

INTRODUCTION

Gardens are close to the heart of God. As a result, *gardening* and *farming* play a prominent role in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. If we will study them carefully, they will teach us a great deal about the *nature of God* and the *nature of man*. As we spend time in God's gardens, we will *grow* in our understanding of God, our understanding of ourselves and our understanding of the world.

First and foremost, *gardens* reveal to us a great deal about the *nature of God*. The Bible tells us that a *garden* was primal and central to God's creative purposes for the world. After He "...created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), we are told that **"The Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed."**

Until that time in the creative process **"...there was no man to work the ground"** (Gen. 2:5). While there was a perfect **"heaven and earth"** – there was no one to take care of it! As a result of this *built in deficiency* **"...the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being"** (Gen. 2:7-8).

The Hebrew word that is used for **"...formed the man"** is *yasar*. It is a rich and instructive word, and describes the *work of an artist* crafting a magnificent work of art. Here then is the picture of the "Divine Artist" painting His masterpiece...the "Divine Sculptor" carving His own likeness...the "Divine Potter" shaping from clay an earthen vessel in His own image! The Psalmist expressed this truth when he exclaimed: **"I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful"** (Ps. 139:14)!

We also see from this simple creative story in Genesis that the Divine Creator is an "earthy God." While He is the *transcendent God* who is far "above and beyond" His creation, He is neither distant nor detached from it. He is not aloof from His world. That's because *God loves His creation!* He takes divine delight in the works of His hands! We are told that He created the world for His own glory.

Every act in the creation drama reveals that the Creator is a "hands on" God! The Book of Genesis reveals that God literally has "dirt under His fingernails!" How else could He create man from the **"dust of the ground"** -- without getting "down and dirty?!" So the true God of the Bible is One who "rolls up His sleeves" and "gets His hands dirty" in the work of creation! Therefore, God loves to "work in His garden" alongside the man of His creation!

The very fact that man was created by God from the **"dust of the ground"** reveals that both *our nature* and *God's nature* are closely connected to the *earth*. In the Bible, *name generally represents nature*. So the *name of a person* often reflects the *nature of the person*. We can see this in the fact that the first man's name was **"Adam,"** from the Hebrew *adamah*, which basically means **"ground."** Man's name then, would forever be a reminder to him that he was created from the *earth*. So by virtue of creation, man

would always be intricately connected to the earth. He was not an angelic or heavenly being who was created out of the ethereal matter of the spiritual realm. He was not a being who had “come down out of heaven.” He was a man who had been raised “up from the ground” by the very hands of God!

In every other *fiat* of creation, things came into being by the power of God’s word. Over and over again in Genesis 1 we read the phrase “**And God said, let there be...and it was so**” (Gen. 1:3; 6; 14; 24). As a result of the creative power of God’s word, everything came into being exactly as “**God said.**” The Psalmist wrote:

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth...for He spoke and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps. 33:6-9; c.f. Ps. 148:5).

But when it came to the creation of man, it was not so much what “**God said**” – but what “*God did.*” He did not *speak* man into existence, He “...**formed man from the dust of the ground.**” Therefore, since man was created from the “**dust of the ground,**” he can never escape his *earthiness*.

But unlike the other lower animals in creation, man also was given a *divine nature* that came from His Creator. Only man was “kissed by God” with the very “**breath of life.**” Only man was “God-breathed” from the life-giving lips of his Creator! Man alone was given mouth-to-mouth respiration by the true and living God who “...**breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.**” He did not do this with any of the other animal He had created. Therefore, as a result of this *divine breath* from the mouth of God, “...**the man became a living being**” (*nepes*, literally means a “**living soul**”).

Only man then, is a divinely created combination of *dust* and *divinity!* As a result, he can never escape the “**dust**” of his *physical nature*. Nor can he ever escape the “**soul**” of his *spiritual nature*. The two natures are eternally fixed in man’s DNA. And it was in a *garden* that man would express both of these natures to God’s glory!

