

SEASONS OF GOD –  
SPIRALS OF LIFE

*A Bible-Theme Study for Women*

by Barbara Mouser

# SEASONS OF GOD, SPIRALS OF LIFE

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Bible-Theme Studies by Barbara Mouser are through-the-Bible studies which focus on a particular theme introduced in Genesis, developed in the Old Testament, climaxed in the Gospels, applied in the Epistles, and culminated in Revelation.

Topics of particular interest and essential to the edification of women are chosen in accord with the goals and purposes of Wisdom House.

Dedicated to:

PHYLLIS STANLEY—

my co-laborer and friend  
in seedtime and harvest  
these past 20 years

Seasons : iv

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# **Preface**

## **The Languages of God**

God's revelation is written in scores of different "languages"—in the vocabularies of plant and garden, of money and economics, of kings and war, of sexuality and romance, of parent and child, and many more. As we shall see in this study, God also writes extensively in the language of the seasons. He has created and He speaks of earthly things so that He can speak to us of heavenly things. He speaks to us of things in time that He might speak to us of things in eternity.

Our goal in this study is to learn God's basic vocabulary of the seasons, that we might live more wisely on earth, to be sure; but beyond that, that we might learn the heavenly and eternal things that God wants us to know. Especially we want to look at God and understand the word-pictures He draws of Himself in the language of the seasons. I call these word-pictures "portraits of God." Twenty-six in number, they run through this book like a connecting chain of many strong links. In this light—in the light of God's own Person—we will seek to understand His seasons for the world and for us as women as well.

## **The Bible As Epic Story**

The Bible is a great and coherent work of art which follows the pattern of great art as we know it. God introduces His great themes at creation. He develops them in the long pages and history of the Old Testament. He brings His work to definitive climax at the coming of Christ, especially in Passion Week. He applies and works out the ramifications of Christ's work in The Acts and Epistles. Finally, He brings all to culmination and resolution in John's Revelation.

## **About This Study**

The six chapters of this study follow the dramatic progression explained above (see Table of Contents). The first part of each chap-

ter focuses on Portraits of God; the second part, Making Sense of the Seasons, includes application and questions. A Glossary, Appendices, and Some Suggested Answers appear in the back of the book. Please use these tools!

Many thanks to my husband Bill who did all the formatting and illustration for this book. I am truly grateful for his skill, patience, and for his great eye for illustration. I also thank my good friend Priscilla Fisher for allowing me to include her carefully-wrought charts on the generational seasons of life.

## **A Bigger God**

We cannot encompass or summarize Scripture. The Word of God and any of its themes are like the sun that you cannot look at, like a waterfall that you cannot take home in a canteen. We can only walk in the light of Scripture, drink from its river, and eat from its unending banquet. Then why try to do surveys and thematic overviews, you might ask? I do them and urge others to do them because they are a way to “ask, seek, and knock.”

Every time I seek to follow God through Scripture on a specific theme, I have been rewarded with a cornucopia of beauty and truth. More than that, I have received the greatest reward, a bigger and bigger God. This study on seedtime and harvest has been no exception. I pray you will receive the same blessing.

In Christ,  
Barbara Mouser  
April 2009





## Chapter One: Overture

### SOVEREIGN OF THE SEASONS

#### God creates and establishes the seasons

**Gen. 1:14**—And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years,...

**Gen. 8:22**—While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

#### Why Study the Seasons?

Women select color schemes, decorate their houses, set their tables, dress their children, and choose their own wardrobes based on the seasons. Don't women already know the seasons? Why should we study them?

Let me offer two main reasons why women should study the seasons more deeply. First of all, everyone should study the seasons because they form a true and significant theme of Scripture, given to us by God for our spiritual food and edification. The topic of seasons is not one of the great Bible themes, like God, man, salvation, or judgment. But seasons are a major theme of Scripture, introduced in Genesis, developed extensively in the Old Testament, climaxed in the Gospels, applied in the Epistles, and culminated in Revelation—as I hope to demonstrate in this small book. Therefore, if seasons are this important to God, they should be important to us.

Secondly, women, who are specially created to be lifegivers and nurturers, should study the seasons because they are inextricably linked to life and all its cycles. The woman who does not search and ponder the natural seasons and their spiritual applications is not only in dereliction of duty, she also forfeits a sustaining pillar and a rejuvenating fountain for her own life and work.

