

Ecclesiastes 3 Commentary

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KJV Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

BGT Ecclesiastes 3:1 το ς π σιν χρ νος κα καιρ ς τ παντ πρ γματι π τ ν ο ραν ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 3:1 To all things there is a time, and a season for every matter under heaven.

NET Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is an appointed time, and an appropriate time for every activity on earth:

CSB Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven:

ESV Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

NIV Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

NLT Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.

YLT Ecclesiastes 3:1 To everything -- a season, and a time to every delight under the heavens:

NJB Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:

NRS Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

NAB Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.

GWN Ecclesiastes 3:1 Everything has its own time, and there is a specific time for every activity under heaven:

BBE Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a fixed time, and a time for every business under the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 3:1 To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

- **every thing:** Ec 3:17 Ec 7:14 Ec 8:5-6 2Ki 5:26 2Ch 33:12 Pr 15:23 Mt 16:3
- under: Ec 1:13 Ec 2:3,17
- Play the Song [Redeem the Time](#) - the words bring to mind Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 3

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 3:17+ I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,"**for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.**

Ecclesiastes 7:14+ In the **day** of prosperity be happy, But in the **day** of adversity consider— **God has made the one as well as the other** So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

Ecclesiastes 8:5-6+ He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure. 6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him.

Psalms 31:15+ **My times are in Your hand;** Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

[Spurgeon](#) - The sovereign arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair.

[Spurgeon](#) - *My times*. He does not use the plural number, in my opinion, without reason; but rather to mark the variety of casualties by which the life of man is usually harassed. *John Calvin*.

[Spurgeon](#) - When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time* in which God will deliver thee. 1Sa 24:4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time. *Matthew Henry*.

Acts 1:7+ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own

authority;

Galatians 4:4+ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Daniel 2:21+ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

*God is behind the scenes
and controls the scenes He is behind.*

Psalms 103:19+ The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

Psalms 145:9+ The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

Jeremiah 51:19 The portion of Jacob is not like these; For the Maker of all is He, And of the tribe of His inheritance; The LORD of hosts is His name.

Habakkuk 2:13-14+ "Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts That peoples toil for fire, And nations grow weary for nothing? For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.



THE DIVINE KEEPER OF ALL TIME ALL THE TIME!

New Bible Commentary - The function of this section is to call us to a view of God's sovereignty which both reassures and yet sobers the reader. It reassures because of God's control; yet it sobers because God's control remains mysterious.

*There is an appropriate time for everything, the unpleasant as well as pleasant experiences.
That is the argument of Ecclesiastes 3.*

Ray Stedman - I am amazed at the variety of things that are offered to us every day to help us find the secret of successful living. Magazine articles by the dozens tell us how to cope with various problems; TV commercials -- dozens to a program it seems -- bombard us, telling us how to be successful in life, or at least how to look successful even if we really are not, health clubs offer us saunas and whirlpool baths to relax us so we can face life with equanimity; while various kinds of drugs are available to turn us on, turn us off, take us out, or whatever. All this is evidence of the universal search for the secret of enjoyment of life. Billions of dollars are spent every day on this quest. That is the very quest that the book of Ecclesiastes tells us about. The greatest experiment ever performed in the history of mankind to test the various approaches to success, enjoyment or contentment in life is recorded in this 3,000 year old book.....There is an appropriate time for everything, the unpleasant as well as pleasant experiences. That is the argument of Ecclesiastes 3. **This is not merely a description of what happens in life, it is a description of what God sends** Many of us are familiar with Bill Bright's Four Spiritual Laws, the first of which is, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." When talking to someone about his relationship with God, that is an appropriate place to begin. That is the plan that is set forth here. All along, the Searcher, the author of this book, is saying that God desires to bring joy into human experience. Many people think Ecclesiastes is a book of gloom and pessimism because, on the level of the writer's limitations -- which, he says, are, "under the sun," i.e., the visible things of life -- his findings are gloomy and pessimistic. But that is not the message of the book. God intends us to have joy and his program to bring it about includes all these opposites.

I like the way **Michael Eaton** lays out chapter 3 and relates it to chapter 2 (remember there are no inspired chapter breaks) - This section elucidates the world-view underlying the life portrayed in Ec 2:24-26+. Just as Ec 1:2-2:23 moved from the pessimistic world-view (Ec 1:2-11) to the pessimistic daily life (Ec 1:12-2:23), so in a chiasmic movement the thought of Ec 2:24-26 proceeds from the

believer's life to his world-view (Ec 3:1-22). Ec 3:1-8 lay down the basic postulate; Ec 3:9-15 work out its practical implications. (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes Page 76](#))

*Life is a little gleam of time
between two eternities.
--Thomas Carlyle*

There is an appointed time for everything (kōl) - KJV = "To every thing there is a season" While Solomon does not say who appoints the time, keep in mind he has just declared "For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without **Him**?" Ecc 2:24 in the NLT says "I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that this pleasure is **from the hand of God**." Regarding the Hebrew word **kōl** keep in mind that its exact meaning is determined by the context, and in this passage it conveys the sense of *all without exception*. Therefore **everything (kōl)** in this verse means literally **everything** (no exceptions) under the sun and therefore would include eating and drinking. It would seem reasonable therefore to conclude that if eating and drinking and work are from God, indeed **everything is from the hand of God** including **time**. As James says "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17+).

Beloved, even events which seem to be occur "by chance" are all part of a divine panoramic plan! Further, man does not control time but God does, steering humanity into the future with His sovereign hand, and absolute control of all events.

*There is a God-appointed time for each moment and
that [the Lord is ultimately in control](#) over them all.*

[GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#) writing on Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 states that "Within these statements, Solomon condensed every human "activity under the heavens" (Ec 3:1), concluding that there is a God-appointed time for each moment and that [the Lord is ultimately in control](#) over them all."

The key words in this verse are "**time**" and "**every**" (**kōl**) which ultimately speak of every event in **time** being under the sovereign control of our great God. Does this truth discourage you? Or does this great truth encourage you, knowing that our all wise, all good God is in full control? I pray it encourages you and causes you to give Him praise and thanks for assuming the responsibility of being in full control of the universe. David understood this great truth acknowledging...

