

A Time for Everything

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Do you ever feel like the summer goes by faster every year? I can't believe it's already sweet corn season. It feels to me like the corn just got planted! Before you know it, we're going to be picking pumpkins!

Scientists have actually studied this phenomenon, and this feeling that time goes by faster every year is actually a real thing. They have a theory for why this happens.

Scientists say that every day your brain records the things you did, but your brain is wired to think new experiences are more important than the stuff you do regularly every day. So, if you're doing something for the first time, you'll probably remember it quite vividly, but when you do the same thing over and over again, day after day, like driving to work, your brain doesn't record that information because it needs to save room for the new stuff. So that's why you might vividly remember your summer vacation five years ago, but you forget what you had for breakfast this morning. Our brains are wired to remember new experiences, this is how God created us. But here's the catch. We tend to have fewer and fewer new experiences as we get older. So, our brains don't recall all the things we're used to doing every day, and it ends up feeling to us like time is speeding up faster and faster.

When I was a kid, it seemed like summer stretched on forever. By the end of August, I actually started looking forward to going back to school, just so I would have something to do. I was in a season of life when new things were happening all the time. The first day of high school. Getting my driver's license. Going to prom. My first summer job. But now that I'm older, it feels to me like summer is speeding by.

God has created our lives to have many different seasons. When we're in one particular season, it tends to feel to us like that's the way things are going to be forever. But just like the seasons of the year change, the seasons of our lives also change.

We change from being babies to toddlers, from toddlers to school children, from school children to teenagers. Teenagers turn to adults, and adults eventually become seniors. Babies grow up and have babies of their own. Ecclesiastes reminds us that this is how we were made. When you're in a certain season of life, it seems to stretch on forever, but that season will change soon, and often sooner than you think.

When Natalia was a baby, I felt like I would never sleep again. I was like a zombie from the Walking Dead. But now that she's older, I actually sleep pretty well. I'm not sure exactly when this season changed, but one day I realized that Natalia was finally sleeping through the night.

In every new season of our lives, we encounter change. We experience different challenges and new opportunities that we've never faced before. And throughout each different season of our lives, God is with us.

Changes in our lives can be difficult. A new season of life might require you to let go of things that were once important to you. A teenager may need to let go of the security of living at home with her parents in order to embrace adulthood. A senior may need to let go of his driver's license, and the independence that comes with it. We may experience grief when a season of our life is over.

But in each new season, we have a chance to learn new things- new things about ourselves, and new things about God. The change from living at home to living independently that a young adult experiences can allow her an opportunity to learn to trust God in a new way. Money arrives just in time to pay her internet bill. New friends get made. The senior letting go of his driver's license might learn to accept help from other people in the community with running his errands. The seasons of life teach us new things about God. In one season, you might learn that God can be trusted when times are tough. In a different season, you might learn how God brings other people into your life to help you.

Change is part of what it means to be alive. If you didn't change, you would be dead! Change can be difficult for us to accept, but it can also be a blessing.

If we didn't change, our lives would be stagnant. They would become flat and boring. And we wouldn't need to learn anything new. But God has designed our lives to go through seasons of change. These changes force us to be pushed out of our comfort zones, they force us to learn to see God in new ways.

It's tempting for us to want to think that we can control our lives. In some of our seasons, this might almost seem true. When your job is going well and your kids are doing great and everything seems like it's coming together for you, you might feel like you've got everything figured out. But all it takes is one moment of crisis for all that to change.

When I was in school I had a friend who was really popular. He was an amazing musician and a lot of girls liked him. One day he was playing hockey when he slammed into the boards and broke his femur. He suffered complications from his broken leg, and he was in the hospital for a long time. One day he was on top of the world, and the next morning he was in a hospital bed. This kind of crisis can happen to any of us, at any moment.

The passage of Ecclesiastes that we read today describes a vast array of the different kinds of experiences people encounter. It's not giving permission for these experiences to happen, it's not necessarily saying they are OK. It's describing them, acknowledging that they do happen. The author seems to be reflecting that there are many different things we will go through over the course of our lives.

The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that the seasons of our lives change. Only God remains the same. Life is fleeting. It goes by faster than we think, and the things we want to hold onto we won't be able to take with us at the end.

Money is good to have, but I've never been to a funeral where the family talked about how much money somebody made. Good looks fade over time. Even our health is something we can't fully control. You can go to the gym to work out every day and still get hit with a serious health problem. Ecclesiastes 5:15 says, "Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can hold in his hand."

Everything that you work for, you will someday need to let go of. That's the reality of human life. The wise Sage of Ecclesiastes describes this reality. This book is gritty. It acknowledges the contradictions and complexities of life. Ecclesiastes reminds the reader that "time and chance" happen to us all, the sinner and the righteous person alike. There are many things in our lives that we have absolutely no control over. It reminds us that the only sure guarantee we have in life, is God.

Ecclesiastes counsels us to remember God in the days of our youth, before the hard times come. Because once times get tough, we're going to need God to rely upon.

The world we live in today looks much different than it did when Ecclesiastes was written thousands of years ago, but some things remain surprisingly the same. Despite all of our scientific advancements and our fancy technology, people still get sick. We are still vulnerable to financial problems and family problems. And we still die. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes remains just as true today as it was thousands of years ago. Seek God now. Find ways to connect with God during the good times in your life. That way when a crisis hits, you will have a rock to hold onto.

What can you do this summer to deepen your relationship with God? How can you make this a priority item in your life? Maybe you can take advantage of a quieter season to commit yourself to spending some regular time in prayer each day. Maybe you can find a church to visit when you're on vacation up north. Or perhaps this summer is a busy season for you. If that's your situation, maybe you can ask God to help you be aware of how the Holy Spirit is making things happen all around you. Whatever your plans are this summer, make it a priority to deepen your relationship with God. Your life may change, but God's faithfulness lasts forever.

In the words of Isaiah 55:6

Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.