

PRINCIPLES FOR SOWING

By Bob Young

We must constantly adjust as God uses us to accomplish his purpose in our changing world. The message is constant but the soil is constantly changed by its surroundings. For the seed to take root and flourish, the soil must be constantly refreshed, renewed, and prepared.

I share an illustration. In farming, after the ground lays fallow, one must till the ground, get rid of weeds, get rid of any problems with bacteria and bugs, fertilize the soil to replenish lost nutrients, prepare the soil. Then, the seed must be planted at the right time, in the right way, right depth, right season.

Too often today, the church fails to harvest because it fails to honor time-tested truths of seed-planting and harvesting. Solomon in Ecclesiastes 11:4 teaches us not to look to and blame factors that are irrelevant. The rhythms of seedtime and harvest are set by God. The guiding principles are unchanging. When the seed is planted correctly, the harvest comes.

In many places, the contemporary church has forgotten this basic truth. Harvest failures are blamed on various factors. Solomon words are proved true. Looking at those factors has caused many to become hesitant in seed-planting focused on evangelism and faithful discipleship.

Churches that neglect the principles often try to introduce attractive and artificial dynamics. That leads to “greenhouse” churches and “greenhouse” mission work. Instead of honoring God’s time-tested message and foundational principles, too many try new remedies to compensate for our lack of perseverance in critical aspects of evangelism and discipleship.

As we think about needed corrections to help us return to God’s principles for sowing and reaping, carefully evaluating our experience during the pandemic could be a helpful tool.

When Jesus said that the harvest was plentiful and the workers were few, I believe he was setting forth a principle for all times. What should we see?

- In an unbelieving world, the church has a great opportunity. A great challenge? Yes! But equally a great opportunity.
- Jesus’ statement about the lack of workers should cause us to assess our weaknesses and failures.
- The lack of workers suggests a need to make certain that those sent are committed to being harvest workers advancing God’s eternal purpose.
- The lack of workers suggests a need for equipping and training workers (the entire church!).
- Such training must focus on basics—awareness of God’s principles and God’s processes.
- To prepare for evangelism, the church must focus on the seed, the gospel message of Jesus Christ.
- To increase evangelism, the church must return to an emphasis on seed-planting and harvesting.
- To increase and retain the harvest, the church must emphasize discipleship.

Now is the time to refocus on the great goal of making disciples, sowing the seed, reaping the harvest, bearing fruit. Now is the time to set fresh goals based on new realities.

And, when the harvest is reaped, then what? Making disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded, so that new disciples go forth as disciple-makers.