

SEASONS OF GROWTH

Today in Queensland, we are enjoying spring. It is perfect weather, not too hot; not too cold. The birds are chirping, people fall in love and new life starts to appear on plants and trees. Of course we'll soon move right into summer ... where the trees bear fruit ... days get longer and people hang out at the beach and seem to become more social.

Autumn on the Gold Coast can also be a pleasant time ... not too hot and not too cold ... that is until we hit winter. However, on the Gold Coast we have a very mild winter ... **unlike where I was born in the UK and where I grew up in NZ.** There, it snows and puddles freeze over and people slip on them. You can see your breath and sometimes, that icy wind blows right through you no matter what you wear to try and stop it. In most places ... plant life is dormant as many go into hibernation.

So it is in our Christian lives. As we progress through time ... we encounter seasons of change. **We find our experience in God is not like it used to be when we first believed ...** when we were first born again and experienced blessing. It seemed whatever we did prospered ... we had more energy ... more enthusiasm and people around us were greatly influenced and some even became believers.

I remember times of overflowing joy ... where we'd all write God-songs and sing almost all day long. The Word of God became a book of unfolding mysteries ... Christian coffee shops opened up all over the city ... newly converted young people invaded the streets with pamphlets telling people about Jesus. You could not stop believers talking about Jesus.

And yet, a few years later it all changed. There were no Christian coffee shops ... there was no invasion of street evangelists ... circumstances changed and many people went back into the world system or got religious **telling about the days that were.**

SO, THE QUESTION WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES IS ...

ARE THESE TIMES ORDAINED OF GOD? DOES GOD REALLY PUT US THROUGH CHANGING SEASONS?

Acts 1:7 SLIDE

*He [Jesus] said to them, "It is not for you to [pre] know **times or seasons** which the Father has put in His own authority.*

We see God the Father sovereignly instigates times and seasons as part of His plan.

- Seasons in His plan and purpose for mankind **collectively**
- Seasons in His plan and purpose for us **personally**

COLLECTIVELY

As we mentioned ... there are certain times and seasons that the church passes through. For example: The beginning of the 20th century with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Assusa Street and in Wales ... The restoration of healing in the 1960s ... Christchurch, NZ where 1000's were swept into the kingdom.

PERSONALLY

We also experience personal seasons which are unique to us.

Changing times that God has ordained to bring about our personal growth.

The word 'Season' is 'Kairos' = **a time period displaying unique characteristics**
It is frequently translated, 'Time' or 'Times'

SLIDE

NB: CHANGING SEASONS IN OUR LIVES ARE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES & EXPERIENCES.

THEY **DO NOT** AFFECT OUR ESTABLISHED FAITH ... IN FACT THEY ENHANCE OUR FAITH.
BUT HERE AND NOW – EXPERIENCIALY AS WE WALK THROUGH THIS PRESENT AGE ...
OUR EXPERIENCES AND CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE – SOMETIMES NOT APPEARING TO BE
FOR THE BETTER ... JUST AS SPRING AND SUMMER INEVITABLY TURN TO AUTUMN AND
WINTER.

*WHEREAS PREVIOUSLY THERE WAS PROSPERITY AND RESULTS ... NOW THERE SEEMS TO
BE DORMANCY AND DEATH ... WE START TO WONDER, WHERE DID I GO WRONG! DID I
MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION ... WE CAN FEEL ABANDONED BY GOD ... ALL BECAUSE WE
DON'T UNDERSTAND THE SEASON HAS CHANGED FOR US.*

*The sheep in Psalm 23 walk into the valley of the shadows not because they walked away
from the Shepherd but **because they followed Him.***

Galatians 6:9 **SLIDE** Here we see a season of seeming barrenness:

*... Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in **due season** we shall reap if we do not
lose heart.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1 **SLIDE**

*To **everything** there is a season, A time for every **purpose** under heaven:*

2 A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;

3 A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;

*5 A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to
refrain from embracing;*

6 A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away;

7 A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;

8 A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S SEASONS IS TO ENHANCE GROWTH IN YOUR LIFE

SLIDE of Growing trees

**ALL OUR SPIRITUAL SEASONS ARE DESIGNED BY A SOVEREIGN GOD TO
PRODUCE GROWTH IN US.**

It's His Process

- It's part of the process that helps us become outwardly who we are inwardly
- It matures us so we can produce fruit – unique to us
- It moves us toward the Purpose that God has assigned us to

NB: The seasons don't affect the nature of the tree but the organic life and growth of the Tree.

