**E-I-E-I-O Part 2**

***Psalm 126 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.***

I shared a little bit last week about my time off right after Christmas and how God gave me this grace to spend quality time reading and praying and communing with Him. It was a time where God had to bring conviction and point some things out that needed to change as well as a time of clarity; God began answering questions I had been asking Him over the last two years.

And one of the things God gave direction and definition too was how to proceed as a church in 2022. Many of us have fought some pretty intense battles over the last couple of years and there is a weariness and a hopelessness that has begun to grip the church. We are kind of scratching our heads feeling like we have done everything we know to do to change the trajectory of our families, our communities, our churches, this nation and we have hit a plateau where we can’t push back the principalities and powers of darkness any further.  It feels like this is as much breakthrough we can get with our kids, in our singleness, in our congregation, in our city, in our country. We have experienced a few answered prayers and some miracles but the grace of God seems to be drying up and compared to what we are facing God’s power is like a little trickle here and then a little trickle there. It falls short to what we need.

And we are all crying out like Psalm 126 God restore us. Restore my joy, restore my kids, restore my marriage, restore my finances, restore my love for you, restore my consecration. God come and restore the years that the canker worm has eaten.

But remember how God answered His people in Psalm 126. God didn’t give His people who were in a national crises a miraculous deliverance the way we picture a miraculous deliverance but instead He gave to them **a Kingdom Principle that had attached to it a Kingdom promise.**

**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 gave to His people in a national crises in Psalm 126 to bring about restoration was the principle of sowing and reaping.

**2Corinthians 9:6-8 NIV – 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

Now I know that his passage of scripture is used by most pastors to speak about money and tithing but there is a deeper truth here that Christians need to pay attention to.

Can we take a moment to look at 2Corinthians chapter 9 and highlight a few things I didn’t get to last week.

**2Corinthians 9:6-8 NIV – 6*Remember this*: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

2Corithinas chapter 9 begins with a pretty big statement. The bible says remember this. Now when the bible literally writes in the beginning of a text remember this it would be wise for us as believers to take notice of what is about to follow.

God is telling us point blank Michael you have to take action to remember what I am about to say to you. You have to remember it when times are tough, you have to remember it when all of your prayers are being answered, you have to remember it when you are sitting in a Sunday service and you are being overwhelmed by My love and My presence and you have to remember it when you are sitting in a Sunday service and you feel absolutely nothing. You have to be intentional to remember this. You have to make it a priority.

Now why does God want us to remember 2Corinthians 9 so badly.

Well **Number 1**because God is about to describe a kingdom principle in the next couple of verses which is the direction of how God’s kingdom works in our lives and in our churches.

And **Number 2** We have to remember this kingdom principle because the principle goes against how we naturally think and how our hearts are naturally inclined. It is counter cultural to me and to you. That is why this message is going to bother some of us because we are talking about the kingdom that operates differently than how we operate.

But God takes it a step further by using another key word that should stop us in our tracks when we are reading this.

**2Corinthians 9:6-8 NIV – 6 Remember this:Whoeversows sparingly will also reap sparingly, andwhoeversows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

God says whoever makes the choice to sow will in time reap. That is a profound statement. Whoever does this is going to get this. Did you get that. Notice God doesn’t say if Pastor Michael sows or if those really holy Christians sow, or if your Christian leaders sow, no; God says Whoever. Let that sink in for a moment. Remember sowing is not for special people or Christian leasers or those in full time ministry it is a kingdom principle in the Earth.

And there a lot of Christians throughout the church who are believing God for a forest of power and life and joy and influence and leadership and kingdom impact in a place where they have never even planted a seed.

2Corinthians 9 says remember, whoever. Can we say that together on three. One, two, three remember, whoever.

The fact that the bible says whoever sows will reap is implying that everyone has already been given seed. You cannot sow something you don’t have and when the bible makes such a sweeping statement declaring that the kingdom principle of sowing and reaping is for whoever chooses to sow really what the bible is saying is that every single believer already has seed. God has already given you something to sow.

The problem is there are a lot of Christians who have seed who make the choice not to sow it.  Why? Because of two main reasons.

Number one:**they want the tree not the seed**.  We all deal with this. Many of us look at the seed that God has given, for example the seed of influence. We look at Pastors or ministry leaders or other Christians who seem to have been given so much influence by God. They were given a pulpit to influence others for His kingdom or an online podcast that is supper successful that influence others or a thriving ministry where they have tons of people flocking to their class or their seminar where they are influencing others for the kingdom. And then God gives you a few relationships in the church with people who need your influence; people who need you to take them out to get a cup of coffee and encourage them and speak into their lives. It isn’t a pulpit where you are seen by hundreds of people every week, it is a seed of influence. A seed not a tree.

See many times we are looking at someone else’s harvest and we think that that is the seed that God has given them. And then we compare our seed with what we think is there seed. But what we don’t realize is that those Pastors and people we look up to had a seed of influence to start but they kept sowing those seeds until they grew into a harvest.

