

FOUR CYCLES OF CHURCH LIFE

1. One of the most important things we can do is to **discern**
 - A. **What the Holy Spirit is doing**
 1. in the current season or cycle that we are in
 2. and then work with the Holy Spirit in what he is trying to accomplish
 - a. instead of working against him
 - B. Secondly we must come to the understanding that each Season or cycle of church life is based upon two things:
 1. **First: Our Co-operation, yielding, surrender** to the Holy Spirit
 - a. Phil 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
 - b. We see an example of co-operation, yielding & surrender in Jesus
 - (1) Jesus was about to change the season / cycle of His Life and ministry
 - (2) Jesus was about to go from a season of life to death
 - (a) John 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.
 2. **Secondly we must understand that no season cycle of church life lasts forever:**
 - a. God has a specific purpose he desires to accomplish in each season / cycle of church life
 - b. and when that Purpose is fulfilled: the season / cycle of church life you are currently in will change
 - (1) Eccl 3:1 To everything there is a **season**, A **time for every purpose** under heaven:
 - (2) Eccl 3:17 For there is a **time there for every purpose** and for every work."
 3. Our co-operation, yielding & surrender or lack there of **can determine the length of time we spend in each season**
 - a. if the purpose of God has not been accomplished
 - (1) Holy Spirit will not permit us to go into a change of seasons / cycles of church life
 - b. But, once the Purpose of God is accomplished for that seasons you will enter another cycle of church life
- C. We want it to be **harvest time**.....all of the time
We want it to be **reaping time**all of the time
We want it to be **blessing time**.....all of the time
 1. Just as man cannot violate the laws of nature concerning seasons / cycles of life & nature
 - a. Gen 8:22 "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease."

- b. You will discover that there are also spiritual Principles that are in place to the seasons / cycles of church life:
- c. and we must learn to work with & yield to the season / cycle / of what the Holy Spirit is doing

II. FIRST CYCLE OF CHURCH LIFE: PREPARATION:

A. God prepares a man / woman to accomplish His will upon the earth

1. For **Abraham** it was 25 years of preparation so he could learn to walk by faith & be called the father of faith
2. For **Moses** it was 40 years of living in a wilderness as a shepherd: before he became the deliver of Israel
3. For **Joshua** it was becoming Moses minister before he became The second shepherd of Israel
4. For **Samuel** it was growing up in the temple under the ministry of Eli
5. For **King David** it was tending his father's sheep, facing & Killing a lion, bear & giant named Goliath & serving under the leadership of King Saul before he became what God described is
 - a. Acts 13:22 I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'
6. For **Paul** it was three years in a desert being taught by the Holy Spirit as seen in Gal 1:16-18
 - a. and serving under the ministry of Barnabas before he became the Apostle to the gentiles
7. For **Elisha** it was washing the hands of Elijah
8. For **Timothy & Titus** it was learning to become a faithful son in the ministry to their spiritual father / the Apostle Paul
9. For Timothy it was:
 - a. Being betrayed by his brothers
 - b. Sold into slavery
 - c. Then imprisoned by false accusations
 - d. Before he fulfilled the call of God upon his life by becoming The second in command in Egypt & saving the nation of Israel from the great drought so the lineage of the Messiah could go on

B. The Cycle / season of Preparation is not always easy & at times Carries a **great price to pay** that may be accompanied by pain And sacrifice:

Ps 105:17 He sent a man before them — Joseph — who was sold as a slave.

18 They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons.

19 Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him.

1. "They hurt his / Joseph's feet with fetters" PAIN!!!!!!

- a. Many times as we dream our dream as Joseph did, we do not receive insight to the preparation we must go through
 - (1) In our dreams & visions we do not see the pain & sacrifice required on our part / in order to become the vessel God has called us to be.