My times are in Thy hand

-- Psalm 31:15+

So teach us to number our days,

That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

-- Psalm 90:12+

And there is a time (et/eth) for every (kōl) event (chephets - purpose = what one wants to do) **under heaven** - ESV = "For everything there is a season." **Under heaven** in the context of this book would be synonymous with Solomon's description **under the sun**, life on earth. Normally Solomon uses **under the sun** with a negative connotation, but now he pulls the curtains back, so to speak, and let's us see that literally everything and every event **under the sun** is ultimately **under** God's guidance and control! Let's be honest. This transcendent truth overwhelms our minds for we sometimes even forget what day of the week it is! God never forgets anything, anytime! How great is our God! Note that **event (chephets)** refers not to random happenings, but purpose-driven activities, designed to accomplish something. Life operates on a divinely-ordained timetable. Every action, event, and season of human existence has a God-ordained time and purpose. This opposes the view that life is chaotic or meaningless. Instead, behind all of life's changes stands a wise and purposeful God. Even though life seems inconsistent or unpredictable from our perspective, Solomon assures us that there is a season, a reason, and an appointment for everything **under heaven**.

*Almighty God, help me not to fritter away my days
but to use each moment for the greatest possible good. Amen.*

-- [Ray Pritchard](#)

Tommy Nelson - God is sovereign over everything. He is not always pleased, but He is never perplexed. No evil action skirts His plan. No piece of the puzzle is left over at the end. **Either God is sovereign or He is not.** Solomon goes on to reiterate and explain his point. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 45](#))

David Hubbard - The mystery, difficulty, even futility of trying to catch life's hidden meaning, and especially of trying to change life's destined course, that was the reality that the Preacher was seeking to demonstrate....The Fixity of Time. God's planned time was the first evidence he offered in his argument....In this poem the motif of changelessness and divine control is applied to the widest possible range of human activities. The literary form comprises fourteen pairs of contrasts. The use of this double seven number

helps to convey the idea of completeness. These contrary lines couple basic human experiences and their equally basic opposites. This device is usually called a [merism](#) and suggests that the poles that are stated mean to include every similar activity that occurs between them. The pair, for example, “to be born” and “to die” (Ec 3:2) embrace each major event, perhaps even each moment, in the human life cycle. The poem is wrapped in an introduction (Ec 3:1) and a conclusion (Ec 3:9). The introduction establishes the theme of set or appointed times. “**Season**” means literally “appointed time” (NASB) as its use (Heb. *zemān*) elsewhere indicates: in Nehemiah it marks the schedule for the cupbearer’s journey to Jerusalem and his return (2:6); in Esther it pinpoints the calendar for the two-day feast of Purim in celebration of rescue from the genocidal plots of Haman (9:27, 31). “Purpose” in verse 1 means “event,” “activity,” or “matter” (see 8:6 which carries a thought similar to that of 3:1). The breadth of the word (Heb. *hēphes*, which may also mean “delight” or “pleasure” in 5:4 and 12:1; see also “acceptable” in 12:10) is assured by its parallel use to “everything” in 3:14 and to “work” (“deed” or “task”) in 3:17. It seems to include all the major activities in which human beings engage under the sovereign will of God. The human component in all of this is made clear in two ways. First, the items in the catalog all involve human participation. They are not activities of the elements like earth, sun, wind, and sea in 1:4–11. Second, the conclusion (3:9) centers in the futility of all the human activity involved in life as summarized in verses 2–8.

Michael Eaton - This reading takes Ec 3:1-15 as orthodox, not, as has often been maintained, as part of the Preacher’s despair. Jones is one of many who maintain that ‘although the passage is one of great beauty and poetry, the burden is that of protest ... Its essence is that Koheleth feels imprisoned by this sequence of times, and he rebels because this is what he must go through, though without knowing why’. H. L. Ginsberg similarly sees the Preacher as a fatalist whose rigid predestinarianism is an obstruction to the quest for a satisfying life; it is an example of men’s striving ‘to anticipate his time-table, but without their ever guessing everything correctly ... Koheleth regards God as the absolute and arbitrary master of destiny’. James Barr says that it is ‘clear that the purpose of the whole is to emphasize the frustrating effect of time on human life and labour, whether because God has appointed the events beforehand or for some other reason’. This is part of the truth, as indicated by certain conclusions in Ec 3:9-15. Ecc 3:9, 10 and 11b stress human inadequacy under God’s disposal of the epochs of life. Events and characteristic seasons of time are imposed upon men: no-one chooses a time to weep. Equally, the events of life that come our way undermine our confidence that our endeavours will have any permanence. ‘Whatever may be our skill and initiative, our real masters seem to be these inexorable seasons: not only those of the calendar, but that tide of events which moves us now to one kind of action which seems fitting, now to another which puts it all into reverse.’ (See Kidner [The Message of Ecclesiastes](#)) We are not sure they will have any total meaning, and we cannot stand outside the events of life and view them ‘from the beginning to the end’. All this puts mankind in his place, far from being master of his fate and captain of his soul. However, there is more than one conclusion in these verses. Ec 3:11a, 12-15 stress that the disposal of events which humiliates men may also be the ground of their joy and security. This section may, therefore, have quite another force, contributing to the Preacher’s solution of the problem of life’s vanity. C. S. Knopf is surely right: ‘too often the whole cast of the book has been determined by certain pessimistic elements, ignoring just as patent constructive elements ... Chapter three has often been interpreted as a lament of the ceaseless round of life. Instead it is part of the basic optimism of Koheleth.’ (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes Page 76](#))

Believer's Study Bible - (Ec 3:1-8) Blind fate would be a terrible consolation, but how comforting it is to know that the events of the universe are ordered by a compassionate, gracious, long-suffering, faithful God. If tragedy strikes, we have but to wait patiently for the hour of redemption. This is the broadest unfolding of God's sovereign rule, and understanding divine sovereignty is a prerequisite to trusting divine providence. Everything is ordered by God, without any dependence upon man's approval, at a divinely appointed time, according to God's plan and providence. The different activities mentioned (Ec 3:2-8) include 14 pairs of opposites in order to cover the widest range of activity and to represent every aspect of human activity. They are exclusively divine activities in respect to appointment -- i.e., a proper time for God to act. His sovereignty demands that all rest upon His will (cf. Deut. 32:39; Ps. 75:2; 102:13). Since man cannot know what God intends to do, he consequently cannot order his own doings and goings, but must wait upon the Lord. The lengthy list adds emphasis to the fact that all of man's life is under the control of the overall providence of God (cf. Jer. 10:23).

