



# The Seasons of the Soul

## Resurrection Rhythms in Life with God

copyright, 2020, WellSpring Life Resources, Inc.

Our lives are an invitation to embrace and release. Things precious to us come and are sometimes painfully taken away. They grow up, fall away, and sometimes come back to life again in surprising new forms more profound and life giving than the original.

Jesus himself went through seasons of embracing and releasing, of living and dying and coming to life again in a new form that brought to fullness his early beginnings.

Over the centuries, many people have identified at least six distinct stages, or phases, or seasons of Jesus' earthly life and ministry in the Gospels. These include:

**Cana**  
**Good Friday**  
**Easter**  
**The 40 Days**  
**Ascension**  
**Pentecost**

These are historical seasons for Jesus, and interestingly, parallel seasons that you and I are passing through all the time in our own lives and interior world. As Christians we are "in Christ," and are invited to participate with Jesus' in repeated seasons of redemption and fresh starts.

As you skim through the six ***Seasons of the Soul*** on the following pages, notice which season you most connect with right now. We have included brief descriptions, Scripture passages and questions to help you unpack your season.

*The Seasons of the Soul* are not entirely linear. That is, they are not designed to pass through in a "once and done" fashion. No, you might find yourself in two different seasons in two different areas of your life at the same time. Or you might find yourself cycling through each season again and again in one area of your life over the decades as you grow in a deeper and deeper understanding of yourself and your life with God.

As you pondering the season or seasons you most connect with today, notice whether you are kicking against your season in any way. Sometimes we don't especially like the season we find ourselves in and would like to opt out—to exchange it for a season that appeals to us more! But how do we make peace with the season we find ourselves in and relax down with God into our real situation, the real life we've been given?

"Be with God in what is."

This is the deep wisdom and invitation of each season of the soul. We're invited to relax with God in what is, and entrust ourselves into his care to guide us forward, from season to season, deeper and deeper into the life our hearts yearn for and are built to enjoy.

Blessings on your journey!



## **What season or seasons on the following pages most speak to me today?**

*Maybe stay with that season, reflecting on the others another time. Respond in the form of a journal, prayer, drawing, poem, dance, or other expression.*

### **The Seasons of the Soul**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Cana        | <i>life is good, things are progressing, problems are fixable</i>  |
| Good Friday | <i>calamity, the death of the former thing, the loss of something centrally precious</i>   |
| Easter      | <i>God offering new life for my changed situation</i>  |
| The 40 Days | <i>making peace with my deaths, mourning them, letting God love me in this in-between place as I adjust to the new, staying gently available for Easter life to emerge</i> |
| Ascension   | <i>releasing the old, letting it “ascend” into God’s hands—surrender, rest, contenting my heart in Christ</i>  |
| Pentecost   | <i>receiving the fullness of God’s Spirit into my new situation</i>  |



## **Cana** *life is good, things are progressing, problems are fixable*

At Cana (John 2:9-11) Jesus attends a wedding, the wine runs out, he miraculously solves the problem, the people are delighted, and his ministry expands. This is a picture of nearly every encounter of the first three years of Jesus' earthly ministry up to Good Friday. Cana refers to the seasons of our lives when things are looking good, life is expanding, we're overcoming our problems, and it's not costing us too much.

John 2:9-11

*9 And the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." 11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

### **ponder questions like -**

How does the wedding feast described in this passage express what I long for in life, hope for, or expect? What's good about this? When might my expectations become a problem?

Who in the passage most speaks to my desires, concerns, and values at this time—the bride and groom (hopeful, celebrating, eager for the future), the master of the banquet (focused on keeping the party going smoothly, nervous about the scarcity of something important), Jesus (confident that his Father will provide in this moment), the disciples (good-hearted, just starting to believe), someone else?

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in return?



## **Good Friday** *calamity, the death of the former thing, the loss of something centrally precious*

On Good Friday (John 12:23,24) an abrupt end comes to Jesus' Cana season. Good Friday becomes Jesus' required passageway into something more deeply transforming and transcendent. We all experience many "good Fridays"—regular deaths we must pass through on our way to new and more profound chapters of life.

John 12:23,24

*And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*

### ***ponder questions like -***

What death (disappointment, trial, frustration, passing away of a former dream or ideal) have I experienced or am I undergoing today? What feelings or longings does this death stir in me?

How might my death hold in it the seeds of resurrection for me? What new and life-giving way of being in Christ might be hidden here?

To allow my buried seed to grow into new life, what old voices, habits, or attitudes of heart and mind am I being called to leave behind? What new ones must I embrace? What risks might be involved? What rewards?

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in return?



## **Easter**    *God offering new life for my changed situation*

Jesus' resurrection (John 20:19-22) emerges out of his Good Friday death and ushers him into a new way of being. In our Easter season a resurrection and new way of being are offered to us too. And we're faced with a choice: will we receive the new life offered with all its transforming possibilities, or spend our energy trying to get back to Cana?

