

E-I-E-I-O – Week 1

Psalm 126:1-6 ESV - *When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.”³ The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb!⁵ Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!⁶ He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

It is interesting when you read Psalm 126 because the Psalm can be broken up into two parts. Verses 1-3 which is a song of thanksgiving and then Verses 4-6 which is a cry for help. The first half of the Psalm has been debated over for years by many biblical scholars.

Everyone agrees that verses 1-3 is speaking about Israel’s deliverance and return from the Babylon Captivity. But the translation of the verb tenses in the Psalm have been debated by many theologians. Some believe that the verbs are translated in the past tense making the first half of the Psalm a Psalm of thanksgiving (God had delivered us from Babylon). Others believe the verbs are in the future tense making the whole Psalm a prayer for help (God help us because you promised through your prophets to deliver us).

But either way; whether you translate the first half of the Psalm as a song of remembrance of God’s deliverance or you translated it as a hope for God’s future deliverance. Really what the Psalm is; is God’s people confessing that they are stuck in a nationwide trial that is so big that it is effecting every family and individual and the only way out is if God Himself comes down miraculously and makes a way where there is no way.

And I believe with all my heart that this Psalm is where the church in America has been over the last two years. You know when Covid started in 2020 and everything shut down for two weeks. It was distressing but it was still a novelty for most of us. We got to work from home, we had more personal time, some of us learned how to cook, others found new tools and ways to get around not having any toilet paper; it was scary but it was manageable and then 2021 came around and we had gone a full year of dealing with the pandemic and some of the consequences of the shut down and isolation and the virus started to become more real. Everyone you met had at least one family member or friend who died from Covid. Depression went from something that only 18 percent of adults in our country dealt with before the pandemic to one in three adults saying that they are dealing with sever depressed and anxiety since the pandemic. All of the cracks in the foundation of our churches, our families, our businesses, our personal walks with God began to be exposed at an accelerated rate. And it has been so overwhelming that most people are shell shocked and don’t know what to do.

And we all thought if we could just get to the end of 2021; If we can put that year behind us and start new in 2022 we can finally find our footing again and move forward putting this nightmare to rest. But as we are finding out 2022 is not turning out to be a new start but instead it is the same old story except our troubles in our singleness, or our families, with our kids, in our churches, in our minds, in our hearts are only getting worse.

We are in a Psalm 126 season. Where we have entered a national crises that has exposed all the cracks in all of these foundations and it is effecting everyone; rich and poor alike; the boss as well as the employee; the church leaders as well as the congregation no one is escaping this sifting that is happening right now.

And like Psalm 126 we are coming to church every Sunday and to our devotion times in the week remembering God's past deliverances; we are looking through the word at how God met His people and how He delivered them in the most impossible situations and we are remembering God's faithfulness in our own lives and through the little bit of faith that is being stirred up through remembering we are crying out with this deep groaning like verse four ***Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb!***

Restore my joy oh Lord or restore my kids or restore your church or restore my business or restore my faith or restore my ministry or restore my love for you oh God or my consecration to you. God these last couple of years has brought a lot of destruction but you oh God can and will restore.

But then here is the part of Psalm 126 that confuses me. You would think that after God's people cried out with such an honest and broken cry that the next couple of verse would have read like Psalm 18.

Psalm 18:6-9 & 14-17 ESV - *In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.⁷ Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry.⁸ Smoke went up from his nostrils,^[b] and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him.⁹ He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet.¹⁴ And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them.¹⁵ Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.¹⁶ He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.¹⁷ He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.*

But Psalm 126 doesn't read like Psalm 18. No; in fact Psalm 126 says this -

Psalm 126:1-3 ESV - *³ The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb!⁵ Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!⁶ He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

See in Psalm 126 God doesn't give His people a miraculous deliverance the way we picture miraculous deliverances but instead He gives to them a Kingdom Principle; **He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.**

God sees the national crises that his people are facing; God sees all the cracks in the foundations; God sees their fear and all of their trials and God says there is a deliverance, there is a way out of all of this, there is victory and a way to overcome but this time God isn't just going to come down and baptize everyone in His Spirit, knock them out on the floor and then after they get up make everything okay. No this time God's people will have to implement God's kingdom principle of sowing and reaping.

Write this down; **God's kingdom operates according to kingdom principles. If we want to see kingdom power, kingdom deliverance, kingdom restoration then we have to embrace God's kingdom principles.**

And the principle that God gives to His people in a national crisis in Psalm 126 is the Principle of sowing and reaping.