THOUGHT - Ecclesiastes 3 was made famous by the Byrds in the 1965 through a song entitled [TURN! TURN! TURN!](#) It's almost Scriptural! I would just add an exhortation in light of the truth of Ecclesiastes that every soul should **TURN! TURN! TURN!** to Jesus Christ, the Ark of salvation, so that they might be rescued from the coming flood of God's righteous wrath (1Th 1:10b+) and eternal loss in hell.

NET NOTE - Verses 1–8 refer to God’s appointed time-table (**ED: GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL**) for human activities or actions whose most appropriate time is determined by men. Verses 9–15 state that God is ultimately responsible for the time in which events in human history occur. This seems to provide a striking balance between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Man does what God has willed, but man also does what he “pleases” (see note on the word “matter” in 3:1).

Eaton adds "The pairing of the varying aspects of human life indicates the universality of God’s control. For the expression of totality in pairs is a common Old Testament idiom. Thus ‘man and woman’ (Exod. 36:6) or ‘great and small’ (Jer. 6:13) is used to say emphatically ‘everybody’; ‘sea and land’ (Jon. 1:9) is an emphatic way of saying ‘everywhere’. (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament](#)

Appointed time (02656) (zeman from **zaman** = to be fixed, appointed. A masculine noun meaning an appointed time, a specific time and thus refers to a certain specific time which is set, rather than the amount of time. See the 4 uses below.

Baker has an interesting note on **ZEMAN** - In Ecclesiastes, it occurs in an often-quoted verse, "To every thing there is a season" (Eccl. 3:1) to say that everything has a predestined time. The word translated time throughout Ecclesiastes 3 is [et/eth](#). Thus, **zeman** bears a different sense, emphasizing the **specificity in time**. ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament](#))

ZAMAN - 4V - Neh. 2:6 = "I gave him a definite time"; Est. 9:27 = "according to their appointed time annually"; Est. 9:31 = "to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times"; Eccl. 3:1

Everything...every (03605) **kōl** is a particle used almost 5000 times in the OT and conveys the meanings each, every, all, everything, the whole, entire. The root **kalal** from which **kol** is derived means to be complete or whole. Kol can be used alone, meaning "the entirety," "whole," or "all," as in: "you shall put all these (WHAT? Ex 29:23) in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons" (Ex. 29:24+). "**Kōl** can signify everything in a given unit whose members have been selected from others of their kind: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Ge 6:2+)." ([Vine](#))

John Oswalt in the [Theological Wordbook of the OT](#) (page 440) writes kol means "every, any, whole, none. A very common particle, occurring about 5400 times. Of these all but about 800 are in a genitive relation with the following word, signifying thus, "the whole of something." It is commonly translated "all" if the following word is plural, and "every" if the word is singular and without the article. It can also have a suffix attached to it: "the whole of it, all of it." This particular formation may then follow a given noun, stressing the aspect of totality (2 Samuel 2:9). It can also be used in this way with the noun understood, as does Isaiah when he expressed the corruption of the entire people by saying, "All of it loves a bribe" (Isaiah 1:23; cf. also Isaiah 9:17 [H 16]). In some contexts it denotes "all kinds of," "of all sorts." Thus Eliezer took with him "all of the good thing of his master" i.e. "a great variety of good things" (Genesis 24:10; cf. Leviticus 19:23). **Kōl** can also stand by itself, or absolutely, to express "**everything**." The sense in which "all" is to be taken must be gathered from the context (cf. Jeremiah 9:3). When used with the article it refers to something just mentioned (Leviticus 1:9; etc.), or, in a wider sense, to the whole of creation. Such passages as Psalm 103:19; Psalm 145:9 and Jeremiah 51:19 use this construction when expressing the idea of God's lordship over all things.

Baker on **kōl** - Its exact meaning must be discerned from its usage in its context. Some representative samplings will help: With the definite article, it means the whole or everything of something (Eccl. 11:5); used before a definite noun, it expresses the whole of that noun, the whole earth (Gen. 9:19); whole people (Gen. 41:40). Used after a noun, it can refer to the whole or entirety of the preceding noun (2 Sam. 2:9); before a plural noun, it usually means all, all the nations (Isa. 2:2); before a collective noun, it means all or every, all people (Gen. 7:21). Before a singular noun, it means every (Esth. 3:8). Other nuances of its use can be discerned from studying its context closely. ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament](#))

Gilbrant on **kōl** - This word is actually a noun but because of the way Hebrew uses nouns in construct relationship to one another, literally, "the whole of," it functions the same as the English adjective "all of" or "every." Various examples of the sense of totality are: the Lord is the maker of all things (Isa. 44:24); all people were corrupt before the flood that God brought to destroy all life (Gen. 6-8; Ishmael would be against everyone and everyone against him (Gen. 16:12); God is good to all (Ps. 145:9); everything is meaningless apart from knowing the Lord (Ecc. 12:8). But the latter chapter goes on to say that the covenant relationship of reverential awe and worship for the Lord and covenantal obedience to his commands is, literally, "this is the all of humanity" or "this is every person." The writer seems to be assuming that some word should be supplied by the reader, such as "this is the purpose of every person," or "this is the whole purpose of humankind." It likely conveys the prime verbal nuance here, that which gives true meaning to life, as the person in Ecclesiastes was searching for throughout all his endeavors in life. Finally, the only appropriate response to God is to love Him with the totality of one's being (Deut. 6:5). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Time (season) (06256) **et/eth** means time but the exact sense depends on the context. It is used most often to express the time of the occurrence of some event. Et/eth can refer to a duration of time, as for all time (Ex. 18:22; Pr 8:30) or for any time in general (Lev 16:2). The time referred to may be past, present, or future (Nu 23:23; Jdg. 13:23; Isa. 9:1). **Et/eth** can be the time when certain appropriate things took place - kings went forth to war in the spring (2 Sa 11:1; 1 Chr. 20:1), the Jews said "The **time** has not come, even the **time** for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt," to which God said "Is it **time** for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled

houses while this house lies desolate?” (cf Hag 1:2, 4). **Et/eth** is fitting for certain reasons, such as rain falling on the land in its season (Dt. 11:14; Jer. 5:24); fruit trees bearing fruit at the proper time (Ps. 1:3), a proper time for fitting words (Pr 15:23)

NET NOTE - The noun נָתַח ('et, "point in time") has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) "time of an event" and (2) "time for an event" (BDB 773 s.v. נָתַח). The latter has subcategories: (a) "usual time," (b) "the proper, suitable or appropriate time," (c) "the appointed time," and (d) "uncertain time" (Eccl 9:11). Here it connotes "a proper, suitable time for an event" (HALOT 900 s.v. 6 נָתַח; BDB s.v. 2 נָתַח.b). Examples: "the time for rain" (Ezra 10:13), "a time of judgment for the nations" (Ezek 30:3), "an appropriate time for every occasion" (Eccl 3:1), "the time when mountain goats are born" (Job 39:1), "the rain in its season" (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24), "the time for the harvest" (Hos 2:11; Ps 1:3), "food in its season" (Ps 104:27), "no one knows his hour of destiny" (Eccl 9:12), "the right moment" (Eccl 8:5); cf. HALOT 900 s.v. 6 נָתַח.

