

Series: Increase

Echo Church | Week 36 | September 7, 2025 | Rich Saunders Jr. |

“Where there’s no God, There’s no Increase” Part 1 | 1 Corinthians 3:5-8 (NKJV)

### 1 Corinthians 3:5-8 (NKJV)

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

### Introduction

Why do you want an increase? In order to properly answer that question we must first understand what it is. Increase as a verb is defined as become or make greater in size, amount, intensity, or degree. As a noun it is an instance of growing or making greater.

However in our text on today the word increase means to grow, spread, extend. We tend to want to grow, spread become greater and at times it's rooted in pleasing our flesh. We want more of everything from followers to money to friends to material items, we want more shoes we just want more. It is as if we have adopted the world's desires and just tried to add God shake and serve. We work hard. We grind. We shed blood sweat and tears just so we can have more or an increase in things because we are searching for something that makes us happy or satisfied and if we be honest it at times seems as if it is never going to come to past.

The problem isn't that we want more—it's that we want the wrong more. We're chasing followers when God called us to make disciples. We're chasing money

when God called us to steward resources. We're chasing happiness when God called us to joy. The increase you're looking for isn't in the grind; it's in the God who gives the growth.

We've turned the pursuit of increase into an idol. We want more likes, more money, more stuff—but here's the truth: if God isn't the source of your increase, it will never satisfy. You can grind all you want, but until you let God grow it, you'll always feel like you're running on empty.

### Point 1: The Source of the Seed

You can't plant what God hasn't provided. The seed you're working with didn't come from your grind—it came from His grace. Stop acting like you're the supplier and start recognizing that God is the source of everything you need to grow.

Let's talk about the seed. A seed is small, but it's powerful. It contains everything necessary to produce life, but here's the catch: you didn't create the seed. You didn't manufacture it. You didn't design it. The seed is a gift from God. It's a reminder that everything we have—our talents, our resources, our opportunities—comes from Him.

In 1 Corinthians 3:5–8, Paul is addressing a church that's caught up in division, arguing over who's more important—Paul or Apollos. But Paul shuts it down by reminding them that neither he nor Apollos is the source. They're just servants. The seed they're planting? That came from God. The growth? That's God's work too.

In the ancient world, agriculture was central to life. People understood the importance of the seed. They knew that without a seed, there could be no harvest. But they also understood that the seed was a gift. It wasn't something they could create; it was something they received.

Paul's audience in Corinth would have understood this metaphor deeply. They lived in a society where farming was a way of life. When Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," they would have immediately

connected it to the process of farming. They knew that no matter how skilled the farmer was, they couldn't make the seed grow. That was God's job.

This is a life-changing truth: God is the source of the seed. Whether it's the seed of an idea, a dream, a relationship, or a ministry, it all starts with Him. And if God is the source, then we need to stop acting like we're the suppliers. We're not the originators; we're the stewards.

Think about a farmer. A farmer doesn't create the seed. They don't sit in their barn and manufacture seeds out of thin air. No, they receive the seed—whether it's from last year's harvest or from another source. Their job is to plant it, water it, and care for it. But the seed itself? That's a gift.

How often do we act like we're the source of our own success? We say things like, "I worked hard for this," or "I made this happen." But the truth is, even the ability to work hard comes from God. The opportunities, the connections, the resources—they're all seeds that God has placed in your hands.

Here's the question: Are you planting the seeds God gave you, or are you trying to manufacture your own? Because if you're trying to create your own seed, you're going to end up frustrated. But if you recognize that God is the source, you'll start to see the potential in what He's already given you.

### Supporting Scriptures

2 Corinthians 9:10 (NKJV):

"Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness."

This verse reminds us that God is the supplier of the seed. He doesn't just give us the seed; He multiplies it. When we recognize Him as the source, we position ourselves to receive His multiplication.

James 1:17 (NKJV):

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Every good thing in your life—every seed of potential, every opportunity, every resource—comes from God. He is the unchanging source of all that is good.

Genesis 1:11 (NKJV):

"Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so."

From the very beginning, God established Himself as the source of the seed. Creation itself is a testimony to His provision. The seed is a part of His divine design.

