

Women & More

In Season; Out of Season

November 1, 2012

Moses is the one who told us: “... *We spend our years as a tale that is told,*” in Psalm 90:9b KJV. **And God has a plan for our story!** Scripture further says that we have three score and ten years—that’s 70—and perhaps 80 years if we have the strength. Psalm 90:10a in the NIV says, “*The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength....*” Those who have reached 80 must know that God has given them the strength to become an *octogenarian*.

Spring, summer, fall, and winter—seasons of a normal year—easily represent human life: Our youthful spring years are birth to **20**;

summer’s young adult years from 20 to **40**;

fall’s middle aged from 40-**60**; and

winter’s senior years are 60 to **80**.

Most of us are in the fall and winter seasons of our lives, and we must not wait a moment longer to be an influence for Christ. Our story must tell His story!

A couple of Christian guys in California had just graduated from seminary and returned to a large college to do graduate work. The two met almost every evening for Bible study and fellowship in their dorm room, which was high up in a several-story building.

One night, they heard a lot of noise next door, so they checked to see what was going on. They learned that their next-door neighbor had jumped out of the window to commit suicide. He left a note explaining that no one cared about him, that no one had even taken the time to meet him.

The two Christian guys were interested in having a ministry somewhere else someday, and had neglected the guy right next to them.

Remember that we don’t have to go far, because the mission field begins in us! Every moment, every hour, every day of every year of our lives, we must have an influence **for—in favor of**—Christ Jesus our Lord! Whether we’re in a good season of life or a difficult one, our influence for our God can make a difference in the lives of those around us. It is a statistical fact that if a person is not saved by the age of 18, there is an 85 percent chance that he will never be saved.

Albert Schweitzer said about *influence*: “Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.” We’re to be an influence for Jesus Christ in all seasons of each year and those of our lives, because actions speak louder than bumper stickers! His story—doesn’t it seem easier and more natural to tell around Christmas or Easter? Well, just listen to some ways Satan deceives people at Christmastime:

► The following article exert, titled: *Bringing religion into Christmas?*—with no by-line—appeared in the Church News section of the Friday, December 14, 2007, issue of the *Grove Sun*:

“This past Sunday, my pastor mentioned that a couple of years ago, while at the mall, he was admiring the nativity scene on display. He tried to affirm his feelings with a woman passing by when he commented, ‘This is nice, isn’t it?’ The response he got was, ‘Why do they always have to bring religion into everything?’

“My pastor went on to say that he immediately thought that this woman has no clue. If it weren’t for the nativity scene, she probably would not have been at the mall that day, as Christmas would not exist, nor would Easter. ...What has gone so wrong that Christianity is being pushed out of Christmas?”

► And the following article, *How to answer “the Santa question”*, by Allyson Dickman, appeared in the December 18-20, 2009, issue of the USA WEEKEND: “Ahh, Christmas. It’s time for holiday cheer, goodwill toward all—and possibly facing the dreaded question, ‘Is Santa real?’

“Time to tell? Hold on, says Santa expert Cyndy Seheibe, an associate psychology professor at Ithaca College in New York who has researched the mind and Mr. Claus for 23 years. She says to take the discussion slowly.

“Disbelief in Santa doesn’t happen overnight: ‘For most kids, the process begins around 7 or 8, but some kids continue to be unclear until the age of 10 or 11, or even 12.’

“So don’t just give it up when your child begins questioning. First, gauge her readiness to let go by asking what she thinks about Santa Claus. If she starts to justify his existence, such as by saying, ‘Maybe he can shrink and get through the window since we don’t have a fireplace,’ it’s not time to divulge. However, if she gives reasons why he can’t be real, it’s probably time to let her in on the secret. Keep the Christmas spirit alive by explaining that she gets to play the role of Santa Claus for other people.”

There’s one statement in there I’d like to repeat: “**Disbelief in Santa doesn’t happen overnight.**” Imagine—neither does disbelief in God! Think about it— if we’ve taught our children that Santa Claus is real and then told them that the Santa they’ve believed in is not true—a lie—then what will we tell them about Jesus Christ? Have we lied about that too? And what will they tend to believe about the Lord when they attend secular institutions, or are just out in the world, where belief in God is discounted and debunked?

2 Timothy 4:2 says, “*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*” Proverbs 4:13 “*Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.*” And then Proverbs 28:23 “*He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.*” God charges Ezekiel as a ‘watchman’ for Israel to warn them:

WOE—Ezekiel 3:18 “*When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to **dissuade** him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and **I will hold you accountable for his blood.**”*

BUT—Ezekiel 3:19 “*But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but **you will have saved yourself.**”*

WOE—Ezekiel 3:20 “*Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and **I will hold you accountable for his blood.**”*

BUT—Ezekiel 3:21 “*But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and **you will have saved yourself.**”*

And God will hold believers today accountable for warning the lost—unsaved—and erring Christians to repent. Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 11 “*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...¹¹He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Max Lucado, speaking of God, said: “He pounds **Do Not Enter** signs on every square inch of Satan’s gate and tells those hell-bent on entering to do so over his dead body.”*

Because of what we have been rescued from and redeemed to, we must: **Hold on** to our faith and that which is good; and **Let go** of things that hinder and entangle and strangle, so that we may **FINISH** the course laid out for us in Scripture. The fastest, surest way to lose something is to place it ahead of God!