2. **God was in control** of Joseph's preparation, just as The Lord is in control of our preparation:

a. vs 17 "He / **God sent a man** before them (Nation of Israel)"

(1) The devil did not send Joseph

(2) His brothers did not send Joseph / though they were a part of God's plan

(3) God sent Joseph before them

3. Many times we do not understand or have prophetic insight to some of the **places** God prepares us for His glory:

a. Many times we have no revelation of the **things we must first do**, as a part of our preparation

4. **NOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCERNING THE CYCLE / SEASON THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS US IN:**

a. Ps 105:19 **Until the time** that his word came to pass, The **word** of the Lord **tested** him.

b. **three keys factors that effect our preparation:**

(1) "Until the time"

(a) we can say: UNTIL THE SEASON / CYCLE

(b) Joseph was not going into the fullness of his dreams until the time / season / cycle of his preparation was completed

(2) "The word of The Lord"

(a) Speaking of God's prophetic word

(1) which can manifest by a Rhema scripture spoken to you

(2) a prophetic dream / as in Joseph's case

(3) a prophesy spoken over your life

(3) "tested"

(a) The Word of The Lord "TESTED / tried" Joseph

(1) to refine, to melt, to purge away, fuse metal like a goldsmith, to purify

(2) can you see how the Word of The Lord in Joseph's life played a role in his preparation

C. **When the call of God is upon your life:**

1. The puts a Word / dream / vision in your heart:

2. The Lord has a work for you to do in fulfilling His will upon the earth

3. The Lord has a people for you to minister to and lead

4. Then The Lord "sends" you as He did Joseph into your season cycle of preparation

5. Then when you have successfully went through your season of preparations the Holy Spirit releases you into the next cycle of church life:

a. The Ingathering

III. **The INGATHERING CYCLE:**

A. The ingathering is a **HARVEST TIME** and we see an example Of this in the Book of Acts

1. It is **Harvest Time** of increase and growth & souls won to The Lord:

a. Acts 5:14 And believers were **increasingly added** to the Lord,

multitudes of both men and women,

b. Acts 2:41 baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were **added** to them.

2. **it is a season of healings & miracles**

a. Acts 5:15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and **they were all healed.**

3. **Time of unity & favor in the church**

a. Acts 2:46 So continuing daily with **one accord in the temple**, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
47 praising God and having **favor** with all the people.

4. **financial & prosperity increase**

a. Acts 4:34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and **brought the proceeds** of the things that were sold,
35 and **laid them at the apostles' feet**; and they **distributed** to each as anyone had need.
36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,
37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and **laid it at the apostles' feet.**

b. Many times churches purchase land & build their sanctuaries during these times of prosperity & financial increase

5. **The ingathering is a time of peace in the church:**

a. Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had **peace** and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

B. Remember No cycle of church life / no season / not even the Ingathering lasts forever:

1. Eccl 3:17 For **there is a time there for every purpose** and for **every work."**

- a. once the purpose of God for a cycle / season has been fulfilled your season will change
- b. once the work of God has been accomplished in a cycle of church life / your season will change
- c. once God has reached that people group with the Gospel
- d. once the harvest for that appointed time has been reaped
- e. once the work of God is fulfilled your season will change

2. Which will take you into the next cycle of church life called:

a. The Sifting

IV.:THE SIFTING CYCLE

A. This is the season where many ministers and Christians get out of Step in working with the Holy Spirit:

1. They fail to discern what season / cycle they are in
 - a. They fail to understand & discern the work the Holy Spirit desires to do in their midst in this cycle/ season
2. Many will fall into spiritual formulas they have learned:
 - a. and begin to bind & rebuke everything that is taking place
 - b. and not realize they are fighting the work of the Holy Spirit
3. It is also during the sifting season that **Pastors will leave their churches** prematurely / out of season / out of cycle
 - a. because they weary in the midst of the battle
 - b. or become **frustrated like Moses** in dealing with the people and **miss God's destiny for their life:**

(1) Num 20:10 "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, **therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.**"

4. It is during the sifting stage when our churches are shrinking, instead of growing:
 - a. as **immature and even carnal believers** flee the local church, hoping to escape the cycle of sifting
 - b. Only to become spiritual vagabonds running from church to church, who now have developed this ungodly pattern of attempting to flee the sifting, every time this season / cycle comes into the church or their life
 - (1) instead of yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit so they can bring forth more fruit unto the glory of God

C. **The key for the cycle of sifting is prayer:**

1. developing you personal prayer life to a greater degree
2. developing & increasing corporate prayer meetings in the church
3. Jesus reveals this key to us in:
 - a. Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may **sift you as wheat.**
32 But **I have prayed for you,** that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."
 - (1) **"I have prayed for you"**
 - b. During the cycle season of sifting we must discern who is doing the sifting:
 - (1) is it the **devil trying to destroy me:** if so we need to do prayers of spiritual warfare...binding....rebuking...etc.
 - (2) or is the **Holy Spirit behind the sifting:** if so.....
 - (a) we need to be seeking the face of Our father & **Prayers of surrender**

