

# Seasons of a Woman's Life

✖ She was the wife of a young pastor with a thriving congregation. Heavily involved in the church, she had been a vital key to its spiritual vibrancy and growth. She was also the soon-to-be mother of her second child.

"Before I heard your message, I felt frustrated and guilty," she admitted to me. "On the one hand, I saw the ministry needs of the people around me. On the other, I knew I had a new baby on the way who would need my attention and nurture.

"But after listening to your teaching," she said, "I felt every part of my body and spirit begin to relax. It was suddenly clear to me that this period of life is only for a season."

That had been my topic: seasons. They were, after all, God's idea: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22, NKJV).

The fact is no woman is called to do all things at all times. Seasons are an integral part of God's program for the earth—and for people.

This was recognized by the psalmists, the prophets and the apostles. Fruit comes in due season, and so do tears (Ps. 1:3; 22:2). Rainy days come in seasons (Jer. 5:24; Ezek. 34:26). Prophetic words are fulfilled in their season (Luke 1:20). There are seasons of heaviness and seasons of rejoicing (1 Pet. 1:6).

It seems that God in His wisdom punctuated all of life with seasons. And just as punctuation marks add meaning and variety to written communication, causing the reader to pause for understanding, accelerate with excitement or end abruptly at the conclusion, so seasons bring necessary meaning and variety

to our lives.

After all, can you imagine what life would be like if it were merely one long day? One *sameness*?

The wise man of Ecclesiastes declares, "To everything there is a season" (Eccl. 3:1). In nature there is a progression from winter to spring to summer to fall. In our lives, too, there is a progression of change from one season to another. As surely as seasons direct the course of nature, so they direct the courses of our lives.

Understanding and accepting this can bring contentment. As Paul said, "For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11). If we cooperate with the seasons of life, we can experience great productivity and fruitfulness. But if we struggle against them, we will be constantly anxious and frustrated.

Physically, seasons are inevitable. Time, measured in years, directs our changing course from infancy to the edge of immortality. Slowly nature etches the lines of maturity on the countenance of inexperience.

Tiring trivia, so necessary in the young years of building homes, families, careers and ministries, gives way to quiet knowing. Wisdom and patience compensate for waning strength and failing energy. Graceful reconciliation with the changing years brings serenity and an experienced trust.

Every season, from youth to old age, has its own responsibilities and rewards. Primary responsibilities change in various seasons, and as they do, new opportunities become available. If we are sensitive to the varying responsibilities of each season, we can reap the reward of a greater harvest in seasons to come.

## **Ranking Priorities**

For women of vision and accountability, the child-rearing years often produce undue pressure. Possessing ability and giftedness—and stimulated by a vast array of “you-can-do-it” books and “you-should-be-doing-it” seminars—many young mothers become frustrated. Understanding the principle of seasons, however, can alleviate the guilt, help chart a course for the future and give children the direction they need, too.

If you have children at home, realize this: It is for only a short season! Responsibilities attended to well during the early years of motherhood can produce an extended harvest for the kingdom through the lives of your children. On the other hand, neglect during this season can produce wild tares and weeds for you to contend with in the seasons to come.

With clear perspective, determine how much extended involvement you can manage, and do not feel guilty or repressed by your decision. Feel comfortable with the ranking order of your priorities, knowing that this season will pass and your present priorities will change.

I first met Joy Strang, the publisher of *SpiritLed Woman*, at a women’s leadership conference several years ago. Anyone who knew Joy recognized immediately she was not out of place at a leadership meeting. However, a few years lapsed before she became as visibly involved in leading women as she is today.

Why? One reason: Seasons. Joy was the mother of a 1-year-old boy at the time of that conference.

My life, too, has been punctuated by seasons. As a young mother I experienced the season of long hours at home with my children. My husband, Tom, was in a traveling ministry, and since our house was in a wooded area with few neighbors, I had little involvement with others and felt quite tied down.

My natural motivation urged me to be up, out and away. But my primary responsibilities in those early years of marriage and family determined the season of my life. Feeling alone and

stifled, I sometimes battled with resentment and frustration.

The conflict was resolved, however, when I determined to fill some of the lonely hours with reading and study that would benefit me for the future. A studious mind helped a lonely heart!

Before going to bed each night, I would set the house in order for the next day. Then I'd get up very early the next morning and have several hours of undisturbed prayer and study before my motherly duties demanded my attention.

I read many books. I even read Bible commentaries! This was a season which, in retrospect, passed much more quickly than it seemed at the time.

I have now lived full circle. Today I have few home and family responsibilities. I am free to work, travel and speak. Little did I realize, while taking care of my primary responsibility as a young mother, that I had also been given an opportunity that would develop my future ministry of teaching and writing!

