

# The Seasons of Life

5-1-11  
'Train up a child'

Good Morning,

The poet, John Donne wrote a poem called No Man is an Island,

**No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.**

It speaks to us of the connectedness of our lives. It also hints of the brevity of life. That the clock is ticking, but we are connected so if it ticks for one, it ticks for all. So what do we do with the time that is given to us, and how do we help those around us, maximize the time given them.

In the month of May we are going to take a practical look at the Seasons of our lives. We are going to dip into the history of Israel a little bit to zero in on these seasons, but what we want to draw out are some active understandings of what to do with this time.

<i>I sat down with a 52 year old man recently, another pastor, and colleague, and he looked straight across the table at me and said, I feel like my life is a failure, I do not feel I have accomplished what I am suppose to in life.</i>
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The reality is, we all are getting one shot at this. Life is not a dress rehearsal, this is it. How you treat those children, the choices you make, the person you covenant with, the legacy you leave is all happening, as we speak. Solomon writes in Eccl 3:1 *"There is a season for everything under heaven, a time for every activity"* This is a man reflecting back on life and realizing how much of it he wasted, pursuing everything under the sun, trying to find happiness, when all along real peace and contentment, he concludes is found in a love relationship with God our creator

He writes another verse in the book of Proverbs 22:6 that will start all the gears turning on this series and brings us to the first season of life.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*  
*Proverbs 22:6*

We all enter this life, the same, as a baby.

This season came full circle back to me, just about 15 months ago, when our first grandson was born, and I was personally reintroduced to this first season of life. I looked through the glass at that little boy laying in that hospital crib, and the feeling I had for him and about him was like no other I had ever experienced. I thought to myself later, *"this child has no idea, my love for him it would cause me to leave no stone unturned to help him as he grows."*

The question for me becomes, how do I direct the things I have toward these ones who are in the first season of their lives, in such a way as to really direct them toward the kind of life

God intended for them. So that even if they leave it, or turn away from it, in later life they will return to it.

In order to give us some practical biblical instruction on this we are going to go all the way back to the book of Deuteronomy, where Moses is preparing the people for the promised land and he is giving them commands, basically on how to flourish in this new land. In essence, it is **Remember these things, and practice them.** Here is what he says:

*“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:5-8*

I want to look at these verses in two parts, the first is:

## What do you Train?

What do we train these children or grandchildren of ours in?

Of all the things he could have said, prepare them to be scholars, athletes, soldiers, farmers, he told them first Love God. Love the Lord your God, but then he got very specific. He wanted the children to see the adults loving God in 3 specific ways.

- a. With all your heart – this is our human will. When our children see us do something because we are so passionate about it that nothing on earth could stop us. They know that whatever we are pursuing is being pursued with our whole heart. A child is stopped in their tracks. Not one word needs to be said, when an adult is pursuing something with all their heart. Loving with all our heart builds admiration in our children.
- b. With all your soul – this is our spirit journey. It requires that we speak. Our souls house those deepest understandings and convictions that we carry. Unlike loving with all our heart, loving with all our souls means that we have to find the words that capture our convictions and speak them verbally to our children. This gives them the chance to understand what drives us to such love and conviction. We as adults must learn to break the silence barrier, if our children are ever going to really understand what motivates us. *(I saw great motivation and passion in my Father, he worked hard, but he never told me with his mouth what he was dedicated to, what he worshipped. As his son I longed to hear what he had to say. I never knew what was in my Father’s soul)* Loving with all your soul builds confidence in God into our children.
- c. With all your strength – this is our resources. It may be our physical strength, it maybe our financial strength, it may be our time, or any other physical asset we possess. When our children see us not only talk a good game or show incredible passion, but they also see us put our money where our mouth is, it builds in them respect for us and for our God who we are committed to.

## 1. How do you Train?

Please understand what God is doing in our church. From July 2010 to December 2010 – 15 children in our church accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Last week at our Easter service, while we were down here 18 more children accepted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. 5 others recommitted their lives to Christ, thus further solidifying the decision they made a couple months ago. In just over a month, between 10-20, (I am praying for 20) of our teens in student ministry, will be going to ALIVE a Christian Music festival, where the best Christian bands in the world will be performing, and speakers will be presenting on the most relevant topics in the young lives of their listeners.

This is what is happening in our church, so what can be happening at home.

This passage is very clear to the Israelites, about how to train, not just what to train.

The first thing Moses says is

### a. Impress them on your children.

Impress these commands to Love God on them. The word impress means to ‘stamp upon’ ‘to leave a lasting mark’ So that it is never forgotten.

And here is how we are to do it:

First we are to:

### b. Talk about them when you sit at home –

This would be at Dinner time. When I first thought about this. It hit me that I give my children to other people for 6+ hours a day, for those people to teach my children things that will help them in this physical world. My question to myself was, When do I as their Dad, do the same thing. It was then that I realized the power of the dinner table. Along with eating Fried Chicken ( I’m just saying) I began to ask simple questions for them to answer. Things like, Who built the Ark? And Who died on the cross? Very quickly I realized they were waiting for me at dinner, waiting to see what questions I might have that could possibly stump them. Before long I was teaching them the Greek alphabet, because I was a seminary student and I didn’t have a life. It was at that dinner table that the girls heard over and over again the early stages of the ocean diagram and a philosophy of discipleship that God was telling their Father.

### c. When you walk along the road –

This would be Driving time. I would get home from work and I realized very soon that Kathy had had the girls all day. We would have dinner and then we would go on what became known as ‘Night Rides’ Our automobile turned into a space ship and we each had names and a destination to get to. Most of the time that destination involved a snack and a challenge. This was, especially when the girls were young, our time to explore the world, later that would turn into them trusting us to take them on hikes,

and international mission trips and to college and university choices, as their world expanded more and more

**d. When you lie down –**

This obviously is at Bedtime. And by now you see it is the training of a new set of habits in our own life. When the children are at home. We have these critical windows of time, in which we can speak into their lives and Moses is naming them, one at a time. The stories that can be knitted together in the deep of the night can hold the fascination of a child for the rest of their life. They will never forget what is said. They long for them, this is the time where no phones are ringing, no urgent deals have to be struck and they have Mom or Dad or GrandMa or GrandDad all to themselves, to hear about the wonderment of life.

**e. When you get up –**

Here then Moses gives us the last window of time in the life of a child where day after day we can do something, to inject that training that will follow them all their hours and minutes of their life. Breakfast time. It is a time of preparation. For the day, for the challenges they will face. I was often already gone to work during this time when my own daughters were young, but parents and grandparents have stated to me that leaving note cards, and gifts. Expressions of love to them from time to time were things they have done. It reminds the child that they are not far from our thoughts even when we are not there.

**f. Outward symbols and demonstrations**

Finally it is as if Moses looks around and after speaking about each of these moments in a typical day, looks for one more thing. In a very practical sense, he says “And remember to be outward in your expression of your love for God” Do not confine it to these private moments, express it in the clothes you wear, the bumper stickers, the things that you put in your yards, the pictures you hang on your walls. Let these little ones know that you are proud of what you believe and your love for God. When they grow up they will take time to survey all that they have learned from you and as Solomon tells us, they will return to it.