I have spent many years working through the Scriptures on the topic of womanhood. Those were good years, and I don't regret them. However, when I completed that work, I purposed that for the rest of my life I would study the Bible with my eyes on God Himself. Whatever topic I studied I would seek to see God because I believe that He is rightly the main subject of the Bible and our attention.

As an evidence of this approach, you will find that I have headlined some 26 "Portraits of God" throughout this study on the seasons. (See Appendix A, p. 143.) When we see Him aright, then we will see ourselves. What we should do in response by way of application will follow.

## **Portrait 1. GOD—CREATOR OF THE SEASONS**

### **God Created Seasons by Engineering the Heavens**

We do not have to go any farther than Genesis 1:14 to learn that God made the seasons. Somewhat surprisingly, He does not first tell us why He made the seasons; He tells us how. In order to give the earth seasons, God engineered the entire heavens. He created the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, and the stars—in order to provide seasons, days, and years for the earth.

Darkened minds constantly use the size and complexity of the universe to argue for the insignificance of the earth. For example, they say, "Earth is a meaningless speck in a vast and unknowable universe." However, the Scriptures reveal that this thinking is exactly backwards. Earth is not insignificant because the universe is huge. On the contrary, the earth is all the more significant because God created the huge universe to serve it.

The earth is central in His purpose, and the complex universe was created in relationship to it. God's first stated purpose for building the sun, the moon, and the stars is to provide the seasons, the days, and the years for earth.



**Gen. 1:14-19**—And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, <sup>15</sup>and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.

<sup>16</sup>And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

<sup>17</sup>And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

We might ask, couldn't God give the earth seasons by a means less vast and complex? Certainly, He could have. However, later Scripture reveals another purpose of the heavens which goes a long way to explain the great vastness of God's "season-making" universe. The other purpose of the heavens is to reveal God's glory and to proclaim His handiwork (Ps. 19:1).

According to the Bible, the universe is for season-making and for glory-declaring. If we look at nature and if we read the Bible, we will find this dual explanation fits very well. The entire universe is a great and majestic clockwork, all of which is intricately and mathematically linked. The rotations, the revolutions, and the tilts of all these bodies produce the beautiful and life-filled earth that we know.

Only God in His sovereignty and power could produce a season-making universe in perfect balance to maintain this lifegiving earth. Only God in His wisdom and artistry could produce a glory-declaring heavens worthy of His majesty.

As we view the season-makers in the heavens and as we experience the seasons on earth, we continuously see the greatness and power of God.

Consider the following Scripture verses. All testify to God's active and continuous work to maintain the wonder of His heavens—He leads, guides, brings out the stars, calling each one by name. This is not the religion of deism in which an intelligent, but inattentive divinity made a clockwork universe only to go off and leave it. This is the portrait of an all-powerful, ever-attentive, and active God who guides the course of every star.

**Ps. 74:17**—You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter.

**Ps. 104:19**—He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.

**Job 38:32**—Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth [constellation] in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children?

**Is. 40:26**—Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

## **Reason 1 for Seasons: To Give Life**

If seasons are so important that God designed the heavens to produce them, then what is this great importance—what is the purpose of the seasons? The first answer (we shall learn more later in the story) is that God wants to **give life** to the earth by means of the seasons. Psalm 104:11-26 lists at least thirteen different creatures that God personally feeds, each in season. Verse 27 summarizes:

**Ps. 104:27**—These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.

**Ps. 145:15**—The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.



God's design is to give to all His many and diverse creatures—plants, birds, fish, animals, and man—the bounty of life through the seasons.

### **Reason 2 for Seasons: To witness to God**

Seasons are the most basic gift that God has given to express His goodness and grace to all mankind. When Paul preached to the idolaters of Lystra, he revealed something amazing about the seasons.

**Acts 14:15-17**—...we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. <sup>16</sup>In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup>**Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."**

A second reason God created the seasons was to bear witness to Himself. This purpose of the seasons has been active and effective in all nations since the beginning of time. Unless one suppresses the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:19-20), the power and eternal nature of God are clearly seen in creation, specifically according to Acts 14:17, through the seasons.