Even before the very first *fiat* of God’s creative work, He had obviously envisioned *man*. As a result, man is not the end product of a mindless evolutionary process. Nor is he the impersonal consummation of a naturalistic “survival of the fittest.” *Man originated in the very heart and mind of God!* Therefore, this creature would be like no other. He would be the very zenith of God’s creative handiwork. Man would be the “crowning touch” of God’s creation. Nothing in all of creation would be *higher* than him, or *equal* to man. He would have no peer in all of creation -- but his mate, who was created from his own body.

Even though his physical body would come from the “**dust of the ground,**” man would be crowned with a *divine dignity* like nothing else in creation. He would reflect the glory of His Creator in a way that no other being in all creation could do. Man would have a uniqueness that surpassed even the angels, arch-angels and seraphs of heaven. As a result of being the very *image bearer* of God, He would be given *dominion* over all of

God's creation! With that profound truth in mind, please carefully and prayerfully read afresh this brief account of *man's nature* and *man's purpose*:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make *man* in our *image*, in our *likeness*, and let them *rule over* (literally “have *dominion over*”; KJV) the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created man in His own *image*, in the *image of God* He created him; *male* and *female* He created them.

So God *blessed them* and said to them. ‘*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over* the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground...

God saw all that He had made, and it was *very good*.” (Gen. 1:26-31).

We find this *first creation story* recorded in Genesis 1, amplified in the *second creation story* recorded in Genesis 2. In chapter 1, the Divine Artist paints the canvas of his world with bold and broad strokes of color and contrast. Then in chapter 2, he takes up the smaller brushes to paint in the finer spiritual and natural details of creation! He lavishes it with *brilliance*, *balance* and *beauty*. Just look at the colors of the rainbow. Observe the infinite variety of flowers and fowl. Examine the incredible diversity of animal life. Drink in the majestic brilliance of a sunrise -- or the ever-changing hues of a sunset. Gaze into the heavens at night, resplendent with billions of stars and millions of galaxies. Feast your eyes and ears on the sights and sounds of the endless tapestry of nature. God is truly *divinely extravagant* in every act of creation!

And yet, there was *something* lacking. Or rather, there is *someone* missing.

God wanted to share His creation with someone else. Someone who was enough like Him that he could drink in the beauty of His world. Someone who would have the intelligence to fully appreciate and enjoy the *beauty* and *balance* of the natural world. A being like Himself who could reason and respond. One who would have the capacity to reflect and remember. A higher creature who would have more than animal instincts -- and could make willful choices. Most of all, someone who could love and be loved.

But God also desired someone who would be able to enter into the *co-creative* process with him -- and bring his earth to maximum *fruitfulness*. Then and only then would the world fully reflect the *glory of God!* This would require the creation of *man*. And in man alone God would make the highest divine deposit. In this creature He would engrave His own **“*image and likeness*.”** As a result, man would have *dominion* and *dominate* the rest of creation.

Therefore, in the second creation account recorded in Genesis 2, we read about the “why” for God's creation of man. It was because **“...there was *no man to work the***

ground.” This reminds us that God did not create the “**ground**” that covered the earth to lie idle...unused...un-worked. It was not created to be *barren* – but *beautiful*. The earth was not meant to be *fallow* – but *fruitful*. It was created so that man could “...**work the ground.**” God intended that the man “...**rule (have dominion over) the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth**” (Gen. 1:26).

This also clearly reveals the important fact that “**work**” came *BEFORE* the Fall of man. In other words, *man was created for work* long before sin ever entered the world. *Work* was the very *purpose for man’s creation*. Contrary to what many wrongly believe today, *work was not a curse* – but a *blessing!* It was not a *punishment, but a privilege*. So in God’s original design, man was not *condemned to work* as a rebellious criminal in the universe. He was *created to work* as his first expression of *worship* to God. He was created to *work for God’s glory...for his own good...and for the benefit and blessing of all creation!*

Therefore, the Bible clearly teaches that since God is a *God who works*, the man who was created in “**His image**” -- was also designed for *work!* God built into His creation an *incompleteness* that man would eliminate only through *work*. While only God has the power to *create ex nihilo*, or “*out of nothing*,” man would be given the power to *co-create* and *procreate* out of existing matter already created by God. So creation was not *static* – but *dynamic*. It was a *process* that God would allow man to participate in. Man would be God’s *gardener... farmer... partner... steward... overseer... vice-regent... prince... ruler!* Man alone would “...**have dominion over the works of God’s hands**” (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:6).

