



Kids, this month I would like you to look up a special passage—

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and fill in the blanks.

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.

- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____
- A time to _____

References:

1. John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes In A Leader's Day: Revitalize Your Spirit And Empower Your Leadership*, Nelson Business, 2000, Concepts from pp. 317-332.
2. Michael Kaplan, *The Best Time to Do Everything*, Bottom Line Personal, July 1, 2008, p. 1.

The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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TIMING IS EVERYTHING

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A few years ago, a friend of mine retired after his retirement plan was fully vested. He and his wife had carefully planned their retirement so they could purchase a comfortable home in their chosen retirement location. Upon arriving, they rented a home and began to look for the retirement home of their dreams.

They had the option of purchasing land and having a builder construct their dream home. This plan would require them to do a lot of the work themselves, such as landscaping and painting. Or they could purchase an older home and modernize the areas of the home that needed improvement.

One day they noticed in the local paper that a residential builder had gone bankrupt and the local bank was offering a cul-de-sac of homes for sale. More out of curiosity than the possibility of actually purchasing one of these homes, he decided to attend the auction.

To his surprise there were only four people at the auction; the banker, the auctioneer, one other customer and himself. The banker asked my friend if he was interested. He

replied that if the price fell within his price range he would consider buying. When the banker heard my friend's offer he replied, "That amount would barely cover the cost of materials for one these homes, let alone the construction expenditure."

As my friend turned to leave, the banker called him back and said, "If you can return with a cashier's check for that amount of money, we will accept your bid and you may have first choice of any of these cul-de-sac homes."

Because they had spent the last twenty years faithfully saving their money for their retirement home, when the door of opportunity opened, they were able to purchase a better home than they could ever have imagined.

Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

My friend's experience demonstrates not only how important it is to save, but how timing can be more significant. The wise man from the Old Testament, King Solomon, said it well in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the heaven." Many times we fail to seize the right opportunity or take advantage of an important moment in time. Not because we do not have a great plan or lack determination, but because we move too early or too late.

The model of the four seasons yearly rotation may assist us in becoming effective in our timing, whether it is for an individual project or a lifetime goal. In addition, the wonderful biblical story of the courageous Jewish

orphan girl, Esther, will clearly illustrate the benefits of seasonal timing.

WINTER PLANNING

If you choose to be successful in life or a specific project, winter is the best time to plan and strategize for the spring planting. This is the time when you begin to reflect on your dreams, set your goals, determine your purpose, and make plans to

fulfill your objective. Esther spent many long winter seasons for years in exile with her people before she was elevated to be the Persian Queen. And yet, during that extended period of her life, she had ample time to associate and understand the needs of her Israelite community. Consequently, when she became queen, she knew the heart and soul of her nation's people, what they desired and what she was required to do in order to save them.

preparation prior to her appearance before the monarch. It was during this twelve-month period that Esther found favor with the king's eunuch, who guided and instructed her how to conduct herself throughout this appearance so as to win the king's favor.

SUMMER PRODUCING

When the summer season arrives, it is time to take action and coordinate the inner workings of your project to see if your plan is

for the salvation of the children of Israel, her future would be the same as her own people.

FALL PROSPERING

For those who have planned, worked hard, taken risks and cultivated their dreams and aspirations, the fall is always the best season. This is when you see the results of your four seasons of work. On the other hand, the outcome can be disenchantment, disillusionment and regret because of missed

opportunities and meager preparation. In the story of Esther, the fall

season was a time for rejoicing when the King of

Persia ended Haman's evil conniving for power and hung

him on his own gallows. Also, the

winter plans to save the Jewish people by Mordecai

was rewarded when he was promoted to second in command.¹

Ultimately, for each of us, the key to making correct decisions, developing purposeful goals and seeing a project through to a successful conclusion, is to understand, discern and utilize each of the four seasons. Remember, timing is everything.

"Usually, the best time to:

- ⇒ go banking midweek, approximately thirty minutes after the doors open.
- ⇒ purchase shoes in the afternoon because your feet have swelled a little and your shoe will fit better.
- ⇒ go to the supermarket to buy groceries is between mid-morning and mid-afternoon on Tuesday and Wednesday. Best because the shelves are full, the crowds are minimal, and the departmental managers are available to answer questions.
- ⇒ acquire major home appliances is in the spring and after Thanksgiving as this is when manufacturers generally clear out their inventories.
- ⇒ fill a pharmacy prescription mid-month, as drugstores are the busiest at the beginning or the end of the month when seniors receive their Social Security checks.²

SPRING PLANTING

The successful individual knows that when spring arrives, it is time to put the plans in motion. This is not the time to sit back and continue daydreaming. This is the time to sow the seeds for the upcoming harvest. The book of Esther explains that before a Persian Queen could be crowned, Persian law required that she spend twelve months in

on track. In Esther's case, this was the time for her to go before her husband, the king, and request his presence at a special banquet prepared for him and Haman. Summer is also the time to take calculated risks and venture into uncharted waters. Mordecai reminded Esther that if she did not take this chance and present a case