

Farming

Harvest is the culmination of the farmer's agricultural year of sowing seed and tending the plants, watching fruit grow to the perfect maturity. Farming is a critical, but hazardous, endeavor. It takes a great deal of daily--or even hourly--attention; anything can ruin the crop. This is one of the reasons why farming is often a family business, as modeled from the very beginning. I don't often think of Adam and Eve as farmers, nor do I think of God as a farmer. I bet you don't either. That isn't generally how the story reads. But tending a garden that has to provide for all living creatures *is* farming. Sure, it was perfect—no weeds, molds, pestilence, unseasonable weather—but it did require some level of faithfulness or *stewardship* over what had been put in man's care. And it would require ongoing planting of seeds. It could be viewed that farming-to-produce-a-harvest was the point of creation.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to farm the land and to take care of it.

The "seeds" God sowed at the creation were seeds of faith housed in His words (Heb. 11:3; Psa 33:6,9; 2 Pet 3:6). "God planted a garden in Eden" using His words only; He wasn't digging little holes and dropping in vegetable seeds. Throughout scripture He speaks in universal agricultural terms with respect to individual people and nations, and words as seeds¹. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and would have been expected to behave like Him, planting word-seeds, tending the vines and reaping the harvest.

Ok, so Adam and Eve were 'farmers', how is this relevant to believers today? Just like Adam and Eve, God still asks every one of His children to farm: cultivate soil, plant seeds and produce fruit, a harvest. This requires stewardship--obedience and resource management-- from His children. We are like our Father and Adam and Eve; we, too, are farmers: stewards of material and spiritual resources.

"But," you say, "I can't give a lot of money. I give when I can and help out at church when I have time." Church members say this frequently, usually accompanied by a lament of having so little money. Adam didn't have any money either, (although he was told about Havilah where there is gold.) Adam was told to care for the land (his only material resource), obey God's one instruction with respect to that resource, and commune daily with God. That's it, three simple things that didn't include money. As far as we know, Adam and Eve were good stewards of everything except God's words of instruction--which then interfered with their communion with God and their material resources. Six thousand years later, we have the same challenge. Stewardship over non-material resources will always affect everything else.²

Romans 12:12 says to be “faithful in prayer.” This is such a simple instruction; it might be overlooked or thought of as praying *often*. Faithful is defined as loyal, constant, and steadfast, thorough in the performance of a duty. The Greek for this word deals more with earnest diligence, devotion, unwavering strength, and attending assiduously all the exercises³. Faithfulness in prayer requires us to manage our time and our thoughts. Yes, *thoughts*. Thoughts are the soil in which faith or doubt seeds are planted and grow. Eve entertained a single thought of doubt, resulting in an act of sin. The thought life must be worked diligently, removing everything that inhibits faith seeds, “we take captive **every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”⁴ A disciplined thought life must filter what is ingested in order to produce the weed-free harvest. Allowing large amounts of worldly input produces a worldly thought life and perspective. This happens so gradually, believers often don’t even realize they no longer take the Biblical words seriously or even literally. What is allowed into the mind **will** control the belief and come out of the mouth.⁵ A mind with weeds **cannot** produce a harvest of faithful prayers.⁶

Good stewardship (or discipleship or faithfulness) is an absolute requirement for the believer. Both require good management of the resources every human is given: time, thoughts and words. The true believer’s heart (mind) will be “tended”—guarded, disciplined, sown generously with the good seed of God’s word – in order to produce the faith necessary for faithful prayer. Without the “tending”, even good seeds will not grow and communion with God becomes inhibited. But with good seed and proper tending, the 30, 60 or 100 fold harvest is inevitable.⁷ Spiritual growth and even life will cease to exist without good stewardship in this area⁸.

Farming – planting and harvesting – is God’s family business⁹. We can all participate in the family business and be faithful in prayer by managing our non-material resources. And that will make produce a harvest that all of heaven can celebrate!¹⁰

1. Gen 1:11, 29; Exo 15:17; **Deu 28:4, 11, 18, 39**; Deu 32:32; Jud 8:2; Job 4:8; Job 15:32-33; Psa1:3; Psa 80:8; Psa 92:12; Psa 126:5; Ecc 3:2; Ecc 11:4, 6; Isa 1:30; Isa 5:1, 4; Jer 2:21; Jer 12:2, 10; Jer 17:8; **Jer 32:41**; Eze 19:10-14; **Eze 17:1-10, 22-24**; Dan 4:10-23; Hos 8:7; Hos 9:16; Hos 10:1, 12; Hos 14:5-8; **Joe 3:13**; **Amo 9:15**; **Jon 4:6**; Zep 1:13; Hag 2:19; Mat 6:26; Mat 7:16-18; **Mat 9:37-38**; **Mat 12:33**; **Mat 13:3-8, 18-23, 24-30, 31-32, 36-43**; **Mat 15:13-33- Mat 21:33-43**; Mar 4:3-31; Luk 6:43-45; Luk 8:5-12; **Luk 10:2**; Luk 12:24; **Luk 13:6-9**; **Joh 4:35-38**; **Joh 15:1-8, 16**; 1 Cor 9:11; 1 Cor 15:37; 2 Cor 9:6, 10; Gal 6:7-9; 1 Pet 1:23

2. Mat 24:47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Mat 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

3. 4342 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

4. 2 Cor 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Cor 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

5. Luk 12:34, Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Mat 15:18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a man.

Luk 6:45, Mat 12:34-35 The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the evil out of the evil brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaks.

6. Jam 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

7. Mar 4:20, Mat 13:8, Luk 8:15 "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

8. John 15:6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mat 3:10, Luk 3:9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Luk 13:7 Finally, he said to his gardener, 'I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden.'

9. Gen 8:22 "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

10. Luk 15:5-7 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, 6comes home, and calls together his friends and neighbors to tell them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep!' 7In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who do not need to repent.

15:23-24 Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. 24For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.