So while God’s creation was *perfect*, it was *incomplete by divine design*. That’s because there was “...**no man to work the ground.**” Therefore, *God’s creation was purposefully incomplete without man*. So we read that: “**The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground.**” Only after this crowning act of creation did God have a creature in His own image who was *from the ground* and would *work the ground*. And where did God put the man? In a *garden!* Note this simple, but profound account:

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed...The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:8, 15).

Man then, was not originally created for the city. He was created for the *garden*. He was not created to be an urbanite – but a *farmer*. He was not created to be surrounded by bricks and mortar – but by the untamed wilds of nature. Man was not designed by God to live in the impersonal “concrete jungle” of a city. He was originally created to live in a lush garden surrounded by diverse wildlife, beautiful flowers, fruitful trees and abundant vegetables! It was only *AFTER* the Fall that man rebelled against God by saying:

“Come, let us make *bricks* and bake them thoroughly...Come, let us build ourselves a *city* with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may *make a name for ourselves* and *not be scattered* over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:3-4).

We can clearly see then, that it was only AFTER sin entered the world through man’s rebellion, that he sought to “escape the farm” and “flee to the city.” All over the world to this very day, man continues to build large cities to “...**make a name for himself.**” He continues to build taller and taller sky-scrapers “...**that reach to the heavens.**” Annually, more and more millions of people “abandon the farms” and “flock to the cities” so that they will “...**not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.**” This is in direct rebellion against God’s command to “...**fill the earth.**”

Look at the cities of our world today. While these concrete and steel metropolitan areas contain many magnificent “man-made monuments” and tall buildings reaching ever higher into the heavens, they are also increasingly surrounded by *squalid ghettos*, *sprawling townships* and *decaying inner cities*. And these crowded cities are the boiling cauldrons of sin, crime, disease, joblessness, poverty, ethnic fighting, immorality, alcohol, drugs, gambling, prostitution and perversion. The “cities of man” are anything and everything but the “City of God!”

As man has become more and more *urbanized* and *industrialized*, he has also often become increasingly poor and malnourished. Man has increasingly exchanged “things” for the basic necessities of life. He has swapped *naturalism* for *materialism*. Man has increasingly become a *consumer* rather than a *producer*. Rather than having *dominion* over creation, man has become *dominated* by materialism. And in the process, he has lost his soul!

As more and more rural life is exchanged for urban living, the less food is produced on farms and in gardens. As a result, man becomes increasingly addicted to unhealthy, sedentary life-styles – while eating less and less nutritional organic foods, fruit and fibers. While hunger faces millions, obesity plagues millions more! That’s because there is no room in the “concrete jungle” of metropolitan cities for gardens or farms!

Both history and contemporary experience demonstrate over and over again that *no country can rise any higher than her agricultural base!* Until a people can consistently *feed themselves*, they cannot prosper. Therefore, *it is impossible for a people to advance beyond their agricultural base.* So in God’s economy, *gardening* and *farming* are the most basic building blocks of a healthy and prosperous society!

So if God is a *Gardener* – we too should be *gardeners!* If God “...**planted a garden in the east, in Eden,**” then we also should “plant a garden” – whether we live in the east, south, north or west!

As you reflect on these basic *foundational farming facts*, I want you to prayerfully meditate on an appropriate and well loved Psalm. These verses simply and profoundly summarize the principles of this introduction:

**“When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings,
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him *ruler* over the works of your hands;
You put everything under his feet:
all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea...
O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is your name in all the earth.”**
(Ps. 8:3-9)

BEING A SUCCESSFUL PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL FARMER

BY:
DR. J.L. WILLIAMS

FOR:
DOUBLE HARVEST
AND
THE GENESIS FARM

**“The *hard-working farmer* ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops”
(II Tim. 2:6).**

PREPARATION

1. *Privation:*

- A. “The *laborer’s appetite works for him; his hunger* drives him on” (Prov. 16:26).
- B. “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: *‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’*” (II Thess. 3:10).
- C. “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who *work hard* among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love *because of their work*. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, *warn those who are idle...*” (I Thess. 5:12-14).

