...* **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Matthew 6:21. I think in **reverse...**
  - **IOW, giving is a way to change the loves of your heart.** Jesus is saying, *“One of the ways you can fight against money’s power in your heart is to give it away.”*
- Jesus said that the you can’t love God and money... giving is a way of releasing your heart.
- **Lewis: *wealth has a way of knitting a man’s heart.***
- I heard a great example of this: **Tom Monaghan,**<sup>6</sup> **the founder of the Domino's Pizza,** shared that what drove him to succeed in life was really the desire to have more than everyone else. But after seeing how prideful his heart had become and how miserable it had made him, he decided to take a new approach. He adopted a very simple lifestyle, set a limit on what he’d live on, and committed to give away everything else to the Kingdom of God. **He says the latter approach has filled him with more joy than all the stuff he used to buy with his money.**
- **Again: *Generosity is an invitation for God to infuse blessing into your finances.***
  - **And so those who are wise are thinking about how they can invest the fortune of their lives.** *There is a very wealthy man who gives away a ton of money; “Bounce my last check.”*
  - **Some of you say,** “Well, that won’t be a problem for me, because I’m bouncing checks all the time already.” How can I give, since I have so little to spare?” **One of the ways that God can infuse blessing and multiplication** into your finances is for you to give him your first and your best.
  - *Generosity is an invitation for God to infuse blessing into your finances.*
  - God is saying, *“I’m not telling you to give to me because you feel like you can afford it; give to me even though you know you can’t and watch me multiply it!”*

#### **Law 4: The harvest is proportional to the planting.**

Scripture says the blessing God puts in us is proportional to the sacrifice. It’s greater, but it’s also proportional.

- Your generosity toward God and others determines his generosity toward you. –

<sup>6</sup> <https://vimeo.com/19495108>

- *I know some of you are already objecting—don't argue with me, argue with Solomon*
- **Look at this:** "Whoever is kind to the poor is *lending to the Lord*—the benefit of his gift will return to him in *abundance*." **Prov. 19:17** God gives an incredible ROI!
- **Remember Prov 3:9–10...**
- **Another biblical example:** Earlier this year we considered God's offer to **Solomon, "Ask me anything."** But what do we also know was true of Solomon?
- **Solomon was himself a man of generosity.** For example, it was a tradition for the king to sacrifice one bull during his inauguration. Go to **1 Kings 8** tells us that Solomon sacrificed 1000 bulls. He went 1000x beyond what was required. **Is it any coincidence that that the only time God said to someone, "Ask me whatever you want and I'll give it to you,"** he said it to an extravagant giver?
- To the excessively generous, God is excessively generous. Like we often that You can't out-give God!

Please know that I'm not trying to create some kind of rule for you. I'm just saying, "How much do you want God to bless and multiply you? That will be **proportional** to what you offer."

- **God measures our giving not by how much we put in, but by what kind of sacrifice it represents for us.**
- Jesus was once *watching an offering* where a woman...

**I think here of D. L. Moody's words:** *"The world has yet to see what God can do through one man fully and completely dedicated to him."*

**What does it look like when a whole church thinks that way?**

This is why we say Multiply has never been about meeting a financial goal. Our primary goal is 100%.

- **If Bill Gates was at the DDC...** we would still do it.

**Law 5: We can't do anything about this year's harvest, but we can change next year's.**

- **You reap today what you sowed yesterday.** You can't change that, even if you pray about, even if you ask for forgiveness.
- **The gospel is that God gives you forgiveness immediately.** But the way he begins to work change in your life is by getting you to begin sowing seeds of the Spirit in your life today!
- Some of you **right now, today, are experiencing the bad harvest** that comes from an ungenerous life. Dissatisfaction in your heart. (*Prov. the righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the selfish will always be hungry*). Financial difficulties with your spouse. Materialism in your kids. The feeling that you are wasting your life. Never feeling like you have enough. Maybe you're going through genuine financial hardship right now. **All the harvest of an ungenerous life.**
- **We can't do anything about this year's harvest, but we can change next year's.**
- **The old proverb states:** The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is today.
- *It's time to start sowing different seeds so you can reap a different harvest.*
- **What do you want to reap next year?** It is only possible if you start sowing for it today.

Listen, more than **1 of 4 American Evangelicals** gave away \$0 last year. The **median annual giving for a Christian is just \$200**—just over ½ percent of after-tax income.<sup>7</sup>

Christians **gives less on average now**, than they did in the Great Depression. 3.5% compared to 2.4%.

This is such an **indictment** on us, because **our money, Jesus said, infallibly reveals what we worship.** We can even deceive ourselves. But our wallets never lie. Our wallets give an infallible indicator of what we really worship. Do you trust God, the harvest bringer, enough to sow in obedience?

<sup>7</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Call to Resurgence*, 202

And it is a **tragedy**, because **God has promised to bless us in this if we honor him**. If we don't, it's a curse. When we don't give to God our first and our best, it's like we are robbing God! It's not that God asks you to give him some of your money. It's all his money that he gave you; he asks you to give back to him of what is already his!

- **Alexander the Great**: rice offering. "Give me that back." Gave back 2 colonels.
- **Give me that...** watch what I do!
- **The reason we don't make a bigger impact is not because God is limited in compassion or power**. We won't give our 1<sup>st</sup> and best!
- **And I say this every time...** and I'll say it every time. If you think this is a scheme...
- **I know you can't be a follower of Jesus...**

## Multiply Instructions

- **Finish strong**: We only reap the benefit if we persevere! Only if we continue on to the end!
- New? Join in. Start giving today.
  - **Summitrdu.com/Multiply** for more details.
- **Multiply is not simply a 2-year journey**, it's a way of responding to what God has given us that we want to practice for the rest of our lives!
- He gave us what he gave us to sow into his kingdom so he could multiply it for the salvation of the world!

Check out this story... (VIDEO)