

SELF-DECEPTION: SOWING & REAPING

Joe Slater

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

I grew up on a dry land farm in eastern Colorado. My dad grew wheat as well as some other grains and hay crops. When he planted wheat, he didn't expect to harvest corn or oats. You reap what you sow. Obvious!

But Paul wasn't giving us an agriculture lesson. Reaping what you sow applies in the spiritual realm too. *“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”* (Galatians 6:8). If you govern your life by the desires of the flesh, corruption will result. Thinking and behaving as though you can practice the works of the flesh (5:19-21) yet escape the consequences, both temporal and eternal, is absolute self-deception! I've heard it stated this way: “Don't sow your wild oats and then hope for a crop failure!”

In fact a harvest is generally larger than what is planted. I remember my dad planting 60 pounds of wheat per acre of ground. That's one bushel. But we hoped to harvest far more than one bushel per acre. And that principle holds true in spiritual matters also. God put it this way to His people in ancient times, speaking through the prophet Hosea: *“They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.”* Wind is serious enough, but a whirlwind can be devastating! Many think God won't send anyone to Hell but the worst of the worst. But remember, the harvest greatly exceeds what was sown.

Here's good news: sowing to the Spirit (letting your spirit, controlled by the Spirit-inspired word, direct your life) results in a bumper crop: Everlasting Life!

WHEN WORDS BECOME WEAPONS

Death and life are in the power of the tongue ... Prov. 18:21

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!” Really? Who ever found that to be true? In fact, words can crush my spirit, devastate my sense of self-worth, and destroy my dignity. Verbal abuse, unlike physical abuse, leaves no outward scars. It cannot be proven by photographs or other evidence. No one but the victim will ever fully know the pain and distress that it causes. Jesus understands. He discussed verbal abuse in connection with murder and anger (Matt. 5:22). We must take it as seriously as He did.

What does verbal abuse involve? Dr. Jay Grady, the author of *Stop Verbal Abuse: How To Break The Cycle Of Verbal Abuse*, provides this partial list:

Yelling - Accusing - Using sarcasm - Threatening - Insulting - Treating another with scorn - Intimidating - Humiliating - Putting another down - Ridiculing - Blaming - Disparaging another's ideas - Name-calling - Belittling - Rejecting another's opinion - Criticizing - Mocking - Trivializing another's desires.

You and I could use this checklist on ourselves. We could ask our spouses, children, and others, “Does my language or tone ever leave you feeling that I am accusing, using sarcasm, humiliating, etc.?” Regardless of our professed intentions, if our words have these perceived effects, we have no business using them! Parents, employers, church leaders, and others in leadership positions must be especially cautious, lest we appear to misuse our authority to take advantage of those under our direction. We must correct our children, for example, without derogatory, demeaning words that leave them emotionally crippled.

If my spouse, child, or another person answers, “Yes, I do feel that way (intimidated, etc.),” as a Christian I know I should

say, “Please forgive me. I genuinely love and respect you. Tell me whenever you feel this way again.” According to Grady, “The underlying premise of verbal abuse is control, which is a means of holding power over another.” When I sincerely ask your forgiveness, I make it clear that I am not about control or manipulation. I set both of us free.

Because I am a sinner, I can so easily justify my words, insisting I have done no wrong. I can say, “I was just joking!” See Prov. 26:18-19. I can say, “You're too sensitive!” I can say, “I didn't mean that the way you heard it!” But, because I truly want you to be blessed, I'll just say, “If it does not edify, help, and encourage you, I won't say it or do it. Period!”

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” Eph 4:29.

--Cory Collins (Keller, TX)

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Things Money Cannot Buy

You cannot buy brains unless they are calf brains in some butcher shop.

You cannot buy the artist's touch, the musician's ear, or the gift of song.

You cannot buy a good name, an easy conscience, or stainless reputation.

You cannot buy a big manly heart or the faith of a little child.

Neither can you buy happiness; it has a way of running from the person with money.

You cannot buy a good man's confidence or a good woman's love.

Still less can you buy self-respect, or the right to pray or a place in the kingdom of heaven