

RENEWAL

SUCCESS

Crisis

BUILDING

# The Seven Seasons

**LIFE  
PLAN**

REFLECTION

Suffering

REBUILDING



# The Seven Seasons LIFE PLAN

**A Flexible Guide to Help  
You Prepare For The  
Seasons of Your Life**

# 15

*Decisions*

*that*

*could*

*change*

*your*

*life!*

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## What Are The Seven Seasons?

We each go through different stages, or seasons, in life. Sometimes they come upon us unexpectedly, sometimes there is a barely perceptible transition to a new season, and often we are in two or more seasons at once.

## What This Life Plan Is And Isn't

This Life Plan will help you prepare for seven seasons that every man experiences: **Reflection, Building, Crisis, Renewal, Rebuilding, Suffering, and Success.** This Life Plan is not a list of activities to help you gain favor with God, but a way for you to respond to the grace of God at work in your life.

MAN  
IN THE  
MIRROR

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the *Seven Seasons Life Plan*.

Many of the lessons in this booklet have been learned in the crucible of my own life, and I consider it an honor to share them with you.

In this Life Plan you will be asked to consider a number of decisions which have a potential to change your life. It is good for a man to decide in advance how much he is willing to be changed. So, as you begin, let me encourage you to take a moment and ask yourself, "How much am I willing to allow God to change me during this process?"

If you want, why not begin this process with a prayer telling God how much you are willing to be changed and, also, what you hope to gain from this exercise.

Sincerely,



Patrick Morley

## How to get the Most Out of this Life Plan



For the next several days set aside about 10 minutes each day to spend on the *Seven Seasons Life Plan*.



Form a Man in the Mirror Discussion Group (or meet with an existing group) of 4 to 6 men and meet weekly. For week 1, you should read the "Introduction" and the "Season of Reflection". Then complete the reflection exercises. For weeks 2 through 6, complete one "two-page spread" to prepare for your meeting. In most cases this will be a single season. As a group, discuss the Group Discussion Questions found at the bottom of each section.



If married, regularly share your progress with your wife.



After completing the Life Plan, continue your Man in the Mirror Group as a Bible Study, discipleship group, or accountability group. Consider using *The Seven Seasons of a Man's Life* small group curriculum (see the back cover for ordering information.)

MAN IN THE MIRROR  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS  
FOR THE SEVEN SEASONS  
LIFE PLAN

## THE SEASON OF REBUILDING

Many adult men discover that after 10, 15 or 20 years of living what they considered a "good life", things still haven't turned out the way they planned. They have a nagging feeling that there must be something more to life. If this description fits you, this may be a time for a season of rebuilding. God uses a season of rebuilding to repair the foundation of our lives. It's a time to adopt Biblical priorities rather than the values of the world.



# FOUR CRUCIAL CONVERSIONS

As Christian men, we can kid ourselves about how much we have it all together. However, in a season of rebuilding we are forced to see ourselves as we truly are. We see that we need to "convert" (surrender, transform) more and more of our lives to Christ. Which of these four areas have you "converted" to following Christ?

- **Your Heart** – It is not enough to give Jesus your life; you must also give Him your heart. Perhaps our greatest risk is to lose our "first love" (see Revelation 2:4). Our wonderful love relationship is reduced to an endless repetition of religious tasks and activities intended to please Him. Give highest priority to your relationship with Jesus. Become the lover of Jesus. We don't love God because we serve Him; we serve Him because we love Him.
- **Your Head** – We make choices based on what we know. Therefore, it is crucial to know the truth and think rightly. Developing a Christian worldview helps us see the world as God sees it. Otherwise, our Christianity will be more "cultural" than "biblical".
- **Your Calendar** – How we spend our time shows how we answer the question, "Who's in charge?" Do you still live as if your time is your own and you can do what you want? A true believer should say, "I will go anywhere You want me to go, do anything You want me to do, and be anything You want me to be."
- **Your Wallet** – Many men think they own their money and should give some of it back to God. The Bible teaches that God owns everything and allows us to be stewards of up to 90 percent of what He gives us. Has your wallet been converted to Christ? If we give control of our money to Jesus, He will release us from our bondage to money. We will be free to be generous and glad. Remember: "Where your wallet is, there will your heart be also."

