

Series Title: **'Satisfied? What does it take for you?'**

Message Title: **"Turn the Page and Move On"**

Scripture Source: **Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**

Date: Sunday, January 19, 2014

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The Chapters of Our Lives

Around here, we often use the analogy of 'story' to describe and express our lives. Over the years we have been moved deeply at times as people have openly and honestly shared a page or chapter of their unique story with us. And often the story telling has included living with the tension of hard, difficult experiences that in time have often generated growth in character, perspective, and faith in God. One of the things that stands out to me about many of these stories...and the story of my own life, is the challenge of believing that a 'next chapter' is a real and meaningful possibility. 'Turning the page' well requires moving on from the past chapter, even though the 'move' will be difficult to do. Is it just me, or are some 'chapters' of our lives really hard to move on from? Do we drift back to a certain chapter or 'season' of life...and find ourselves 'stuck' there, with deep disappointment, regret, anger or yearning? Has that been, or is that your current experience? It's basically impossible to taste satisfaction...lasting and deep...when we are living tethered to a past event or chapter. Illustrate :

Ragged Edge Realities: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Read

"Sunrise, sunset, swiftly fly the years. One season follows another. Laden with happiness and tears." (Fiddler on the Roof) How true these lyrics are! And Solomon gives us wise and instructive insight for the often 'messy' journey of life. His writing yields one significant contrast after another, intersecting with most of the experiences and events of life. Let's just look at a few of them and then seek to learn some critical lessons for the seasons and chapters of our lives...of your life. Lessons learned as we examine some pertinent questions: Do I know the season or chapter I tend to get 'stuck' in? Can I name it? Do I know the season I am in now? What lessons and truths has God yearned that I would 'get' from the different seasons and chapters of my life...and what can I learn from the chapters of others? How can I move forward, 'turn the page' and begin with God, to write a new chapter, one that has hope and purpose embedded? Are any of these questions intersecting with you in a real and timely way?

Heartbreaks, Hardships and Highlights...Ecclesiastes 3:4, 6, 7

There are moments and seasons where 'liquid grief' is freely expressed. And entirely appropriate and necessary. Heartbreak comes to us in a variety of ways...death, loss, tragedy. In those hard-to-face 'chapters, tears flow, the language of mourning is natural and important.

Is 'heartbreak' a plot line in your book, creating a chapter that continues to effect and shape you? Mourn deeply. With God and a few good friends.

There are chapters where the sound of joyous music is heard, where happiness and celebration live fully. Where the 'dance of life' is joyous and passionate...even if you aren't a good dancer...like me.

Celebrate freely, with gratitude to God, and celebrate with those you love and who love and care for you. Wedding celebrations, graduations, marking certain moments really well.

Solomon's study of contrasts continues..."a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away." This can be a hard one...an adopted child looks for their birth parents and there is an unwillingness to respond...when does that person walk away? When is a certain dream or aspiration relentlessly pursued...and when is that yearning placed in the hands of God, and you move on, turning the page to your next chapter?

One of my favourite activities is cleaning out my closet...turfing stuff that doesn't belong anymore and holding on to things that have a place in my heart. Illustrate:

One last phrase to look at, "a time to be silent and a time to speak". Figuring out when to live in these moments can be challenging. And sometimes we get it backwards, I know I do. When it's time to be silent, then be silent. And when it's time to speak up, especially for someone, for something that really matters, speak up with courage and love.

These few contrasts speak powerfully to the different 'chapters and seasons' of our lives.

You and Your Chapters...Turning the Page and Moving On

To me, one of the most thought provoking words in this passage is the connective word, 'and.' Solomon is stating that there is a next chapter to be written and experienced, a new season to be lived and learned from. Yet, many of us at times become stuck. The writing stops. We re-read a past chapter over and over again, with regret, with a pain that we nurse and feed, with a growing sense of hopelessness and aimlessness taking over our thoughts. Has that ever been true in your life? Is it true now?

"When one door closes, another door opens; but we often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us." (Alexander Graham Bell) Re-reading past chapters to the degree that I believe I have no meaningful future is a sure sign it is time to turn the page and move on. All of us have chapters, seasons of life we wish we could change. You can't and I can't.

Can you identify a chapter or two that you need to place in God's hands and move on from? Please understand this: turning the page on that chapter doesn't mean we forget it or pretend it wasn't as profound as it was; it does mean we learn lessons and insights about life, ourselves, others and God and we take those learnings with us, we take note of them in ways that help them 'stick', we allow them to shape and change us as we enter the next chapter God is asking us...you...to write with him.

What do you need to turn the page on? Is it an event or experience...a heart break, hardship, or highlight? Can you name it? Will you? _____

Is it an attitude or behaviour? Sometimes we can become entrenched in ways of thinking and behaving that are immature, self-centered, and destructive. Is it a grudge? Is it an attitude of procrastination? What do you need to turn the page on? Chronic cynicism or negativity? Is it a relationship you need to turn the page on? In what specific way is it time for you to move on?

How Do I Turn the Page and Move On?

Grace, grit, and a few good friends along the way enable us to move on.

Grace: We need to make a choice. Do you believe God is good and can be trusted with the chapters of our lives, and the ones still to be written or not? God gives grace and strength to

help us turn the page when we are ready to. Romans 8:28. (Slide) Jeremiah 29:11-14, (slide for vs.11) Isaiah 43:18-19 (slide). And we tenaciously believe that there is an afterlife with God to be experienced and enjoyed. Eternity has been embedded in our hearts. And we trust God with his eternal plan. Vss.14-15

Grit: We step forward, pen in hand and start writing the new chapter, paying attention to what God is doing and saying to us along the way. We do this, even when our heart aches, tears flow, and it is hard to do. We turn the page and move on.

A Few Good Friends: God graces us with people to help us turn the page, whose words and prayers help us see that the chapter doesn't need to become the whole book. They are the ones who live seasons and chapters with us. They remind us that God can be trusted and life does have a compelling purpose.

Consequences: Ecclesiastes 3:13-15

As we turn the page and move on, we mature in character, outlook, and faith. We taste satisfaction...the fulfillment of a deepening relationship with God, loving relationships with others, and the opportunity to be used of God to help others find hope in the chapters of their lives. Folks, there are all sorts of people needing to learn how to turn the page and move on, let your life be a profound and inspiring example! Hope and purpose that is rooted in a relationship with the God of all hope, a relationship we can experience through the stunning and amazing gift of Jesus, our Saviour.

So, let's turn the page and start writing, with God's grace, purpose, and strength, our next chapter, and experience our new season with God and others.