

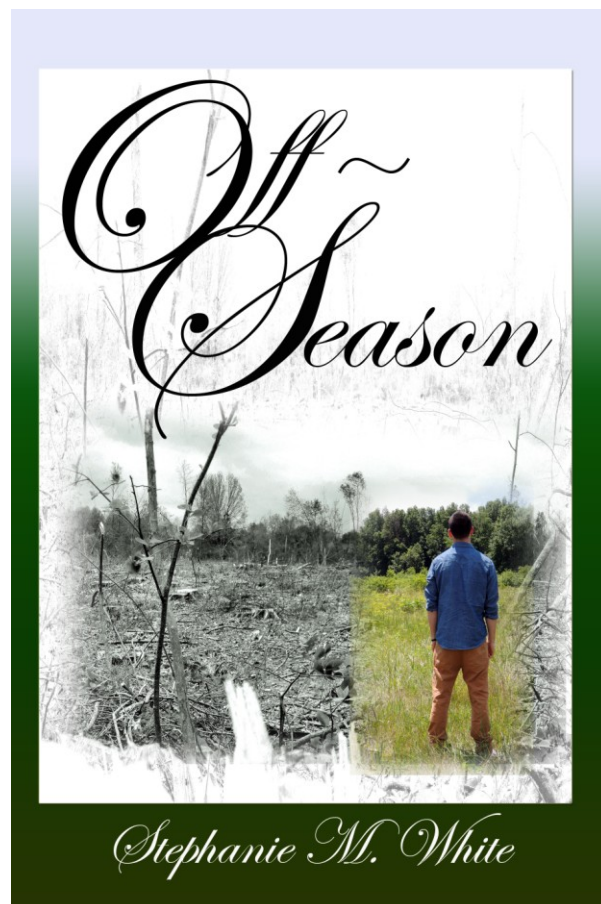
OFF-SEASON

by Stephanie M. White

www.heavenonearthforme.com

To order a copy of the book, Off-Season, go to:

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DAY 1

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?


An off-season is a dry time in life. It is a time of lack – a lack of progress, a lack of success, a lack of victory. It involves trials and feelings of loneliness. During an off-season you may feel like God is not listening to you; you may even feel like He does not care about your struggle or your pain.

Did you ever feel like the Psalmist? Did you ever feel like you were crying out to God as loud as you could just to get Him to acknowledge you? Did you ever feel like God could not hear you or did not want to hear you? If you have, you know how awful those feelings are. We must understand, however, that feelings can lie – and the feeling that says God does not care so He is not listening is definitely a lie! It may seem like God is not there in the midst of your turmoil, but He is.

God is not hiding; God is right there with you. You may not feel Him or see Him at the moment, but He *is* there. He promises to never leave you nor forsake you; focus on His promise to be there with you instead of your deceitful feelings.

Remember – remember God's promises to you. Open the Word of God and discover the good plans He has for you. Remember – remember previous victories that God has given you. Remember – remember the men and women of the Bible who experienced victory over their off-seasons. Like the Psalmist, you can meditate on all of His works and consider all of His mighty deeds. You can choose to remember.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **The Word of God is your Spiritual fuel or food. Without this fuel, you will be weak Spiritually. If you are Spiritually weak you will then speak according to the flesh and you will think based on the flesh. The flesh will never produce anything of Spiritual value in your life; the fruit of the flesh is useless and polluted. You must realize what a lack of the Word will produce in your life.**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

Psalm 77:1,12 (NIV) I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord...I will meditate on all Your works and consider all Your mighty deeds.

DAY 2


TRIALS ARE PART OF LIFE

“Why me?” Who hasn’t asked that question! We all have, but a better question would be, “Why *not* me?” Jesus did not mislead us concerning the off-seasons that we would encounter; in fact, He guaranteed their arrival. We do not have to be taken off-guard by these times of trials. We live in a fallen world and trials *are* part of it. The flesh is alive and well and that is where sin originates. Man’s sinful nature (the flesh) brings harm to himself and it also hurts others; the flesh uses others, deceives others, abuses others, mistreats others, and so on. **It is man’s sinful nature that produces all sin and all sin produces problems for man.**

We must understand that we will go through difficult and trying times while we live on this earth; we will go through times when we *feel* as if God has abandoned us. We will go through seasons that make us feel that nothing good or productive is happening in our lives. During these times we must understand that God *is* doing a positive, Spiritual work. Instead of crying out, “Why me?” we should be declaring, “I am not surprised by this off-season and through Christ I am prepared for victory over it! He is working everything together for my good and His glory!”

