

**Topical**  
**Summer - A Season to Use Well (Various Texts)**  
**6-6-10**  
**Scripture Reading - Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

**Introduction - Life is seasonal**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: <sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; <sup>3</sup>a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup>a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; <sup>5</sup>a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; <sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; <sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; <sup>8</sup>a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

- First, note that it was God through King Solomon, not the Beetles, who came up with this idea of life being seasonal ☺.
- Second, the older I get the more I realize just how true it is that life is seasonal and how important it is to keep the season of life we're in mind as we live.

Our season of life can be determined in a million different ways...

- Age - childhood, teen years, young adulthood, adulthood, senior years
- Relational Status - single, dating/courting, married, divorced, widowed
- Children - kids are young, older, out of the house, having kids
- Health - sick / well, in shape / out of shape, feeling good / feeling bad,
- Career - student / deli worker, teacher / coach, youth pastor, church planter
- Finances - not making it, just making it, comfortable, prospering

- Spiritual - before Christ /new in Christ/maturing in Christ/mature in Christ, high times /low times, rapid growth/stagnancy, close to God/far from God
- Pace - slow, relaxed, busy, crazy
- Time of year - fall winter, spring, summer

It is VERY important to recognize the season of life we are in and to allow that season to help determine how we live.

- Our hopes, goals, priorities, and expectations must change with our seasons or we will become very frustrated.
  - o Us - 2 kids to 8 kids
  - o Jess - exercise before knee surgery vs. after
  - o Emersons - before grad school vs. after grad school
  - o We have to adjust with our seasons

Though each of us are in different seasons of life, as Christians, we should all have one thing in common and that is this, *a desire to honor God and make the most of the season of life we are in.*

- **Ephesians 5:15-17 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup>Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>*making the best use of the time*, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but *understand what the will of the Lord is.*

- God wants us to make *the best use* of the season of life we are in and the way we do that is by *understanding what the will of the Lord is* for that season.
- The way we understand what the will of the Lord is for our season is by studying His Word and being led by the Spirit.
- That's what we'll seek to do today as we look at a special season of life that we all have in common, SUMMER!!!

**Body - God wants us to make the most of this summer season by concentrating on: relationships, reaching out, and rest.**

- 1) Relationships - Summer is a great time to honor God by fostering the relationships He's given us.
  - a. God is a relational God and wants us to be relational people.
    - i. He wants to have a relationship with us and He wants us to have a relationship with Him and with others.
  - b. *I found relationships to be the BIGGEST BLESSING and the BIGGEST CHALLENGE of the Christian life.*
    - i. Before Christ, when summer finally came, I had one thing on my mind, ME!!!
      1. True beyond summer
      2. Not good, but simple
    - ii. In Christ, I have lots of people on my mind besides myself
      1. God, wife, kids, believers, unbelievers
      2. God calls us to do all these relationships well and frankly, *nothing overwhelms me more.*
    - iii. Increase in relationship volume and significance is THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE of the Christian life.
      1. Unbelievers are called to love and relate to family, friends, and sometimes neighbors (defined narrowly as those living close to them) IF they are loving and relating to them in return.
      2. Believers are called to love and relate not only to family and friends but to neighbors (defined broadly and biblically as anyone in need around them), to God Himself, to other followers of Christ, and to those who are not yet followers of Christ and to do so REGARDLESS of whether or not they loving and relating to them in return and for the purpose of making an ETERNAL DIFFERENCE in their lives. YIKES!!!
    - iv. Now don't get me wrong, all of these relationships are a HUGE blessing. The BIGGEST BLESSING of being a Christian. But keeping up

with them all, and doing them in a God-honoring, unconditionally loving, exemplary way can be a *real challenge*.

