

Family Seasons

The Rhythms of Life

Lesson #1 for April 6, 2019

Scriptures: Genesis 1; 8:22; Psalm 90:10; Job 1:13-19; Acts 9:1-22; Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:1; Ecclesiastes 3:1.

1. Anyone who has any degree of insight must admit that there are times for almost everything in one's life. (See Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.)
2. Would we even want to have lives without change? Changes often bring excitement and joy. How about a new child or grandchild? Do you look forward to changes when they come? What major changes have come to your life in the last few months or years? How have they impacted you? Were you prepared for the changes when they came? Were your expectations realized? Or, did the change, or changes, really surprise you?
3. Read Genesis 1:1; compare Genesis 1:2-31. If we are to correctly understand what happened, it seems that God took a rocky ball covered with water and transformed it into a beautiful garden called Eden. But, did God create the ball of stone with its molten center at the same time He created our world? The text does not seem to suggest that. To where was Satan cast down? (Revelation 12:7-8) Satan was already here when the Garden of Eden was created.
4. In the original languages, *earth* meant the rock and the core materials that form our globe. *World* comes from a word that means the biosphere and all that goes along with it to cover the earth. The Bible does not tell us if the earth was created at the same time as the world.
5. There is no question that God created everything at some time in the past. But, it is not necessary that the events pictured in Genesis 1:1 happened at the same time as the events in the rest of Genesis 1. One thing is certain, life and all the changes that come with various forms of life were created by God "in the beginning" of our world in the relatively recent past.
6. In God's orderly account as found in Genesis 1, is there any hint of randomness or chance?
7. Evolution claims that given enough time, almost anything can happen by "chance" and that complex lifeforms have developed from many small DNA changes over thousands or even millions of years. The laws of thermodynamics suggest just the opposite, that is, that given enough time everything on planet earth would deteriorate into chaos.

The first law, also known as Law of Conservation of Energy, states that energy cannot be created or destroyed in an isolated system.

The second law of thermodynamics states that the entropy [chaos] of any isolated system always increases.

The third law of thermodynamics states that the entropy of a system approaches a constant value as the temperature approaches absolute zero.—<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/introchem/chapter/the-three-laws-of-thermodynamics/> [Accessed February 10, 2019. Content in brackets is added.]

8. What is suggested by the following words from Ellen White?

Order is heaven's first law, and the Lord desires his people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts. Truth never places her delicate feet in a path of uncleanness or impurity. Truth does not make men and women coarse or rough or untidy. It raises all who accept it to a high level. Under Christ's influence, a work of constant refinement goes on.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* June 10, 1902, par. 1; *Signs of the Times*,* June 8, 1908, par 4.

But heaven's first law is obedience in all things. By creation and by redemption

we are God's property, and we are to submit to the working of his Holy Spirit, co-operating with it, but not attempting to work it ourselves. Under its guidance we are made contrite in heart. Our souls are not lifted up in vanity, but are humbled before God.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* April 1, 1897, par. 4.

9. How are these two statements related? Does obedience to God's laws bring order? Or, not?
10. Even after the flood, we read in Genesis 8:22 that the regular seasons for planting and harvesting, summer and winter, and day and night would continue. Isaiah 66:23 seems to imply that some of these rhythms will continue even into the new earth.
11. What will we be celebrating at the New Moon Festivals in heaven? Some have suggested that it will be the time for a new monthly fruit to ripen on the tree of life. Could that be true?

The Jewish New Moon Festival is described as "Rosh Chodesh or Rosh Hodesh (trans. Beginning of the Month; lit. Head of the Month) is the name for the first day of every month in the Hebrew calendar, marked by the birth of a new moon. It is considered a minor holiday, akin to the intermediate days of Passover and Sukkot"—See "Rosh Chodesh" on Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosh_Chodesh. [Accessed February 10, 2019.]

