

Dear all, greetings.

While in S Africa recently, I picked up a book on the 4 seasons of love entitled “The Four Love Seasons,” published by the Stanborough Press in the UK. The title was somewhat intriguing, and as I know the authors personally (Drs Jeffrey and Pattiejean Brown, for whom I have huge personal respect), and being an irredeemable romantic, I wanted to read and learn. Here is what I gleaned, *inter alia*:

Season of Love	What to Embrace	What to be Watch For
Spring	The season of new beginnings, everything is new in nature, and so is our yearning to be loved and to love another. The brain is flooded with dopamine in the spring season as we rejoice in the smells, sights, tastes and flavors of new life once again. Tends to be the ages 20-35. We look for that which is new, we rejoice in the newness of life, and we look for love. Spring love, like the blue-bells or daffodils that poke their way up through the last snow, is an optimistic love.	Rather than being realistic about love and the one we love, we tend to high levels of idealism, overlooking potential fault-lines in the relationship, or hoping that “love will conquer all.” Misplaced emotions leave young people open to promiscuity, pornography, fornication and addictions.
Summer	The season of commitment, when new love matures into stable love. Tends to be the ages 35-50. In the northern hemisphere, most marriages take place in June, in mid-summer. We make commitments to love in this season, enter covenants of love in this season, and then as we raise families, we live out those commitments. We take the plunge from new love to committed love in this season of life.	Summer love focusses on the roots. Plants put down deep roots into the soil to receive nourishment, and to be able to withstand storms. Likewise, those in a committed relationship are to invest the time, effort and emotional engagement to put down deep relational roots. Avoid the temptation to just “cruise along” and assume everything is OK. Watch out for the competition of time in this season of life. We juggle children, work and church commitments. Finances are tight. We are exhausted. Rather, intentionally invest and deliberately deepen.
Autumn	The season of distractions, when the leaves turn beautiful colors and then fall to the ground. Tends to be the ages 50-65. An unlikely season to find new love. A season of constant change – new homes, new jobs, new schools, new business opportunities as we return from summer vacations. The first flush of love is gone, and the season of commitment gives way to the season of distractions as mature adults look for meaning and purpose beyond their	In this season, some are vulnerable to affairs, trying to recapture their lost youth. It is easy to be distracted by fast cars, loose women or power-games in the hunt for something to fill what for many is an internal void. Empty-nest syndrome and the nagging question “Is this all there is to life?” leave us vulnerable to ungodly distractions. Just as leaves mature, change color, and fade away, so we move past the peak physical years of life into a gradual decline. Questions of eternal significance tend to

	<p>marriage and the successful raising and launching of their now-adult children. This is the season to refocus on your priorities – in love and in life.</p>	<p>pry into our self-satisfied material lives. Just as motorists are least attentive in the final miles before they reach home, and are most open to accidents, so we are least attentive in this stage of life. Our homes are paid off, our children have launched, we have achieved all we wanted professionally, so we let down our guards emotionally and spiritually, and with self-satisfaction we can be blindsided or make silly mistakes.</p>
<p>Winter</p>	<p>The season of commitment and devotion. Some hate winter, for some this is the season of discontent, but the winter season is just as needed for human survival as is the summer season. Tends to be ages 65+. In this season, just as penguins press together for mutual support, so we press together with the love of our life for mutual support. We rely on each other more than we push each other. Although all begin with a wedding service, the ups and downs of life have shaped each marriage differently. Our marital relationship is truly unique, shaped by our journey through life's pressures. Life is no longer black and white. We have learned to live in the grey, and to focus on what is truly important. People manifest all the elements of life and love in one package: the joy of spring; the energy of summer; the soberness of autumn; and the simplicity of winter. We sing, play and laugh with our loved one, as we enjoy the last journey of life and look forward to that day when all things are created new again.</p>	<p>The root of bitterness or dissatisfaction can easily flower into a destructive weed that destroys our relationships. A lack of forgiveness can destroy not only our marriage, and impact our children and grandchildren, but leads to cardiac disease or cancer in our own bodies. Questions of death and remarriage come to the fore, together with ensuring that children from any first marriage are catered for in wills and bequests. Questions of disinheritance and the just or unjust treatment of children from previous marriages must be honestly addressed.</p>

I am not sure what season of life and love you are in right now. My wife and I are in the summer season, which is truly a season of commitment and competition for our time. May God grant us all, wherever we are in the seasons of love, the wisdom to truly appreciate the gift of love He has given each of us in our own unique ways. Treasure and cherish love – it is hard to find and easy to lose, but adds life to years and years to life.

Kind regards,

Conrad.