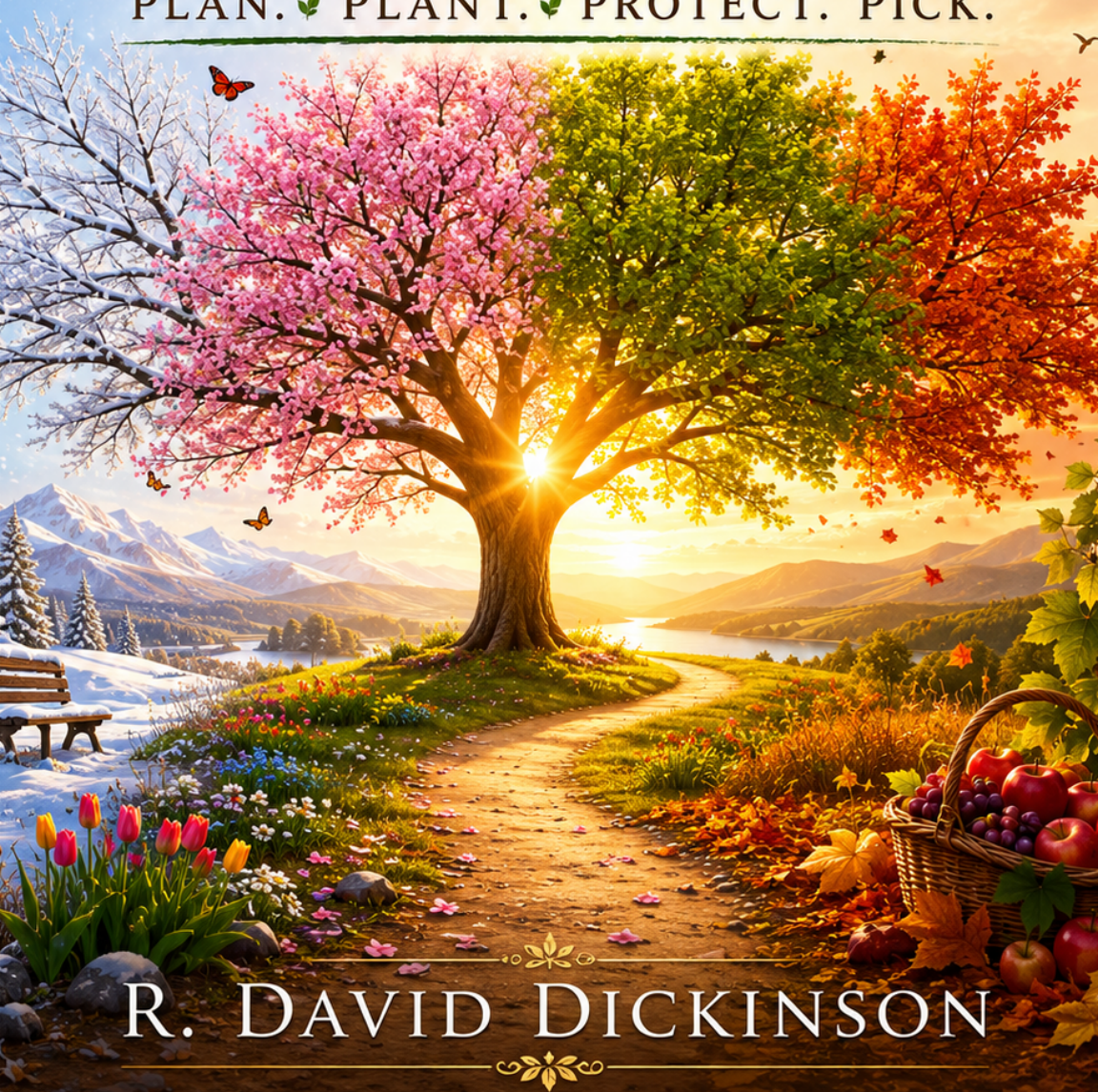


Seasons *of* Life

PLAN. PLANT. PROTECT. PICK.



R. DAVID DICKINSON

Introduction

If there is one thing nature teaches us without ever speaking a word, it is that life unfolds according to seasons. Every year, without fail, winter gives way to spring, spring gives way to summer, summer gives way to fall, and fall eventually returns to winter. The seasons do not rush one another, compete with one another, or attempt to exchange places. Each season has its own purpose, its own responsibilities, and its own rewards. Together, they create the perfect environment for growth.

Human beings, however, often believe they are somehow exempt from this universal law.

We want success without preparation. We want abundance without planting. We want the harvest without enduring the growing season. We want the rewards while avoiding the responsibilities that naturally produce them. Yet whether we acknowledge it or not, our lives are governed by the very same principles that govern every tree, every flower, every crop, and every forest on earth.

Nature never hurries, but it is never late.