1. "I feel like I'm not doing anything well," in reference to relationships.
- c. If you're feeling this way too, let me give you a few tips that have helped me.
- i. Just get started. Something is better than nothing. A few little things go a long way. Chip away remembering that it's a marathon not a sprint.
  - ii. Make your personal relationship with God your top priority.
    1. **Matthew 22:36-39 (NIV)**  
<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
    2. This makes sense, we all know we should do it, we all want to do it, but very few of us ever get it done. Why?
    3. *I think for most of us, it's because we don't work at it. We're waiting for God to give us a desire for Him before we begin to pursue Him. We think it's weird, or even wrong in some way, to read our Bibles and pray to God when we don't really feel like it.*
    4. If this is your attitude, you're going to be waiting *a long time*. Though Christ has set us free from slavery to sin, our sinful nature (flesh) still has great pull and influence in our lives.
      - a. **Galatians 5:16-17 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the desires of the

flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, *to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

5. Six things help foster your relationship with God this summer.
  - a. Make reading your Bible the first thing you do every day.
  - b. Read at least one Christian book.
  - c. Enjoy God in nature.
  - d. Carve out a concentrated prayer time.
  - e. Have little conversations with God throughout the day.
  - f. Ask God to change your affections.
  
- iii. Make your relationship with your spouse your next highest priority.
  1. You are one flesh and thus irreplaceable.
    - a. If you're off as a couple, you're off as
  2. Get out on a date at least once a month this summer and make one of those dates an overnight.
  
- iv. Next should come your kids.
  1. Again you are irreplaceable
  2. Take advantage of the beautiful weather and longer days (stay up late).
  3. Be intentional about building summer memories to last through the long winter (projects can wait).
  
- v. Then comes everyone else God has placed in your life.
  1. Believers - Closest friendships are naturally going to be with fellow believers due to your common bond in Christ.
    - a. Enjoy those relationships this summer!
    - b. Have someone over for dinner

2. Unbelievers - Though Jesus spent much time with His disciples, He also spent much time with those who had not yet chosen to follow Him.
  - a. **Luke 5:27-32 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." <sup>28</sup> And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. <sup>29</sup> And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. <sup>30</sup> And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."
  - b. Jesus spent time with unbelievers and we need to do the same. *I am more and more convinced all the time of the importance of relationship when it comes to sharing our faith.*

- 2) Reaching Out - Summer is a great time to honor God by reaching out to our neighbors both relationally and through acts of service.
  - a. People are eager to get together in the summer, so get together.
    - i. Enjoy them, get to know them, pray for open doors, don't force the issue.
      1. Late talk with J.
  - b. Make it point to hang out in your yard.
  - c. Be a light by jumping on board with already existing projects.

- i. Serving the community is ESSENTIAL in the eyes of unbelievers.
    - ii. Serving the community is not as complicated as we think.
      - 1. Lend a hand to a neighbor.
      - 2. Jump on board with what's already going on in the community.
        - a. Park clean up.
- 3) Rest – Summer is a great time to honor God by resting so that we can be the best ambassadors for Christ we can be.
- a. Burnout advice on 97.3
  - b. Would have seen this as heresy a few years ago
    - i. Teaching and had fewer kids
  - c. The more I pour myself out for others the more I see how essential it is to rest.
  - d. God thinks rest is essential too.
    - i. God rested on the seventh day and He calls us to rest too.
    - ii. Struck by the emphasis on both weekly and seasonal “Sabbaths” in OT.
    - iii. I’m convinced that these seasons of rest were about more than just setting Israel apart and resting from their physical labors.
    - iv. I think they were about putting Israel in the best possible position to be obedient to God.
  - e. If we’re going to love God and love others with everything we’ve got, *we need to rest. It’s hard work!!!*
    - i. I get to the end of the day and I’m exhausted.
    - ii. *Way more* exhausted than when I was a teacher.
    - iii. More too it than getting old ☺
      - 1. Spiritual battle / I’m a sinner
  - f. Make time to rest this summer and enjoy it!
    - i. Figure out what is truly restful for you and do it!
      - 1. For me it’s: golf, watching sports, reading a book, or watching a movie or getting away with my wife
  - g. The problem with resting is it’s tempting to want too much
    - i. God *worked for six days* and rested for one.
    - ii. We can’t afford to take more than one day off.

- iii. *A means to an end, not the end itself.*
- iv. The diff between rest and rest then for me
- v. It's tempting to go back and that's why I need Jesus

**Conclusion - If we're going to make the most of this summer season by concentrating on relationships, reaching out, and rest, we need Jesus' help.**