

The Seasons of a Man's Life

As men get older, we tend to reflect more deeply on our life, especially with regard to navigating the various stages or seasons we enter. It is no different than what many people do at the turn of the calendar for a new year as they assess their past year and then make resolutions for the coming year.

For God Buddies, reflection and life planning is an important practice for navigating the big decisions and many seasons of your life.

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AoM

The Art of Manliness

One of my favorite websites is The Art of Manliness (AoM) which is full of advice on a man's character, career, relationships, fitness, style, skills, and much more. It has weekly podcasts and well-written articles from the philosophical and serious to the practical and fun aspects of being a man.

Authors Brett and Kate McKay recently posted a series of articles titled, The Seasons of a Man's Life based on a 1960s book by Daniel J. Levinson a psychologist who conducted in-

depth interviews with 40 men between the ages of 35-45.

This post got me thinking about how God Buddies can help each of us through the major seasons and transitions periods of life, whether it's marriage, a home purchase, job change, move to a new city, or the decision to retire. I believe its good to utilize all of your resources when facing a big decision, which includes the guys you trust and admire that have experienced these same decisions themselves.

The Eras of a Man's Life Cycle

The AOM post includes this great chart from Dr. Levinson that summarizes the seasons or eras of a man's "life cycle".

ERAS IN THE MALE LIFE CYCLE

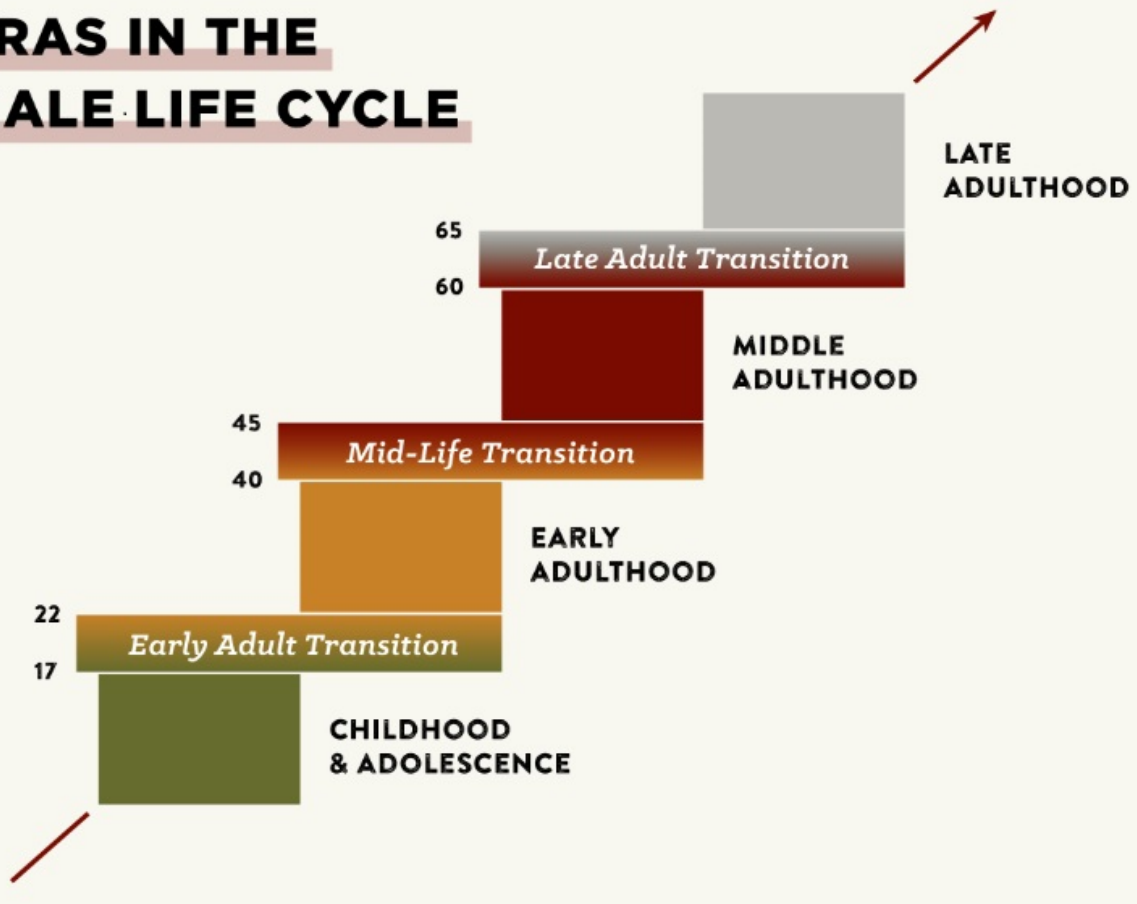


Diagram adapted from *The Seasons of a Man's Life*

It also showed that the stages actually overlap creating transition periods.

