

## Changing Seasons

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I don't know about you, but this is probably my favorite time of the year! The overbearing heat has FINALLY subsided and there is a cool breeze in the air. I'm getting my sweatshirts and flannels out of storage. The leaves have just started their transition to bright gold, red, and orange. Football season is well underway, and pumpkin and maple flavored treats abound! Fall is without a doubt my favorite season.

I have always been someone who has been closely connected to God's creation. I love that God decided that humanity could benefit from seasonal changes and shifts alongside creation. I find my own life often mimicking what is happening in the natural world. Spring with its themes of re-birth and new life, summer with its theme of abundance, fall with its themes of transition and preparation, and winter with its themes of death and rest.

So today, I'd like to spend some time discussing changing seasons and pointing us to some scripture that I find comforting in the midst of shaky ground. When I start to feel things in my life transition or change, I usually start to feel a lump in my throat and tightness in my chest. I am a person who thrives on routine and structure. I would NOT say that I handle change super well. When things begin to shift or feel uncertain, I can get panicky and fearful. Instead of focusing on God's faithfulness and provision in times past, my brain tends to head straight for the anxiety accompanied with the coming changes. Even though the Lord has been faithful to me in every season, and I could literally list 100 reasons how, it's like my emotions and heart only want to respond to the fears and what-ifs.

Being someone who gets to talk with a lot of people in my daily life, reminds me that I am not alone in these feelings. When we look at some of the major Bible characters, their actions reflect their hesitancy to step into a new season too. Moses responds to God when He calls him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, "Lord, please! Send anyone else!" [Exodus 4:13 NLT] out of fear. Jonah refuses to obey God and literally runs in the opposite direction [Jonah 1:1-10]. The disciples completely miss Jesus's warning that the "The Son of Man must suffer many terrible things," he said. "He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead." [Luke 9:21-22 NLT]. Lastly, Paul (previously Saul) is so determined to prevent the message of the early Christians spreading that he starts persecuting the very church he comes to dedicate his life to serving [Galatians 1:13-14 NLT]. These are just a few examples of the wonky ways we start to act when we feel threatened by change. However, despite the above's fears and failures, God still goes before them and works all things together for their good. And he does that for us too. A reminder that I need often.

Now, I'd like to invite us to consider what changes and transitions we may be facing this season. What feels transitional or uncertain in our lives right now? Is it a new job, a different house, a recent loss, an addition to family, a recent diagnosis, increased responsibility, more or less free time, the beginning or ending of a relationship? Whatever it is, let's take a minute and write it down. Now, I want to offer some scriptures of encouragement to meditate on during this transitional time. The scripture is listed below. Maybe pick the verse or a few verses that resonate with you the most and copy them down under the list you made of uncertain things. I am going to try and make it a practice to pray through these verses when I am feeling anxious about the unknowns to come. Praying that you will feel Jesus' reassuring presence during times of uncertainty.

Isaiah 43:19 (NLT)

For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.

Deuteronomy 31:8 (ESV)

It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (NLT)

- 1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.
- 2 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.
- 3 A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.
- 4 A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.
- 5 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
- 6 A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away.
- 7 A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
- 8 A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.
- 9 What do people really get for all their hard work?
- 10 I have seen the burden God has placed on us all.
- 11 Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.