ET/ETH USES IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 3:1; Eccl. 3:2; Eccl. 3:3; Eccl. 3:4; Eccl. 3:5; Eccl. 3:6; Eccl. 3:7; Eccl. 3:8; Eccl. 3:11; Eccl. 3:17; Eccl. 7:17; Eccl. 8:5; Eccl. 8:6; Eccl. 9:8; Eccl. 9:11; Eccl. 9:12; Eccl. 10:17

Event (desire, pleasure) (02656) [Hepes/chepes/chephets](#) from verb **chaphets** = to delight in) is a masculine noun which means to take pleasure or find enjoyment in something. It speaks of delight, desire, pleasure. To feel great favor towards something. To experience emotional delight (referring either to men as here in Ps 1:2 or to God - 1Sa 15:22, Ps 16:3, Isa 44:28, 46:10; 48:14; 53:10). It is interesting that the first use of this Hebrew word is not until the time of 1 Samuel 15:22! **CHEPHETS** signifies delight in or (in an unrealized sense) a desire for earthly goods, such as Solomon's desire for timber (1Ki 5:9-10); a delight in fruitful land (Mal. 3:12); or the delight of hands in their labor (Pr 31:13). The word also refers to people's delight in God's Law (Ps. 1:2); His works (Ps. 111:2); God's own delight in His works (Isa. 46:10; 48:14); His lack of delight in foolish or disrespectful people (Eccl. 5:4; Mal. 1:10).

NET NOTE - The noun כְּפֶזֶת (khefets, here "matter, business") has a broad range of meanings: (1) "delight; joy," (2) "desire; wish; longing," (3) "the good pleasure; will; purpose," (4) "precious stones" (i.e., jewelry), i.e., what someone takes delight in, and (5) "matter; business," as a metonymy of adjunct to what someone takes delight in (Eccl 3:1, 17; 5:7; 8:6; Isa 53:10; 58:3, 13; Pss 16:3; 111:2; Prov 31:13); see HALOT 340 s.v. 4 כְּפֶזֶת; BDB 343 s.v. 4 כְּפֶזֶת. It is also sometimes used in reference to the "good pleasure" of God, that is, his sovereign plan, e.g., Judg 13:23; Isa 44:28; 46:10; 48:14 (BDB 343 s.v. כְּפֶזֶת). While the theme of the sovereignty of God permeates Eccl 3:1-4:3, the content of Ecc 3:1-8 refers to human activities that are planned and purposed by man. The LXX translated it with πράγματα (pragmati, "matter"). The term is translated variously by modern English versions: "every purpose" (KJV, ASV), "every event" (NASB), "every delight" (NASB margin), "every affair" (NAB), "every matter" (RSV, NRSV), "every activity" (NEB, NIV), "every project" (MLB), and "every experience" (NJPS).

Gilbrant - This masculine noun is derived from the verb chāphfets and usually means "desire" or "pleasure," although it can also refer to a "business matter." In Ps 1, the righteous person is described as one whose desire is in the Law of the Lord (Ps 1:2). Job's friend Eliphaz asked him rhetorically what pleasure the Lord would find in Job's righteousness (Job 22:3). Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would accomplish all the Lord's delight (Isa 44:28). In other places, chfiphets is used to denote "costly jewels." Isaiah described the future glory of Israel as having walls of precious stones (Isa 54:12). Wisdom is described as being more precious than rubies (Pr 3:15). Chfiphets can denote someone's business affairs. The preacher declares that every affair has its time and season (Eccl 3:1, 17). He further advises his hearers not to marvel at the matter (or affair) of the oppression of the poor, because God notices it (Ecc. 5:8). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

CHEPHETS -38V - care(1), delight(8), delightful(2), delights(1), desirable things(1), desire(10), desired(2), event(1), good pleasure(3), matter(1), pleased(1), pleasure(3), precious(1), sight(1), undesirable*(2), what you desire(1). 1 Sam. 15:22; 1 Sam. 18:25; 2 Sam. 23:5; 1 Ki. 5:8; 1 Ki. 5:9; 1 Ki. 5:10; 1 Ki. 9:11; 1 Ki. 10:13; 2 Chr. 9:12; Job 21:21; Job 22:3; Job 31:16; Ps. 1:2; Ps. 16:3; Ps. 107:30; Prov. 3:15; Prov. 8:11; Prov. 31:13; Eccl. 3:1; Eccl. 3:17; Eccl. 5:4; Eccl. 5:8; Eccl. 8:6; Eccl. 12:1; Eccl. 12:10; Isa. 44:28; Isa. 46:10; Isa. 48:14; Isa. 53:10; Isa. 54:12; Isa. 58:3; Isa. 58:13; Isa. 62:4; Jer. 22:28; Jer. 48:38; Hos. 8:8; Mal. 1:10; Mal. 3:12

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Sovereignty is defined by Webster's as supreme power especially over a body politic. It describes freedom from external control or

of other controlling influences. God is the ultimate authority in every sphere and place. It follows that all creation is subject to Him and that all creation is answerable to Him. As an aside, what verb do you see in the word sovereign? "Reign" of course, and this verb captures the essence of this divine attribute. Our God Reigns!

Our God Reigns

by Leonard Smith

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him
Who brings good news, good news;
Announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness:
Our God reigns, our God reigns!

Refrain

Our God reigns!
Our God reigns!
Our God reigns!
Our God reigns!

