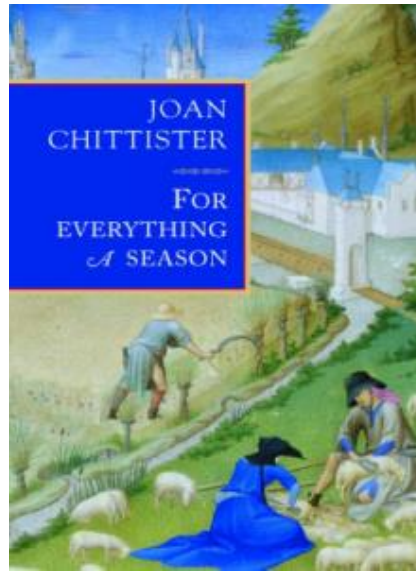


Discussion Questions

For Everything a Season



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Chapter 1: The Seasons of Life

QUESTIONS:

1. View this rendition of Ecclesiastes 3 on YouTube and then share your response to the translation used:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22eS8acYIKE>

2. “Life comes out of nowhere, or at least out of where we would rather not be, again and again and again,” states Sister Joan. Share one life experience you have had or are having that proves this statement true.

3. What sentence in this first chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 2: A Time to Be Born

QUESTIONS:

1. Speaking of destiny, Sister Joan suggests that it “. . . has something to do with discovering what we ought to be doing. It has something to do with shaping our way of being in the world.” Have you truly discovered what you ought to be doing at this time in your life? Please share what or who has made this possible.

2. Sister Joan outline three obstacles to “the development in us of the force of personality that would make us a moral factor in the world around us” (22). List the three and then discuss which, for you, is or has been the biggest obstacle.

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 3: A Time to Lose

QUESTIONS:

1. Sister Joan quotes Elie Wiesel who said that God gave Adam “the right to begin again.” Write a brief story about a time in your life when you believe God gave you “the right to begin again.” What did doing so require of you?
2. If loss is ever to be a liberating experience for us, one of the barriers Sister Joan avers must be overcome is “. . . the corruption that comes with the need to control.” Where do you see one or more examples of this kind of corruption in our nation and/or world today.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 4: A Time to Love

QUESTIONS:

1. Reflect on the second paragraph on page 39 which begins, “I look to a friend for. . .” Share a story about a friend you have who embodies all the qualities of friendship Sister Joan offers here.
2. What does Mary Oliver’s poem The Gift say to you about love?

Be still my soul, and steadfast.
Earth and heaven both are still watching
though time is draining from the clock
and your walk, that was confident and quick,
has become slow.

So, be slow if you must, but let
the heart still play its true part.
Love still as once you loved, deeply

and without patience. Let God and the world know you are grateful. That the gift has been given.

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 5: A Time to Laugh

QUESTIONS:

1. Sister Joan writes, “Most of all, laughter is healthy when we are able to laugh at ourselves. . .” (45). Are you able to laugh at yourself? Share a situation in which you did so.
2. Some people are humorless according to Sister Joan. Do you agree with her? Explain why after you review the obstacles to laughter she proposes in this chapter.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 6: A Time for War

QUESTIONS:

1. “We are the gravediggers of the world. Worse, perhaps, we sell death to the highest bidder and call it ‘security’” (53). Choose a post-WWII example that proves these words about the United States true. Did you protest this in any way? Why or why not?
2. There are many people in the US who deny that the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol was an insurrection. More than a few are elected politicians. Where do you stand on this issue?
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 7: A Time to Heal

QUESTIONS:

1. Unpack the powerful truths of the following statements by Sister Joan for yourself, personally and/or for human beings in general: “Isn’t the implication, then, that personal healing, the cauterization of personal wounds, is part of the natural rhythm of life? That we all need it on every level? That we must all go through it someday or run the risk, ironically, of never being whole because we have never known what it is to be wounded but then healed, to be struck down but still survive?”
2. Sister Joan asks, “And if I am the one in need of healing, what is my own role in it?” How would you answer this question? Note that she offers two obstacles to healing on pages 65-66.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapters 8: A Time to Sow

QUESTIONS:

1. Share a situation in which you faced the impossible and still acted “. . . as if a miracle will come tomorrow” (71).
2. Sister Joan insists that “the spirituality of the sower, then, is the spirituality of urgent patience. They demand for now what others do not even know is lacking” (73). Describe a historical or contemporary person who embodies this for you.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 9: A Time to Die