Pick a Peril—listed are some catastrophes in our nation and world; remember Anne Graham Lotz said, “The world is not falling apart, it is falling into place”?
 ► August 16, 2012 a TV news program announced that 43,000 wildfires had burned across the US in this season, and right now they are raging in the West.
 ► August 17 the West Nile virus had begun to infest Dallas, TX—17 people are dead; 10 in Dallas County—and the Mayor of that city called a state of emergency and announced that they would initiate massive aerial spraying—something that had not been since 1966 (the viral infection is delivered by mosquitoes and is incurable). There are more than 700 infected across the US.
 ► Early this fall, 1.2 million people reportedly fled their homeland of Syria, with more packing up every day—*Slaughter in Damascus* they’re calling it!

► On September 11, 2012, in Bengazi, Libya, our consulate endured a terrorist attack resulting in the deaths of our ambassador and three others.

► At the end of October 2012, and one week from a very close and critical election, monster storm Sandy devastated the Northeast United States with hurricane winds and waves, extreme surge and rain causing crippling flooding, and blizzards.

► **But we mustn't underestimate our influence!** Some 25 years ago, on August 2, 1985, Delta Flight 191 crashed on approach to the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport killing 135 people. Two days after the accident, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* dedicated an entire section to coverage of the tragedy. One of the articles was written about an interview with one of the ambulance drivers who arrived at the scene long after many of the other rescue squads.

When he arrived, the tail section of the plane was still on fire, but it appeared that all rescue attempts were finished. Out of curiosity, though, he walked close to the wreckage, and to his amazement he heard the voice of a screaming lady. Next he noticed a man, on fire, moving in the rear of the tail section.

Immediately he called for help but no one came! He was shocked, but worked as fast as he could and as a result of his effort was able to save the lives of the two people. He stretched his professional influence to rescue!

Influence also means to **affect**, to **alter** and to **sway**—used 6 times in Scripture: If we claim Christ as Savior; we're believers; followers of Christ, but we live like the world, then that will **give** the lost around us a mixed-up message. It will absolutely take fixing our eyes on Jesus...the author and the perfecter of our faith to be the truthful, consistent influence for Christ that we must be!

When Christians remember that everyone faces divine judgment, and that God charges us with warning others, that should motivate us to tell them what they need to do to be saved—to influence, affect, alter and sway them!

-Our **compulsion**—if we are not endeavoring to bring souls to Christ, we are not pleasing God: We are either soul-winners or we are back sliders!

-Our **compensation**—at the judgment seat of Christ we will be judged by what **sort** our influence is, and not what size it is.

-Our **conviction**—Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (Romans 3:18). When half-truth becomes the only truth it becomes untruth!

-Our **compassion**—the love of Christ drove Paul (John 21:15-17).

-Our **confidence**—we are new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:16-18) and

-Our **commission**—God gave us the ministry of reconciliation!

I received a call early Tuesday morning, October 30, 2012, about Mark Brehmer's sudden death. He had awoken early with some difficulty breathing and struggling with his balance. He was talking to his wife—when he just died.

I can tell you that Mark was ready to go—of course, he didn't know he would be going that morning but he was ready. **The family was not!** Mark and his wife Vickie had been to church on Sunday morning, afternoon and evening, and they'd attended the *Peace of Mind* presentation at the church on Monday night as well. In fact the Brehmers were regulars in the house of God, and we rarely saw Mark without Vickie at his side!

May I tell you how we met? I had seen the tall man with the walker and his attendant wife at Grove's First Baptist Church, but I had never actually met them...yet! But more than a year ago I was waiting to see my oncologist in Grove—he practices at Freeman in Joplin, but comes here on Tuesdays. And I noticed the same man with the walker amicably talking with someone through the reception window of my doctor's office—I watched.

He turned and greeted me with a friendly smile, and introduced himself and Vickie. He told me how much he thought of Dr. Miller, and then he asked me about my situation. He said, "Jeanene, I'm going to start a cancer support group and I want you to be part of it." Well, I was thinking more about getting myself as far away from 'cancer' as I could get just as soon as this ordeal was over with; and I half-hoped he would forget that he'd asked me. But he didn't!

On April 30, 2012, six of us met at the church in room 102A to organize the *Cancer Support Team* (CST) that Mark had envisioned, and that he and his adoring wife founded. Mark was hard to say "no" to, and, besides that, God had a talk with me that went something like this: "I didn't allow you to have cancer so that you could be stingy with your support to others who have it." Well, between the two of them, I was in. We have had as many as 17 attend a single meeting, and I can count on 2 fingers the number of times Mark missed. He was all in, and we are witnesses that Mark was an influence for the Lord in the church and the *Cancer Support Team*: and his story had become Christ's story!

John 17:18 *"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."* We are sent! There are those who formally share the gospel of Jesus Christ—evangelists—and there are more informal, resident evangelizers and that's us. Let Christ use us where we are in the season of our lives, whether good or bad. Let our experiences allow us to enlarge our sphere of influence, and let us be faithful to be that influence for Christ until we are called home!

Remember that the battle is the Lord's!