

# Seasons of the Heart

**"God is here to stay."**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-13**

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## A Time

*To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time for every season under heaven.*<sup>1</sup> The tune was catchy, and the words seemed profound, and the Byrds' song seemed not to grow old as the mid-60's marched to the late-60's and I was convinced that it was really a protest song calling for peace in Vietnam.

*A time to gain, a time to lose, a time to rend, a time to sew, a time for love a time for hate, a time for peace: I swear it's not too late.*<sup>2</sup>

During a work project in one of my classes somebody started humming the tune – maybe even singing the words – when another friend said, off the cuff, "You know the words are scripture." "No. Bible words in a top of the charts folk rock song? You've got to be kidding me."

He wasn't.

They are.

## A Covenant

Like I said, I thought the whole point of the song was to make a long list of seasons just to get to the point that there's a time for peace and it's not too late. I hadn't heard the scripture used, yet, in a funeral sermon or on the first Sunday of the year. I hadn't considered that all the words are there for a reason.

There's a season for every purpose under heaven. Each of us undergoes them: right times for this or that; one thing or its opposite. *A time to build up, a time to break down, a time to dance, a time to mourn, a time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together.*<sup>3</sup>

Seasons of the heart.

What season is this? When I counsel parents who are going to have a child baptized, I like to tell them about how profound the moment is. You know how it usually

goes: we bring parents and sometimes sponsors up in front of the congregation and ask them questions about rejecting evil and believing in Jesus and promising to raise the child to have a heart of faith. Then I hold the baby (usually!) and place water on their head in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then I present her or him to you and you welcome them in Christian love and we sing a love song as I walk the child through the midst of you.

‘You know what your baptism means? I think that it was even before you were born, God had a claim on you. God loved you with a love so immense that it can’t be measured. That was before you did anything well or right or insufficient or rebellious. ‘Just loved you for being you and because that’s the way God is. And when your heart started beating and you were born there was already a bit of a relationship forming. God loving you and you, even before you could name it, you were loving God back.

Because God was going to be in your life to stay. It’s kind of like two people falling in love with each other and long before they walk down the aisle to exchange their vows of marriage, there’s something going on. Love exchanged and hopes and agreements being made about the nature and the future of the relationship.

Little, informal covenants.

So when they walk down the aisle and make concrete the covenant of marriage, it’s not the first agreement to bond them. It’s a going public with the covenant. It’s making the covenant formal and concrete and irrevocable. From then, on, the people who are there are responsible for encouraging and counseling and helping the couple – they become party to the covenant too. The couple becomes accountable to them (and not only them – but also the state that issued the license).

Baptism is like that. When you were baptized your covenant with God became formal and concrete and irrevocable. It also became a three-way relationship: it went public. And you became accountable to Christ’s gathered people, the church. They became responsible for you. From that point on you and God are united in Christ for you to grow, more deeply in love with God than ever before – each and every day.

We all make a difference to God and to each other. We are bound by this covenant, this baptism. The way we grow, the way we don’t; the way we serve; the way we don’t; the way we worship, the way we don’t – all makes a difference to our life together.

## A Resolve

*To everything, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn, and a time for every purpose under heaven.*<sup>4</sup>

If the season is under heaven, then how would you seek and then find the purpose... and then do it?

New Year's Day, 2012: what season is it for your heart? Because God is in your heart to stay.

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<sup>1</sup> *Turn, Turn, Turn*. Words and music by Pete Seeger, 1959. Sung by The Byrds, 1965, Columbia Records.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*