

Accurately Discerning Your Season Shifts

For years, our lives have been rhythmic.

We pick up speed late summer and sprint through the fall until Thanksgiving. We slow our pace in December and gradually trot toward a long rest from Jan. 1 until just around the end of March. Life gets full again in the spring, we play hard in the summer, our pulse already racing before we hit the fall sprint.

Repeat.

I know my seasons.

At least I thought I did.

I birth books and babies in the fall. (And even the children I didn't birth myself have birthdays in the fall.)

Then the embers in our fireplace never fully die in the winter. "Start the teapot again, please, Mommy" is just as frequent as "Babe, would you light another fire?" I read novels in the winter and we piece together puzzles. The flurry of activity quiets but the walls field the noise of seven lives, slowing to a halt and reacquainting themselves with the stillness of winter on the other side of our steamed windows.

Last year was the same as this year was the same as the year before that.

So when April hit, of course I knew my season. *Right?* Soccer and weeding out winter clothes and wintered flower beds and finishing writing my book. I planned to finally put into place some ideas I'd had for this blog and my writing and a project about which I've been dreaming for a year—all the things I'd been scratching into my moleskine when life was quiet.

And then there was that surprise Tuesday morning.

I don't consider myself "old," and yet when a slip on the sidewalk during a morning run landed me in a cast with a broken ankle, I wonder if I'm 8 again or pushing 80. "Nope, we don't see many people in here your age, ma'am" said the 20-year-old-looking intern at the orthopedist's office. That one time I wasn't so thankful to be called ma'am.

In one day, my spring plans changed.

Though small in scale, this near-two-month stint off my ankle has been revelatory. As I grow in God, there is a subtle part of me that does not expect to have surprises. And I get used to relating to God without surprises so that when they come I might spend a good bit of the energy I need to move forward instead mining back through my calendar saying, "This wasn't the plan" on repeat, as if to convince myself (or God) that we're stuck.

After the wrestle—you know, that part of me that made a mental list of all the things I couldn't do without walking or driving and threw a little fit on my insides—I started to realize that somewhere pretty deep in there I *wanted* to be a little girl again, sequestered to her room for rest time, even though my body's inertia told me I could play all day without interruptions.

I wanted to be led by a strong Daddy. I wanted to "get" to be weak, and follow.

The mystery of God requires us to hang in the balance, at times, if we're going to not only acknowledge it but receive it as beauty. And sometimes I talk myself out of mystery, less because I've gotten a new handle on a side of God from His Word and more because I don't like the vulnerability of being led like that little girl.

In April I got told, "This isn't the season you thought it was

going to be.”

And I type through tears because I have felt profoundly loved by God in it all.

God made me a little girl again and told me that I needed rest time and, yes, even after pouring hours of prayer into the plan I thought we’d made together for this spring.

{If you will, an aside: This post isn’t about whether this whole ankle debacle was initiated by Satan or God or just my uncoordinated flesh. There are some things that, once they happen and you ask for Him to bring miraculous healing—because, yes, I believe He does—and the healing doesn’t yet come, that require you to say, “Well, God, what do You have for me here,” if you’re going to grow in the midst of it.}

I didn’t know how badly I needed to be grossly unproductive and see—from that very place—the glint in God’s eye that spoke to me more than words and said, “Just abide, here, in Me.”

Friends, it’s sweet to be my age and get sequestered. Grounded, if you will.

I’ll end with this note, to the creative types out there—or, rather, the efficient producers. Or maybe all of us: **We’re in a unique time in history when creating in a closet or producing something or experiencing the beauty of God, alone and in private, feels antiquated.** *Why write in my journal when I can tell the world my latest insight into God? Why just live the private moment of God-kissed beauty that’s happened in my family room when I can invite thousands of others to see it? Why create—if it’s not for another person? Why live if it’s not be productive unto someone else’s benefit?*

I say this as a writer, finishing my next book for which I can’t wait to have people pour over the pages. I love to work for the benefit of others.

But this unique time in history, when we weigh and measure our lives against dozens (if not hundreds) of people that we “see” harvesting in a day, has allured us into ignoring the importance of individual seasons—particularly the ones when the ground needs to rest before we sow or harvest.

We’ve been allured into renouncing the leadership of God, who ordains for each one of us (and at separate times) a winter, a spring, a summer and a fall and each for its own purpose.

Could it be that you’re sowing during a time when the ground needs to rest or clamoring to harvest what you haven’t yet painstakingly sown? Or what if you’re resting and it’s harvest time?

We often live, pushing to harvest something during the wrong season that could be easily retrieved in the right one or expecting one kind of harvest when God has been sowing another seed or trying to sow into hard ground when, if we waited just a bit longer, it would take half the time and effort, all because the soil was tilled.

Sometimes all it takes is the question and the set-aside time to hear the answer: *What season do you have me in, God? And how to I partner and align with You, where You have me?*

Slide outside, go for a walk and start asking Him. I say *start*, because He’s not a Pez machine. Let this be the beginning of a lifetime of having this dialogue with God.

It all is really this simple: He’s a very good leader.

Yes, even for those of us pushing 40 who think we’ve figured out a few things about life. {eo}

On that note, I’m leaning in to the season He has so obviously and surprisingly given me. I’m letting “the land rest” a bit on the blog. I’m going to live more than I write this summer (at least outside my private journal) and soak in what He has

for me during this sequestered season of deep rest. Thus, this blog will breathe a bit until August. We'll still be posting our daily adorations and some other short ruminations over here throughout the summer. Come August, when I'm back to writing again, I'll send a note via my newsletter along with some fun new news on my next book through Zondervan.

For Your Continued Pursuit (don't take my word for it, look it up): Genesis 8:22 | Matthew 9:37-38 | Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 | Proverbs 16:9 | Daniel 2:21 | John 15:9-17 | Leviticus 25:1-7 | Exodus 23:10-12 | Hebrews 12:3-12

Sara is a wife to Nate and a mother of five whose arms stretched wide across the expanse between the United States and Africa. After almost a decade of Christian life she was introduced to pain and perplexity and, ultimately, intimacy with Jesus. God met her and moved her when life stopped working for her. And out of the overflow of this perplexity, came her writing, both on her blog and in her book, *Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet*, released October 2014 via Zondervan. Connect with Sara on Instagram.