

THE NEXT CHAPTER

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Ecclesiastes 3:1

“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under Heaven.”

Our verse today begins what is commonly called the “seasons of life.” What follows are a series of fourteen couplets, opposites. Birth and death. Finding and giving up as lost. Love and hate. Those are not multiple choices. If they were, we’d pick only the good stuff. Like the vows in a marriage ceremony, “sickness and health, richer or poorer,” those are the things of life.

The key to all of these expressions is “there is a time.” Knowing what time it is, makes all the difference. And that leads to the important discussion of moving to the next chapter of your life. Our lives are like a book in one sense. And, in another sense, our lives are very different than a book. We have a starting page, “once upon a time,” our story begins. There are chapters when we were young. There are chapters when we were in school. There are chapters about clubs, sports, music in our lives. There are chapters about love. There is the chapter about marriage. And, as the long-ago rhythm went, “first came love, then came marriage, then came pushing the baby carriage.” There is a chapter about careers. As we age, more and more chapters are added to our story. There is a chapter about finding the grace of our Lord and salvation.



As one moves through the chapters of life or the seasons, as Solomon paints it for us, one thinks about the next chapter. Preparing for the next chapter of life is helpful. It keeps you aware of the changes and the adjustments that follow.

A young couple prepares for a baby coming. They may have to find a bigger place to live. As kids get to school age, adjustments are made. The kids start driving, a new chapter and some changes take place. As the kids move out of the house and you are now empty nesters, do you need a big house any longer? Adjustments. As one nears retirement, if the next chapter hasn't been given a lot of thought or planning, those years could be a lot different than you dreamed.

Some chapters in our story are long. Some are short. There are some chapters that one doesn't like and can be hard. The death of a child. The death of a mate. The long season with an illness. Those are chapters in the story of our lives.

As I write these words, I'm in a cabin in the mountains of Tennessee. Some of my kids and grandkids are with us. One of the things that brought me here was to think about the next chapter in my life. Things do not continue on as they are forever. Life has a way of keeping that from happening. Age, finances, desire, needs bring about changes whether one wants them or not. What's the next chapter going to look like? Where is it that I want to end up next?

Age and finances also play a role in mapping out the next chapter in life. At a certain point in life, one realizes that some boats have sailed away and are not coming back. Reality can be a cold look in the mirror, but it can also be something that opens new doors that one never thought of before.

Here are some thoughts:

- ◆ **First, no one knows how long the next chapter will be.** We plan, but what's coming may only be a few pages in our story. Plan anyway. There is a coming appointment with God that we will keep.
- ◆ **Second, one must keep the lord at the forefront of all that we plan.** What congregation will I be a part of, and will they help me get to Heaven and will I be able to help them get to Heaven? What will I be able to do in the next chapter of my life for the kingdom of God?
- ◆ **Third, however long our book will be, there will be others who read our story.** Our friends, our family, many in our fellowship will look at the choices we made and how we colored the story that we call life. Our story should never be just about ourselves. It should never be about what I want to do. Thinking of others, honoring our Lord will shape the choices that we make in life.

One day, our story here will be over. It won't be the last page of our book, because we will live on and on in eternity. We do not have a "The End," or a final page to the book of our lives. Jesus died so we could live. Live here. Live now and live then. Live eternally.

The next chapter in our story...have you thought about yours? Don't just sit back and let life happen to you, shape it by your faith, your choices and your wisdom.

The next chapter...I've been thinking about that.