As we go through these trying times, we can look to His Word and abide in it and find rest. We do not have to live anxious, stressed, and miserable lives. We can enjoy today and look forward to what God has in store. He is at work even when we do not see Him. Rest in that.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **W**hen we are at rest we have ceased to work. Instead of trying to live up to the Word, which is impossible, we are living *through* the Word as God intended. The Word was never given to man as a challenge or a goal; bear in mind that the Word was given to man as the prescription for life. The Word is the treatment for the flesh; it is the cure for our sinful nature. If we look at the Word as something that we can attain or live up to apart from Christ, then we will never live dependent on it; as a result, we will live as slaves to our own flesh.

VERSE FOR TODAY:

John 16:33 NIV "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

DAY 3


TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

During the off-season we have a choice to make: focus on the Word of God or focus on the trials at hand. Your decision is critical; you must abide in the Word if you want to see victory. You must choose the Word, the truth, or you will experience the consequences of the lies that disagree with the Word. We can see victory over the off-season if we will abide in the Word.

Each Christian has two natures – a Spirit and a flesh. Your dominant nature is the nature that you feed the most. If you spend more time taking in the Word of God than you do taking in the things of the flesh, your Spiritual nature will control your flesh. Your Spiritual nature considers your trials pure joy because your Spiritual nature knows that God is in control and that He has nothing but victory in mind for the final outcome. The opposite is also true, however. If you are focusing on your trial more than you are the Word of God, you will never consider your trial pure joy. Trials of many kinds will come, but how you look at them makes all the difference.

Your off-season demands the truth of the Word. If we are ignoring the Word of God, then our off-season will continue on. Truth or consequences. The choice is up to you.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **Any feeling that does not line up with the Word of God is a lie; it is a fruit of your flesh. You must be convinced of this truth. You cannot agree with your flesh and the Word of God simultaneously.**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

John 8:31-32 (KJV) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

DAY 4


COMMON TO MAN

When we encounter trials we can waste plenty of time simply feeling sorry for ourselves. Trials will come. Period. We must understand that others are struggling, too, and we are not just being picked out to be picked on. Life is full of circumstances – and all of them are not pleasant.

We are not the only ones facing an off-season; hard times really are a part of this life for everyone. It may seem like others are doing just fine, but you must remember that not everyone *voices* their hardships. You may be assuming that someone else's life is perfect; when in fact, they are quietly pressing on through an off-season.

Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves, we should get busy discovering God's loving plan for our lives. Even though the trial is common, it is not the sum of life. With the trial comes the ability to handle it. The same verse that assures us that we will all struggle also assures us that we have what we need to endure and see victory because God is faithful!

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **G**od provides the way out of our off-seasons through His Word. Faith is the victory that overcomes everything that we come up against (1 John 5:4) and faith is the result of our steady intake of the Word (Romans 10:17). We cannot be faithful apart from Christ; we cannot do anything to “earn” victory over a trial. He has already paid the price for our victory; we simply must rest in His faithfulness and His promise to bring that victory into all of our situations.

VERSE FOR TODAY:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV) No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

DAY 5


FAITH-FULL IN THE TRIAL

The path of hardships is common to man; we will all tread that path and that path will require faith. Faith comes as the result of our *habitual* intake of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We must be full of faith, full of the Word, in order to see victory over the off-seasons of life.

God's plan for us is to live by faith; to do so, we must fill ourselves with the Word of God. During this off-season, make up your mind to abide in the Word and be full of faith.

