

**You Cannot Produce What You Are Not
E-Votional Ages 12-18 Week 23Jun08
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... Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

Imagine you are instructed to grow a small garden as a part of a school project. The decision has been left to you to decide exactly *what* you would like to plant, and after serious consideration (one cannot take matters such as these lightly, of course), you settle upon cucumbers. After all, summer is here, and there is nothing better on a hot summer day than a cold, crisp cucumber salad. You purchase all the supplies, carefully create a small plot of land in your backyard, and till the ground in preparation for planting. Ripping open the package of seeds, you gently place each one into the soil and cover them up. Each day you visit your little garden, watering the black earth, waiting for signs of life.

Then you see it - a small sprout of green peeping up from the soil! Over the next few weeks, you watch as the small green buds push their way further and further up. A couple months pass, and one day as you're watering you notice something rather strange. Far be it from you to call yourself an expert on horticulture, but the plant doesn't look quite like the one on the picture. "Oh well", you tell yourself, "I suppose that's how it's supposed to look when it's young. I'm sure it will just take a little more time." A week or two later, the round green fruits growing from the vines confirm your suspicion: the seeds you planted were *not* cucumbers. Instead, you have a thriving crop of tomatoes! Somehow in the packaging process, the seeds were placed in the wrong bag. Despite all of your well-meaning intentions and no matter how badly you *wanted* to grow cucumbers, you ultimately had no control over what was produced because regardless of whether you knew it or not, that's not what you planted.

Our lives are a lot like that. Sometimes we can put on the face of the “perfect” person. Our packaging says one thing, but it isn’t an accurate description of what is on the inside. But as we grow and the things in our heart are manifest into actions, the fruits of our spirit are made obvious to the whole world. If you’ve labored to cultivate a spirit of patience and love, you won’t see deceit or jealousy cropping up its ugly head. Likewise, if you’ve planted seeds of bitterness and rebellion in your heart, don’t expect to display forgiveness and humility. We simply cannot produce what we are not.