Principle of Welfare:

“When a person *cannot work*, we are to provide for him; When he *will not work*, we are to exhort him.”

2. *Priorities:*

- A. “Finish your *outdoor work* and get your fields ready; after that, build your house” (Prov. 24:27).

- B. “This is what the Lord says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: *‘Break up your unplowed ground...’*” (Jer. 4:3).
- C. “Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek *first* His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Mtt. 6:31-34).
- D. “This then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. *Give us today our daily bread.* Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Mtt. 6:9-13).

Principle of Priority:

“When first things are in their proper place, secondary and tertiary fall into perspective. But when secondary and tertiary things take first place, All of life loses focus and becomes unbalanced.”

3. Planning:

- A. “I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard; my loved one had a vineyard on a *fertile* hillside” (Isa. 5:1).
- B. “He *dug it up* and *cleared it* of stones and *planted it* with the *choicest* vines. He *built a watchtower* in it and *cut out a winepress* as well” (Isa. 5:2).
- C. “Sow for yourselves *righteousness*, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you” (Hosea 10:12).

Principle of Planning:

*“If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.
Therefore, proper planning is the best preparation for success.”*

4. **Perspiration:**

- A. “You brought a vine out of Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it. You *cleared the ground* for it, and it took root and filled the land” (Psalm 80:8-9).
- B. “He *dug* it up and *cleared* it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He *built* a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit” (Isa. 5:2).
- C. “This is what the Lord says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: ‘*Break up* your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns’” (Jer. 4:3).
- D. “He who *works his land* will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty” (Proverbs 28:19).
- E. “A *sluggard* does not *plow* in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing” (Prov. 20:4).
- F. “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure *hardship*, do the *work* of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (II Tim. 4:5).

Principle:

“Both *farming* and *ministry* are 10% inspiration,
and 90% perspiration!”

5. **Planting:**

- A. “There is a *time for everything*, and a *season* for every activity under heaven...a *time to plant*... (Ecc. 3:1-2).
- B. “Then God said, ‘Let the land produce *vegetation*; *seed-bearing plants* and trees on the land that bear fruit with *seed* in it, according to their kinds.’ And it was so. The land produced *vegetation*; *plants bearing seed* according to their kinds and

trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:11-12).

- C. **“When a *farmer* plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? *His God instructs him and teaches him the right way” (Isa. 28:24-26).***
- D. (Jesus teaching) **“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man *scatters seed* on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the *seed sprouts* and *grows*, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head” (Mk. 4:26-29).**
- E. (Jesus’ Sermon by the Sea) **“Then He told them many things in parables, saying: ‘A farmer went out to *sow his seed*. As he was scattering the *seed*, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other *seed* fell among the thorns; which grew up and choked the plants. Still other *seed* fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt. 13:3-9).**
- F. **“Now He who supplies *seed to the sower* and bread for food will also *supply* and *increase your store of seed* and will *enlarge the harvest* of your righteousness” (II Cor. 9:10).**

6. *Precipitation:*

- A. **“When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens – no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent *rain* on the earth, and there was no man to work the ground, but *streams* came up from the earth and *watered the whole surface of the ground” (Gen. 2:4-6) [Note here God’s use of the “ebb and flow” system of flood irrigation!].***

- B. “As the *rains* and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without *watering the earth* and *making it bud and flourish*, so that it yields *seed for the sower* and *break for the eater*, so is My word that goes out from My mouth; It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purposes for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:10-11).
- C. (Result of God’s chosen fast) “The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a *well watered garden*, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isa. 58:11).
- D. (Restoration of Israel) “I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. I will bless them...I will send down *showers in season*; there will be *showers of blessing*. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslave them” (Ezek. 34:25-27).
- E. (Ministry) “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul” Only servants through whom you came to believe as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I *planted the seed*, Apollos *watered it*, but God made it *grow*. So neither he who *plants* nor he who *waters* is anything, but only God, who makes things *grow*. The man who *plants* and the one who *waters* have one purpose and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers, *you are God’s field...*” (1 Cor. 3:5-9).
- F. “Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be *burned*” (Hebrews 6:7-8).

