

Sowing the Seed

THE LORD'S GARDEN

The books in this series are collections of devotional stories written for children. The stories are based on true happenings, gleaned from a variety of sources, and rewritten for contemporary readers. Most are culled from books of the nineteenth century, including several by Richard Newton. Modern presentations of these stories were originally published in *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* magazine and are now arranged thematically for the purposes of these volumes. Each story accompanies a passage of Scripture and is intended to illustrate that particular biblical truth. Some stories are shorter, some longer. However, all will capture the attention of children and hopefully their hearts.

Books in the Series:

Vol. 1 — *Taking Root: Devotional Stories about Conversion*

Vol. 2 — *Bearing Fruit: Devotional Stories about Godliness*

Vol. 3 — *Sowing the Seed: Devotional Stories about Sharing
the Gospel*

Sowing the Seed

Devotional Stories about Sharing the Gospel

Diana Kleyn



REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Sowing the Seed

© 2008, 2020 by Diana Kleyn

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Direct your requests to the publisher at the following addresses:

Reformation Heritage Books

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America

20 21 22 23 24 25/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-60178-731-6

ISBN 978-1-60178-732-3 (e-pub)

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or e-mail address.

Contents

Introduction	1
1. A Faithful Pastor	9
2. Doing God's Work.	13
3. A Shy Woman.	18
4. George Whitefield	21
5. The Christian Traveler	23
6. The Gardener's Glad Moment	38
7. Phillip	42
8. A Father Taught by His Child	48
9. The Convict.	50
10. Pleading Tears	54
11. A Little Indian Girl	59
12. The Widow's Mite	62
13. Betsy Brown	65
14. College Friends.	69
15. God Wants Our Best.	72
16. Protection through Providence.	75
17. The Man Who Paid	77
18. In the Service of the Lord.	81
19. Who Made It?	83

20. Timely Words	86
21. Wanting to Confess	88
22. The Living Word	91
23. Tears and a Tract	95
24. Spreading God's Word	98
25. The Good One Penny Did	106
26. Real Christianity	111
27. A Faithful Witness	116
28. Raymond Jones	118
29. The Little Schoolboy's Prayer Meeting	122
30. The Minister and the Gypsy Boy	125
31. Changed by the Gospel	128
32. George Whitefield and the Trumpeter	130
33. The Little Missionary	133
34. With Whom Have You Been Talking?	136
35. The Name of the Lord	140
36. A Minister Who Spoke the Truth	143
37. A Teacher's Tear	146
38. Little Brother's Warning	149
39. Morning Prayer	152
40. The Despised Bible	154
41. Simple Efforts Blessed	160
42. Blessing for Food	166

Introduction

For those of us who have experienced snow, ice, and cold this winter, we eagerly await the arrival of spring. Certainly the snow and ice are beautiful, and we marvel at God's artistry when we examine a snowflake, admire icicles sparkling in the sunlight, or study the frosty swirls on the windows. We marvel at the power of God's creation when we see how quickly snow can make driving dangerous or the cold wind takes our breath away and we must stay inside to avoid frostbite. We enjoy winter when we can slide down a hill on our sleds, build a snowman or a snow fort, or make tracks in the snow till our fingers and toes tingle with cold, and our noses and cheeks are rosy. But spring will come, just as God promised to Noah in Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Spring is a time of new life. Many animals give birth to young ones, flowers begin to bloom, grass and trees become green again, and farmers plant their crops hoping for a rich harvest. Jesus spoke about springtime when He was on earth. The parable of the sower is perhaps the best

known of Jesus's parables (Matthew 13:3–9; Mark 4:3–9; Luke 8:5–8). The sower is a farmer who is planting his spring crop. In Bible times, the sower carried a pouch filled with seed. He would walk up and down the length of the field scattering the seed as he went. Today, a farmer uses a tractor with a machine hooked up behind it. This way the farmer can plant several neat rows of seeds at once. He can also plant more fields than the farmer of long ago with this modern method. Both the sower in the parable and the farmer of today are doing their job. It is a necessary part of their daily life, a way to provide food for their families and their animals.

