

*“Getting Unstuck So We Can Live Free!”*

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*“Getting Unstuck From An Unbalanced Life”*

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Key Texts: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

## **I. Introduction: Stepping Into a New Season**

Here we are at the close of our summer sermon series and on to a new season of life. School has started in Culpeper and will start soon in other local areas. New sports seasons are about to begin. There’s a new season of Wednesday night suppers, choirs reconnecting, and small groups starting in the week and weeks ahead. And today we begin a new season of confirmation for our 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Hopefully, no matter what season of life you’ve been in as of late, today you can take a step towards a new season. Today’s scripture, which is familiar to most, was popularized by a group called the The Byrds. It was written in the late 50’s, released in 1962, and became an international hit in 1965 by the folk-rock group The Byrds, reaching #1 on December 4, 1965.

The lyrics are almost verbatim from Eccl 3. It is thought the book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon around the 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C., but some biblical scholars date the writing to 3 B. C. Either way, “Turn, Turn, Turn” is the number one pop song with the oldest lyrics.

We all know seasons come and seasons go. Summer will soon push to fall and into another winter. We watch our children or parents grow, develop, mature, and eventually we move from a time to be born and a time to die. And, before you get too depressed, let’s remember there is a whole lifetime to enjoy in between. That’s why if we can get unstuck we have more time to enjoy life, engage in living and make the most of our time.

## **II. Course Correction**

What so often happens is life gets off course. We are crammed with busyness, too out of focus, unbalanced in what we do, wishing it could be different. Solomon says we are supposed to be happy and do good as long as we live, knowing that everything God does will endure forever. That “nothing can be added to it nor anything can be taken from it.” All this so we, as God’s children, can place God first in our lives and surrender ourselves and our need to be in control over God.

Paul teaches the Ephesians, “so be careful how you live, not as unwise people, but wise, making the most of every opportunity.” (Eph 5:15-16)

The issue is, if we are running from one season to the next, it is so easy to get off balance and then it is easy to miss important opportunities that come our way. We fill our schedules with so many good things, because for some reason we think it’s godly to be busy, that we miss out on some great things God has for us.

One sports season, when the kids were young, we decided no soccer, no baseball, no dance. We are taking a season off and we are going to chill together as a family. Note, we didn’t take many off after that. We thoroughly enjoyed that fall, eating supper together, going on picnics, fishing, playing, being together.

## **III. God in Charge of My Schedule?**

So, what would your schedule look like if God were in charge of it? How does God want you to spend this next season of your life?

For me it’s making sure I find balance. I kind of like the use of a wheel because I have a bunch of important people and things in my life, none more important than the other. It’s just you can probably guess who is in the center. God!

So, making sure God and I are spending quality time is actually the source or indicator of how well balanced the rest of my life is going to be and the same would be true for you. Then, for me, it's my wife, my boys, their families, my friendships and activities where I make friends, then my work. Like, for this season at work, giving time and getting to spend time with our youth is exciting to me. To teach them about God and the journey they can be on, which has a lot to do about seasons we go through. On Wednesday, to jump back into teaching Disciple Bible Study with a group that is hungry and eager to know God and God's Word. So much of the church's administrative work is off my shoulders. Thank you, Church, for making this transition to a new season, so I can focus on ministry and making disciples and congregational care and training leaders using my best spiritual gifts to help the church grow and mature and be fruitful in this particular season.

And our schedules will determine if we are living balanced or unbalanced lives. I'm learning my schedule is far less about what I want to get done and far more about who I want to become.

#### **IV. To Get Unstuck From an Unbalanced Life You Have to Be Honest**

To get unstuck from an unbalanced life, you have to get honest with yourself and your family and in your work. You might have to reshuffle the matrix and reset priorities. That, in itself, can be transformational if you will spend some time praying about it and asking God to help you set your schedule.

Is HOME a few nights a week on your schedule?

How about church or small group?

Can you write "church" in your calendar every Sunday instead of once a month?

How about vacation a time or two a year to get away?

Is your marriage worth fighting for?

Is "Gym" or "Exercise" on your calendar. One guy said, "Look at me—I'm a slug, but, man, you should have seen me in high school". Then he decided to go to the gym 3 or 4 days a week, just an hour-long workout—no personal trainer, no private chef. Just no cheeseburgers and fries and breakfast sandwich every day and no soda or Southern-style sweet tea and the guy lost over 40 lbs. Today he feels much better than he did 20 years ago, is able to play on the floor with the grandkids and even enjoys playing softball and hiking. All because he wrote "Gym" in his calendar 3 or 4 days a week 4 years ago and made a commitment to it and he still does. It has led him to having a much more balanced life.

#### **V. Fighting Drift**

And, yes, one thing we all have to fight is the drift. Paul says, and I think it applies to living a balanced life, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. So run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who goes into the game goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." (I Cor 9:24-27)

Paul knew the importance of living a balanced life. He encouraged his readers to "Focus on Jesus and to make Jesus known". That's the rhythm of life we are called to as God's people. If we run, or live, in such a way as to get the prize we'll be more focused, more intentional about who we are becoming versus what we are doing. When we are becoming who God wants to be, what we do will look much more like Jesus and we will not live with so much anxiousness and angst in our lives. And I recognize that is going to look different for every one of us, depending on where we are in life.