If the Word of God is not your delight during an afflicting time, you will not enjoy life as God has it. The Word of God can be your delight; it can bring you pleasure and enjoyment. In order for the Word to be your delight, you must read it as a dearly loved child of God. You must understand that His Word is full of His promises to you – promises for your behavior, your thoughts, your words, your family, your life, your occupation, and so much more! **Instead of looking at the Word as a rule book, look at it as God's loving promise book.** For example, when you read about treating others according to love, do not look at it as a challenge or something you must accomplish if you want God to be happy with you; look at it as a promise you can count on. Recognize it as the promise that it is – *if* you will abide in the Word of God you *will* love others and treat them right. The opposite is also true; however, if you ignore the Word you will never walk in love. You cannot adjust your behavior to fit into the mold of the Word; only God can transform you into His image.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **O**ur lack of faith is a direct result of our lack of the Word of God – period. In every season of life we need faith; we need the Word of God always, but an off-season requires even more of the Word. Faith is the only victory that will overcome the off-season.

VERSES FOR TODAY:

Romans 10:17 (KJV) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

1 John 5:4 MKJV For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

DAY 6


AN APPOINTED TIME

In the midst of your off-season, feelings of hopelessness may creep in. A spirit of depression can tempt anyone who is experiencing a trying time. We can find ourselves doubting God's Word and falling for the lie of despondency. If we are not careful, we can focus more on the trial than we do on the promises of God. The Bible tells us that our faith is a fight and when we experience these carnal feelings we need to wage war against them. These feelings do not agree with the Word of God; they are not Spiritual. We fight the things of the flesh with the Spirit – we attack with the Word of God.

The Bible declares boldly that the revelation (the demonstration of the Word) will come in its appointed time – there is a specific time set aside by God for your victory! Looking forward to our appointed time can escape us when the trial becomes the center of our attention. An appointed time may not seem like much encouragement while you are in the midst of the suffering, but *you* must make God's promises your focus on purpose; only they will bring life to your situation.

There *is* a specific time for *your* breakthrough. God has already procured your victory; it is finished! Even though God declares the work finished, we still have to endure until the appointed time. During the wait, we can boldly proclaim the victory and rest assured that the trial will pass. God will make your trials worth your while! God promises that He will keep His Word. The trial you are in right now has an expiration date; you *are* coming out of the fire – and you won't even smell like smoke!

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **If we do not find out what God has to say about our off-season we will lack Spiritual hope. We must meet with God; we must open His Word and abide in His presence. Our situation *is* impossible without Him! We will never experience our appointed time without His Word.**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

Habakkuk 2:3 NIV For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

DAY 7

FAITH AND PATIENCE

Promises are inherited; they are not earned. An inheritance can be described as a birth right. It is something we did not work for, but someone we are in close relationship with did. They did the work but they want to bless us with the result of that work. An inheritance is not based on what *we* do; it is based on our relationship with the one who did the doing. What a beautiful depiction of Christ! He has completed the work and He loves us so much that He has bequeathed the blessings of that work to us.

We experience this inheritance through faith and patience. Faith is the end result of our habitual intake of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We do not decide to have faith; faith is a result. The Word of God is the Seed for faith and for patience. As we abide in the Word of God, faith will be produced and along with that faith, the ability to wait in a Spiritual manner during the off-season.

We need faith and patience for the off-seasons of life and that means we need a steady intake of the Word. Find out what God has to say about the trial you are going through today and focus on His promise you have inherited because of Jesus Christ.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **All Spiritual fruit is the result of abiding in the Word; we cannot produce any Spiritual fruit apart from the Word.**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

Hebrews 6:12 NIV We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

DAY 8


THE EVERLASTING SONG OF LOVE

Christian, God's love for you is to be the foundation of your life. His love for you must be addressed often and repeatedly. It is always the right time to remind yourself of God's love for you, but it is imperative that you remind yourself during these off-seasons because these times can cause you to doubt His love more than ever.

We must focus on the infinite love that God has for us during the off-seasons because it is too easy to believe that He is mad at us and is withholding blessings from us. Our behavior alone can cause us to doubt His desire to bless us. When we focus on ourselves rather than on Christ we are being selfish and we *will* doubt. We need to surround ourselves with His love and leave the doubt behind.