In the parable, Jesus explains what happened to the seeds. Not all the seeds became fruitful. Some fell on the roadway and never grew at all, for the birds ate them. Some fell on rocky soil and quickly withered. Some seeds were overwhelmed by thorns and died. Some seeds, however, fell on good soil and grew to produce a harvest. Today's farmer also plants his seed not knowing what will happen. Will there be too much rain? Not enough rain? Will there be enough sunshine? Will there be a sickness or a pest invasion in the crop? The farmer cannot control the growth of the seed; that is God's work.

Jesus told this parable to illustrate the effect the preaching of the Word of God has on those who hear it. Not everyone who hears the Word is saved. The preacher cannot produce salvation in his hearers, just as the sower cannot make the seeds grow. The preacher brings God's Word to the ear, but it is the Holy Spirit who applies the Word of God to the heart. Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave

the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

Are ministers and missionaries the only people who are commanded to bring the Word of God to others? What about those of us who are “lay people,” that is, ordinary people? Do we have a responsibility? What about children? Must they wait until they are grown-ups? In one of His many messages to His disciples, Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32–33). The apostle John wrote, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). Solomon writes, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30). After David fell into sin, he longed for forgiveness so that he could once again tell others about the Lord. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Psalm 51:12–13). It is the duty and the joy of every believer to tell others about the God they serve. Not everyone is a preacher, but every child of God must be a witness of the truth.

Just as not every person is a preacher, so not everyone is a farmer. The farmer has large fields planted with thousands of seeds. Some people, however, plant only a few seeds. Do you have a garden at home? Maybe you help your parents plant the seeds in the springtime. A garden is not as

large as a whole field. Perhaps you have planted just one or two seeds in a flowerpot. You placed the pot in the sunlight and carefully watered the seeds. Whether there is just one seed or a whole field full of seeds, the sower watches every day to see if there is life. Neither you nor the farmer can make the seed grow; that is God's work.

So it is in spiritual life. The preacher brings the Word every Sunday in the pulpit, but every child of God must scatter the seed of the Word as he goes about his daily life. No, that does not mean every child of God preaches like a minister or a missionary does. It does mean, however, that you drop little seeds as you go. A seed can be an action or a few words or simply your example. Jesus instructed His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13), and, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:50). In order to be a witness to others, you must "have salt in yourselves," which means the Holy Spirit must live in your heart. When the Lord Himself lives in your heart, you have the same desires that He does. Paul states, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1).

It is not only a command, but the true Christian cannot help but talk about the Lord he loves. David exclaimed, "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make

mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only” (Psalm 71:15–16). When Jesus healed the man possessed by devils, the man wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus had a task for him, “Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (Luke 8:39). Peter and John were told by the Jewish authorities that they must no longer speak about their Savior. Their answer was, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

Sometimes being a witness for the Lord is done through example, as Paul says he hopes to do with his fellow Israelites. “If by any means I may provoke to emulation¹ them which are my flesh, and might save some of them” (Romans 11:14). Paul also writes, “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). He advises Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Even children can witness of their Lord by their quiet example.

Notice, children, that being a witness for the Lord does not mean talking about yourself. It means telling others about the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you notice that in the texts

1. To emulate means to copy or imitate. Paul hopes that other people (“them which are my flesh”) will follow his godly example, so that some of them might be saved.

I have quoted? Paul clearly states that the sower—“he that planteth”—is nothing and “he that watereth” is nothing (1 Corinthians 3:7). Witnesses are messengers; they are servants of God. Their joy is not to talk about themselves but about their Savior. What good is a messenger who talks only about himself and does not bring the message his master has sent him to deliver? What good would it do to tell another sinner only about yourself and not about Jesus? A faithful witness tells about salvation in Christ Jesus. Their desire is that souls will be saved. Is that your wish? Do you pray for the salvation of others? Do you ask the Lord to save you so that you can be a witness for Him? Do you ask the Lord for opportunities to tell others about Him?

