

Friday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## CFO 2025 - Surviving Tough Seasons

New Hope Yokohama

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Aloha Everyone! We are truly honored to have the opportunity to speak again at the Camp Furthest Out. Thank you, Mama Inoue and Shioko, for the opportunity to share God's Word with you all. We have invited some members from New Hope Yokohama to join us again this year. Thank you for allowing us to invite others to this CFO family.

What is your favorite season? I would definitely say summer, but with some reservations, mainly the humidity. I would be perfectly happy with sunny blue skies, long days, and wearing tank tops and shorts all summer. Yet, even within these excellent summer conditions, typhoons come, heat exhaustion, and with them, inconveniences and even hardships. As the theme of this year's camp, **"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."****Ecclesiastes 3:1 ESV:**

There is a season for everything in life. King Solomon writes in the third chapter, 14 pairs of opposites that show there is a time for everything in life. And God creates them, controls them, and allows them to be part of our lives. Of course, who doesn't want good times to continue? Yuko and I love to watch Korean dramas, and the one we are watching now seems to follow the very seasons King Solomon depicts in the Book of Ecclesiastes. There were seasons of pain and emptiness, but there were also seasons of joy and fullness! However, one of the main themes running through each episode is that we cannot control the changes of seasons or even the unexpected events that occur within each season. We will experience fulfilling and

plentiful seasons, as well as tough ones. Today, I would like to share with you what God shared with me about how to survive tough seasons.

How do you endure or cope with difficult seasons? Some of us blame someone or something, and some of us turn to entertainment to distract us from pain or stress. Some of us may even have turned to working more, or abusing things like drink or food. I know I used to run away from things or even blame others, especially God. Surviving tough times especially biblically will go against what you expect.

### **1) Be still.**

**Psalm 46:10 (NIV) “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

Psalm 46 is a song of praise to God for protection from Jerusalem’s enemies. I often see this verse used as an instruction to stop doing, sit quietly, and contemplate the Lord. But the Hebrew word “rapha,” which means “be still,” actually means to let go, stop striving, slacken, and let drop. It’s not a call to inaction but a call to surrender our circumstances to God’s sovereignty. It means letting go and letting God. I know that, for some of us, we tend to want to fix things that are going wrong, right away. But when we hit times that are so tough, it overwhelms our strength and resources and leaves us feeling powerless. God may be doing precisely that! He wants you to let go of control and allow Him to show His sovereignty and might. This verse tells us to be still and know that He is God. Say to someone, “know.” To know means to understand or see that He is in control. He knows what you are going through. He knows how to get you through it. He knows what will happen on the other side of this season. How can we be still and know He is God?

**Take time to be still before God.** In the busyness of everyday life, take time to be quiet, shutting off your phone and any distractions. I like to take walks to

clear my mind and spend time with God. Perhaps this camp is a perfect opportunity to sit and get away from distractions. Grab a verse to meditate on and allow God to speak to you.

**Let Go.** We all may feel we need to be in control of our situation. We may need to repeat a verse or phrase “ It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Deuteronomy 31:8”

Repeat after me. “God goes before me. God is with me now. God will never leave me or abandon me. I have no fear or worry in God.”

Stop yourself and repeat this when you feel anxious, and let God’s word bring you peace.

**Cry out in Praise!** Psalm 46:10 ends with “...I will be exalted in the earth.” Make time to give him praise. It is so important to praise God amidst tough seasons. Praise Him because Your heavenly Father is going before you. He is with you and will never leave or abandon you.

The subpoints are the acronym for TLC or Tender Loving Care. So please remember God’s TLC as you are “being still” in Him.

## **2) Express Praise and Gratefulness.**

**4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ...6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Philippians 4:4 and 6 NLT**

Quick quiz! Where did Paul write the letter to the Philippians?

A: At home B: On a ship C: In jail

The answer is C: In jail. Paul was in jail, again, while writing this letter to the Philippians. He tells us how often to be full of joy? Always. That means we are to praise God even amidst tough seasons. Paul knew what he was talking about because he wrote this letter while he and Silas were in jail, singing hymns while imprisoned. Not a place nor time for people to think about praising God, yet they did. What happened after? God caused an earthquake that released them from prison. So here again is Paul in jail, praising God. He knew the key to surviving tough seasons. First is being still, then praising and thanking God! Wait, what can I praise and thank God for? The season I'm in is killing me! It's hard to breathe! Why should I rejoice and praise God and be grateful for what's happening? Paul isn't saying to be happy. Happiness is based on happenings. And what is happening in our tough season is not causing any happiness. Paul says to rejoice because God is there to help! God is working on your situation right now. He may be growing you, disciplining you, killing off, pruning, or tearing down things in your life to make way for healing, rebuilding, life, joy, and celebration. As the 14 opposites in Ecclesiastes 3 discuss the seasons we will go through, we can praise God that He will bring us out of the difficult seasons. We can be grateful for His guidance and comfort. We can thank Him for the hope we have in Jesus. If we still can't think of anything, remember Deu 31:6, "He is going before you, He is with you and he will never abandon nor forsake you!" That right there is enough to praise and thank him! Amen?!