

Family Seasons: Lesson 1

The Rhythms Of Life

Memory Text: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Setting The Stage: We are leaving winter here in the northern hemisphere and heading into spring. Soon it will be hot, and then shortly after that it won't be. We each look forward to our favorite seasons. Some enjoy fall because of the change of leaves and the cooler evenings. Others love summer with the visits to the beach or because of the opportunity to plant a garden and reap a little harvest. Seasons come and seasons go.

Capturing the ever-changing nature of life with all of its varying “seasons,” King Solomon writes in **Eccl. 3:1-8** that there is a time for everything.

These verses tell us two things:

- 1) The world we live in is a world of changes. There is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; sometimes from one extreme to the other.
- 2) Some of the change that will come our way we will not have any control over. Some things we will have to just “roll” with, and make the necessary preparations for those things that are inevitable.

What are some of the seasons and rhythms of life? And how will they likely impact our lives?

Sunday - In The Beginning

Genesis 1; 8:22

In the book of beginnings we find a lot of firsts. The biggest first is the beginning of the human race. Here we find our beginning and our purpose, unlike modern theories that leave people feeling like life is meaningless and pointless.

For example, nihilism teaches that life has no meaning. This philosophy is deeply ingrained in the attitude, disposition, and thought of Millennial's and Post-Millennial's. If life has no meaning, as the theory purports, then there is no purpose to our existence. We are here by mere random chance. You don't have to imagine what type of behavior this adopted thinking breeds—lack of respect for self, lack of respect toward others, selfishness, self-gratification, depression, suicidal tendencies, etc.—as it's all around us today. Paul's prediction of the last days is incredibly accurate (see 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

What is most disturbing is to see this attitude enter the church. Of all people living, Christian's lives should exude meaning and clear direction. God made us, and fashioned us into His own image. We were created to glorify our Maker (Isa. 43:7). The notion that God made a couple of "simple" cells (that really aren't that simple) and left things to chance, really doesn't really foster purpose. But when we look at the creation account in Genesis 1, we don't see randomness, we see intentionality, and we see a God who didn't make us for the world, but prepared the world for us.

Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

God is a God of order. And although sin has disturbed the natural world, order, rhythm, and regularity still exist. Seasons come and go in an orderly fashion. The earth deliberately rotates on its axis and gives us a 24-hour day. The moon goes through its 28-day cycle. There are still 365¼ days to a year. These are things we take for granted. We order our lives by them. Farmers still sow seed expecting a harvest. We don't question whether night will come. This is because of God's promise to us.

In spite of themselves, self-proscribed atheists and anti-theists enjoy the benefits of and take advantage of God's promise as well. Also in spite of themselves, the world enjoys a seven-day week without any astronomical sign telling them to do so. Where did the seven-day week come from?

Life on this earth seems to be calibrated in some mysterious way to the number seven. The number seven even governs the music world (do, re, me, fa, so, la, ti—and then we start over again with do). That eighth note, the octave, begins a new cycle of seven. There are as many notes in the scale as there are days in a week.

A growing number of scientists not so long ago embraced an entirely new field of study known as chronobiology that examines repeating phenomena in living organisms. These cycles are known as biological rhythms. Franz Halberg, considered the "father of chronobiology," insisted that we humans don't just experience circadian rhythms of approximately 24 hours, we also operate under circaseptan or weekly rhythms as well.

The Bible promotes a seven-day week, specifically in Genesis 1 and 2. If God gave us a seven-day cycle to operate within, then it makes sense that our body rhythm would operate in the same vein.

That means the seventh-day Sabbath comes rhythmically as well. What a blessing to be able to anticipate this divinely instituted day off. We look forward to it as a family. Our lives, in many ways, revolves around this day. How about you?

Monday – The Rhythms Of Life

Ecclesiastes 3:2; Genesis 21:8; Psalm 71:5; 90:10

Not only do rhythms exist around us, but also in us. **What are the predictable rhythms of life mentioned in the following Bible verses, and how do they directly tie into family life?**

Ecclesiastes 3:2: “A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted.” (Birth & Death)

Genesis 21:8: “So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned.” (Child Development)

Psalm 71:5: “For You are my hope, O Lord God; you are my trust from my youth.” (Days of Youth)

Psalm 90:10: “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Old Age & Death)

Life has two bookends: birth and death. And between these two bookends we each go through a variety of seasons, sometimes different from each other. We each are unique and our varying experiences are not all quite the same.

We each have something special to share with someone else. For example, both young and old can benefit from each other: “The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their grey hair” (Prov. 20:29). And both the enduring and the endured can help each others: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (1 Cor. 1:3, 4)

Whatever our life circumstances happen to be right now, what can we do to be a blessing to someone else, even those in our own family? Can we be more understanding, listen more? Can we lend a helping hand? Can we encourage someone?

Tuesday – The Unexpected

Job 1:13-19; 2:7-9

Job 1:13-19; 2:7-9. If it doesn't rain it pours. In one fowl swoop Job lost everything he owned and those he loved, except for his wife. (Do you think Satan knew what he was doing in leaving Mrs. Job around?) Did things change for Job? Absolutely! Could he prevent the change? No he couldn't.

