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A New Season

Wk. 1: The Natural Pattern

September 13, 2026

Welcome to our new fall series called, “A New Season.” I challenge you to be here to take this in with your brothers and sisters.

Orientation: Life is stable, blessed, and aligned with God.
Disorientation: Crisis, sin, exile, or unprovoked suffering disrupts life.
New Orientation: Transformation occurs, resulting in a higher, redeemed state of being. And the blessing of this transformation extends to others.

They were living as **God’s people aligned with the teachings given to Moses,** and they were acting as an example to the other nations of how to be in relationship with God and receive his blessing. **Then a crisis would come, often because of breaking the law** of Moses and deciding not to trust God. Sometimes it was a **neighboring nation invading,** other times it was **because their king** was not following the law. It was always about **worshipping other gods** and setting up places to do that or the way they treated their own people taking advantage.

Often there was a time of repentance and returning to God by following the law of Moses. Often prior to this, **one of the prophets would challenge** the people and their leaders in this direction.

Ultimately, after splitting into **2 nations - Israel** to the north and **Judah** to the south - both nations **experienced the crisis of being conquered** and many of their people taken away into captivity. The new orientation or new season came when some obeyed God by keeping the law and **by returning to re-establish the worship of God in the temple** in Jerusalem. A new season of blessing began after much struggle and suffering.

Their new orientation would result in God blessing them often giving them additional influence with the nations around them.

Even the early church established after **Jesus’ resurrection** and the coming of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost** experienced this pattern. They were **growing into thousands** who followed Jesus and joined together as a community in Jerusalem. **The crisis was not because of their sin, but rather persecution** from the Jewish leadership. People were arrested, even killed, causing most to **scatter across Palestine and beyond**. This **spread the Gospel, and churches popped up** across the region even into Europe. **This new orientation fit with what the great commission had directed**. The new orientation or season was the **Kingdom of God moving across the world,** even **creating change in the Roman Empire.**

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This pattern is also reflected in the life and ministry of Jesus. **It is God's preferred pattern for redeeming, restoring or bringing something or someone back to life.**

Jesus came as a baby, **recognized by those who saw him first as the Messiah**. His orientation was being **sent to save creation and establish the kingdom of God**. But the **son of man must suffer, scripture foretold**. He was **rejected by his own people the Jews**, he was **falsely arrested**, **tried and found guilty of blasphemy**. He was then **tortured** almost to the point of death, and then **hung on a cross to die**.

His renewal came when he walked out of the grave. Now his new orientation or fruitfulness is that **he was the first fruit to come from the grave**, the first of **many who put their trust in him** who will be made new and then follow him in resurrection. **They will receive new bodies** that are not affected by sin and therefore do not decay. They are **perfected**. **Therefore, we see the pattern of suffering that leads to renewal which leads to increased fruitfulness.**

In this pattern…Suffering works when **The Kingdom of God** is the focus

Good can come out of something bad. God's purposes can be **furthered in unexpected ways through these difficult times whether caused by sin or** just because the world is broken and we have an enemy who hates God and hates God's people.

32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else**, (NIV says "first") and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. 34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today. Matthew 6:32-34

If you can keep focused on the kingdom, then the suffering has a chance to lead you to renewal.

If not, then suffering has no power in and of itself. It is the **seed that must die, be buried**, which grows into a tree that **produces fruit that nourishes** many.

The other options when the kingdom is not in focus are bitterness and compromise.

Bitterness…This is when our focus starts to shift and land on **"what is being done to me."** This is where bitterness leads to a **victim mentality**.

Scripture is very clear about not letting bitterness "take root" or it will poison or defile many. My bitterness is not about me, **it is about my kids**, and the people close to me.

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Bitterness causes a person to **memorialize that suffering** and the injustice done to them. **It is like a statue in the middle of town** that everything goes around it. It's always there because **it is the event that tells that person's story, defines their identity**.

Jesus cannot redeem what I have built a statue in homage toward. The suffering **cannot be turned into a new season**.

Compromise…This is when we **allow the suffering to push us to make choices that compromise who we are in Christ**. When **suffering comes those areas where we are vulnerable** to sin become more tempting. When there is **trouble in a marriage**, disappointment, hurt, neglect then the thought can come that says, **"I deserve to _____ that I am not getting from my spouse."** That **thought pattern** is trouble.

Things are tough financially and I'm suffering so I decide that **I can't trust God and he should never allow me to suffer like this** so I'm going to go "get mine." That thought pattern is trouble.

If we focus on the Kingdom and what God is restoring and don't give into bitterness or compromise…Only then can suffering lead to renewal, being made new.