He had no stately form, He had no majesty
That we should be drawn to Him.
He was despised and we took no account of Him.
Our God reigns, our God reigns!

Refrain

It was our sin and guilt that bruised and wounded Him.
It was our sin that brought Him down.
When we like sheep had gone astray our Shepherd came
And on His shoulders bore our shame.

Refrain

Meek as a lamb that's led out to the slaughterhouse,
Dumb as a sheep before its shearer,
His life ran down upon the ground like pouring rain
That we might be born again.

Refrain

Out from the tomb He came with grace and majesty;
He is alive, He is alive.
God loves us so, see here His hands, His feet, His side
Yes we know, He is alive.

The 1828 Edition of Webster's defines **Sovereign** as "Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion; as a sovereign ruler of the universe. Supreme; superior to all others; chief. God is the sovereign good of all who love and obey him. Supremely efficacious; superior to all others; predominant; effectual; as a sovereign remedy."

The Sovereignty of God A. W. Pink. Here is an excerpt to encourage you to read the entire topic -- "The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy... Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of "heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him. So His own Word expressly declares: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Is 46:10); "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand" (Da 4:35+). Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name, that He is on the Throne of the universe, directing all things, working all things "after the counsel of His own will" (Ep 1:11+).

C H Spurgeon summarized God's sovereignty in his introductory remarks to his sermon on [Divine Sovereignty](#)...There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but

yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth. And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust. ([Divine Sovereignty - Sermon on Matthew 20:15](#))

[See 1300 links that relate to the word Sovereign as used by C H Spurgeon](#)

J I Packer - I do not intend to spend any time at all proving to you the general truth that God is sovereign in His world. There is no need; for I know that, if you are a Christian, you believe this already. How do I know that? Because I know that, if you are a Christian, you *pray*; and the recognition of God's sovereignty, is the basis of your prayers. In prayer, you ask for things and give thanks for things. Why? Because you recognize that God is the author and source of all the good that you have had already and all the good that you hope for in the future. This is the fundamental philosophy of Christian prayer. The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hand, but a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence. When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts. Every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others, must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a gift from His hands. If this is true even of our daily bread (and the Lord's Prayer teaches us that it is), much more is it true of spiritual benefits. This is all luminously clear to us when we are actually praying, whatever we may be betrayed into saying in argument afterwards. In effect, therefore, *what we do every time we pray, is to confess our own impotence and God's sovereignty*. The very fact that a Christian prays is thus proof positive that he believes in the Lordship of his God. (Read full article [Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility](#))

THOUGHT - Dear brother or sister in Christ, rest assured that your times are in the omnipotent, omniscient, loving hands of our good, good God. No matter what may happen in this world, **He is in control of all time, all the time!**

[This Is My Father's World](#)—

(Beautiful Vocal Version by Fernando Ortega
With Beautiful Pictures of His glorious creation)

This is my Father's world, And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas--
His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world: The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world: O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!

This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world: The battle is not done;
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and heav'n be one.
--M D Babcock

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a proper time for everything \(Ecclesiastes 3:1–8\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 is a well-known passage that deals with the balanced, cyclical nature of life and says that there is a proper time for everything

In this passage, the [Preacher](#) says that there is a time for every matter in life. He illustrates this truth by juxtaposing opposites: fourteen pairs of contrasting activities as examples of how life is comprised of various seasons. A straightforward reading of the passage reveals several concepts:

*Both our actions and the timing of our actions
are important to God.*

First, the timing of our activities is important. **Killing** someone (Ecclesiastes 3:8) is generally considered evil and a crime, but that may change during a time of war, when defending one's country can be considered a noble act. **Dancing** (Ec 3:4) may be appropriate during a time of celebration, but it would not be appropriate for a funeral. Both our actions and the *timing* of our actions are important to God.

*The proper activity at the right time, bringing about God's purposes,
is a beautiful part of God's overall plan.*

Second, these seasons in which certain pursuits are proper are **appointed by God**. His plan for life involves a variety of experiences and activities. **Weeping** may be part of life, but life is not *all* weeping; **laughter** has a place, too (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Construction is good in its time, but sometimes deconstruction is necessary (Ec 3:3). A key to this passage is found a few verses later: "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The proper activity at the right time, bringing about God's purposes, is a beautiful part of God's overall plan. A tapestry, viewed from the back, seems a chaotic and unlovely work; but the maker of the tapestry has a wise purpose for the placement of each thread.

*People are to accept each day as a gift
from the hand of God*

Third, Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 serves as a bridge between the first two chapters and the section that follows. People are to accept each day as a gift from the hand of God (Ec 2:24–26). Why? Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 explains it is because God has a reason and a time for all things. People may be ignorant of God's timing (Ec 3:9–11), but they are called to enjoy life in the present (Ec 3:12–13) and trust in God's sovereignty (Ec 3:14–15).

God offers much wisdom in the saying,

*"There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens."*

God is sovereign. Our activity in this world is meaningful as we rely on His wisdom, His timing, and His goodness.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - EACH PRECIOUS MOMENT

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Missionary friends in Nigeria have told me that Africans and Americans hold radically different views of time. For Westerners, time is to be managed, obeyed, and strictly observed. We spend large amounts of time planning for the future. We set deadlines and evaluate our performance by our ability to meet those deadlines. We start every meeting with an agenda and rarely exceed the allotted time limit.

The Nigerian generally approaches the concept of time differently. Relationships take precedence over sticking to time limits. Therefore, if a visitor drops in, the Nigerian host stops whatever he is doing to entertain his company for an appropriate amount of time, according to the relationship. If you live in Nigeria and the visitor decides to stay with you, you do not ask him or her how long the visit will last; that will reveal itself when it is important. To ask is considered rude. If spending time with this unannounced visitor makes you late for another engagement, that is OK. People generally accept that going late to any public function is normal—but one is not to leave early, which is a sign of rudeness. Meetings last until the work is done—with or without an agenda. The more

important an item is, the longer there has to be discussion, even if there is already consensus. If there is no consensus, the group will continue to discuss the issue.

Another striking difference with respect to time deals with the concept of the future. Nigerian Christians speak in a way that frequently calls to mind the truth that God is in control of the number of our days. They frequently thank God for "seeing yet another day." There is also frequent reference to Christ's second coming. For example, a church announcement might sound like this: "Next Sunday evening, at 5 P.M. if the Lord tarries, the Couples' Fellowship will have a special program. All are expected to be in attendance." While those words can become routine, they also embody a biblical worldview—living with a sense of anticipation for the return of our Lord.

