



Sowing Seed

This avocado tree doesn't look much now, but just wait...

'But a few seeds did fall on good ground where the plants produced a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as was scattered' (Matthew 13:8). 'Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour' (John 4:37,38).

I love avocados. My whole family does. In salad, guacamole, whatever. Unfortunately we live in Nepal, where they are rare as Armenian Presbyterians.

Fortunately, near where we live there are two avocado trees, planted over ten years ago by the Smiths family. They too loved them, and so planted some seeds from which large, very fruitful trees grew. Because we are friends with their old landlord, we get to enjoy dozens of them. Fantastic deal.

The thing is, the Smiths never got to taste even one avocado from their

trees. Before the trees were mature enough to bear fruit, they had to return to England. Before I wrote them to tell how much we enjoyed and appreciated their long-sighted labour, they didn't even know the trees were still alive.

Our labour here in the leprosy hospital often seems like this. We sow seeds of light and life to patients passing through our doors. Some accept, and we can see the early fruit in their lives, but they leave, returning to villages days from here with which we usually have no contact. We don't know if the fruit grows, multiplies or

just withers. Some listen patiently, smile, and leave without us knowing of any change in their heart. And some just don't listen.

Occasionally we get glimpses of the harvest we have sown. Over ten years ago a young lady came in with some of the complications of leprosy. Ginnu was angry and bitter. She had been expelled from the family and village for her disease, and hated herself for the deformities in her hands and feet. Arriving in the hospital, one of her first experiences was to hear the patient fellowship singing and joyously praising God.

She angrily asked one of our nurses, 'What are these people so happy about? Most of them are worse off than I!' She remained angry for much of her time here, but towards the end her heart was softened by the ongoing demonstration of God's love and hearing the word. She left believing in Jesus as her Lord.

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And that was the last we heard of her, until she returned ten years later with another complication. She was a changed person, full of joy and peace. She had been accepted back into her family, and during her time away had shared her story with many in the village, and there were now ten families meeting together for fellowship, and looking for a pastor to come and teach them more! We would never have known this were it not for her being forced to return.

Bearing fruit

The fruit from some of the seeds we have sown is plain to see. Binja, a bank manager, came to us decades ago with signs of leprosy, and during treatment he had a severe drug reaction which almost killed him. He steadfastly refused to listen to the gospel, but enjoyed teaching other patients to read. Responding to a young lad's request to read the Bible to him, Binja was convicted by what he read and turned his remaining life over to the Lord. He eventually became the principal of the Bible School and spent several years teaching the gospel to many men and

women from distant areas. What a fantastic harvest!

I suspect that life for many of us is like this. We sow seeds during our day-to-day lives; we may be privileged to see some of the fruit, but much of it we may never see. When we read the story of the farmer sowing seeds, we assume that he will see the fruit of his harvest, and soon. That is the nature of farming. In Canada now, the farmers often sow winter wheat, which lies underground for the long dark winter months, only to sprout the following spring and bear fruit in the summer.

Words of truth we speak and acts of love we do may not bring about a response for a season or two. What joy for us to see the sprouts arising in God's timing. Or, because life is not always like grain farming, we may be sowing apple or avocado seeds, where the fruit takes many years to come. In today's mobile world, we may be sowing without ever seeing the tree, let alone the fruit. In this we need faith in the Lord of the harvest, who watches over all of the seeds that his farmers have sown.

Of course, this assumes that we are really sowing seeds! The seed is the Word of God, nothing less. If we spend our lives sowing other than the true seed, the chance of a harvest are zero. However if we are faithfully sowing seeds wherever God has placed us, we can rest assured that God will do what is needed to bring in his harvest. Perhaps others will fertilise, and yet others prune and weed. Be encouraged: his word will not return empty!

We have planted an avocado tree in our back yard. With a six-year time to

fruition, it is unlikely that we will ever taste the fruit from it. The reward, the blessing, will be for others to enjoy. But really, the important thing is that it will be bearing fruit.

The Partner serves as Medical Director at the leprosy hospital in Nepal. He and his family (pictured below), are seconded from Interserve to International Nepal Fellowship.



Names have been changed.

Prayer pointer

- ♦ Pray for the work being done at the hospital, and the physical and spiritual impact it has on the community.
- ♦ Pray for the faithful planting of spiritual seed.
- ♦ Pray for encouragement for Partners who are not seeing fruit in their work.