1. Circle the areas below in need of "conversion". Which one is most in need of conversion right now, and why?

Heart       Head       Calendar       Wallet

2. Pull out your calendar. Now, find your last bank statement. Examine your schedule and purchases for the last month. What does this say about your priorities?

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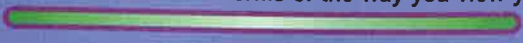
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3. Perhaps the best first step in a season of rebuilding is to settle the issues discussed above. If you are ready, pray this prayer to convert your heart, head, calendar, and wallet to Christ,

LORD, I WANT TO GO ALL THE WAY. I WANT TO BE SOLD OUT TO JESUS. I WILL GO WHEREVER YOU WANT ME TO GO, DO WHATEVER YOU WANT ME TO DO, AND BE WHATEVER YOU WANT ME TO BE. I WANT TO BE OUT-AND-OUT FOR CHRIST. I WANT TO BE CONVERTED IN MY HEART, MY HEAD, MY CALENDAR, AND MY WALLET. MAKE ME A NEW CREATION. REBUILD AND RENEW MY LIFE. PUT ME IN A NEW SEASON FOR YOUR PRAISE AND GLORY. I WANT TO GIVE AS MUCH OF MYSELF AS I CAN TO AS MUCH OF YOU AS I CAN UNDERSTAND. IN JESUS NAME I PRAY, AMEN.

## Rebuilding Your View of Work

There is a continuum to how men think about their work. At one extreme, work becomes an obsession – an end in itself, an idol. At the other extreme, some men see their jobs as merely secular tasks to finance the really spiritual things in their life – such as providing for their families, giving to the church, or personal ministry. Both of these are inadequate views of work. God wants us to do our work "for the Lord, not for men" (see Colossians 3:23). Every vocation is holy to the Lord. For the Christian all of life is spiritual. As Francis Schaeffer pointed out, there is nothing more spiritual about being a pastor or Bible teacher in a Christian college than being a waiter, salesman, manager, engineer, or anything else. Treat your work as part of your calling from God, and do it as an offering to Him.

1. Where are you on this continuum in terms of the way you view your work.  
"Secular" task  Obsession and Idol
2. Do you have a correct biblical view of work, and why or why not? Do you need to adjust your attitude about work and, if so, how?






## REBUILDING YOUR LIFE WITH GOD

Spiritual disciplines are the means by which we nurture our relationship with God. Rather than a way to show God how good we are, they help us appropriate His grace, truth, and transforming power. Do you practice these spiritual disciplines?

- **Bible Study** – In a world awash with change, the Bible is a solid foundation upon which you can build. The Bible is God speaking to man. In the Bible, God encourages, challenges, corrects, convicts, enlightens, guides, and strengthens us. In the Bible God reveals Himself to us as He "is".
- **Prayer** – Prayer is talking to God. God wants us to pray, and prayer changes things. If we believe God will answer prayer, it should become our first resort and not the last.
- **Active Church Involvement** – Jesus Christ started the church so we would have a group for mutual encouragement, worship, growth, fellowship, ministry, and accountability. The church is God's instrument for transforming lives. He knows that we need to be involved with others to grow. His plan is to do this through the church (see Ephesians 4:11-13). It is doubtful you can become the man God intends apart from the church.

1. Are you allowing God to change you through spiritual disciplines? Rate yourself.
 

Bible Study	Cold or Infrequent		Rich and Meaningful
Prayer	Cold or Infrequent		Rich and Meaningful
Active Church Involvement	Cold or Infrequent		Rich and Meaningful
2. What is one change you would like to make in this area? What can you do differently next week?



## Group Discussion Questions

1. What areas of your life remain unconverted? What, if anything, troubles you about the thought of giving those areas to Jesus?
2. Is it easy or difficult for you to view your career as a spiritual calling? Why?
3. Do you read the Bible consistently? Why or why not? If you've found a strategy that works, share it with other men in your group.
4. Are you a man of prayer? (If applicable, would your wife and children describe you as a man of prayer?) Why or why not? How can you make prayer a more meaningful part of your life?
5. What are some of the things the church does for us that we can't do for ourselves? Why is it important for men to actively commit to a church?