### **Reason 3 for Seasons: To satisfy men with gladness**

Notice one more astounding detail of grace in Acts 14:17. God's design is not only to satisfy man with food through the seasons, but with **gladness!**

The seasons are a continuous revelation of God's sovereign power and His gracious commitment to life. The first reason God gives us seasons is to satisfy us with food and life. But life is not mere existence, it is more than that. In the fullness of life, we are satisfied and glad. Countless people over all the millennia of time have rejoiced in the delights of every season—whether the first breath of spring,

the warmth of summer, the tingle of autumn, or the crystalline beauty of winter. This is one of God's main reasons for the seasons—to make us glad.

## **Portrait 2. GOD—DESTROYER OF SEASONS**

### **The Year Without Seasons**

It is a testimony to the sinful nature of man that we cannot even get through the first great age of history in Genesis 1-11, before man rejects God so completely that God destroys mankind and the lifegiving seasons.

The world before the flood had seasons, albeit more mild than the ones we know. The earth was a luxurious place, with bountiful springs of water, lush growth, large human population, and great longevity (Gen. 5). Nevertheless, the people of the antediluvian world became so wicked, God decided to destroy them with a global destruction.

We cannot imagine the trauma and disorientation that the worldwide flood brought to Noah and his family. Mankind had been wiped out; the earth devastated, and an entire year of the normal cycle of life was obliterated. In that year there were no summer and winter, no seedtime, and no harvest. Here, near the beginning of Scripture, God introduces a new, powerful, and disturbing idea in His language of the seasons. We can call this idea **life out of season**.

**life out of season:** God interrupts and disturbs the seasons to make Himself, His judgment, and His miraculous grace known.

We do not know exactly the mechanisms that God used to break up the fountains of the great deep and to open the windows of heaven in order to destroy the world in the day of Noah (Gen. 7:11). We do know that God completely altered the natural cycles of the world in order to bring it about.



## Reason 4 for Seasons: To teach repentance and faith

Noah's flood is the greatest and most cataclysmic judgment in the history of the world so far. God altered His good plan of the seasons for two reasons; one to show His righteous wrath against wickedness and secondly to demonstrate His gracious love and salvation by means of an ark of supernatural design.