EXPECTATION

1. *Fellowship:*

- A. “Then the man and his wife heard the *sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden* in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8).
- B. “You are a *garden* locked up...my bride...You are a *garden fountain* a well of flowing water...Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my *garden*, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his *garden* and taste its choice fruits” (Ecc. 4:12-16).

2. *Fruit:*

- A. “The hardworking farmer should be the *first to receive a share of the crops*” (II Tim. 2:6).
- B. “Sow for yourselves righteousness, *reap the fruit* of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you” (Hosea 10:12).
- C. “Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not *eat of its grapes*? Who tends a flock and does not *drink of the milk*?” (I Cor. 9:7).

3. *Finances:*

- A. “If we have sown *spiritual seed* among you, is it too much if we reap a *material harvest* from you?” (I Cor. 9:11).
- B. “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who *preach the Gospel* should receive their *living from the Gospel*” (I Cor. 9:14).
- C. “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must *share all good things* with his instructor” (Gal. 6:6).

APPLICATION

1. **Sovereignty:**

- A. “...‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the *path*...some fell on *rocky places*... other seed fell among *thorns*...still other seed fell on *good soil*...” (Matt. 13:3-8).
- B. “A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head” (Mk. 4:26-28).

2. **Sacrifice:**

- A. “Those who sow in *tears* will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out *weeping* carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).
- B. “We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way; in great *endurance*; in *troubles, hardships and distresses*; in *beatings, imprisonments* and in *riots*; in *hard work, sleepless nights and hunger*; in *purity, understanding, patience and kindness*; in the *Holy Spirit* and *sincere love*; in *truthful speech* and in the *power of God*; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through *glory and dishonor, bad report and good report*; *genuine*, yet regarded as *imposters*; *known*, yet regarded as *unknown*; *dying*, and yet we live on; *beaten*, and yet not killed; *sorrowful*, yet always *rejoicing*; *poor*, yet making many rich; *having nothing*, and yet *possessing everything*” (II Cor. 6:3-10).

Principle:

“Sacrifice is a necessary prerequisite for successful physical or spiritual farming.”

3. **Surrender:**

- A. “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of what *falls to the ground and dies*, it remains only a single seed. But if it *dies*, it produces *many seeds*. 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 12:24-25).
- B. “But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish! *What you sow does not come to life unless it dies*. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a *seed*, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as He has determined, and to each kind of *seed* He gives its own body. All flesh is not the same; Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another...So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is *sown* is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is *sown* in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is *sown* in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:35-44).

Principle of Surrender:

“Self surrender through dying to self is the key to victorious living; and to successful farming.”

4. **Selectivity:**

- A. “...A man *reaps what he sows*. 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...*” (Gal. 6:7-9).
- B. “He who *sows wickedness reaps trouble*, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed” (Prov. 22:8).
- C. “The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed *according to their kinds* and trees bearing fruit with seed in it *according to their kinds*. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:12).

- D. **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit”**
(John 3:6).

Principle of Selectivity:

“Since ‘like produces like,’ select your seed carefully!”

5. **Sensitivity:**

- A. **“Be sure you know the *condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds*”** (Prov. 27:23).
- B. **“I am the good shepherd. *I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep...My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one*”** (Jn. 10:14-15, 27-30).

Farming Principle:

“The eye of the farmer makes the cow fat!”

This means a good farmer must constantly be out “in the barn,” and “out in the field” keeping an eye on both his farm and livestock! Likewise, the wise “spiritual farmer” will constantly have his eye on his *companion...his children...his co-workers...his congregation* to see whether they are “fat” or “lean”!

6. **Supply:**

- A. **“Remember this: whoever sows *sparingly* will also reap *sparingly*, and whoever sows *generously* will also reap *generously*...Now he who supplies seed to the sower...will also *supply* and *increase* your store of seed and will *enlarge the harvest* of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can *be generous* on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God”**
(II Cor. 9:6, 10-11).

- B. “One man *gives freely*, yet *gains* even more; another *withholds* unduly, but comes to *poverty*. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Prov. 11:24-25).

Principle of Prosperity:

“God prospers us so that we can prosper others;
He blesses us so that we can bless others;
He is generous to us so that we can be generous to others.”