Those years of study became the foundation for my life's work. Never have I had another season for such intense reading, study and prayer without the simultaneous pressure of producing. Those were tough years—but good ones.

My advice to all young mothers with a heart for ministry is this: Do what you can now. Plan and prepare for the future, but do not feel guilty and overload yourself during the formative years of your marriage and children. It is an important season with important priorities. Tend it well. Another season will come—and you will be prepared.

## **Grand Central Station**

For me, a new season dawned when my children became teenagers. Before then, I had always enjoyed cooking and entertaining fellow ministers and workers in my home. Those

times of hospitality and fellowship were special for the entire family.

However, the teen years turned our home into Grand Central Station for the high school crowd. My plans and my teen-agers' plans frequently conflicted.

During this season Tom and I decided it was more important for our home to be open and ready for the younger set than for us to entertain our peers with lovely dinners. Tacos, hamburgers, the Colonel's chicken, lots of cookies and gallons of milk became our home entertainment fare, replacing beautiful roasted meats with Yorkshire pudding, ham and asparagus rolls, and minted tea.

It was a season of making memories we still share with a large circle of now-grown-up young friends. I have never regretted one evening that I gave up studying or speaking in order to sit on the floor in our basement den with my husband, our children and their friends, discussing in lively fashion whatever the issue of the moment was. It was a short season, never to be recaptured. I'm glad I didn't miss it!

### **People in Progress**

Just as there are seasons in nature, in the physical body and in our life's work, there are also spiritual seasons. They are a part of the production process of the kingdom.

Each one of us experiences times of plowing, sowing and harvesting, with all the attendant challenges and pleasures. The budding of a ministry with a fresh anointing is filled with expectancy. The blossoming time brings expectancy into recognition. The season of bearing fruit necessitates the work of preservation and sharing. Harvest is attended with great joy.

And according to the law of production, fruit-bearing is rewarded with the repetition of the process. Our fruit becomes

*more* fruit and progresses to the bounteous harvest of *much* fruit.

It is important to remember, however, that a cycle of production is often preceded by a dormant season. This is a time during which it seems as if nothing is happening spiritually—when we feel stripped bare, buried in isolation, forgotten. Such a time came to the Apostle John on the island of Patmos and to the Apostle Paul in prison.

It may come to you in a time of sickness, loss, disappointment or rejection. I can assure you it *will* come—but only for a season. Be mindful that every bleak winter carries with it the promise of another spring.

Whatever season you find yourself in, practice patience, and know that He who began the work in you is able to complete it (see Phil. 1:6). Patience is what keeps faith working. And refrain from judging yourself or others harshly in present circumstances.

We are not all at the same stage of development—nor are we all destined to produce the same crop. Some crops require a longer growing season. Besides, who would determine the worth of a fruit tree in the wintertime, while it is barren and leafless? We are all people- in-progress!

But while a force beyond yourself determines your season, your reaction to the season is *your* responsibility. God determines when a particular season comes; your responsibility is to tend what has been planted.

We would be foolish to try to plant in winter or harvest in spring. Yet we often resist the circumstances God has allowed to promote growth!

## **Stormy Weather**

In every season, of course, storms may appear. You may be

dancing on a sunbeam when the ring of the telephone comes like a clap of thunder, bearing unexpected news of calamity or loss. Even the best seasons of life can be clouded by a storm.

At such times, thank God for the promise in His Word—that wonderful phrase of Scripture found 120 times within 120 verses, or 10 times for each month: “It shall come to pass.” Storms come, and storms pass. They don’t last forever. The sun will shine again!

The passing years and seasons, I’ve found, have galvanized my emotions. I know now that not every storm will sink my ship. (Hopefully, none of them will!) I also know that when the storm is raging, my feelings are not sure ground.

I take heart in God’s comments to Job—the man of many seasons, serial storms and bounteous blessings. There are treasures in the snow, God told Job, and hail is reserved for the days of trouble, wars, and battle. I have learned that today’s tempest often will hold the sustenance and strength for the future. Storms can make channels for the rain, and tender new growth comes as a result of the storm (see Job 38:22-23,25-27).

Paul said we comfort others “with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:4). The increasing fruitfulness of subsequent seasons, from which we nurture others, may often be augmented by the experience of a storm.

So whatever season of life you are in, make full use of it! Even a dormant season can become a special time for needed rest, quiet listening to God and fresh study. Don’t waste time wishing you were someone else, somewhere else, doing something else.

This is a futile exercise. God made you as you are to use you as He planned. Living fully in your present is the best insurance for your future.

Understanding the law of seasons can relieve whatever pressure

you feel about your current circumstances and increase your faith for the future. While we anticipate the fruit, we must understand the process: You will bring forth fruit in *due* season (see Ps. 1:13). Don't despair; the day of reaping will come!

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