### Portrait 3. GOD—SUSTAINER OF THE SEASONS

#### The Noahic Covenant

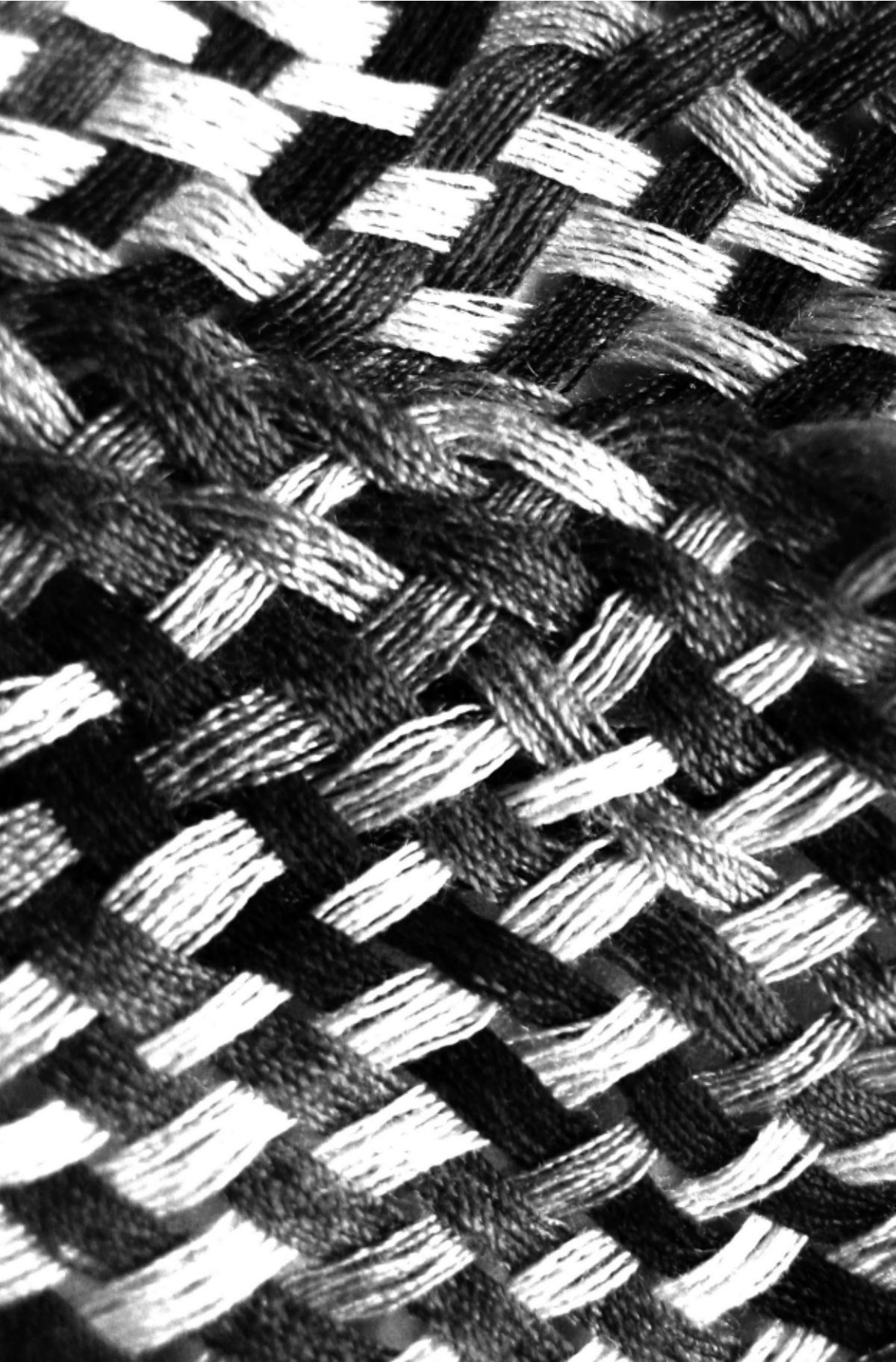
**Gen. 8:20-21**— Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

Upon accepting Noah's first sacrifice after the flood, God purposed not to curse the earth or destroy all life ever again. He stopped cursing the earth—not because man was good— but because mankind was **so bad** ("the intention of his heart is evil from his youth"). If God had continued to curse the earth as He had cursed Adam for his sin, Cain for his sin, and the pre-flood world for its sin, the earth and its life would be marred beyond recognition.

God's purpose not to curse the earth is undergirded by His promise to **stabilize the earth** in its life cycles, that is, its seasons. This stabilization of the earth and God's commitment to it is known as the Noahic Covenant, and its sign is the rainbow.

**Gen. 8:22**—While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Since God's promise to Noah and all the living creatures of the earth (including you and me), God has sustained the earth with



seasons. Some seasons are unusually hot or cold, or long or short. Local floods and droughts occur. Nevertheless, God has sustained some sort of planting and harvesting since the time of Noah. That man has multiplied to the billions is testimony to God's gracious sustenance through the seasons. It should be a cause for our continual thanksgiving.\*

## Focusing Our Study

As I have learned in tracing various Scriptural themes over the years, one Biblical theme leads to another. It is very hard to stay linearly on the track of one of God's ideas because in the Bible He weaves all of His ideas into one great and fabulous tapestry of power and beauty. Indeed, He is the Artist and the Poet!

Seasons are not the biggest of Bible themes, but they are closely related to other big ideas. Light and dark, day and night, cold and heat, festivals and holy days, and signs in the heavens are all related to the topic of seasons. However these topics will take us far beyond the scope of this study, so we will limit our focus to what Genesis 8:22 calls "**seedtime and harvest,...summer and winter.**" I have chosen this emphasis because by itself it is a huge theme in Scripture and because it features the life cycle which should be of special interest to us as women.

## Seedtime and Harvest—Sowing and Reaping

According to God's creation plan, nature has seasons, people have seasons, and all of history has seasons. In the seasons of God, there is no principle more basic than sowing and reaping. Yet most of us, not being gardeners or farmers, don't literally sow or reap anything. So it is good for us to review this most basic of the seasonal concepts. Let's start with simple definitions from Webster's.