2Corinthians 9:6 ESV - ⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^[d] will also reap bountifully.

Now I know that 2Corinthians chapter 9 is used by a lot of Pastors and Teachers to speak about money and tithing but there is something deeper in these passages of scripture than just offering time on Sunday morning. This is God telling His church so powerfully that if you want to experience joy and deliverance and freedom and blessings on your family and your life then you have to Sow. Not only do you need to sow but in the measure that you sow is the measure of deliverance and joy and freedom and leadership and influence breakthrough that you are going to receive.

See it is so easy to look at other believers and begin to jealously covet the blessings they have in their lives. You look at the joy they live in and say man I wish I had that or you look at a business they built and you think man I really want to be in control of my life and destiny like them set my own hours or you look at someone's flourishing ministry and how people line up to be part of their focus group and you think man I want to have that type of influence for the kingdom of God or you look at someone's kids or marriage and say I would give anything to have a family that is so relational and spiritually healthy. We can covet those things and want those things but the problem is many times we are focusing on another person's reaping and not on the sowing that they did to get to that point.

Those believers made the choice to sow into their relationship with God, into their businesses, into their leadership, into their ministry, into the church, into their relationships and not just sow but sow bountifully they put all this work in developing their leadership through reading helpful books and going to seminars and listening to

podcasts, they put in the work learning new skills to better their ministry and they stuck it out through the season when they only had three people attending their focus group, they didn't quit because they didn't get the numbers they were hoping for, no they said I am going to sow and make this the most impactful focus group at the church, they made the sacrifice to get involved in a community group and built all these amazing friendships, they are going to the councilor and reading Christian teachings on marriage with their spouse they did all these things that got them to the point that you are now envying.

See I believe with all my heart that the church is experiencing a dispositional shift universally in many areas. But one of the areas that is causing believers heads to spin all over the western world is we are shifting from a season of continual breakthrough and harvest to a season of having to sow. Many of us have been privilege to live in an ecclesiastical age of constant reaping because of the selfless sowing of the generations that came before us.

Let me show you what I mean. I am going to put a picture up on the screen of what the American church was like 20 to 30 years ago. Does anyone remember church in the mid 90's or early 2000's. God was moving everywhere and although you had some families that were dealing with a wayward child or depression or a suicide it was a minority in the church. Ministries were booming, people were getting radically saved and there was joy in the house of God.

It was like living in a forest with all these oaks of righteousness all around you. The church was so green and filled with life and purpose and expectation.

But let me show you a prophetic picture of where the church and its influence is in America is at today. It is like this barren wasteland. Most Christians don't even attend church anymore because it is so barren and lifeless.

And we are sitting here crying out to God, God send back the forest, send back the oaks of righteousness, make us flourish again, restore our fortunes; let your Sprit Fall on your people, let healing and freedom and prosperity flow.

And we expect any day the forest to reappear; but instead God brings us a bag of seeds and He says I will restore it all but this time you have to sow; even in the heartache and the weeping, even in the pain sow.

And most of us look at the bag of seeds and we reach on in and say okay God and we take one seed out and we say, I am going to come to one or two prayer meetings a year. Or I am going to sign up for a community group and go one or two times and then give up because I thought meaning full relationships can be made in 45 minutes. I am going to pic up a leadership book and read the inside cover, I am going to have a devotion time with you once a month. We sow one seed at a time thinking that that is going to have some type of Kingdom Impact. When God wants us to sow like this.

See this whole message came out of a pity party I was having with God one night after Christmas Eve service. I had a week off and I was telling God how I felt like the challenges and the needs in the church throughout this year had out grown me. And I was praying that He would give me wisdom and power to meet the challenges I was facing, kind of like how he did it with King Solomon in the bible....

How do I sow in a season that is so painful Pastor Michael.

Genesis 8:20-22- ²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse^[a] the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

How can you sow in the pain. By reminding yourself that God has sworn that it works. The principle of sowing and reaping will never end as long as the Earth remains.

Altar Call –

Spend time praying and getting away with God and ask Him the question God where would you have me sow in 2022.

Write down one place that God is calling you to sow in one sentence and then bring it back with you next week.

Where To Sow In 2022

1. Pray and Identify
2. Be Specific
3. Write It Down In One Sentence