For all of us, time is flying. Sometimes we are so intensely looking to the future that the present rushes past unnoticed. Our challenge is to count each day as precious—knowing that what we do counts for eternity.

Almighty God, help me not to fritter away my days but to use each moment for the greatest possible good.
Amen. (ED: SEE REDEEM THE TIME)

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How many hours have you wasted in the last week?
- Suppose that tomorrow you were given five extra hours. How would you use them for the greatest possible good?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 31:15; Acts 1:7; and Romans 12:9-12

- See also Pastor Pritchard's series of 16 messages on [Our Awesome God](#)

ILLUSTRATION OF God's sovereign control. A two-year-old child in a stroller was rapidly turning his little steering wheel to the right, but he was going to the left, nonetheless. His direction was not determined by him, but by his mother; his steering wheel was not connected to anything that mattered. (BORROW [When You've Been Wronged: Moving From Bitterness to Forgiveness](#) by Erwin W. Lutzer)

A Good Season

Today is the first day of spring in the northern half of the world. If you live in Australia, it's the first day of autumn—the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere and the autumnal equinox in the southern hemisphere. Today, the sun shines directly on the equator, and the hours of daylight and nighttime are nearly equal around the world.

New seasons are important for many people. Some count down the day because of what they hope the new season will bring. Perhaps you've been marking off a calendar for spring in Wisconsin to signal the end of another winter. Or maybe you live in Melbourne, and you can't wait for autumn to bring relief from the Australian sun.

We also go through seasons of life that don't have to do with the weather. The author of Ecclesiastes told us there is a season for every activity under the sun—a time appointed by God during which we live our lives (Ec 3:1–11).

Moses spoke of a new season in his life after he led the people of Israel through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 31:2), and he had to give up his leadership role to Joshua. And Paul faced a lonely season while he was under house arrest in Rome—asking for visitors but realizing that God was "at my side" (2 Timothy 4:17).

Regardless of the season of life, let's give thanks to God for His greatness, His help, and His companionship. Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Reflect & Pray

Thank You, Father, for the promise of Your care during this season of my life. You have allowed this circumstance for a good reason. Help me to use this time appointed by You in a way that deepens my trust in You.

Every season brings a reason to rejoice.

Today's Insights Many believe King Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes because the author refers to himself as the "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1) and "king over Israel in Jerusalem" (v. 12) who had more wisdom and possessions "than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before [him]" (v. 16; 2:7). The book's purpose seems clear: "It defends the life of faith in a generous God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative" (Michael Easton, Ecclesiastes). Ecclesiastes underscores the necessity and

desirability of following God in a fallen and frustrating world today (12:1)—no matter our season in life. “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments” (v. 13).

What has helped you to understand the wisdom of following God in various seasons of your life?

The late Will Rogers had these lines engraved on a huge watch which he presented to David Rubinoff, the consummate violinist:

The Clock of Life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.

Now is the only time we own;
Love, live, toil with a will;
Do not wait until tomorrow,
For the Clock may then be still.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 NKJV

My husband, son, and I all took off at our own paces on a Saturday morning run around the park.

Soon I found my cadence, and as I ran, it struck me that everyone at the park had a pace they were supposed to be moving at—not anyone else's but theirs. The large group of women that sped right past me from the get-go. The older gentleman pushing his disabled friend in his wheelchair. The fit guy with the prosthetic leg. The two gals chattering in Spanish as they walked. The men riding their bikes. My son. My husband. Me. We were all moving at our own pace. Because that's how we thrive.

God wants goodness for you and me. But her pace and his pace are not necessarily my best pace or yours. Just because they have their degree, are married, started their own business, had a baby, and you haven't or don't doesn't mean you're behind. Not if you're walking at the pace God leads you. As long as you're tracking with God and His plans for you, you are right on time.

We don't always understand God's timing. We might never understand why that position or life stage came so quickly for a friend or peer but took forever for us. Maybe God needed to grow us. Maybe He needed to teach us some things. Maybe He wanted to make sure we didn't get out of breath. Also we might not be sure why we got thrust into a certain responsibility or role without much preparation. Maybe God knew we were ready or His speedy pace got things in motion just when He needed them to be. Maybe God knew we'd actually enjoy running at a moderate pace or a faster one, and He orchestrated it that way simply for our long-term joy.

The more we live in God's unforced rhythms of grace the better we can determine what pace He wants us to go in this season. Is this a time for rest or for meticulously learning a skill? Is it time to speak up? Or should you bite your tongue? I don't have the answers for you. But God does. He has a time and pace for everything and everyone.

As I was coming down the home stretch of my run, my husband and son clapped and yelled, “Go, Mom!” And I felt so loved. So valued. They never once judged me because I was slower than them. They were proud of me for running my race.

If this is how my husband and son love me, can you imagine how much more God loves us? Cheers for us when we go at the pace He intends for us?

God has good plans for you! Big loops, record speeds, strengthening for your trust muscles, slow runs, cardio workouts that will get your heart pumping, and peaceful pauses. And when you go at His pace, you'll experience the fullness and richness He planned for you all along.

Run your race. At your God-led pace. I'm cheering for you. And so is Jesus. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.) (From [The Urgency of Slowing Down: Biblical Wisdom for Everyday](#))

Reflection:

What in your current season is taking longer than you hoped or going faster than you planned?

Ask Jesus to help you understand His pace for you. Thank Him for His perfect timing and purpose, and ask Him to help you go the speed He's planned for you.

Warren Wiersbe - You don't have to be a philosopher or a scientist to know that “times and seasons” are a regular part of life, no

matter where you live. Were it not for the dependability of God-ordained “natural laws,” both science and daily life would be chaotic, if not impossible. Not only are there times and seasons in this world, but there is also an overruling providence in our lives. From before our birth to the moment of our death, God is accomplishing His divine purposes, even though we don’t always understand what He is doing. In fourteen statements, Solomon affirmed that God is at work in our individual lives, seeking to accomplish His will. All of these events come from God, and they are good in their time. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Stay in Balance [A Fresh Word for Today: 365 Insights for Daily Living - Page 24](#)

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

When you lose your sense of balance, you fall in one direction or another. I know, for it’s happened to me. How about you?