12. How does the Sabbath impact your life? Are there some disadvantages as well as advantages of observing the Sabbath? The Sabbath was especially designed to remind us of our relationship to our Creator and Savior. It provides a very needed rest and change for all those who celebrate it with joy and regularity. It is a time for family and friends and fellowship.
13. Clocks are found everywhere. We have come to think of time as the ultimate regulator of almost everything. Because of the use of clocks, we expect people to be on time—within the minute! But, it turns out that there are body clocks or circadian rhythms built into our systems.
14. Circadian rhythms determine when we are hungry, when we are sleepy, and when we wake up—unless that is controlled by an alarm clock! These rhythms involve many changes in our body's chemistry, nervous system, and metabolism. Circadian rhythms develop from what we normally do each day. The brain takes into account our usual habits and prepares for them in an orderly way.
15. Surely, we would recognize that in our lives there is a time for birth, death, planting, pulling up, growing, weaning, giving birth, youth, marrying, ripe old age, dying, and being buried. David felt at that time that a life should last about 70 years—or if one is lucky 80 years. Those years might be filled with trouble and sorrow, and it might seem like life would soon be over.
16. So, between the two bookends of life—birth and death—we go through a lot of changes. Some are major changes; some relatively minor. All are based on our good or bad choices in life.
17. We should rejoice in these facts because it would be very boring if we were all exactly the same. It is true that we came from a single ancestor; (Acts 17:26) however, we have developed into different races, languages, cultures, and habits. How can we do a better job of appreciating and even celebrating our differences instead of letting them divide us?
Could we choose, and if so how, to be a blessing to all those around us?
18. "God is love," (1 John 4:8,16) and love means we care about others and are willing to give them priority over ourselves. This is one of the major themes of Christianity. A motto that some Christians have adopted is called living a life of JOY: Jesus, first; Others, next; and Yourself, last. Why is that so difficult for ordinarily selfish human beings? We are born selfish!
19. Read Job 1:13-19; 2:7-9. It is hard to imagine anyone suffering greater disaster than Job went through. Did he have any idea that he was at center stage in a cosmic conflict? Did Job know that Satan was causing all of his troubles and that God allowed it? Read Job 1:6-12; 42:7-8. Job suffered at least six major losses: 1) His property, 2) His labor force, 3) His children, 4) His health, 5) The support of his wife, and 6) The encouragement of his friends. Why would God

allow such things to happen to him?

20. Job was one of the first books of the Bible to be written. If only the Jewish people had read and understood the book of Job and the false accusations that his friends brought against him, many of their problems down through the generations might have been avoided.

The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* February 19, 1880; *SDABC*,* vol. 3, 1140.3.

21. What do you think Job's second family will say to Job's first family when they meet in heaven? Will the first family complain about how God treated them?
22. Abel certainly must not have expected to be killed by Cain when they went out into the field. Joseph certainly did not expect to be sold into Egyptian slavery. There are many examples of unexpected things which happened to people in Scripture. Many unexpected things happen to us? How have we related to unexpected happenings?
23. Does knowing what is the ultimate destiny of our lives and this world help to stabilize things when serious disruptions take place? No matter what happens to us, we know for sure that there is a future wonderful life awaiting God's faithful children. Isn't that the ultimate reality?
24. Our lives are filled with choices. Many of them do not require any mental effort. They become habits. How do we develop habits? It is important that we develop habits which are for the best for our health, for our characters, and for the benefit of those around us.
25. Unfortunately, as we get older, it becomes more and more difficult to change. This is obviously because many habits have already been formed. It has been said that "men marry women hoping they won't change, but they do; women marry men hoping they will change, but they don't!" Usually, our bad habits do not change.
26. The good news for Christians is that God is in the business of changing our characters and personalities for the better. But, He does not do this against our will. One of God's greatest gifts to humanity is freedom of choice. So, how has your Christianity changed you? Are you easier to live with? Do your family and friends recognize that you are truly Christian?
27. Read Acts 8:1,3; 9:1-22; and Galatians 1:15-17. The incredible story about the conversion of Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus is well known. One of God's worst enemies was transformed over a relatively short period of time into being one of His best friends. How could such an incredible change take place?

As Saul yielded himself fully to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the mistakes of his life and recognized the far-reaching claims of the law of God. He who had been a proud Pharisee, confident that he was justified by his good works, now bowed before God with the humility and simplicity of a little child, confessing his own unworthiness and pleading the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. Saul longed to come into full harmony and communion with the Father and the Son; and in the intensity of his desire for pardon and acceptance he offered up fervent supplications....

