



## REASON, SEASON AND IMPACT

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There is a phrase that is commonly used saying that people come into other people's lives for a reason or a season. The phrase is said to come from a poem by Jean Dominique Martin: *People come into your life for a reason, a season or a lifetime*. In the poem, Jean Dominique Martin goes on to say, "when you know which one it is, you will know what to do for that person."

Indeed, people come into other people's lives for a reason or a season or a lifetime. I have, however, wondered whether it is not possible that some people come into other people's lives for both a reason and a season. In other words, as the poem says, some people can come to "assist you through a difficulty, to provide you with guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally or spiritually" and also because "your turn has come to share, grow or learn." Martin also says that some people come to your life to "teach you lifetime lessons" – that is a lifetime stanza of his poem.

As I reflect on some of the people that I have crossed paths with, I think *impact* can be one of the reasons why some people come to our lives. I have come across many people, either as friends or acquaintances or students or colleagues or mentors or mentees etc, who have had an impact in my life or career. It is in this context that I argue that people come to other people's lives for a reason or a season or impact, or all this and more. I link this with how far we can go if we go together than alone – put differently, collaborating with others can have a bigger or better impact. People who come to one's life for impact assist that the person can do more or better.

I recently spoke at a birthday event of a former student who became more than a former student over the years. I was privileged to be one of his lecturers about 12 years ago and later supervised both his Masters and Doctoral studies. He later became a "co-conspirator" and a brother. The theme of my remarks at his birthday party was that people come to our lives for a reason and/or season and/or impact, capturing how I have come to view our relationship. Similarly, the collaborations we have undertaken and support we provide to each other confirm that when one walks with others one can go far as opposed to when one walks alone.

Listening to others who were present at the birthday party also confirmed the African proverb that says "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." It was interesting because all those in attendance are runners, true top runners and even an elite runner in the group. It was fascinating because one imagines top runners as competitive, contending for the top spots in races. All of them, however, said something about doing something together. As I put the pieces of the puzzle together, it became clear that the "birthday boy" had brought all of them together and he was playing important roles in their lives. Indeed, one can go far when going with others.

The discussions with the said top runners also reminded me about the importance of understanding one's strengths (and weaknesses). Writing about strengths, Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton, say that "any consistently near perfect performance seems almost too amazing to analyze, But, of course, strengths do not emerge perfect and whole. Each person's strengths are *created*. The strength doesn't have to be artistic to be intimidating. Any near perfect performance stimulates the same feeling of awe."

I have been observing over the years that people who are more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses function better than those who are oblivious of such. Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton demonstrate through research, however, that focusing more on your strengths instead of worrying about managing your weaknesses is better. There will be some people who would want to focus on your weaknesses. Without ignoring your weaknesses, try to focus more on your strengths.

It is worth highlighting that Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton remind us that "each person's talents are enduring and unique." I saw this in the top runners I attended the birthday party with, although I was meeting some of them for the first time. I have witnessed what Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton remind us of in many people I have been lucky to relate with.

Talents, knowledge and skills are what make up strengths of individuals. As Maya Angelou said, "every person is born with a talent." We all know that knowledge and skills can be acquired. It therefore follows that everyone can have strengths that can be sharpened over time so there could be consistently (near) perfect performance in the areas we opt to have an impact on. Acting together, leveraging our respective strengths, can take us far.