Martha worked for Jesus, but Mary spent time with Him. There’s a place in your life for both. Don’t let this little daily devotional be all the time you have for God. Make it your entry point into His Word and your door into His presence. Water the ground with His Word. Till the soil of your heart with repentance and submission to Him or the ground will become hard and barren, and before you know it nothing will grow; nothing’s new; there’s no fruit! Jesus said, “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; neither can you, unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4).

Workaholic, you may be admired for your “get up and go,” but is your soul barren? Are you thirsty and dry? What does it all mean anyway if you gain the whole world but fail to please God? Christian worker, if you give out more than you take in, you’ll get “out of balance,” and before you know it, you’ll be in trouble. You know what to do! Go back to the source. The medicine didn’t fail—you just stopped taking it. The fulfillment you think is waiting for you when you reach some lofty goal can only be found in His presence. And it just might be sitting around your dinner table in the faces of your family and loved ones—if you’d only take time to discover how wonderful they are and build a relationship with them, too.

THE WORD FOR YOU TODAY IS, “LEARN BALANCE!”

The Time Crunch [A Fresh Word for Today: 365 Insights for Daily Living - Page 14](#)

There is an appointed time for everything. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NASB)

Your life will go nowhere until you learn to value time, protect time, and use time wisely. Time management is not hyperventilating with calendars and stopwatches. It’s learning how precious one hour is. Until you learn that, you’ll waste days, months, and years. Stop agonizing over the time you don’t have and organize the time you do have. If you don’t, your days will endure without purpose, and your life will end without accomplishment. When you die, what will others remember you for—the good times you had or the difference you made? You, and only you, have the power to answer that question.

First, you always have enough time to do all that God wants you to do. If you don’t, you’re involved in things He never gave you to do. Get rid of them! (See John 17:4.) Second, learn to “come apart” before you “fall apart.” Jesus did often. He said, “My yoke is easy” (Matthew 11:30). What kills us is the stuff we allow others to put on us. If your schedule is out of control today, get alone with God to ask Him to show you any problem areas.

ASK HIM TO TELL YOU WHAT HE THINKS YOU SHOULD BE DOING. NOW THERE’S A PLAN THAT WILL WORK FOR YOU.

Tick, Tick, Tick . . .

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. — Psalm 90:12

Today’s Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Do you have a clock or watch available with a secondhand on it? Stop and follow that hand as it ticks away 1 minute. Those seconds, of course, are the way we measure time, and time is the very essence of our lives. By the time you reach the age of 75, the clocks and watches of this world will have ticked away a total of nearly 2.5 billion seconds.

Bernard Berenson, an internationally famous art critic, had a zest for life. Even when he was in ill health, he cherished every moment. Shortly before he died at age 94, he said to a friend, “I would willingly stand at street corners, hat in hand, asking passersby to drop their unused minutes into it.” Oh, that we would learn to appreciate the value of time!

We certainly don’t want to be so time-conscious that we become driven workaholics, neglecting our families, never relaxing with our friends, too busy to smell the roses or admire a sunset. Yet Paul urged us to redeem the time (Ephesians 5:15-16), and Moses prayed, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

Let's ask the Lord to help us appreciate the value of time. May we wisely invest our seconds, minutes, hours, and days, realizing that beyond time lies eternity. By: Vernon Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We do not know how long we have
Till time for us is past,
So let us live as if this day
Is going to be our last.
—DJD

To spend time wisely, invest it in eternity.

Seasons Of Motherhood

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture : Luke 2:1-7,25-35

As a pastor, I've ministered to many women during their seasons of motherhood. I have called on mothers in the hospital and rejoiced with them for their precious baby who had come into the world. I've counseled with anxious mothers and tried to assure them that God was watching over their rebellious teenager. I've stood with mothers at the bedside of an injured or ill child and felt their pain. And I've cried with them in their grief when their son or daughter died.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, also experienced these times of joy and sorrow. What joy when the Christ-child was born! (Luke 2:7). What excitement when the shepherds and later the wise men came to worship Him! (vv.8-20; Matthew 2:1-12). What uneasiness when Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul! (Luke 2:35). And what heart-wrenching grief as Mary watched her Son dying on the cross! (John 19:25-30). But her seasons of motherhood didn't end with that terrible scene. She rejoiced that He rose from the grave. And because she trusted Him as her Savior, she is now in heaven with Him.

A mother experiences great joys and intense sorrows. But if she submits her life to God, every season of her motherhood serves His eternal purposes. By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Thank You, Lord, for motherhood
With all its vale of tears,
For happy moments never dimmed
Through all the many years.
—Strecker

Motherhood is a sacred partnership with God.

A Time for Everything

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE Ecclesiastes 3:1–14

While flying recently, I watched a mother and her children a few rows ahead of me. While the toddler played contentedly, the mother gazed into the eyes of her newborn, smiling at him and stroking his cheek. He stared back with a wide-eyed wonderment. I enjoyed the moment with a touch of wistfulness, thinking of my own children at that age and the season that has passed me by.

I reflected, however, about King Solomon's words in the book of Ecclesiastes about "every activity under the heavens" (v. 1). He addresses through a series of opposites how there is a "time for everything" (v. 1): "a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot" (v. 2). Perhaps King Solomon in these verses despairs at what he sees as a meaningless cycle of life. But he also acknowledges the role of God in each season, that our work is a "gift of God" (v. 13) and that "everything God does will endure forever" (v. 14).

We may remember times in our lives with longing, like me thinking of my children as babies. We know, however, that the Lord promises to be with us in every season of our life (Isa. 41:10). We can count on His presence and find that our purpose is in walking with Him.

Lord God, You lead me through the seasons, and whether I'm laughing or crying I know You are with me. May I reach out to someone with Your love today. Amy Boucher Pye (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost

the full devotional without their permission.)

God gives us the seasons of our lives.

Today's Insights The writer of Ecclesiastes lists fourteen pairs of "times" we may find ourselves in throughout our lives. But following this list is a question, "What do workers gain from their toil?" (3:9). The answer is quite encouraging. From our toil we gain satisfaction, and that is a gift from God (v. 13). Thank God for the season of life you are now in. Thank Him for the satisfaction of work. J.R. Hudberg

How important is time? Ask death-beds. "Doctor," said a dying man, "the whole of my estate for half-an-hour," but no, the whole of his estate could not purchase half a moment.

