

LIVE WITH WISDOM

CORE PASSAGE: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-15

CONTEXT

Wisdom literature in the Bible includes the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. This genre wasn't unique to ancient Israel but was popular throughout the ancient Near East. Nations such as Egypt and Babylon wrote down wise sayings before Israel did. In Scripture, however, the wisdom books only address one God and generally speak to human flourishing by living according to God's holy will.

KEY CONCEPT

God's timing is perfect, and everything is a gift from God.

As you read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15:

- Acknowledge that while we long to know the future, only God knows His purpose for everything.
- Celebrate that God is awe-inspiring and just in all His ways.



TIMELINE

Solomon Becomes King upon
David's Death (1 Kings 1–2)

Solomon Wrote Numerous Proverbs
and Songs (1 Kings 4)

**SESSION STUDY: Solomon
Contemplates Life (Ecclesiastes 3)**

Solomon Asks the Lord for Wisdom
(1 Kings 3)

Solomon Builds the Temple and
His Palace (1 Kings 5–9)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Ecclesiastes 1–4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Song of Songs 1–3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Ecclesiastes 5–8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Song of Songs 4–8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Ecclesiastes 9–12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 34 |



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-11

THERE ARE SEASONS AND TIMES FOR EVERYTHING, GOOD AND BAD.

Circle a line from the passage below that resonates with you this week.

1 There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: **2** a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; **3** a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build; **4** a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; **5** a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing; **6** a time to search and a time to count as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away; **7** a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; **8** a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. **9** What does the worker gain from his struggles? **10** I have seen the task that God has given the children of Adam to keep them occupied. **11** He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: Many nonbelievers have argued that if God is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-knowing, then evil would not exist in the world. They argue because evil exists in the world, God must not exist (or He is not good or all-powerful). Despite its powerful rhetoric, appealing to evil as an argument against God fails: first, because outrage over bad things in this world presupposes a “good” moral standard that does not exist apart from God, and second, because God could have a good reason (though unknown to us) for allowing evil and suffering to continue for a season. Given what we know about God’s character and purposes, Christians can rest assured that even in the midst of evil, God is working all things for our good (Romans 8:28).

Key Concept: God's timing is perfect, and everything is a gift from God.



There is an occasion for “everything,” which encompasses every part of life, even those we don’t like to acknowledge or walk through. The list of various “times” in verses 2-8 is not exhaustive because life is complex, but it represents all of life. Given the whole counsel of Scripture, we should not read this list as a justification for sin at any point; rather, God appoints to us times that we will enjoy and times we might wish to do without. Whether good or bad from our perspective, these are all times for faith and faithfulness because God is good.

This passage is both a reminder of hope and a warning against wrongly-directed dependence. In the hard seasons of life, we have hope that God will redeem our struggles and toil with a God-ordained purpose. In the good seasons, we must not become dependent on created, transient things, which ultimately should point us to the Creator, the unchanging God.

What are some times you are currently in, and how do you need to respond in them?

In verse 11, Solomon says that God “has made everything appropriate in its time.” Again, as in verse 1, this means “everything,” even the bad or hard. This requires us to acknowledge and trust in the sovereignty of God, believing that He doesn’t cause evil in the world but that He is able to and does work through it for the good of His children. Rather than knowing how God works in eternity, we must rest in the knowledge that He does work in eternity and that our lives are a part of that work.

What are some ways you have recognized a sense of eternity in your heart?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

✕ ————— ✕

“[H]arvest is not the only good season. We would not have harvest without the planting season. [Farmers] see the whole, not just the parts. Likewise, Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that all elements of life are gifts from God and that he sees the ‘whole’ of our lives, even when we cannot.”¹ –Africa Study Bible

PERSONAL PREPARATION

ECCLESIASTES 3:12-15

WE ARE NOT TO TAKE FOR GRANTED THE EVERYDAY GIFTS GOD GIVES.

Highlight what God does in this passage.

12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy the good life. **13** It is also the gift of God whenever anyone eats, drinks, and enjoys all his efforts. **14** I know that everything God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of him. **15** Whatever is, has already been, and whatever will be, already is. However, God seeks justice for the persecuted.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

God's perfect timing for Jesus made it possible for salvation to come through Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection that fulfilled prophecies. Throughout the history of the world and our lives, both victories and struggles are gifts to be used for the proclamation of Christ for His glory.



Although we can't know eternity like God does (v. 11), He gives us gifts in our time-bound lives to enjoy for ourselves and to use for the benefit of others. He is a kind God who delights in our delight of His created world. We experience seasons of life that are good and some that are challenging, but through them all, God supplies all our needs, and for that we should be thankful (Philippians 4:19).

This brings to mind the garden of Eden (Genesis 1–2). God gave Adam and Eve an abundance of resources and good work to do. Their fall into sin corrupted creation (Genesis 3), but the fall didn't thwart God's purposes in His creation. When we reject or misuse good gifts, such as food or work, we reject God's pre-fall design for the world. Essentially we claim we know better than Him or that our purposes are holier than His. We shouldn't push away God's gifts as indulgent or sinful, but neither should we squander them through misuse or overindulgence. Abusing God's gifts is how they become instruments of sin.

We're saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but part of being in covenant with the Lord includes living according to His Word. Motivated by the hope we have in Him, we believe we will one day be redeemed from the brokenness of the world and dwell in His presence forever, and that faith leads to obedience to how the Lord has said we

should enjoy His world. Faithful obedience and growth (not perfection) in rightly using God's gifts are evidence of true saving faith.

What are some ways you can remind yourself that work, food, drink, rest, and nature are gifts from God?

Because earthly life is seasonal and temporary, we can struggle to find meaning and hope in this world. But we find those things in the Lord precisely because He does not change. Our works and our joys fade over time, but "everything God does will last forever" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). We see changes in this world—"whatever is, has already been, and whatever will be, already is" (v. 15)—but the Lord sees it all, and He works through it all so we will praise Him. God is awe-inspiring, in control, and just in all His ways, even when those ways don't make sense to our finite minds.

What reasons do you have to be in awe of the Lord?

SEASON AND PURPOSE

Reflect on these phrases from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, and fill in the blanks with a word or phrase that fits the season of life you are in right now.

A TIME TO PLANT _____ AND

A TIME TO UPROOT _____ .

A TIME TO TEAR DOWN _____ AND

A TIME TO BUILD _____ .

A TIME TO EMBRACE _____ AND

A TIME TO AVOID EMBRACING _____ .

A TIME TO KEEP _____ AND

A TIME TO THROW AWAY _____ .

A TIME TO BE SILENT _____ AND

A TIME TO SPEAK _____ .

When you or someone close to you doubts the goodness of God,
how can you point them back to truth?

Key Concept: God's timing is perfect, and everything is a gift from God.



HEAD

What steps can you take to read, understand better, and apply the whole counsel of Scripture?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

×

Read Psalm 34, and notice how the psalmist praises God through all seasons of life and exhorts other believers, including us, to do the same. Pray through verses 15-22, praising God with these words.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How will you praise the Lord in your current season, whether good or bad?



HANDS

Who is a wise and trusted brother or sister in Christ you will confide in for support during your good and bad times?