Job was a guy who knew about suffering and knew about trusting God for renewal. "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! "**Why are you allowing this suffering** to happen" **or "I chose to follow my own sinful desire"** and "**now I want you to forgive me and take it away."**

Next comes an understanding of how the kingdom of God works. The restoration or renewal of God's loving rule over all things. **14** If someone dies, will they live again? All the days of my hard service **I will wait** for my renewal to come. **15** **You will call** and **I will answer you**; **There's another important pattern**, I will **wait**, you will **call** and I will **answer**. Because… you will long for the creature your hands have made. Job 14:13-15

Why are we talking about this now? It's because I see this pattern happening in the life of our church.

This church has a great history that started way before I came on the scene. But **in the past decade,** we have seen God amazingly **lead us into a new lifecycle.** He miraculously **erased our debt of just a bit under a million dollars**. It started at 1.8 20 years ago. **This new lifecycle came because we chose to become outwardly focused**, **do the hard work to become a disciple making churc**h as well as a **church that multiplies** the kingdom by started **coffee shops and a second campus**, and **sending people to pastor** other churches.

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Our recent season of suffering…and struggle - COVID and people leaving in painful ways
COVID

- **Many people we love** decided they wanted something different, **didn't like our response to COVID**. This was a **gut punch** to lose people and be accused of being politically motivated.

- **We had just taken the big risk** to open our first non-profit coffee shop in the Midland Mall. We started with a **nest egg,** but that was soon gone paying the bills while getting nothing much coming in.

- **Finances suffered** from the loss of a number of families, and **ministries suffered as well by the loss of people** who worked them.

- **Keeping the church together outwardly focused when suffering pushed us to become inwardly focused, obsessed with our own needs and pain.**

After a COVID and a **massive flood, we combined with Beaverton Church of God**

- **We raised money and stretched ourselves thin, now smaller than before COVID** because God called us to multiply and **keep a life-giving church in Gladwin County** when it was in danger.

- **You guys from Beaverton experienced the attacks** of some who didn't want this to happen and the **loss of people who didn't want to move forward with us.**

Then there was a season where there were **attacks on the church from within**. There were **divisions that cannot continue** within the body of Christ. **Hard decisions were made for the health of the congregation and to make it a safe place again.** These **decisions had loss attached to them, and loss is painful.**

But here's what God has always done with suffering. He is preparing his people for renewal and…Renewal can lead to a new fruitful season **That is if we allow the Spirit to complete** what He has started. Bitterness and compromise **short circuit this**.

Here's what the **pattern looks like**…Suffering-> When it is seen through the Kingdom of our Good King leads to Renewal -> When allowed not cut short and we allow the spirit to finish leads to Fruitfulness And **fruitfulness leads to blessing others** bringing them to Christ.

The image of fruit in the scripture is what is produced by a person or group. **This can either be poisonous, or it can be nutritious** for others to feed on it.

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16 You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. Matthew 7:16-18

Fruitfulness, or producing what will nourish, bless, transform others only can come from a good tree.

Poison ivy doesn't produce anything that will nourish, bless or positively transform others who eat from it. By the time you **prepare that poison ivy salad, you will be suffering greatly** before the possibility of eating it.

Jesus teaches how a good tree becomes a good tree in this parable. 4 One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him: 5 "A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. 6 Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. 8 Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew **and produced a crop** that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!" When he had said this, he called out, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." 4 types of soil, 3 are bad only 1 is good. 9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant…11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word. 12 The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. 13 The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. 14 The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. 15 And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest. Luke 8:4-14

Renewal comes to the right kind of tree preparing to produce good fruit.

Renewal comes in the right soil. Good trees in good soil.

Renewal isn't just for the sake of itself, it is to prepare the renewed for a new fruitful season.

But because we are in a broken world, **the pattern will repeat itself until Jesus returns**.

How do we become 4th soil people that become good trees?

Hear God's Word…I believe we have done this as a church, **but have you heard and then done something about what you heard?**

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Remain deeply connected to Jesus and hold on…the one thing that will **keep renewal from happening is giving up.**

Recognize the season and patiently wait for what is possible. **Part of my job is to help us see the season we are in. And that is not just about you and me.**

And I believe we are…Stepping into a new season!

Ask these 2 questions:

1. What do I need to do to prepare for a new productive season?

Have I let go of my deep connection to Jesus or I've simply taken it for granted and it slipped away. We've been saying it this way, **"Is it time to come home to Jesus?"**

2. Is there a personal sacrifice or something I need to release that will prepare my soil?

Is there something **you need to bury in the ground** so that God can make something else grow from it. **Is there a relationship** that needs to go…a relationship that **needs to begin**…is there **a habit that needs to end** and one that needs to begin…**are the priorities that you truly believe** in not reflected in how you are living right now.