Trials have a way of making us feel unloved, but that is a lie. The Word is very clear about God's unfailing and unconditional love for us. In the off-seasons of life, bear in mind that you need more love. Copy verses regarding God's love for you and meditate on them daily. The Word tells us that faith is made effective and active through love; it also tells us that faith is the victory – fill yourselves with God's love and be prepared for victory. It is imperative that you meditate on His love for you as His child; you are a dearly loved child of God. This off-season cannot defeat God's love for you and it cannot change who you are in Christ!

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **God's love for us must be our foundation. Without God's love for us we are hopeless. We cannot even love God without Him first loving us. A work had to be done in every one of us before we could love God – loving God is not something we can take credit for; it is something we should be thankful for!**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

Song of Solomon 1:4 NIV Take me away with You--let us hurry! Let the King bring me into His chambers. We rejoice and delight in You; we will praise Your love more than wine. How right they are to adore You!

DAY 9

LOST IN THE OFF-SEASON

The off-seasons of life can tempt us as Christians to doubt God's love for us and to doubt our identity in Christ. What we must understand, however, is that the trial does not define us – even when the trial is brought about by our own doing.


In the story of the prodigal son we see that by his own volition he left his father and lived a life that was reckless and uncontrolled. The end result of his wantonness was loss; he lost everything he had and he was in need. This need led him to a place of servitude.

We can relate the experience this son had to a Spiritual experience. Many times we leave the presence of our Father; and when we do, our lives become reckless and uncontrolled. Apart from Christ we can do nothing of Spiritual value; consequently, when we leave His presence we can only produce carnal fruit. This fruit leaves us needy and we become servants to the flesh. Instead of living as a son, we live as a slave.

The son eventually realized that he could find relief at his father's house, but he did not understand that he could go back as a son. He was willing to take on the position of a slave because he mistakenly thought he had to. He believed that his sin kept him from his position as a son. How many times do we fall for the same lie? We are deceived because we erroneously believe that our identity has something to do with us. The identity of a Christian is based on Christ; we are sons and daughters *because of Him and His love for us!* Our position in Christ is not based on us; therefore, it cannot be lost because of us. We did not earn our Spiritual identity and we cannot lose it, either – but we can forfeit it.

Are you, like the prodigal son, in a season of trials that were brought about because of something *you* have done? If so, do not lose sight of what *Christ* has done for you.

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **Do not define yourself based on your actions. Your identity is found in Christ – it is based on *His* actions; it is found in what *He* has done for you. You must never give up your rights as a child of God because you have yielded to your flesh.**

VERSES FOR TODAY:

Luke 15:20-24 (NIV) So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

DAY 10

SEASONAL FEAR

Fear can overtake us during an off-season. All off-seasons present us with doubts about who we are in Christ, our lives, our futures, our families, and so on. These doubts are presented – they do not have to be accepted. We can reject the fear by focusing on what the Word of God declares about our trial. Faith is fearless!


Faith overcomes fear. Faith declares God's promise instead of what your situation is articulating. Faith will show the enemy that the victory is yours.

When you are fearless it is because you are faith-full; you are full of the good promises of your God! Fear is of the flesh; fear is not Spiritual – fearlessness is! In order for you to live fearless in the face of adversity, you must be immersed in the Word. Your steady intake of the Word will produce faith, not fear, in your life. Fear is not for God's children.

Fear can keep you from moving forward to take hold of what God has for you; it can keep you in your off-season. Man settles when man believes that he cannot experience anything better than what he currently has. We must fight those feelings with the Word! God has good plans for us!

Do you want to take possession of what God has for you? Then tread fearlessly!

POWER THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

 **We must avoid fear like we would avoid physical sickness. The Word of God is our prescription for fear. If we will fill ourselves with the good things of God's Word, then the infection of fear will be rendered harmless.**

VERSE FOR TODAY:

Philippians 1:28 AMP And do not [for a moment] be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such [constancy and fearlessness] will be a clear sign (proof and seal) to them of [their impending] destruction, but [a sure token and evidence] of your deliverance and salvation, and that from God.