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\*The global warming that the people of earth need to worry about is not one of natural or manmade origin. The global warming that should be feared is Christ purging this earth with fire (2 Pet. 3:7,12).

**sow:** to plant seed for growth especially by scattering; to set something in motion.

**reap:** to cut with a sickle, scythe, or reaping machine; to harvest; to obtain, win.

**Gen. 26:12**—And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him,...

Before we can understand the spiritual spirals of life we must understand life's natural cycles. To begin, let us consider the simple seasons as they are generally known. As you read, consider the seasons of your own life.

1. Spring: cultivating land and sowing seed, sprouting of new life (usually associated with youth)
2. Summer: cultivation and tending plants as they grow to maturity (associated with middle life)
3. Autumn: harvest, gathering in of mature crops and preparing them for threshing, winnowing, storage (associated with early senior years)
4. Winter: time of increasing dormancy and inactivity (advanced old age). Winter will not be emphasized in this book, since I prefer to treat winter principles in a study on rest.

#### **Portrait 4: SOVEREIGN OF THE SEASONS**

God introduces Himself as the Creator, Destroyer, and Sustainer of the Seasons in Genesis 1-11. Before we leave Genesis, God presents us with another portrait of Himself—He is the Sovereign of the Seasons. That is, He rules the seasons of the earth according to His personal plan and will, even, as we shall see, down to specific nations, towns, and fields!

## Fourteen Years in Joseph's Egypt

When Joseph was in Egypt, God predicted seven years of great plenty to be followed by seven years of famine. God sent this information to Pharaoh in a dream, gave interpretation through Joseph, and then fulfilled His Word to the letter (Gen. 41).

Why did God do this? Interestingly, it seems God altered the seasons of the known world in order to bring Joseph's ten brothers to repentance for selling him into slavery. Yet it was also God's purpose to keep many people alive (Gen. 49:11), and to make Joseph an epic-scale Christ type. Much could be said about Joseph as a great lord of the harvest, but we will leave that portrait for a later chapter. Suffice it to say here, that God revealed Himself sovereign, powerful, and gracious "in season and out" as He painted on the canvas of the seasons in Egypt.

In the Bible, God provides scores of examples of His sovereignty over the seasons. The ten plagues on Egypt are certainly a dramatic example, but there is a verse so specific and startling in Amos, as to warrant our attention even in this short survey.

**Amos 4:7-8**—"I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; <sup>8</sup>so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me," declares the Lord.

In this passage God says that He sovereignly distributed the rain by individual town and field in His effort to get His people to repent!

### **Reason 5 for Seasons: To provide a setting for the supernatural**

Miracles are not possible unless there is an orderly pattern of nature against which to view them (1 Sam. 12:17; Josh. 3:15). God

guarantees the natural order as His own canvas for His supernatural acts. Miracles are God's out-of-the-ordinary acts to teach us about life beyond this natural time and place. For example, the reason we know that resurrection from the dead is a miracle is because it "never" happens. God shows us His power by sustaining the regularity of nature, and He shows us His power by interrupting the regularity of nature!

## MAKING SENSE OF THE SEASONS

### Simple Seasons

#### Worship and Give Thanks

1. Have you received the gift of the life-giving seasons from God? Consider the following two extremes (redeemed and fallen seasoners!) Check the one you most closely resemble, or write your own testimony/confession about your attitude toward God's gift of seasons.

\_\_\_a. I am continually aware of the beauty of the changing seasons. I greet each one in its turn as a new, yet ancient friend. The distinctive scents and cast of light in each season do indeed fill my heart with gladness. I am thankful for the miracle of life and the renewal of the earth. Through sunshine and rain, God feeds us with fabulous fruits, vegetables, and grains which sustain us and all the animals of this world. If God tinkered with the tiniest part of His fabulous system, we would be plunged into drought or flood or famine. He deserves the glory for the beauty and bounty of the seasons!

\_\_\_b. I am pretty much hermetically sealed in a life of temperature-controlled houses, cars, and office buildings. I don't think about the rain much, except that it irritates me by making my hair frizzy. As far as food is concerned, I get mine

from the refrigerator, the grocery store, and fast-food windows. When I do notice the seasons, it is usually in catalogs or mall-store windows advertising new clothes.