- (1 Luke 22:42 "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."
43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

V. Sifting Continued: Our **Heavenly Father** will take us into cycles / seasons of sifting:

1. John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and **My Father is the vinedresser**.
 - 2 Every branch in Me that does **not bear fruit He takes away**; and every branch that **bears fruit He prunes**, that it may bear **more fruit**.
 - 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
 4. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.
 - 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears **much fruit**; for without Me you can do nothing.
 - 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.
 - 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.
 - 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit**; so you will be My disciples.
- A. vs 1 "**My Father is the vine dresser / husbandman**"
1. Do you understand the role of the vinedresser in Jn 15
 - a. vs 2 any branch that does not bear fruit God takes away
 - b. vs 2 any branch bearing fruit God prunes
 - c. Jesus said in vs 5 "I am the vine, you are the **branches**"
 - (1) our lives are the branches that are either removed or pruned
- B. So The Vine Dresser / God Our Father visits our life / visits our church and he is **looking for two things: Life and Fruit**:
1. **Life**:
 - a. When The Vine Dresser visits our life & church He is not looking for:
 - (1) form, formalities, & dead traditions of man
 - (2) Our Father is looking for the **life of The Holy Spirit** and fruit of the holy Spirit in our lives & ministries within the church
 - (a) John 10:10 I have come that they may have **life**, and that they may have it more abundantly.
 - (1) **Def Life**: Zoe.....the God kind of life
 - (a) is the person truly saved & is manifesting the life of Christ
 - (b) is a church spiritually dead or alive with the presence of God
 2. Our Father is looking for the **Fruit of The Holy Spirit** in Our lives and ministries within the church
 - a. **Fruit of The Spirit in the life of the Believer**:

- (1) Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.
- (a) Jesus said if a branch / a life / a person does not bear any fruit: vs 2 “**He takes away**”
 - (1) takes them out of the Kingdom of God
 - (2) takes them out from our local church

b. mistake made by many pastors is:

- (1) they spend most of their time & energy trying to bring back people with no fruit....whom the vinedresser has removed
- (2) instead of investing most of their time and energy in those whom the Holy Spirit is pruning to bring forth more & much fruit

2. Fruit & Life coming froth from the ministries that function our local church

- a. many times a church will hold on to a ministry that has out lived it's season & purpose
 - (1) it may have brought forth fruit at one time
 - (2) But now that ministry no longer effectively contributes to the life of the church & does not bring forth any fruit
 - (a) The Vinedresser will come and take that ministry away
 - (b) but will we lie tot die?

b. How can we tell of a ministry has fulfilled it's purpose & now Is not longer effective in ministering to the needs of people?

- (1) Deut 11:10 For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and **watered it by foot**, as a vegetable garden; 11 but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, **which drinks water from the rain of heaven**,
 - (a) God told Israel that when they entered into their promise land
 - (b) When they entered into the fullness of God's will
 - (c) They no longer would have to keep everything alive by their human efforts:
 - (1) vs 10 “**watered it by foot**”
 - (d) but instead it would be blessed & alive by:
 - (1) vs10 **drinks water from the rains of heaven**”
 - (a) any ministry that is a constant drain to you time wise, money wise, problem wise
 - (b) any ministry that only survives thru our human effort is not a ministry that is alive, blessed & drinking of the rains of haven / rains of the Spirit of God
 - (1) The Vine Dresser desires to remove it
 - (2) So it can in turn be replaced with a ministry that Would be effective for the glory of God

D. The Purpose of PRUNING:

- 1. Pruning is not meant to kill us:
 - a. rather it is to enable us to bring forth more fruit:

- (1) John 15:2 and every branch that bears fruit He **prunes**, that it may **bear more fruit**.
2. Bearing Fruit is how a church, a ministry, a person glorifies God:
 - a. John 15:8 By this My **Father is glorified**, that you **bear much fruit**; so you will be **My disciples**.
3. Always remember that God is not after a bunch of **converts**,
 - a. Rather God desires **disciples**:
 - (1) **Def Disciple**: student, follower
 - (a) We are not to stop with Justin getting people saved / convert
 - (b) we must equip them to bring forth fruit & become a disciple a student of the Word & a follower of Jesus Christ
 - (1) Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 - 20 **teaching them** to observe all things that I have commanded you;

E. We can find an **example of sifting** in the Bible when Gideon Was about to fight a major battle in Judges Chapter seven
Judg 7:1-8

1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2 And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."