The prayers of the penitent Pharisee were not in vain. The inmost thoughts and emotions of his heart were transformed by divine grace; and his nobler faculties were brought into harmony with the eternal purposes of God. Christ and His righteousness became to Saul more than the whole world.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 119.2-120.1.

28. If you have not been an Adventist all your life, think about your own conversion story. Or,

perhaps you have been instrumental in helping someone else to become an Adventist. Such experiences can teach us a lot of things. Are we willing to accept changes as Paul did? Are we willing to accept God's guidance in everything that we do? Read Philippians 1:6 and Romans 8:1. These promises should inspire each one of us. Can you thank God for your life?

29. One of the most important things to recognize about human existence is that we are molded by our relationships. God intended for us to have important relationships. Without relationships—even if, at times, they are not good relationships—we could not be born. Even after we are born, we depend upon others to care for us until, finally, we feel that we can start making choices on our own behalf. Clearly, the most important relationships that we have are with other human beings—our families, our friends, even our fellow workers; however, all of these relationships should be trumped by our relationship with God. Is that true in our lives?
30. It is important for us to recognize that while others around us affect us, we, in turn, affect them. And if we want those relationships to be good ones, it is important for us to be the right kind of influence on others. That will tend to make them reflect good back on us. But, this is not a selfish motive. How can we be sure that we are being the best possible influence on others? Do your family members recognize your influence as positive? Or, negative? Or, some of each? What is the secret to becoming more and more like Jesus Christ? Prayer and Bible study.
31. Read Romans 15:7; Ephesians 4:2,32; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; and James 5:16. Are we willing to accept one another, and to be humble, gentle, and patient? Do we exercise loving tolerance with each other? Are we kind? Tenderhearted? Willing to forgive? Do we exercise love for others? Especially in our families and in our churches? Are we willing to confess our faults to one another and to pray for each other? Is it always true that if we have the right kind of influence on others, that influence will largely be reflected back on us?
32. Some of the best examples of change in the Bible are probably exhibited in the lives of the disciples of Jesus. Think of what they went through. Try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples! Even during the ministry of Jesus, they exhibited jealousy, (Matthew 20:20-24) and conflict; (John 3:25) they lacked faith; (Mark 9:28-29) they even abandoned Jesus (Matthew 26:56) and betrayed Him. (Matthew 26:20,69-74) But, even when they were behaving their worst—for example, Peter in the courtyard (Matthew 26:72)—people recognized that they had been with Jesus. And after the resurrection and Pentecost when Peter and John were called to account before the Sanhedrin, even those Jewish leaders recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13) So, what kind of men were those disciples?

Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man [and woman] patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world's most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His colaborers; and He gave them the advantage of association with Himself. Never had the world's great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour's training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. [See Acts 4:13.]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 250.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

33. Look at **John 13:34-35**: ³⁴“And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 13:34-35). New York: American Bible Society.

34. Could loving our fellow church members change us so completely that everyone would know that we are Christians? Do Christians stand out like that? Is that possible even in our day? Consider the implications of these two passages from Ellen White.

The most powerful sermon that can be given the unbelieving world in recommendation of our faith is a well-disciplined family. Children that are educated to habits of self-denial and self-control, and are taught to be courteous, kind, and affectionate, will make an impression upon minds that nothing else can.—Ellen G. White, *Testimony to the Church at Battle Creek, Pamphlet 123*,* 45.1.

The home may be plain, but it can always be a place where cheerful words are spoken and kindly deeds are done, where courtesy and love are abiding guests.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* July 9, 1901, par. 10; *The Adventist Home** 18.2.

35. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. How many of these events happen to us unexpectedly? How many of them are planned? If so, how can we make choices that will produce the best possible results?
36. What life-changing events have you experienced recently? What did you learn from those events? Are there some things that you should have learned that you did not? Were those life-changing events expected? Or, a surprise?
37. Read Genesis 1:14; 2:3. While these verses are speaking about things before sin here on this earth, even after sin, our lives are controlled or at least influenced by environmental, biological, relational, familial, emotional, and even political events. Few, if any, of us would want to live banal, unchanging lives. Few of us will undergo horrendous changes such as happened to Job. But, how have we responded to the changes that have happened to us?
38. If we accept what the Bible teaches about future events up to and including the seven last plagues, we know that we will go through experiences in some ways similar to what Job went through. Are we prepared?
39. Think about the influences that your parents have had on you. Can you think of some good influences, as well as, perhaps, some bad influences? How well have you done at passing along only good influences to your children? (2 Corinthians 5:17; Proverbs 22:6)
40. Dealing with young children is often a challenge. They have a hard time waiting or understanding even why waiting is necessary! The authors of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* found that since Sabbaths were very special in their family, involving a sundown Sabbath candle ceremony on Friday evenings, then Sabbath school, church, often potlucks and times with friends on Sabbath, these Sabbaths formed a kind of weekly clock for children. When they needed to tell their children that something was, maybe, three weeks away, they found that it was good to say “after three Sabbaths” such and such will happen. This worked well for them and might be something we should try.

