

## **Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less**

### Onward and Upward (Week 4) - A Predictable Journey:



1) We started the last week of our series by acknowledging that it's hard to take a journey without a map.

2) For at least 800-1000 years, Christians have understood that our spiritual journey has four predictable seasons, each drawn from a major biblical image of salvation or the spiritual life: these seasons are non-sequential, and you'll experience each one at least several times over the course of your lifetime.

3) The first season is awakening (see Rom. 13.11-12): in it, you feel disengaged, lethargic, and half-alive, as if sleepwalking through life, and in some cases underlying all that is deep stubbornness.

4) Thus, in this season God's activity in your life takes a foreseeable shape: He is prophetic, poking and prodding at you, sometime in an incessant whisper, and eventually in a loud yell, trying to get you to wake up.

5) The second season is purgation ( that term is built from the root word "purge"): this phase is right in line with the 2nd half of last week's sermon, and entails a letting go of something in order for God to give you something better in return.

6) Father Albert Haase has written that if we're in this season that we can often find what God wants us to lose by identifying that which we're trying to defend, protect, or justify most in our lives.

7) He gives a list of things on which we as humans tend to rely on too much that God will ask us to acknowledge and turn loose of eventually, all beginning with the letter "P": pleasure (excitement or constant stimulation), possessions, power/prestige/position, productivity, perfectionism, and praise/popularity.

8) The third expected spiritual season is illumination: biblically speaking, God's light emerges gradually in our lives (see Psalm 97.11 and Eph. 1.18, for example), not all at once, and in this phase we get the distinct impression that God is helping us see/understand differently and better.

9) This is a season marked by not knowing, which invites you to ask questions and seek new answers, which can be both frightening and invigorating at the same time.

10) The last season is union, in which we feel great connection, dependence upon, and closeness to God and others, which is often accompanied with great fruitfulness (John 15.1-5, 17.21-26).

11) Two keys to keep in mind during a season of union: a) don't ask it to last forever (we often do), and b) pay attention to WHY you feel so connected and fruitful, and try to carry those attitudes, actions, routines, and priorities forward into the other expected seasons of your spiritual life.

(One sentence too many this week - apologies, had to do it to cover everything.)

### **Going Further This Week**

1) In light of the sermon, and perhaps using some of the resources in #3 below, reflect upon which spiritual season you might be in right now. Why? And how should you respond to it? Maybe a good conversation with a friend or your small group/class about the seasons, and where you find yourself at present?

2) Adapt Dave Ferguson's 30 day challenge, itself drawn from the Christian philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal, into a daily habit this week:

Pray every day this week, "God, if I am sleeping wake me up, amen." Come the end of the week, take note of what God has shown you that you might not have been seeing beforehand, or how He has spurred you to action.

3) Exploring the four spiritual seasons more:

- Here's a good podcast from a reliable author on spiritual formation. They don't emphasize that the seasons repeat in our lives, but that's the only downside...the seasons descriptions are very helpful: [Season 10: Episode 6 | The Classic Christian Pilgrimage](#)

- Here's an easy read that devotes one chapter to each of the four seasons...very accessible and enjoyable, even for those don't read many books: [Eternity Is Now in Session: A Radical Rediscovery of What Jesus Really Taught about Salvation, Eternity, and Getting to the Good Place: Ortberg, John](#)

- A good short summary of the four seasons, which has the added benefit of touching on characteristics of the phases that Pastor Chris couldn't yesterday because of time limitations: [Everyday with dan...: The classical christian pilgrimage](#)