John 20:19-20

*19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

### ***ponder questions like -***

What changed situation does my death (my disappointment, trial, frustration, passing away of a former dream or ideal) leave me with? What new reality have I been given?

What new life do I sense is being offered to me in my changed situation? Does this wrestle with any part of me that wants to go back to Cana, or disappear into a fantasy life I would prefer to live in? How will I give God's new life an incubating home in my heart and world?

What feels exciting in all this? What feels scary? What risks are called for?

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in return?



## **The 40 Days** *mourning my losses; letting God befriend me as I adjust to the new*

The forty days between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension in the Gospels (John 21) are not much discussed today, but were a needed time for the disciples to choose to let the old Cana season go and begin to embrace the new thing Jesus had begun in his Resurrection. Our 40 Days is the season during which we're called to mourn our losses, stop clinging to a past that has died, or to a fantasy life we would prefer to live, and instead be with God in the real life that our death and resurrection are offering.

2nd Corinthians 4:8-10,16,17

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body... 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer self is decaying, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...*

### **ponder questions like -**

Do I feel ready to stop clinging to my preferences, fantasies and wish-dreams and instead live the real life God is offering me?

Am I ready to feel and mourn the deaths I have experienced and invite Jesus to be with me in my mourning?

As Jesus fed and warmed his disciples during their 40 Days, am I ready to allow him to befriend and comfort me? How will I extend patient love and compassion to myself while slowly embracing the new thing God is doing? How will I be a *Doula* to the new life trying to be born in me?

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in response?



## **Ascension** *releasing the old, letting it “ascend” with Jesus to the Father*

At Jesus' ascension (Luke 24:50-53), the disciples show they are ready to release Jesus to heaven along with any demand to cling to the past. For us, this season represents our readiness to release a past with its sometimes painful events and tightly held needs or demands, letting them “ascend” into the care of Jesus and our Father in heaven.

Luke 24:50-53

*<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

### ***ponder questions like -***

I will never again be as I was before my Good Friday experience (my disappointment, pain, loss, or past life). I have been given a new situation. God wants to give my spirit a fullness of life fitted to my new reality.

Am I ready to release former things into Jesus' care, letting them ascend with him to my Father?  
Am I ready to open myself up to the blessing that this release wants to impart to me?

What permissions might I need to give to God? What actions might I need to take to release my past, my demands, or my assumptions into Jesus' care?

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in response?



## **Pentecost** *receiving a full spirit from God fitted to my new situation*

The disciples' readiness to let Jesus ascend to heaven opened up in them a new space able to be filled with the Holy Spirit ten days later at Pentecost—the very Spirit they would need to equip them for their new life, changed circumstances, and future call (*Gal 2:20a; Acts 2:17,18; Ephesians 4:11,12*). *As we give the rhythm of Jesus' journey a home in us, a beautiful new fullness of thought, wellbeing and love gradually form inside. And with this comes a growing urge to bless others.*

*[We] are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me... Galatians 2:20a*

*“When one reaches the highest level of human maturity, one has only one question left: ‘How can I be helpful?’” Teresa of Avila*

### **ponder questions like these**

God is growing in my spirit a fullness of life fitted to my new reality.

As I listen with my heart, what are one or two things I seem ready to do, speak or believe that will help me live from a more full spirit? How will this honor and express my true self?

What urge to bless others do I notice growing inside me? Does any person or group especially come to mind to whom I would like to extend blessing? As I picture them what stirs in my heart? (Be with Jesus regarding any concrete ways you are ready to extend blessing.)

What would I like to say to God about this?

What is God's word to me in response?



# Prayers for All Seasons

Visit the prayers below throughout all the seasons of your soul. Let the prayers find a deeper and deeper place in you.

## loving myself during this season

*God, I release myself to live as an imperfect person under your blessing during this season. I allow my daily faults and weaknesses to relax in complete safety beneath your compassionate gaze and my compassionate gaze. Because your son Jesus has left all judgment to you, dear Father, I refuse to act as a judge of myself, or hold back approval, or only give affection to myself when certain conditions are met. I will intentionally look for and point out again and again your presence and qualities in me. I will honor them by giving them room to grow. I embrace your affection, Lord, as you delight in me as your beautifully made child, while you transform me more and more each day from glory to glory in you!*

## loving others during their seasons

*God, I release \_\_\_\_\_ to live as an imperfect person under your blessing, and under my blessing during this season. I allow their weaknesses and faults to rest in complete safety beneath your compassionate gaze and my compassionate gaze. Because your son Jesus has left all judgment to you, dear Father, I refuse to act as a judge, or hold back approval, or only give affection when certain conditions are met. More than that, I choose to look for, point out, and celebrate your presence and qualities in my loved one, and to honor them by giving them room to grow. I rejoice in \_\_\_\_\_ as your beautifully made child, while you transform him/her more and more each day from glory to glory in you!*

*In Jesus' name, amen.*