In winter, plant life lies dormant. But it's part of the survival mechanism, to help plants gear up for warmer days ahead. Seeds lie dormant, metabolising at low levels, waiting for spring.

Ooi says it's only when a seed has been exposed to low temperatures for long enough, a process known as cold stratification, that plant hormones trigger the end of dormancy. At this time, if environmental conditions are favourable — enough water — the seed can then germinate, again a process governed by plant hormones.

Atwell also says it's a time of housekeeping: proteins are broken down and re-made and cell membranes are maintained. Winter dormancy can also be about conserving nutrients. Cherry trees, for instance, are genetically programmed to undergo a winter before buds open in spring. Buds won't burst to life until the tree has been chilled.

SO IT IS WITH US ... OUR WINTER EXPERIENCES ARE PRODUCING GROWTH INSIDE US.

PROBLEMS

If only you can receive this message in Faith ... it will relieve the emotional suffering of much of what you are struggling with.

If we know we are in a **God ordained different season** – a time in which He is producing growth in our lives, we will be able **to rest** in that season ... **to trust Him** and continue **to experience** His blessing **and enjoy** the season.

HOWEVER, IF WE DON'T RECOGNISE THESE CHANGES AS GOD'S PLAN WE CAN BECOME GREATLY DISCOURAGED AND CONFUSED.

SOME PEOPLE DO ALL SORTS OF CRAZY THINGS.

SOME PEOPLE TRY TO FIGHT THE SEASON AND KILL IT.

But the season ain't gonna die, no matter how many times you hit it...

SLIDE **HYPER-PENTECOSTALS COMMAND THE SEASON TO LEAVE THEM ... THEY SHOUT THEIR WAY THOUGH, REFUSING TO ACCEPT THIS SEASON IS HAPPENING TO THEM. THEY EXIST IN UNREALITY AND MISS THE GROWTH. THEY REMAIN STUNTED AND FANATICAL.**

SOME PEOPLE DENY THE WINTER SEASON AND TRY AND LIVE LIKE THEY DID BEFORE IN THE SUMMER TIME.

SLIDE of people not changing with the seasons.

THINGS HAVE TO CHANGE WHEN THE SEASON CHANGES.

SLIDE Some sit and pine over the past summer and reminisce about 'the good ol' days'.

Those were the days my friend we thought they'd never end (see footnotes)

Many have fallen by the way during winter seasons! They become stagnant, inactive, inert, dormant and sluggish; pining over the past.

Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away ... now it looks like they are here to stay, oh I believe in yesterday ...

STUNTED GROWTH

IF WE PINE OVER OUR PAST EXPERIENCE OR REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE CHANGING SEASON IN WHICH WE NOW FIND OURSELVES ... **WE WILL MISS WHAT GOD IS DOING TODAY.**

Peter says, 'Think it not strange because some fiery trial comes on you.' It takes greater Faith to rest than it does to fight.

HINTS TO HELP YOU GO THROUGH WINTER SEASONS

1. **SLIDE** REALISE ... YOUR SPIRIT REMAINS UNAFFECTED

1 Peter 1: 3-6 **SLIDE**

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to **an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled** and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are **kept by the power of God** through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time [season].*

⁶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for **a little while** [season], if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.*

1 Peter 1: 3-6 PARAPHRASED **SLIDE**

Though now for a little **while** [season], you have been grieved [distressed] by various trials ... you greatly rejoice [knowing that] God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has begotten you again to **a living hope** ... and has reserved in heaven for you, **an inheritance incorruptible** and undefiled and that does not fade away, and **you are now kept by the power of God** through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the **last time** [season].

