

Seasons in Marriage

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Seasons in Marriage

To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

The springtime emerges with its fresh flowers and new leaves. Then it gives way to the humidity and strength of the sun in the summer. The hot climate is reduced to crisp air and the changing and falling of leaves. Then a cold front appears to clean and moisten the environment. All of these represent various seasons. Each one brings in its own elements and effects. God teaches us through nature as it pertains to seasons in life and relationships. The above passage offers a profound perspective concerning seasons. Notice how it is worded; “*To everything there is a season and a time....*” The term everything is all-inclusive. It means everything will go through its share of changes.

Married life is one of those things that will experience various changes as it goes through its progression. It starts off blissful like the spring, heats up with romance like the summer, becomes colorful like the fall, and refreshes like the winter. God ordained this beautiful institution to be fulfilling and promising (*Genesis 2:23*). The key is to view it from God’s

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perspective in order to maximize the experience of love that it offers. Marriage is a spiritual covenant between a man and a woman, joined together as one (*Genesis 2:24*). It is an extraordinary institution of God, which brings two people together for companionship and connectedness. It offers a recipe for bonding and sharing that is unique from any other relationship. Married life offers emotional benefits that guide a man and woman to the highest degree of human intimacy (*Genesis 2:25*).

Marriage has a Spiritual Meaning

The institution of marriage carries a powerful expression that relates Jesus Christ to His church. It symbolizes the unshakable and unfaltering manner in which He bonds with each and every one of His followers. It reveals the commitment that Jesus Christ made in remaining devoted to His people (*Ephesians 5:21-33*). God inspires a perspective about the spiritual and emotional commitments that should be rendered in the marital covenant. The passage reveals the spiritual significance of marriage as it relates to His Son, (Jesus Christ) and the church (*v.32*).

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²¹ *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

²² *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*

²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

²⁴ *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

²⁶ *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

²⁷ *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

²⁸ *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*

²⁹ *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

³⁰ *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*

³¹ *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

³² *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

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³³ Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The passage gives instructions on how to entreat and partner with your spouse. If these directives are carefully and obediently followed, it will strengthen your relationship. Notice the depth of writing in verse 28, “*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.*” This is a powerful expression that interprets the heart of Jesus Christ for His bride, the church. The thought of loving someone that strongly, as you would your own body, communicates an undying love that must take its foundation from God. Consider all of the changes that go on within the human body, yet it must be nourished, cleaned, and clothed. These things cannot be neglected or it will negatively affect the overall functioning of a man’s body; therefore, he intently cares for those areas. God encourages the man to offer the same kind of attention in caring for his wife. The bible uses terms such as, *nourish* and *cherish* to indicate how a husband should entreat his wife. His emotional responsibility in the marriage is reflected by how he treats his own physical body (*v.28*).

The passage encourages wives to reverence and submit to their husbands (*v. 22, 33*). This is done in a voluntary and God-loving manner. It is not intended to demean the value of the wife or place her in an inferior position within the relationship. It is to offer cooperation and consideration for the spiritual and emotional needs of her husband. God gives her insight into her husband's strengths and responsibilities. She comes alongside to work with him in helping to meet the needs of the relationship. Her loving commitment brings out the best in her husband and secures him emotionally. Whether or not he admits it, he needs her help, *"And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (*Genesis 2:18*).

Men are hard-wired to work, produce, and provide. They are born this way. It is not something they inherited or picked up along the way. While these traits are to be admired, if misused, it can impair their judgment on matters that pertain to marriage and family life. God cares deeply for the spiritual and emotional needs of the husband; therefore, He placed the wife to contribute toward his growth as a man.

She will learn and know her husband's heart better than anyone. God will give her the grace to partner and minister to his spiritual needs. She will have the opportunity to communicate with God on her husband's behalf in prayer. Her position in his life is a benefit in ways he may never imagine. After all, she has been chosen by God to walk beside him, and will have insight into many of his deepest needs.

The instructions given to the husband and wife reflect the bond in which Jesus Christ initiates and His followers respond. It metaphorically reveals the inseparable manner that our Lord has with us, and how we should cooperate in meeting the objectives of the spiritual covenant we share with Him.

Do you know that you have entered into a covenant with God, through His son, Jesus Christ? This is a spiritual bond that was established through a sacrificial offering made on your behalf by the blood of Jesus Christ, through the death of the cross (*John chapter 19*). God is a relational being. The first two institutions that He gave mankind were marriage (*Genesis 2:18-25*) and Family (*Genesis 4:1-2*). God's love created relationships and this same love sought to reconcile us back to Him.

Marital life reveals a great mystery between Christ and his church (*Ephesians 5:32*). We are joined to him in an eternal covenant. This is the same concept that God delivers to the husband and wife in their marital covenant.

The Seasons and Experiences

Every marriage will go through its various stages toward spiritual, emotional, and practical advancement. The key is to understand the objectives established for the marital covenant. The most important of all is to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. This will ensure that both the husband and wife are keeping with the heart of God for marriage.