5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."

6 And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

7 Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place."

8 So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

A. vs 2 Judg 7:2 lest **Israel claim glory for itself** against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

1. The Lord knew that there were those in the camp who would not give God the glory for the victory
 - a. So God dealt with their pride & leaning upon the arm of flesh
2. Judg 7:3 whoever is **fearful and afraid**, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned,

- a. Next God sifted out all who were bound by fear, instead of having the spirit of faith
- 3. Judg 7:5 "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."
 - 6 And the number of **those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth**, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.
 - a. next The Lord sifts out all except for three hundred men
 - b. who, when they drank the water drank it from the hand
 - c. type and shadow of men who would drink **water** / revelation of the Word of God
 - d. from the hand: a type of the hand of God or **Five Fold Ministry** gifts teaching & preaching the Word of God:
 - (1) Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, teacher

- B. many times we experience these same type of sifting within our Congregations:
 - 1. When the people are fearful to step out by faith in following the Pastors vision
 - 2. When people do not receive the Word of the Lord & the Truth The Pastor is preaching from God's word
 - 3. or when a church is filled with pride & confident in self / flesh
 - 4. We experience a sifting:
 - a. But win a great battle in the Kingdom of God with the three hundred / a smaller group who drinks from the word the pastor is preaching & God gets the glory

VI. When the sifting is Completed, we then go into the next cycle of Church life: **A DEGREE OF FULFILLMENT OF THE VISION**

- A. In this cycle / season **You experience break through manifest & doors open that have been closed for years:**
 - 1. a. Acts 10 Peter is praying on a roof top & has a vision to go and minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles
 - 2. **You receive fresh direction**, when before you did not know where to go
 - a. Acts 16 Paul receives a vision from The Lord to go to Macedonia to preach the Gospel in that city
 - 3. After the sifting it becomes a season / cycle of **fruit bearing**:
 - a. John 15:8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit;
 - (1) where you had failure, you know have success
 - (2) all the years of holding on, believing God & hard work & being faithful...finally pay off
 - 4. You will also find that during this cycle, many **new ministries will be birthed in the church**
 - a. you will find a fresh anointing & a deeper maturity upon ministries that function within your church
 - b. also, your spiritual sons & daughters** who you have poured

your life will step up to help you

B. In the cycle of a degree of fulfillment of the visions: we do

Not enter into the fullness of the vision all at one time, it is also a **Process: as seen with King David**

1. David did not enter into the fullness of his vision all at one time
 - a. he received three different anointings and each one brought him into a degree of fulfillment of the will of God & vision for his life
2. **Thee anointings of David:**
 - a. 1 Sam 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and **anointed him in the midst of his brothers;** and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.
 - c. 2 Sam 2:4 Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed **David king over the house of Judah.**
 - d. 2 Sam 5:3 Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord. And they **anointed David king over Israel.**
 - (1) This last anointing brought about the fullness of David's Vision & call of God: King over all of Israel

C. The cycle of the fullness of the vision coming to pass: is determined by God's time table:

1. Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an **appointed time;** But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.
2. Our responsibility is to:
 - a. determine the cycle / season we are in
 - b. and the work the Holy Spirit is wanting to accomplish
 - (1) in us
 - (2) and in our ministry
3. Then walk in obedience
 - a. and work with the Holy Spirit
4. and at God's appointed time: you enter into a degree of fulfillment of the vision:
 - a. Est 4:14 you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

VII. After you have been thru each cycle of church life

A. The Process Repeats Itself:

1. **Except** for the Cycle where God prepares the man or woman of God:
2. We re-enter:
 - a. The ingathering
 - b. the sifting
 - c. degree of fulfillment of the vision
 - (1) If you have been in ministry for a number of years:

(2) I am positive that you can look at your life & ministry and see this Process of **THE CYCLE OF CHURCH LIFE** repeating itself over and again through the years