NB: Spiritually we remain unaffected by changing seasons in our lives. **We remain justified, born again, blessed, seated with Christ**, etc. although situationally as we walk through this age here on this planet we are subject

to changing times and seasons.

... We keep our eyes fixed on the eternal as we travel through the temporal.

2. SLIDE RECOGNISE THE SEASONS ARE IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN PLAN FOR YOU

Psalm 31:15 SLIDE

My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

NB: We rejoice because we know that this season is ordained of God to reveal how real our Faith is. Your genuine faith will survive and will receive, praise, honour and glory from God.

3. SLIDE RECEIVE A WORD OF WISDOM FOR THAT SEASON

Through cancer ... the Lord spoke a word of wisdom to me regarding my situation ... He said, 'This is about learning'.

THIS WAS A SEASON OF LEARNING

With this great assurance I was comforted and able to stop struggling and rest back into His arms ... and He brought me through and I learned ... and still learn ...

James 1:2-8 SLIDE

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

For example: One lady whose husband had passed away only 2 months before, said to me ... 'I keep asking God why did you take him so young ...' Then as she continued on, she said quite casually, 'The Lord told me that this was his time to come home'. She quickly passed on to talk about her sorrow but I couldn't get passed that statement. 'Can you see it' I said? Do you realise the power and significance of that word that God has spoken to your heart?' She looked at me cautiously.

This is the Word of Wisdom... She doubted what I said was true. Why, because it didn't come with blinding lights or shake the foundation?

Isaiah 50:4-5 **SLIDE**

*The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak **a word in season** to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, **He awakens My ear to hear** as the learned.*

It's essential to know the season we are in as it determines what we do ...
how we do it and where we do it. The season affects everything we do. We
act accordingly.

*For example: In the winter season, we put away our swimming costume and buy a coat.
We turn off the air conditioning and turn on the heater.*

4. **SLIDE** RESET YOUR THINKING & ADAPT TO THAT SEASON

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVES

Jeremiah 29:4-10 **SLIDE** - Israel in captivity ... Look at what the Lord said to them.

*Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom **I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:** ⁵**Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit.** ⁶**Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.** ⁷**And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.** ⁸**For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed.** ⁹**For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord.** ¹⁰**For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.***

Grace and peace only work when we accept our situation and God's provision. They do not work while we are fighting the circumstance ... striving to overcome ... struggling to get out. Our efforts are futile ... our fear is worthless ...

*Coming out of cancer ... I was led by God to start an advertising business
I started small ...*

5. **SLIDE** REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF THE COMING SPRING

Romans 12:11-12 **SLIDE** Berean Study

Do not let your zeal subside; keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

¹²*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, persistent in prayer.*

Hebrews 12:2 (Redacted)

Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. = Solid Hope

Isaiah 43:18-19 **SLIDE**

"Do not call to mind the former things; pay no attention to the things of old....

¹⁹Behold, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it?

Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert....

Jeremiah 29:10

For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. The season will change.

YOU ARE WHERE YOU ARE BY GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND ... FIND PEACE WHERE YOU ARE.

STOP LOOKING BACK AT WHAT YOU HAD ... THERE IS A NEW SPRING COMING.

Song of Solomon 2:10-12

My beloved spoke, and said to me: "Rise up, my love, my fair one,

And come away. ¹¹For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come,

And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

FOOTNOTES

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

Once upon a time there was a tavern
Where we used to raise a glass or two
Remember how we laughed away the hours
And think of all the great things we would do

Just tonight I stood before the tavern
Nothing seemed the way it used to be
In the glass I saw a strange reflection
Was that lonely woman really me

CHORUS

Those were the days my friend
We thought they'd never end
We'd sing and dance forever and a day
We'd live the life we choose
We'd fight and never lose
For we were young and sure to have our way