Man for years the only influence I had as a Christian was with the two year olds in the children ministry that no one else wanted to sow into. And every Sunday I would go back and love on those kids and pray over them and talk to them about God; then God open up doors for me to sow more influence into high school students and for years I would pick them up in my car and take them to lunch and listen to their struggles and pray for them over and over and over again, then my influence began to grow and I was asked to become an Elder here at Springs Church and then God called me to lay ministry down and the only influence I had was with my family and a few friends. So I spent that time sowing into my kids and my wife and then from all those years of sowing and responding to God I was given another harvest of influence this time I was asked by the elders to come and serve in the role of senior Pastor here at Springs Church.

We don’t sow the seed that we already in our hand because it is a seed and not a tree. We despise the days of small beginnings.

Listen to me because this is important for you to understand. The business that God is putting on your heart to start, the book that His is urging you to write, the ministry that He wants you to begin God will never give it to you in finished form, He will give it to you as a seed. And you have to decide; do I hold on to it, do I burry it, do I forget about it or do I follow God’s Kingdom principle and sow it so that it can grow into what God intended it to be.

Number two; Christians don’t sow their seed because**they don’t understand how the kingdom of God works**.

***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.”***

I shared this scripture last week but I want to look at it with you one more time. Remember this is God coming to Noah after the flood making a covenant with all of creation. God makes a covenant to never again flood the Earth and He establishes certain principles within the covenant, that He legally binds Himself to under the authority of the high courts of heaven.  So look at what He says; while the Earth remains these things, these principles of creation, will never cease. Cold and heat. I understand cold and heat because I live with a wife who I love dearly but who will not allow me to touch the thermostat in my own house. I literally would not buy our home when we were in negotiations with the seller until the owner of the house put central air condition unit into the home. I fought for air-condition because I understood the covenant principle in Genesis chapter 8 that sometimes the house will be cold but other times it will be hot. And every night in the summer when I am sleeping I wake up in a puddle of my own sweet I get up out of bed and sneak downstairs without my wife knowing and turn the air-conditioning on, the air-conditioning that I negotiated for before I bought our house. And every morning I wake up I get into another fight with my beautiful wife about wasting energy. And I say honey I don’t understand we wouldn’t buy the house without the air-conditioning but now you will not let me use the thing that we had to have before we moved in. Out of all the stress we deal with in ministry and parenting this is the one thing we fight over constantly. I understand cold and heat.

I understand the covenant agreement of summer and winter. Trust me I get this principle because I live on monument hill which means when summer goes and winter comes I have to prepare myself to shovel an ungodly amount of snow. I get the principle of night and day. Daytime the sun is out, nighttime it is dark.

But the one principle we all find difficult to understand is seedtime and harvest. Why? Because we read the scripture too fast. We read seedtime, harvest. But if we read it slower. It says seed – time – harvest. If we read it even slower it says seed   –   time   –   harvest. And if we read it even slower it says seed      –      time      –      harvest.

See the principle is that with every seed you sow there is time attached. If you sow your seed it is a ticking time bomb waiting to blow up into something great. See you might be sowing something today that you will not see until three years into the future.

And many Christians don’t sow there seed because when they sowed it in the past they didn’t see instantaneous results and so they thought that God had failed them, that the kingdom principle failed them, because they didn’t understand the entire principle. They thought it is seedtime harvest, they thought I sow and then I turn around and now I reap. But when you study the scripture out the kingdom principle is really seed + time = harvest. So in discouragement they stop sowing.

One of the places that we see this misunderstanding stop Christians and churches from sowing is in prayer.

I was walking with Josh our Executive Pastor the other day and I said to him how much reaping do you think our generation has experienced because of the Moravian Prayer Meeting. For some of you who don’t know who the Moravians were Count Zinzendorf opened up his property in Hernhut, Germany in the seventeen hundreds to 300 Moravian refuges who were fleeing persecution. And on August 12th 1792 the Moravians decided to start a twenty-four hour prayer meeting on Zinzendorf property; two or three refugees met together at a specific time to pray in one hour increments for twenty-four hours straight, seven days a week. They were praying for revival. They prayed like that for five years straight before they saw God’s spirit begin to move on their prayer meeting and on the city. But then here is the kicker after they tasted of the outpouring of God’s spirit they continues to labor in prayer, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for a hundred years straight. Man talk about bountifully sowing. And guess who reaped all of that work; it was the generations to come. It was you and me. See the only way you can labor in pray like that is if you understand God’s kingdom principle of seed – time – harvest.

God made a covenant with Earth and mankind where He legally bound Himself under the high courts of heaven that whosoever makes the choice to sow especially in prayer God attaches a time to every seed that enters the ground but God has sworn that that seed will explode into a harvest. And God says Whoever gets this and begins to sow, to pray and labor in prayer in faith in time will always, always reap.