It is going to look different for a child, a teenager, a young adult, whether you are married or not, as an empty nester or grandparent. As seasons change we change, hobbies, and interests change, people move, work evolves. The sun rises, the sun sets. God's desire is for us to enjoy every season of our lives. King Solomon is inviting us to consider the seasons of our lives through the landscape of eternity and that's how we simplify our lives and find balance.

## **VI. A Time For So Many Things!**

So there's a time to plant and heal and build. A time to laugh and dance and to gather stones together. A time to embrace and search and keep and mend, a time to speak and love and enjoy peace.

On the flip side, Solomon says, "There are also times to uproot, to kill, to tear down and to weep. We don't much like this list. A time to refrain from embracing. A time to give up, throw away, a time to fear and to be silent, a time to hate, and a time for war.

He starts it all off by saying, "There is a time to be born and a time to die". My guess is over a lifetime most of us will experience what seems like the positive side of life and also the negative side of life. Together it makes up the reality of our world and what many have to deal with and struggle through.

There is a total of 28 possible seasons which Solomon lists and there really is no order to the list. They are snapshots of the kinds of seasons you are likely to experience over a lifetime. We identify very easily with some, not so much with others. Think about the difference if you are a civilian or you've served in the military.

When you can identify your season, it will bring you more clarity and balance. You are also more likely to notice God's hand at work in your season of life, learn the lessons God has for you, and to then grow in your character development, wisdom, and spiritual growth opportunities.

## **VII. Identifying Our Season**

As a church family, we've discerned we are in a season where we need to focus on intentional discipleship, to help everyone think about where you are at on your spiritual journey and to consider what is your next step you need to take to grow in your faith.

And think of this, it is just as important to identify your current season so that when that season comes to a close, you'll be less likely to cling to it and more apt to make a graceful exit and to then step whole heartedly into the new season that is dawning.

Just know this, you are not in your current season by accident. God's hand is in it, and there is a purpose to God's activity. Ask yourself, what does God want to teach me in this unique, it's never going to be the same again, season?

Let's don't be followers of Jesus who are spinning out of control. Let's don't act like we have no idea about God's narrative for our lives.

God has made everything, including you and me, beautiful in its time.

## **VIII. Seasons End, Seasons Begin**

All summer we've talked about getting unstuck, so you can live freely for Christ. We don't have to be stuck in whatever we are dealing with forever. It's a season. Solomon says seasons end and seasons begin. Seasons come to a close, we move on. It could be an unhealthy relationship, or that you can't leave the party, you've just not gotten over the party life, but before this turns into an addiction that tanks your life, move on. And it could be you're at the addiction point, the painkillers that served a legitimate purpose now anesthetize a pain that is no longer physical, causing a greater pain. This season must end. Step into a new season.

Maybe you're in a season that you're mad at the church. Maybe you've had a bad experience. Someone let you down or you know your church is caught up in the issue of human sexuality and you hold back going into your new season. Some people won't explore their own faith journey because of something that happened 40 years ago. Don't let others rob you of experiencing God's amazing grace. Step into a new season.

It could be cynicism, unforgiveness, abuse. Just know abusers aren't looking for new seasons, they like you right where you are. You have to take the steps to move on and find hope, healing, and balance in your life. Move on for your sake and also for the sake of those you love. A new season awaits you.

## **IX. Life on Earth is Not Our Final Season**

And friends, as we've talked about getting unstuck all summer and today from an unbalanced life, just know life on earth is not your final season. From God's perspective, life on this planet—averaging 70 years or so—is a long, extended season woven from a string of shorter seasons. Someday, this earthly season will come to a close and a new reality will unfold.

Deep inside us, God has given us a sense of eternity. Scripture says God has set eternity into man's heart. (v 11) Scripture says very clearly, if in our season on earth we find grace and forgiveness through Jesus, we can move from one earthly season to the next with our hand in God's hand, learning the lessons God has for us, and finding meaning, satisfaction and purpose along the way in and out of season, no matter which way the seasons Turn or turn out.

When you and I get to the end of our earthly season, we will be invited into the next season with God forever where we, as Paul says in I Corinthians 13, will fully experience God's companionship, joy and God's goodness forever.

Would you choose to live your earthly life hand in hand with God today knowing God honors the choices we make on earth? We desire to get unstuck, to find balance, to live more fully, more simply. Would you today reach for the One who offers forgiveness that lasts for eternity?

When we understand life is structured around seasons our days will be clearer, less cluttered, more focused and balanced. We'll stop spinning wheels, get off our backs and when new seasons come along we can step forward and stop fighting the old and look for the lessons God has for us in the season that lies ahead.

## **X. Closing Prayer**

Let us Pray:

O God, who has set eternity into our hearts, we thank You for each and every season of life. Some are so terrific, some are just so hard to get through. And honestly the seasons of others impacts our seasons as well. We are all so interconnected. Thankfully, we are connected to You, God. Be at our center and help us to be sure we are setting our schedules, so we can attend to the most important people and things You call us to do in our lives. May we each have an assurance of our sins' forgiven and of the promise of heaven. And if we don't help us have it before we leave today, starting a new season with You, God, intentionally in our lives. We'll likely figure it out at some point that actually You've been there all the time in every season so far.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.