Not too commonly known is that the Greek *sabbatōn* in the New Testament refers not only to the seventh-day Sabbath but also can denote a week (*Matt. 28:1, Luke 18:12*). In fact, there is no Greek word for “week” in the New Testament other than *sabbatōn*. I admit I was rather excited that our family’s substitute of “Sabbath” for “week” was biblical!....

As an important side note, there is at least one translation of the Bible (A. E. Knoch’s Concordant Version), and a few Christian ministries, that do not recognize *sabbatōn* as referring to the week. This practice may seem inconsequential at first, but it leads to a textual argument for calling “Sunday” a “Sabbath.” In keeping with this line of thinking, Matthew 28:1, consequently, uses the expression “*one of the Sabbaths*.” Thus, the first day of the week, Sunday, is

called a sabbath. Only context can determine whether “Sabbath” or “week” is intended. Thankfully, just about every recognized English translation renders *sabbatōn* correctly as “week” in Matthew 28.

For those grammatically inclined, the phrase in question, in Matthew 28, literally reads *mian* (first) *sabbatōn*. But there is no gender agreement between *mian*, which is feminine, and *sabbatōn*, which is neuter; therefore, “first” cannot modify *sabbatōn* but instead modifies the assumed feminine noun *hemera* (day). This syntactical construction is similar to our saying, “I’ll see you on the fourth.” The word “day” is assumed. Therefore, reading the text as “the first day of the week,” as opposed to the awkward and ungrammatical “the first day of the sabbaths,” is clearly the accurate translation.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 14.

41. We often think of the Sabbath as the rest that comes at the end of a busy week. But, if we remember the process that took place during the first week on this earth, it was God who worked all week long, only creating Adam and Eve at the end of the sixth day. So, the Sabbath was their first full day. Was God trying to teach us that a time of fellowship with Him and others is our first priority? He makes it clear that work was an essential part of life; but, only after they had celebrated their time of fellowship with God. (See Exodus 20:8-10; Genesis 1:27,31; 2:15.)
42. In our lesson for this week, we have talked about interactions and, sometimes, dealing with the unexpected. How often do things which are unexpected happen to us which if we had more carefully evaluated what was going on around us might have been less unexpected? Think of the story of Joseph. Was his treatment by his brothers really that unexpected in light of the favoritism that his father gave him? And Jacob, in turn, was passing on to his family what his mother and father had done to him. (Genesis 25:28)
43. How often do we just pass along to our children some of the bad things we learned from our parents?
44. And considering the unexpected, both Job and Joseph woke up on those fateful mornings with no idea of what was coming. It is important to have an established faith and a relationship with God to take us through whatever might come. No one can take away from us the privilege of prayer or the privilege of Sabbath worship. We can still worship God and pray even if we are imprisoned.
45. Even in our day, one individual can serve as a kind of “transitional person” for an entire family:
“one who, in a single generation, changes the entire course of a lineage. The individuals who grow up in an abusive, emotionally destructive environment and who somehow find ways to metabolize the poison and not pass it on to their children. They break the mold.”—Randal D. Day, *Introduction to Family Processes* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), p. 116.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 17].
46. How well do we know our Bible stories? There are an incredible number of stories in the Bible, some of which are familiar but many of which are not. Knowing and understanding the stories will help us get through whatever might happen to us.
1 Peter 4:12: My dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful test you are suffering, as though something unusual were happening to you.—*Good News Bible*.*
47. Does it help to know that God has an ultimate plan for us no matter what happens to us during this interval of time here on planet earth?

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