QUESTIONS:

1. “Poetry forces us to face ourselves and die a little so that others may live” (79). Choose a poem that, for you, symbolizes the truth of this sentence.
2. “There is a time for us to face up to what is over in life and what is decaying in life and what is destructive in life and quit trying to make old ideas fit new situations” (83). From either a personal, national or global perspective, state one example of what you deem as “over in life,” “decaying in life,” and “destructive in life,” at this point in history.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapters 10: A Time to Kill

QUESTIONS:

1. Suppose you and Sister Joan were having a conversation over lunch or dinner and she said the following: “There is no iniquity in life that is not in me in embryo, waiting to get out, struggling to take control of me, worming its way through my life. The little greeds, the small lusts, the puny perfidies, the itchy envies, are all there in my tiny churchgoing heart, if I could only see, if I would only look” (85). How would you respond to her?
2. Reflect a bit on the last paragraph in this chapter. Do you agree or disagree with Sister Joan that heartlessness, “the greatest sin of all”?
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapters 11: A Time to Build Up

QUESTIONS:

1. Speaking of rebuilders, Sister Joan remarks that “They show us the world that the rest of us do not want to see until, forced to see it, we can ignore it no longer.” Who would you identify as a “rebuilder” in the wake of the Capitol siege that took place on January 6, 2021? Explain why and what we can learn from them.
2. Have you been or are you a “rebuilder?” Discuss the circumstances that called you to be one.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 12: A Time to Embrace

QUESTIONS:

1. Sister Joan declares that “We are a misguided people indeed. The question is why? The answer is that rationalism is irrational. We have thought our way into oblivion when what we really need is to feel our way into a new world order.” Do you agree or disagree with her? Explain why.
2. A sentence from the quotation by Rabbi Moshe Leib states, “To know the needs of the other and to bear the burden of their sorrow – that is true love.” Please share a story from your own life or from another’s you know that represents the truth of this.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 13: A Time to Reap

QUESTIONS:

1. “Obedience, we have come to know, requires a great deal less of us than conscience,” says Sister Joan. Who do you think are the “we” she is referring to here? Discuss.
2. Sister Joan suggests this: “But reapers know that there is nothing farther from the truth than the notion that age diminishes life. On the contrary. Age is the reaping time” (116). Do you believe this? Why? Do you know someone who models this? Please share.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 14: A Time to Weep

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree or disagree with Sister Joan when she writes, “Weeping is very holy and lifegiving” (121)? Explain why or why not.
2. “What we weep for measures what we are” (120). For what or for whom do you weep? For what or for whom have you wept? Please share what you can.
3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 15: A Time to Refrain from Embracing

QUESTIONS:

1. “The great spiritual task, then, is to look very diligently at that passion in us that at this very moment has become, under the guise of good, our greatest struggle. I must come to ask myself what it is that I

have embraced that requires restraint if I am going to live a life that is whole and balanced. What good is it that is making all the other goods of life impossible for me to attain?" Are you up to this spiritual task? How might you answer the last two questions?

2. Sister Joan states that "The spirituality of refraining is the spirituality of balance." From what have you refrained that has led to balance in your life?

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 16: A Time to Gain

QUESTIONS:

1. "We are simply asked to be ourselves and to do something in our own time that has value." Please share how you are living true to yourself and what one thing you have done or are doing that has value for others.

2. How would you answer the four questions found in the first full paragraph on page 139?

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why

Chapter 17: A Time for Peace

QUESTIONS:

1. Sister Joan declares that "what makes for conflict is the lack of peace within ourselves" (145). Has this been true for you personally? Do you think it is true for much of the current conflict in our nation and/or our world? Discuss.

2. On page 147 Sister Joan indicates that silence and solitude are twin

paths to peace within ourselves. Do both have a significant place in your life? Describe how and when.

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?

Chapter 18: A Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree or disagree with Sister Joan who suggests on page 156 that “There is no such thing as a meaningless moment”? Explain why or why not.

2. Sister Joan describes who she thinks is “the happy person” on page 156. Do you know such a person? Discuss.

3. What sentence in this chapter challenged or inspired you the most? Why?