CULTIVATION

1. *Persistence:*

- A. “The *hardworking farmer* should be the first to receive a share of the crops” (II Tim. 2:6).
- B. “*Lazy hands* make a man poor, but *diligent hands bring wealth*” (Prov. 10:4).
- C. “Whatever your hand finds to do, *do it with all your might*, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (Ecc. 9:10).
- D. “I went past the field of the *sluggard*, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; *thorns* had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with *weeds*, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest* – and *poverty* will come on you like a bandit and *scarcity* like an armed man” (Prov. 24:30-34).

2. *Patience:*

- A. “Be *patient*, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer *waits* for the land to yield its valuable crop and how *patient* he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, *be patient* and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near” (James 5:7-8).

- B. **“Preach the Word; be prepared *in season* and *out of season*; correct, rebuke and encourage – with *great patience* and careful instruction” (II Tim. 4:2).**

Principle:

“Patience is essential whether you are a parent raising children; a pastor disciplining Christians; a pastoralist raising animals; or a farmer raising crops.”

3. Pruning:

- A. **“Then He told this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’” (Luke 13:1-9).**
- B. **“I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Gardener. He *cuts off* every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He *prunes* so that it will be even more fruitful...If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (John 15:1-2, 6).**
- C. (Preaching of John the Baptist) **“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...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” (Jn. 3:8-10).**
- D. **“Land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be *burned*...dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case – things that accompany salvation. God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same *diligence* to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become *lazy*, but**

to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised” (Heb. 6:8-12).

MATURATION

1. **Temperature:**
 - A. “While the earth remains, *seed time* and *harvest...cold* and *heat...summer* and *winter...*” (Gen. 8:22; Jer. 33:20, 25).
 - B. “...You made both *summer* and *winter...*” (Psalm 74:17b).
2. **Timing:**
 - A. “When the *harvest time* approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit” (Matt. 21:34).
 - B. “You cleared the ground for it, and it *took root* and filled the land” (Psalm 80:9).
 - C. “He also said, ‘This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man *scatters seed* on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed *sprouts* and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the *stalk*, then the *head*, then the *full kernel* in the head. As soon as the grain is *ripe*, he puts the sickle to it, because the *harvest has come*’” (Mark 4:26-29).

CONSERVATION

1. **Separation:**
 - A. “His *winnowing fork* is in His hand, and He will *clear* His threshing floor, gathering His what into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12).
 - B. (Wheat and weeds) “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First *collect the weeds* and tie them in bundles to be burned; then *gather the wheat* and bring it into My barn” (Matt. 13:30).

2. **Storage:**

- A. (Joseph in Egypt) **“During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and *stored it* in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph *stored up* huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure”** (Gen. 41:47-49).
- B. **“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, *gathering His wheat into the barn* and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire”** (Matt. 3:12).
- C. **“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then *gather the wheat and bring it into My barn*”** (Matt. 13:30).
- D. **“Honor the Lord with all 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 wine”** (Prov. 3:9-10).
- E. (Feeding of 5,000) **“They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples *picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over*”** (Matt. 14:20).
- F. **“They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples *picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over*”** (Matt. 15:37).

3. **Sharing:**

- A. **“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they *gave to anyone as he had need*...There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was *distributed to anyone as he had need*”** (acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35).

- B. “Now He who supplies *seed to the sower* and break for food will also *supply* and *increase* your store of seed and will *enlarge* the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so *that you can be generous on every occasion*, and through us your *generosity* will result in *thanksgiving* to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of *thanks to God*. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will *praise God* for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your *generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else*. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing *grace* God has given you. **THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS INDESCRIBABLE GIFT!** (II Cor. 9:10- 15).

Principle of Unity in Christ:
“Our *prosperity* is for their *poverty*;
our *plenty* is for their *privation*;
our *riches* are for their *relief*;
our *abundance* is for their *adversity*;
our *luxury* is for their *lack*;
our *blessing* is for their *barrenness*.”

CONCLUSIONS:

By faithfully applying these principles of *life* and *ministry*, we will prove to be “...*hardworking farmers*,” who can fully expect “...*to receive our share of the crops*” for the Lord’s *glory*...for our *good*...for others’ *gain*! **AMEN!**