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Clarion Review

A Different Season: A Practical Guide for Growth While Grieving A Death

Joseph Robert Pfeiffer
Mark Farris, illustrator
Landscapes Publishing
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Three Stars (out of Five)

When faced with the death of a loved one people are often comforted by reflecting on nature. The cycle of life causes trees to drop their leaves only to sprout new ones after a few months. *A Different Season* is a personal guide to grieving and it uses the rhythm of seasonal change to guide those left behind through their mourning.

A Different Season is organized into four parts; each is paired with a particular season. The seasons are arranged to reflect the order of emotions a mourner will likely encounter. The first section "Chilling Visions of Wintertime" describes the sense of bleakness that frequently accompanies the first moments of grief. Next "Evolving Landscapes of Autumn" focuses on how life will feel changed and in transition after losing a loved one. The third section "Reaping the Harvests of Summer" describes the confusing moments when life still seems to contain joy and hope although grief is still present. And lastly "Surprising Moments in Springtime" discusses the importance of keeping the memory alive and explains that grief work will bring about personal growth.

Each section contains meditations to comfort strategies for coping and a self-assessment portion to target exactly what emotions are being felt. The author notes that while individuals grieve in their own way most will encounter some form of the four bereavement stages: validation readjustment reevaluation and rebuilding.

The author Joseph Pfeiffer is a licensed clinical therapist who specializes in grief counseling and he is also an ordained member of the clergy. He has spent twenty-five years helping those in the midst of grieving and he has also experienced painful loss firsthand. His nephew died young and this book is dedicated to him.

Pfeiffer's tone is well-matched to the purpose of the book: to comfort and to guide. His reflections on what the reader may be feeling are both accurate and insightful. But while the book contains a range of helpful advice for coping with loss it reads like the generic pamphlets

found in a funeral home. And *A Different Season* addresses a limited audience since much of the meditation included for comfort requires a belief in God.

The most effective feature of the book is the “Healthy Thought” items that are included on almost every page. These thoughts cut to the chase of how to cope with loss by reminding the reader of what they are too distracted to acknowledge. For example he notes “the most loving tribute you can give to the one you lost is to love and care for yourself” and “the intensity of what you are feeling will eventually diminish.” While in the midst of grief it is easy to forget to take care of oneself and it is easy to think that the pain will never go away. The daily affirmations contained in *A Different Season* can protect mourners from ever reaching the depths of true despair.

Jessica Higgins