If you don't fit (a) or (b) exactly, jot down some of your own thoughts and attitudes toward the seasons.

2. Consider Acts 14:17 again.

**Acts 14:17**—Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

God has given you seasons to supply you with food and gladness. List your favorite foods and your favorite delight associated with in each season. Give thanks!

	<b>Favorite food</b>	<b>Favorite delight/gladness</b>
<b>Spring</b>		
<b>Summer</b>		
<b>Autumn</b>		
<b>Winter</b>		

## Evaluate Your Seasons

BONUS: To help you evaluate your own seasons (and answer the next two questions), consider the charts on pages 146-149, shared with us by my good friend and co-worker Priscilla Fisher.\* Read the first chart, thinking about where your life fits right now. Be careful to read the chart both across and down.

3. What season of life (as defined on pages 12 and 146-147) do you consider yourself to be in now—spring, summer, autumn, or winter? Why?

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\*Another “speaker” in the language of the seasons, Priscilla has worked for several years to understand God’s plan for the generations. As a fruit of that labor she has produced one chart which outlines the basic seasons, pp. 146-147, and another which “stacks” the seasons of the generations, pp. 148-149. While Priscilla’s schema is detailed differently than the one I have presented in this book, I think you will find it accessible and compatible with our study. Please note these charts are “created” and “redeemed.” Priscilla is not seeking to list all the fallen and aberrant problems the generations experience; nor is she dealing with single life. The goal of these charts is to outline God’s general plan for the seasons of life in the generations.



4. In brief phrases, record what you have sown and cultivated in your life thus far in the first column according to the categories provided. Record what you have reaped so far in the second.

	<b>What I've Sown</b>	<b>What I've Reaped</b>
<b>Education/skills:</b>		
<b>Moral character:</b>		
<b>Finances:</b>		
<b>Relationship with God:</b>		
<b>Relationship with family/friends:</b>		

## Be Faithful in Season

Solomon's masterpiece on practical wisdom is the Book of Proverbs. The straightforward advice that this wisest of men gives is: live and work in accord with the seasons.

**Prov. 6:6-8**—Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. <sup>7</sup>Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, <sup>8</sup>she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.

**Prov. 10:5**—He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.

**Prov. 20:4**—The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.

Work when it is time to work. Rest when it is time to rest. You must sow if you are going to reap. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Anyone who has tried it knows that it is not simple. Nevertheless, this is Seasons 101: work in accord with God's created order or you will suffer for it. Faithfulness in the natural seasons is a foundational virtue. Sow and reap, work and rest in the rhythms that God gives.

5. In the light of the following familiar verse, review your answers to Question 4 above.

**Ps. 126:6**—He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Can you think of any sowing that you have wept over? Any sheaves that you have rejoiced over?



## **Giving Life Through the Seasons**

God gives life through the seasons. Therefore, it is no accident that we women as lifegivers use the seasons to give life through our homes, tables, clothes, hospitality, and so forth.

6. Our seasonal lifegiving should facilitate worship, thanksgiving, and “gladness” in others. Think of a new idea for doing this, or an old success you would like to repeat. Jot your ideas down here.

## **A FEW MORE THOUGHTS ON GOD AND NATURE**

### **The God of the Seasons is Not A Nature God**

Nature religions teach that the gods are in the forces of nature—the god of the wind, fire, earth, etc. Pantheism, the all-encompassing nature religion, believes that nature is god and god is nature. The God of the Bible, on the other hand, existed before nature, created it out of nothing by His word, and constantly sustains and directs it as a Personal Sovereign. Usually He rules it through the intermediary of angels, but He enters creation if and when He wants to.

God made nature, He is beyond nature, He actively rules nature. He comes into one with nature at the incarnation, and He intimately interacts with those in nature. The wonder of our faith is great!

7. Check the statement which best represents the framework of this study. (If you need help, see the Preface.)

a. The Bible is true in its scientific and historical details and this is all that matters. The more facts we know, the more spiritual we will be.

b. The Bible is dramatic and poetic. The personal and “spiritual” meanings that we derive from this literature is most important, not whether the Bible is historically and scientifically reliable.

c. The facts and the poetry of Scripture are both essential because God uses the imagery of this world to tell us truth beyond this world.