# The Problem of Suffering



Perhaps the most compelling argument of the atheist is the problem of evil. From a human perspective, the existence of evil and suffering implies that either:

- 1) God doesn't know about it, or
- 2) He can't do anything about it, or
- 3) He doesn't care.

If He didn't know, He wouldn't be omniscient. If He couldn't do anything about it, He wouldn't be omnipotent. If He didn't care, He wouldn't be good. Yet the Bible declares that God is all of these things. How, then, can we explain suffering?

The Bible does not serve up an easy answer. But the Bible does reveal that God became a man and Himself experienced our suffering. Therefore, the Bible says, He is able to sympathize with us.

Because Christ rose from the dead we can have hope in the midst of our sufferings. Eventually, He will right every wrong and wipe away every tear. In the meantime, He promises that "all things work together for good" for his children.

## THE SEASON OF SUFFERING

A man in the season of suffering has questions. "Why do bad things happen to good people?" or better yet, "Why do bad things happen to me?" Many times we wonder where God is in the midst of our suffering. What does he want to accomplish in us? At the same time, the lessons we learn in a season of suffering can become some of our most treasured memories.

1. Do you wrestle with the problem of evil and suffering, and why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Look up these verses from the Psalms and match them with what they teach about God.

- Psalm 147:4-5 Omnipotent (All-powerful)
- Psalm 135:5-7 All-good
- Psalm 33:4-5 Omniscient (All-knowing)

3. What is the greatest suffering you have ever endured? \_\_\_\_\_

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## WHERE SUFFERING COMES FROM

Where does suffering come from? When we suffer, it's for one of three reasons...

- For doing wrong – Sometimes we suffer because we did wrong—through insensitivity or sin. When in anger we bruise or break a relationship, when in selfishness we hurt our spouse, or when through overwork we neglect our children – we suffer for our own mistakes. Sometimes God disciplines us for our rebellion.
- For doing right – Sometimes we suffer because we stand up for principle. At work, you may lose a deal because you won't shade the truth. Or you may be persecuted for clinging to your beliefs.
- For no apparent reason – Sometimes we don't have a clue about why we are going through trials and temptations. Our sufferings seem to be without reason or logic. We all have been victims of seemingly random acts of pain or evil. A surprise health problem, car accidents, natural disasters – all these seem like meaningless, random suffering.

In any one of these cases, the Bible teaches that whatever suffering comes into our lives has been sifted through the hands of God. Nothing happens to you by human will apart from God's will. He is not the author of evil, but neither does he sit by helplessly as His world spins out of control.

1. The last time you were in a season of suffering, was it for...

- doing right       doing wrong       for no apparent reason.

2. Do you agree with the statement, "Whatever suffering comes into our lives has been sifted through the hands of God. Nothing happens to you by human will apart from God's will"? Why or why not?

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## The Purpose of Suffering

There is comfort in suffering because there is purpose to suffering. We may not always know why we suffer, but we can trust God that good will come from suffering. The Bible says that God uses suffering in the lives of his children. Through suffering God corrects our faulty thinking, spares us from greater evils, and brings about greater good. He leads us to repent of our sins. He helps us long for the day when the things of this world will pass away and everything will be made new. He produces in us the character of His Son, Jesus. He disciplines us, molds us, and shapes us. We need the grace of affliction. Pain is often God's impetus for growth. Never ask God to shorten the duration of your hard times. Rather, ask God to teach you every lesson He intends for you, lest you have to travel that road again.

**Suffering will make us bitter or better. The choice is ours.**

1. Has suffering made you bitter or better, and why? \_\_\_\_\_

2. List two or three of the things that suffering can accomplish in a person's life. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Above you were asked about the greatest suffering you've endured. What lessons did you learn through it? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Group Discussion Questions

1. If you are in a season of suffering right now, are you handling it well? What is the situation?
2. Looking into your past, have seasons of suffering been for your good? In what ways have circumstances that looked like bad news turned out good? Have you also had suffering that seems meaningless?
3. Sometimes things don't seem to work out. Yet Romans 8:28 promises that God works everything for good. How can we reconcile these things?
4. The Bible teaches that we are called to suffer as Jesus suffered (look up Philippians 1:29). How does this change our view of suffering?

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