Sowing the seed is hard work. When you tell others about the Lord, you will be shunned and mocked. Many times, it will seem as though there is no fruit. Maybe it seems no one wants to listen. We must remember, however, that it is our duty to sow the seed; it is the Lord who blesses it and creates the harvest. Joy comes later: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5–6).

Do you belong to the Lord? Does the Holy Spirit live in your heart? Have you, perhaps, laughed at those who try to warn you? Do you despise those who set a godly example? The Lord Himself has placed these people in your path. It is the Lord you are rejecting; it is your own soul you are destroying. Dear children, ask the Lord to open your eyes to your great danger! Ask Him to turn you to Him! How many seeds have already been scattered in your heart? Are

any of them growing and bearing fruit? “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3)? “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh” (Hebrews 12:25). Are you one of Jesus’s lambs? Do you set a godly example? Do you love to speak well of the Lord Jesus? It is true, we fail so often. More often than not, we neglect our duties and even set a sinful example. Ask the Lord to forgive you and to make you a faithful witness of His love and grace. You will weep at times, but God has promised joy. “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together” (John 4:36). Ask the Lord to help you cheerfully carry out your Christian duty, remembering the lost souls of those around you: “But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).



—1—

A Faithful Pastor

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

—ISAIAH 58:7

On one of the bitterest mornings of a cold New Hampshire winter, a devoted servant of God in a seacoast town was bundling himself up for a morning walk.

“What?” exclaimed his wife in alarm when she saw him pull on his gloves. “Are you going out today? It is much too cold! You had better stay safely inside by the fire.”

“I really have to go visiting in the east part of the county, dear,” the pastor replied calmly. “It has been a long time since I have visited the families there. I have meetings all day tomorrow, and I may not have another opportunity for weeks.”

“But it is so cold!” fretted his wife.

“Then it might be even more important that I go today just because it is so cold,” countered the pastor. “They are

more likely to be at home.” He smiled at her. “Don’t worry, dear. I’ll dress warmly.”

He filled a bag with tracts and little books as well as some packages of tea, sugar, flour, and even some butter and jam. With a cheery good-bye to his wife, the minister stepped out into the cold. He plodded steadily through drifts of snow, over fences, and through the woods until he came to the farthest edge of the county. In a little house down in the valley lived an aged couple, far from any neighbors. They were both in their eighties and had been kindly and cheerfully supported by people in town for years, but the extreme cold this week had kept people from coming out to see them. Their firewood had been used up, and the poor old man was out in the intense cold, feebly trying to cut down an old willow tree, which had shaded the house for many years. His wife was inside, in bed, since it was too cold to do anything else. There was no wood with which to build a fire to warm the house.

The pastor greeted the old man, took the axe from his tired arms, and soon chopped down the old tree. After he had cut a few pieces of wood and collected some dry branches, he went inside and built a cheery fire. Then he went back outside and cut up enough wood to last for at least a week. He felt no cold, for the exercise warmed him. The old woman got up and made a pot of tea. Together the three of them sat by the fire and warmed themselves. The old man took down a worn black Bible from the shelf. The minister read a chapter and prayed with them. Before he left, he placed some tracts on the table, and with words of encouragement and kindness, the pastor went on his way.

All through that cold day, he went from house to house among the poor of his community, giving comfort to those who mourned, quiet encouragement to the sick, and kindness and love to all. The minister shared news of the neighbors with those he visited. The hearts of those who had food and clothing in abundance were softened to give to those in need. Strong men went out to lend a hand to the poor and weak. Woodpiles were replenished and empty pantries now had shelves with a variety of food. Those who had extra clothes or blankets gladly gave to those who were cold and needy.

Did the faithful pastor suffer from the cold? Not at all! He came home with a song on his lips and thanksgiving in his heart. Paul said, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).



QUESTIONS

- Why was the minister going out on such a wintry day?
- What was the old man trying to do?
- What did the minister do for the elderly couple?
- How did the minister's actions impact others?
- What blessing did the minister receive?

THINK

- What would have happened if the minister had stayed home?
- What can you do to help someone?

PRAYER

Help me to use my hands, eyes, ears, and strength to help someone today.