He is not only Lord over the church, but also over your marriage. Looking to Him and abiding in His instructions will increase your marriage and cause it to yield godly fruit. *Galatians 5:22-23* outlines the kind of character that is needed for healthy interaction with your spouse. Let's read what it says,

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If the aforementioned qualities are allowed to come through you and your spouse, they will provide the design for building a solid covenant. Look carefully at the nine qualities listed in this one fruit. The presence of temperance (self-control), gentleness, and meekness can keep you from harsh responses. The presence of love, joy, and peace can create a romantic torch that shines through your hearts. The presence of longsuffering (patience), goodness, and faith (faithfulness) will release kind-heartedness, which will strengthen the friendship portion of your marriage. No matter in what combination these qualities are used, they will invite God's presence into your daily lives.

Your obedience and application of God's Word will put your marriage in the best position for success. Many of your experiences together will emerge from the attention you give to your spiritual lives (*Galatians 6:7*). It works by principle and the kinds of things you invest into your relationship.

A marriage is also an intimate bond between a man and a woman. Their intimacy strengthens as they have consistent godly interactions with one another. How a husband and wife

relate to one another is critical to their marital growth. This does not mean there will not be moments when things become tensed or strained. If you are experiencing this kind of thing in your marriage, it is not an immediate sign that your relationship is in trouble. Unfortunately, we do not always abide in the “Fruit of the Spirit” (*Galatians 5:22-23*). A careful evaluation of how you are employing God’s word when you and your spouse are interacting may provide the solution.

Through self-centered thinking or gratification of the flesh, it will open the door to corruption entering the relationship (*Galatians 6:8*). Christian marriages should be Christ-centered. It is important to rely on biblical truths for managing the relationship. No other spiritual, emotional, or practical foundation is greater than Jesus Christ.

The goal is to mature and move beyond the practices of the flesh (your old nature). You have the strength to live out your new nature in Christ. This is made possible through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit (*John 16:13-16*). He (the Holy Spirit) is working in you and wants to work through you. It is His presence that makes it possible for you to display the

qualities listed in *Galatians 5:22-23*. Those are godly characteristics that need the involvement of the Holy Spirit. They cannot be successfully obtained in your own human strength. It would be like attempting to start a car without its engine.

Unresolved Contention can hurt your Marriage

If there are habitual patterns of contention that go unresolved, it may be a sign that intervention is needed. When conflict goes unresolved it creates distance, anger, and bitterness in the relationship. This is precisely why the fruit of the Spirit is relevant to your spiritual and emotional lives. If the qualities outlined in *Galatians 5:22-23* are manifesting through you and your spouse, the painful effects resulting from unresolved disagreements will not harvest in your relationship. Instead, God's power will prevail.

All marriages experience growing pains, and there is no way around it. The idea is to minimize tense moments through spiritual thinking (*Philippians 2:5*). This is developed as you train your mind with God's words. The need for patience is also an

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important element because you are both progressively maturing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (*2 Peter 3:18*).

Seasons bring Growth

Each season in marital life brings its own set of experiences. In those moments, it is difficult to understand what you are supposed to learn. The message normally does not become clear until you reach the end of the season. While you are in the trenches, things become pretty cloudy. When you start out, there is excitement and energy for the life you are beginning together. You may not consider the possibility of rain showers descending upon the marriage. After all, in the beginning, it is like springtime. The sun is at its full strength and the flowers are blossoming. However, we must not forget, the earth needs water if it will yield its beauty for us to admire. Your marriage is no different. You will need both sunshine and rain showers because they are a powerful combination for blossoming!

One sure way to remain balanced and keep good perspective on your seasons in marriage is to prepare for them.

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Have all of your items handy for the rain and the sunshine.

What does God's Word say about anger and wrath?

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (James 1:19-20).

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth (Colossians 3:8).

These passages are the items that you will need in the event you start experiencing a rain shower in your communication or interaction with one another. You want to be prepared at all times and not get caught without your rain gear. It is equally important to prepare for the sunshine. Just because you have rain showers from time to time, does not mean you should put away your colorful clothing or defer your outdoor plans. The time is always right to celebrate and enjoy one another. Here is a passage to keep handy during those sunshining moments.

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¹² Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

¹³ Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

¹⁴ And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Colossians 3:12-15).

Here, God admonishes that there should be authentic brotherhood and sisterhood amongst believers. It offers profound insight into how we should relate to one another as followers of Jesus Christ. If the words are applied, they can yield a beautiful harvest in your marriage.

Spiritual Maturity in Marriage

Your aim should be spiritual maturity in Christ. After all, that is what attending weekly church services, studying your bible, praying, and singing worship songs should produce. The objective of godly character is not to work for it. You already have God's nature. The goal is to allow the spiritual resources

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that God has given to guide you toward obedience and maturity in Christ (*Romans 8:29*).

Marriage is work and more work! The results you desire take time and will not happen overnight. Developing godly fruit that will remain and last over the years is a process. It is one thing to comprehend what God's Word says, but we must also be willing to use His Words to build our relationships. The process will take longer if we step away from God's instructions or attempt to build our marriages on some other kind of foundation.

Hang in there. Your marriage will grow as you grow. It will yield godly fruit as you consistently yield to the Holy Spirit's reinforcement of God's Word. Remember, your marriage will go through its share of seasons and experiences; therefore, it is important to learn in the process.

May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abound in your hearts and His joy be ever-present in your marriage.

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Reference

The Holy Bible: King James Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan
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