

Chapter 1

Seasons Don't Ask Permission

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

The only constant in life is change.

— A reflection inspired by the philosophy of Heraclitus

I still remember the day my best friend Nick Poturich told me something that settled deep in my spirit—a truth that shifted the way I saw my own calling. Nick is ten years older than me, a man who speaks with the kind of calm confidence that only time can teach.

We were sitting under the wide arms of an old oak tree on a piece of land I owned in Baker County. The shade felt like a sanctuary from the sun, and the branches overhead swayed just enough to make the light dance on the ground. It was one of those days when your soul is open, even if you don't know it.

Nick had just turned sixty. He wasn't sad—just aware that the clock had grown louder. There were subtle changes in his strength, his pace, his desires, even what he found himself valuing. He looked out across the land, resting his hands on his knees, and said with a thoughtful sigh: "Pastor Juan, life moves in seasons." He paused. "And every season is nothing but a forced change in disguise. It rearranges our lives whether we're ready or not."

I remember turning to look at him, a little caught off guard by the weight in his voice. “Forced change in disguise?” I asked. “That sounds . . . hard.”

Nick chuckled softly. “Yes, it’s hard. But it’s also part of the divine design. You don’t get to stay in the same season just because it feels safe. Seasons don’t ask for permission. They simply don’t ask what we prefer. They come, and they go.”

I leaned back against the rough bark of the tree to think about what he had just said. Nick has a gift for reducing the complicated to the obvious. And he was right. No matter how unprepared, insecure, or overwhelmed we feel, life doesn’t pause so we can gather ourselves. Life doesn’t sit and wait for our courage to catch up. It moves forward, resolute and unapologetic. The truth is that change always arrives without our consent.

“You’re saying that seasons move on their own timetable. So, what do we do?” I asked.

He shrugged, that familiar half-smile on his face and said: “Then we acknowledge their arrival, we respect their weight and we adjust accordingly.” I nodded, letting his words sink in. “And what’s the cost if we don’t?” Nick turned his head slowly, looked me dead in the eyes, and said, “Then life moves on without you. And nothing is sadder than a man stuck in a season that has already passed.”

Mary, Did You Know?

One of the most difficult truths about life is that seasons do not ask for permission before they arrive. They do not schedule an appointment, and they do not wait for a convenient moment. It would be wonderful if life would announce every challenge and every moment of discomfort. But, as Nick pointed out, the seasons of our lives do not inquire whether we feel prepared, qualified, rested, or willing. They simply come.

Few people understood this better than Mary.

Mary was a young woman living an ordinary life when heaven suddenly interrupted her plans. She was engaged to be married, dreaming of a future, making preparations for the life she expected to live. Then the angel appeared with an announcement that would alter the course of her life forever. God had chosen her to carry the Messiah.

Notice what happened: God did not send a survey. He did not ask Mary to submit an application. He did not invite her into a planning meeting to discuss whether this assignment fit her personal goals. The season arrived first. The explanation came later.

In a single moment, Mary found herself standing at the threshold of a future she had not chosen for herself. Her reputation would be questioned. Her relationships would be tested. Her comfort would disappear. The peaceful life she had envisioned was suddenly replaced by uncertainty, sacrifice, and responsibility.

This is often how God works.

The seasons that shape us most deeply are rarely the ones we would have selected. No one volunteers for betrayal, illness, disappointment, loss, or prolonged waiting. No one wakes up and asks for financial hardship, emotional exhaustion, family conflict, or unexpected transition. Yet these seasons arrive without asking our permission.

At sixty years of age, I have learned that much of life's frustration comes from expecting God to negotiate with us before he changes our circumstances. We want advance notice. We want explanations. We want guarantees. We want the opportunity to approve the details before the season begins. But life does not work that way.

The promotion comes before we feel ready. The responsibility arrives before we feel capable. The loss occurs before we have prepared our hearts. The transition begins before we understand where it is leading. The season moves forward whether we welcome it or not.

The question is not whether the season will come. The question is what we will do when it arrives.

Mary could not control the announcement, but she could control her response. She could resist, complain, and live in fear, or she could trust that if God had appointed the season, he would also provide the grace to endure it.

The same is true for us.

Every season carries a demand. Some seasons demand courage. Others require patience. Some require surrender. Others require healing. But every season asks us to become someone we were not before. The irony is that the seasons we resist most often become the seasons that transform us most deeply.

God uses unexpected seasons to stretch our faith, expose our weaknesses, refine our character, and reveal strengths we never knew we possessed. What feels like an interruption is often an invitation. What feels like a detour is often preparation and, many times, what feels like an ending may actually be the beginning of God's next chapter.

Indeed, seasons do not ask for permission. They never have. They arrive carrying both challenge and opportunity. They force us to leave familiar ground and trust God in unfamiliar territory. The men and women who flourish are not those who control every season. They are those who learn to recognize God's hand in seasons they never would have chosen for themselves.

What Time Does Not Heal, It Reveals

As I noted in the introduction, there is a sobering truth many believers—especially men—tend to avoid, and it's one I seek to bring into the light in this book: A man can be engaging, gifted, fruitful, even "anointed," and still carry deep fractures within. Things such as achievement, sound theology, ministry impact, and outward obedience can mask what remains unhealed, covering wounds that were never truly addressed. When healing is delayed, forward movement doesn't leave the pain behind—it carries it into the future.

I often explain it this way: If I catch a cold in Miami and board a flight to New York the next day, the cold doesn't stay in Miami—it travels with me. A new place doesn't eliminate the symptoms; it simply becomes the place where they must be dealt with. Transitions have a way of exposing what stability once concealed.

I often think about what Nick shared with me under the tree that day, that in certain seasons, the wisest response is to adapt rather than resist. If I'm honest, I don't naturally like that idea. There's something in me that resists adapting to what feels uncomfortable, intrusive, or unplanned—especially when I've believed God for something greater, when I've carried an expectation in my heart, only to find the outcome looks nothing like what I imagined.

There is a particular ache in those moments—when faith is sincere, prayers are real, and yet the result doesn't align with what was hoped for. It forces a deeper wrestling, not just with our circumstances, but with our understanding of purpose itself. And it is often in that tension that the soul discovers both its weight and its strength. The issue, then, is not merely the season we find ourselves in, but our understanding of it. We cannot respond well to what we have not rightly discerned. But when we begin to understand what a season is designed to produce, something shifts. Resistance gives way to cooperation and clarity replaces confusion.

It is undisputed that what we fail to understand, we tend to resist—or misuse. But when a season is seen for what it truly is, it becomes possible to respond with intention rather than reaction. For that reason, before moving forward, we must take a closer look at the nature and purpose of each season—and what they are meant to form within us as leaders.

Reflection Questions

1. Nick said, “Nothing is sadder than a man stuck in a season that has already passed.” Where might this warning apply to your life or leadership right now?
2. In what ways are you trying to remain in a season that God may be moving you out of?

3. Have you ever equated God's faithfulness with him "fixing" your problems? How has your understanding of God's work in you changed over time?

4. What might God be asking you to release in order to embrace what comes next?

5. Is there an area of your life where you are asking God for explanations when He is asking you for trust?