Greek philosopher Heraclitus declared, “There is nothing permanent except change.” Just when it seems everything is going fine, the unexpected happens. It could be negative, like in the case of Job, or it could be positive. Life is predictably unpredictable. Our rhythms get interrupted. It could be a blessing or a blessing in disguise.

Job had to endure a new season in his life. By the middle of the book Job suffered six major losses: his property, his labor force, his children, his health, the support of his wife, and the encouragement of his friends. His world had been turned upside down. Although the Bible says of Job that he was a blameless and upright man, one who feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1), there is no doubt he “felt it”. His story is one of complete and utter trust in God. But the point here is that he went through something we, in one way or another, have or will go through.

Abel never expected to be murdered, Isaac never expected to be cheated by one of his sons, Jacob never expected to be cheated by his uncle, Joseph never expected to be sold into slavery, Israel never expected that they would have to suffer under a cruel taskmaster. None of us expect the unexpected.

How can our faith help us in the midst of trials that unexpectedly interrupt our rhythm of life? Our confidence in God provides sure footing so that if we face a life interruption we are not easily rocked. We can fully depend on a God who can take a bad circumstance and somehow bring good out of it (Rom. 8:28). We also have the assurance that one day soon the rhythms of life will no longer be interrupted because sin and its consequences will be ended. This provides hope in the midst of apparent hopelessness.

Wednesday - Transitions

Acts 9:1-22

We are creatures of habit aren't we? There's no question we get set in our ways. The older we get the harder it gets to change (think: old dog, new tricks). We don't change easily. How many wives have complained over the years about not being to change their husbands?

So when we learn that God wants to change us, initially it may not sound very appealing. After all, who likes change? But God isn't interested in changing our personalities (refining them perhaps, yes), He's interested in changing our characters. Who doesn't have some rough edges that need shaving off? Who doesn't have some negative aspects of their characters that need a little work?

Acts 9:1-22. God interrupted Paul's life didn't he. But Paul was heading in the wrong direction, so this was a good interruption. A terrific change came over Paul when Christ met Him on that Damascus road. He not only at that moment yielded to

the powerful working of the Spirit of God, but He followed the leading of the same Spirit toward and into a life of service of proclaiming the gospel and raising up churches.

“As Saul yielded himself fully to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the mistakes of his life and recognized the far-reaching claims of the law of God. He who had been a proud Pharisee, confident that he was justified by his good works, now bowed before God with the humility and simplicity of a little child, confessing his own unworthiness and pleading the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. Saul longed to come into full harmony and communion with the Father and the Son; and in the intensity of his desire for pardon and acceptance he offered up fervent supplications to the throne of grace. The prayers of the penitent Pharisee were not in vain. The inmost thoughts and emotions of his heart were transformed by divine grace; and his nobler faculties were brought into harmony with the eternal purposes of God. Christ and His righteousness became to Saul more than the whole world.” (Acts of the Apostles, pp. 119, 120)

Paul’s experience was dramatic, but our conversion stories don’t need to be the same to be just as powerful. The Spirit of God continues His work in us as we allow Him to, and what He has started in us He is faithful to complete (Phil. 1:6). By His grace we can be victorious!

Thursday – Interactions

Romans 15:7; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; James 5:16

God created us to be in relationship with others. Very few of us live in complete isolation. We came into being by others, at birth we needed others to take care of us, at least up until a certain age. Who would really want to live in isolation? And while certain animals can make good companions, they don’t really bring the fulfillment interactions with others can bring.

Interactions with one another often and do impact the changes and rhythms of our lives. But it works both ways: we can be impacted by others, and we can impact others. Shouldn’t we then be mindful of our influence in all of our interactions? We want to be a force for good.

Earlier we mentioned biblical characters such as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and the unexpected experiences they went through. Interestingly though, their interactions with others, in one way or another, led to the unexpected circumstance they endured. Take Joseph as an example. His father, Jacob, treated Joseph as his favorite son. Joseph’s brothers knew this. Then Joseph, in his naïveté, related his dreams of grandeur to his brothers. These interactions proved to be the tipping point for Joseph’s brothers. They were determined to do away with this “dreamer”.

Jacob, a favorite of his mother, brought this dysfunctional practice into his own home, and the results were devastating. How we interact with others, especially in our homes, can bring about positive circumstances or negative ones.

What good advice does the Bible offer us in our interactions with one another?

Romans 15:7: “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” (Practice acceptance and confidence in each other.)

Ephesians 4:32: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Practice courtesy and having a forgiving spirit.)

1 Thessalonians 3:12: “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you.” (Practice selflessness)

James 5:16: “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (Practice humility)

If we practice these virtues and bring them into our daily relationships what a positive influence we’ll exert over others. While Christ is the one who changes people, He often uses the likes of you and me to inspire that change. We can have a positive influence in the lives of others.