If God is the source of the seed, then He's also the source of the harvest. That means you don't have to strive to create something out of nothing. Your job is to steward what God has already given you.

Stop stressing about what you don't have and start planting what you do have. Because here's the thing: the seed may look small, but it's packed with potential. And when you plant it in faith, God will bring the increase.

## Point 2: The Process of Growth

Growth is a process, not a performance. You can plant, you can water, but you can't rush what God is doing. Stop trying to microwave what God designed to grow in the soil of patience and trust.

We live in a culture that wants instant results, but God's growth doesn't work like Amazon Prime. You plant, you water, and then you wait. Because the God who gives the increase works on His own timeline, not yours.

Growth is not something you can force, fake, or fast-track. It's a process that requires time, patience, and trust in God's timing. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Notice the sequence:

planting, watering, and then growth. Each step is necessary, but none of them can be skipped.

Paul uses this agricultural metaphor to teach the Corinthians about spiritual growth. He's reminding them that while planting and watering are important, the actual growth comes from God. This was a countercultural message, even in Paul's day, because people—just like today—wanted quick results.

Here's the problem: we live in a culture that's obsessed with speed. We want everything now. We want instant success, instant results, and instant gratification. But God's growth doesn't work like that. You can't microwave what God designed to grow in the soil of patience.

Think about it: a farmer doesn't plant a seed today and expect a harvest tomorrow. They understand that growth takes time. They plant, they water, and then they wait. And while they're waiting, they trust that God is doing what only He can do—bringing the increase.

This is where many of us struggle. We want to see results immediately, and when we don't, we get frustrated. God's timeline is not your timeline. Growth is a process, and if you try to rush it, you'll miss what God is doing in the waiting.

Have you ever ordered something online and tracked the package obsessively? You check the status every hour, hoping it'll arrive sooner than expected. But no matter how many times you refresh the page, the package won't come until it's ready.

That's how we treat God's process of growth. We plant the seed, and then we keep checking, hoping to see instant results. But God's growth doesn't work like Amazon Prime. You can't rush it. You can't track it. You just have to trust that it's on the way.

Here's the key: while you're waiting, God is working.

Just because you don't see growth doesn't mean it's not happening. The seed is doing its work underground, out of sight. And when the time is right, it will break through the surface.

God is more interested in your development than your deadlines. You may have a timeline in your head, but God's process is about preparing you for what He's bringing into your life. If He gave it to you too soon, you wouldn't be ready for it.

### Supporting Scriptures

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV):

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

Growth happens in seasons. You can't rush a season, and you can't skip one. Trust that God knows the right time for your growth.

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV):

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Waiting is not wasted time. When you wait on God, He strengthens you for the journey ahead.

Mark 4:26–28 (NKJV):

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.'"

Growth is mysterious and gradual. You don't always see how it's happening, but you can trust that God is working behind the scenes.

### Closing

As we close today, let's take a moment to reflect on what we've learned. We've talked about The Source of the Seed and The Process of Growth. Both of these points remind us of one powerful truth: God is in control. He is the source, the sustainer, and the one who brings the increase.

But here's the challenge: too often, we try to take control of what only God can do. We act like owners when God has called us to be stewards. Ownership says, "This is mine, and I'm in charge." Stewardship says, "This belongs to God, and I'm just managing it."

The seed you're planting? It's not yours—it's His. The growth you're waiting for? That's not your responsibility—it's His. Your job is to plant, to water, and to trust. God's job is to bring the increase.

This week, I want to challenge you to release your desire to control. Take inventory of your life and ask yourself: Where am I trying to be the owner instead of the steward? Maybe it's in your finances, your relationships, your career, or even your ministry. Whatever it is, surrender it to God.

Here's your action step: Every day this week, pray this simple prayer: "Lord, I release my need to control. Help me to trust You as the source of my seed, the guide in my process, and the giver of my increase. I am not the owner—I am the steward. Teach me to trust You more."

God is not just a part of the formula for increase—He is the formula. He's the source, the process, the purpose, and the reward.

So let go of the pressure to make it happen on your own. Trust the God who gave you the seed, who's working in the process, and who will bring the increase in His perfect time.

"The increase you're looking for isn't in your grind—it's in your God. Trust Him, and watch what He does with your faithfulness."