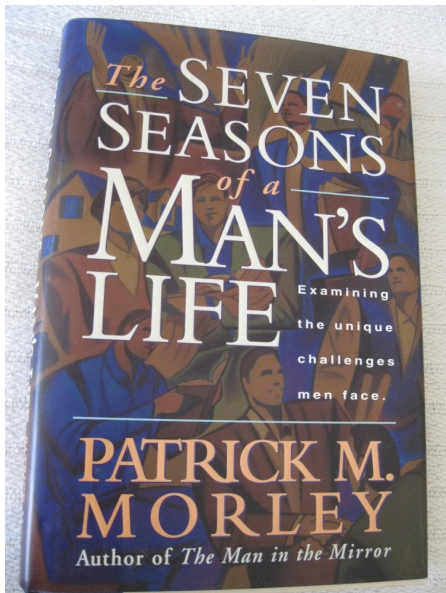
The Struggles for Men between Seasons

The eras in between the male life cycles (e.g., Early Adulthood ends at age 45, while Middle Adulthood begins at age 40) often result in a time when many men struggle in their life. Think of the proverbial mid-life crisis for men in their 40s or 50s or the current struggle transitioning into adulthood for many younger guys.

As I wrote about in my own struggle with work-life balance, a

growing career or life transition can often lead to anxiety, depression, or addiction. Men tend to isolate themselves to deal with the stresses of life and I struggled during this season.

Patrick Morley, author of the book *Man in The Mirror* (a book that helped kick-start my own improvement as a man) also wrote, *Seven Seasons of a Man's Life* in which he named these seasons for men:



- The Season of Reflection
- The Season of Building
- The Season of Crisis
- The Season of Renewal
- The Season of Rebuilding
- The Season of Suffering
- The Season of Success

While these seasons often are age-related as well, Morley concludes that we can not control our seasons any more than we can not control winter, spring, summer, and fall.

The Master Planner

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3:1) which emphasizes that all the emotions and actions, both negative and positive, have important meaning so people should experience them all throughout their life.

This Scripture reminds us that God puts us into many life situations for a variety of reasons. We can get through these seasons successfully by remembering God has a plan and purpose for our lives.

We Have a Responsibility Too

While God has a bigger plan for all of us, it doesn't absolve us of our responsibility to reflect, assess, and take actions to create a legacy that honors Him.

As I wrote in **Planning Your Manhood**, life planning exercises led me down the path of thinking about how I wanted to live the rest of my life. It reoriented my thinking forward toward eternity rather than living haphazardly in the moment. It helped me think about my legacy.



For several years now, my wife and I have periodically reviewed our upcoming big expenses. This covers our near-term, minor purchases, vacations, extra savings, and investments. It also includes medium- to longer-term expenses like housing expenses, kid's weddings, replacement cars, etc. We typically do this when there is a lot of "windshield time" driving while on vacation. The exercise has evolved into a simple tracking spreadsheet with dates and estimated dollars that we refresh periodically.

A few years ago, I also began a 10-year "pre-tirement" planning project to begin thinking about that major transition of life. I identified the forces outside of our control (like where our kids may relocate, unexpected health changes) and factors within our control (downsizing a house, when to quit or change jobs). It was a great discussion about our future.

Think of these as developing your 1-, 3-, and 5-year life plans that include actionable items and goals like companies do for their master plan each year.

Now, I would call these "Master Plans for Life" since I believe that thoughtful anticipation and planning can help us ease through the major transitions that bridge the seasons of

our life.

The God Buddy Principle

As you think about the upcoming seasons in your life, consider including a God Buddy in the discussion. Your GB may have some additional things to consider based on his experience during the same season or struggles during his transition. He can also help you pray for God's guidance in your decisions.

But also remember that the wisdom you gain through your transitions can also be valuable to your children or a younger guy who may ask you about their next big decision. It could become part of your legacy.