An acorn never becomes an oak overnight. A kernel of corn never becomes a cob the day it is planted. Fruit trees do not produce fruit immediately after they blossom. Every living thing follows an orderly progression, and every stage contributes to the final outcome.

The same is true for your life.

Every business begins as an idea.

Every home begins as a blueprint.

Every relationship begins with a conversation.

Every accomplishment begins with a decision.

Every extraordinary life begins with a vision of something that does not yet exist.

Long before anything becomes visible in your life, it first exists invisibly within your imagination. Every achievement starts as a thought before it becomes an action, and every action eventually produces a result. Success is not an accident. It is the predictable outcome of following timeless principles.

One of the greatest misconceptions surrounding goal setting is that it simply involves writing down a list of things you hope to accomplish. While writing goals is certainly important, it is only one small part of a much larger process. Goals are much like seeds. A seed sitting in a package possesses tremendous potential, but until it is planted in fertile soil and cared for through every season, it remains nothing more than unrealized possibility.

Many people spend years collecting seeds.

Few ever plant them.

Even fewer remain committed long enough to enjoy the harvest.

This book is built around one simple yet profound observation: everything in life follows four distinct seasons, and each season requires a different responsibility. I call these responsibilities the Four P's.

Plan. Plant. Protect. Pick.

Winter is the season of planning.

To many people, winter appears lifeless. Trees are bare. Gardens lie dormant beneath frozen ground. Farmers are not harvesting crops. On the surface, very little appears to be happening.

Yet appearances can be deceiving.

Winter is one of the most important seasons because it is the season of preparation. Farmers study last year's harvest, repair equipment, purchase seed, prepare budgets, analyze weather patterns, and make decisions about what they will grow when spring arrives. They understand that today's preparation determines tomorrow's harvest.

Likewise, every meaningful achievement in your life begins during your personal winter. It begins when you decide where you want your life to go. It begins when you become intentional rather than reactive. It

begins when you stop drifting through life and start creating a definite plan for the future you desire.

A life without a plan is much like a ship without a captain or a destination. It may remain busy moving from place to place, but activity alone never guarantees progress.

Once the plan has been established, spring arrives.

Spring is the season of planting.

The farmer no longer thinks about planting. He plants.

Every seed placed into the ground represents an act of faith. At the moment it disappears beneath the soil, there is no visible evidence that anything has changed. The field looks much the same as it did the day before.

Yet beneath the surface, life has begun.

The same principle applies to your goals. The moment you begin taking action - making the phone call, starting the business, writing the first chapter, attending the class, exercising for the first time, investing the first dollar - you have planted the seeds of your future.

Small actions often produce enormous outcomes because every great accomplishment begins with one simple step.

Eventually, spring gives way to summer.

Summer is the season of protecting.

Many people mistakenly believe the difficult work is over once the seed has been planted. Experienced farmers know otherwise.

Summer demands attention.

Weeds compete for nutrients. Insects threaten the crop. Storms arrive unexpectedly. Dry seasons test endurance. Without continual care, the very crop that promised such abundance can be lost before harvest ever arrives.

Our goals require the same protection.

Negative thinking, fear, procrastination, distractions, unhealthy relationships, self-doubt, and discouragement are the weeds that

threaten our dreams. Left unattended, they quietly consume the energy and attention needed for growth.

Protecting your vision becomes just as important as creating it.

Then, almost without notice, fall arrives.

Fall is the season of picking.

Harvest is nature's reward for faithfully honoring every season that came before it. The farmer enjoys today because of decisions made months earlier. Every bushel gathered from the field tells the story of thoughtful planning, faithful planting, patient protecting, and consistent perseverance.

The harvest is never an accident.

Neither is success.

The quality of your harvest is always connected to the quality of your preparation and the consistency of your effort.

Yet the harvest is not the end of the story.

The wisest farmers never consume every seed they harvest. They understand that every harvest also contains the seed for next year's crop. Every ending becomes another beginning. Every accomplishment creates the opportunity for even greater accomplishments.

Life moves in cycles.

There is always another winter to plan.

Another spring to plant.

Another summer to protect.

Another fall to enjoy.

The purpose of this book is not simply to teach you how to achieve one goal. It is to teach you how to think in seasons so you can continue growing throughout your entire life.

Whether your desire is to improve your health, strengthen your relationships, build a successful business, increase your financial security, deepen your faith, discover your purpose, or simply become the person you were created to become, the process remains the same.

Plan.

Plant.

Protect.

Pick.

As you journey through these pages, you will discover that nature has been revealing the blueprint for success all along. The principles are simple, timeless, and available to everyone willing to follow them.

Life unfolds according to a definite plan - if you have a plan.

The question is not whether the seasons will come.

They always do.

The question is whether you will recognize the season you are in, embrace its purpose, and faithfully do what that season requires.

When you do, the harvest becomes not a matter of chance, but a natural consequence of living in harmony with the laws that have governed life since the beginning of time.

R. David Dickinson • Hidden Oak Publishing