Our Measured Life- Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. . --Psalm 90:12

The root meaning of the word translated **number** in "teach us to number our days" (Ps. 90:12) is "to weigh" or "to measure." We are to place each day in the balance and make it tip the scales in a way that will bring glory to God and blessing to the lives of others.

When the great artist Raphael died at the early age of 37, friends and relatives carried his marvelous but unfinished painting The Transfiguration in the funeral procession. His family felt that because of the limited time he was allotted to use his creative genius, the painting was an appropriate symbol of his unfulfilled earthly aspirations. That half-completed picture has another meaning--a message that should impress itself on all of us: Life is fleeting and death may come unexpectedly. We should treasure each hour as a gift of great value and use it to the best advantage.

If we realize the value of our days, we will try to spend them profitably. To have no regrets at life's end and have much reward in heaven, we must make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-16). In the words of the psalmist let us pray, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). --H G Bosch

F. Ferguson - We speak of time as past, present, and future; but what a mystery it is! The present moment is all of time that actually exists. All past time ends in the present moment. All future time begins in the same point. To use the experience of the past so as to shape the future aright is to redeem the time. This gives to every moment of time a tremendous importance.

A day is full of many hours just waiting for your using;
and there are many ways to spend them,
so be careful in your choosing.

A poet once wrote,
Time that is past you can never recall,
Of time to come, you are not sure at all;
Only the present is now in your power,
Therefore, redeem and improve every hour.
—Unknown

There's always enough time to do God's will.

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To say just when the hands will stop;
At late, or early hour.

Now is the only time we own
to do His precious will,
Do not wait until tomorrow;
For the clock may then be still.
-Anon.

Instead of counting the days,
make your days count.

When as a child, I laughed and wept,
Time crept;
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,
Time walked;
When I became a full-grown man,
Time ran;
When older still I daily grew,
Time flew;
Soon I shall find in traveling on,
Time gone.

Seasons

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:1–14

I recently came across a helpful word: wintering. Just as winter is a time of slowing down in much of the natural world, author Katherine May uses this word to describe our need to rest and recuperate during life's "cold" seasons. I found the analogy helpful after losing my father to cancer, which sapped me of energy for months. Resentful of this forced slowing down, I fought against my winter, praying summer's life would return. But I had much to learn.

Ecclesiastes famously says there's "a season for every activity under the heavens"—a time to plant and to harvest, to weep and to laugh, to mourn and to dance (3:1–4). I had read these words for years but only started to understand them in my wintering season. For though we have little control over them, each season is finite and will pass when its work is done. And while we can't always fathom what it is, God is doing something significant in us through them (v. 11). My time of mourning wasn't over. When it was, dancing would return. Just as plants and animals don't fight winter, I needed to rest and let it do its renewing work.

"Lord," a friend prayed, "would You do Your good work in Sheridan during this difficult season." It was a better prayer than mine. For in God's hands, seasons are purposeful things. Let's submit to His renewing work in each one. By: Sheridan Voysey (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

When have you wanted a season to end before its time? What do you think God wants to do in you this season?

Father God, thank You for using every season for Your glory and my good.

For further study, read [When God Says No: Broken Dreams to New Beginnings](#)

Thankful For Seasons

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

I grew up on the West Coast of the US. The possibility of snow for Christmas was so remote that my mom would point to fog in the early morning as evidence that the holidays were just around the corner.

My wife and I now live in the Midwest. There's a lot of snow when the yuletide season comes around. And I couldn't be happier with four distinct seasons. But I don't find that same response from many who have grown up in the Midwest. I find it amusing that they don't share my appreciation for the wonderful cycles of change God has built into nature for our good.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Solomon acknowledged the cycles of life. He observed a time to sow and to reap, to weep and to laugh, to mourn and to dance, to gain and to lose, to keep silent and to speak, to love and to hate.

Just as God determines the weather, He also controls the cycles in our lives: "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1). Do we resist those seasons and complain about the "snowy" conditions on the horizon? Or do we trust God and thank Him for whatever He has planned for us?

Whatever our situation is today, we can be thankful for God's seasons. By: Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Just as the winter turns to spring,
Our lives have changing seasons too;

So when a gloomy forecast comes,
Remember—God has plans for you.
—Sper

Rather than praying for a change in circumstances, pray for a change of heart.

Times And Seasons

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

The Rev. Gardner Taylor has been called “the dean of American preaching.” Born in Louisiana in 1918, the grandson of slaves, he overcame the segregation of his youth to become the pastor of a large New York congregation and a leader in the struggle for racial equality. For 6 decades he traveled the world as a much sought-after preacher.

But at age 89, Rev. Taylor's health gave way and he could no longer accept speaking engagements. He told Rachel Zoll of the Associated Press: “I at first felt rather crestfallen.” But then he spoke of his belief that “there are seasons and eras, and we have to see what they are as best as we can, and to find what is positive in them.”

In an effort to face the challenges of life, we often turn to Solomon's words: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). But we readily admit that we would rather laugh than weep, dance than mourn, and gain than lose (vv.4,6).

Yet we know that as we embrace the lessons and opportunities of every season that comes to us, we find that “God is our refuge and strength” (Ps. 46:1).

Whatever season we're in, it's always the season to trust in Him. By: David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Just as the winter turns to spring,
Our lives have changing seasons too;
So when a gloomy forecast comes,
Remember—God has plans for you.
—Sper

Whatever the season of life, attitude makes all the difference.

Expected—Sooner Or Later

The living know that they will die. — Ecclesiastes 9:5

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

I heard of a popular senator who was swept out of office after only one term. His defeat came as a complete surprise to opponents and supporters alike. In his concession speech, the losing candidate wryly commented that recent events reminded him of an epitaph he once saw on an old tombstone. It said:

I expected this—but not so soon.

Death is certain for all! The Bible says, “It is appointed for men to die once” (Heb. 9:27). For some of us that day is closer than we think. The sensible person faces up to the fact of death and makes provision for this final episode of his earthly life.

There's only one way to prepare for eternity—trusting Christ as Savior. Those who come to God through Him will enter heaven when they have drawn their last breath. But for unbelievers, that fateful moment will seal their never-ending doom.

Are you ready for the inevitable? Jesus said, “He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24). If you've never done so, place your faith in Christ, acknowledging that He died for your sins and rose victorious from the grave. Then, whether the expected comes sooner or later, you'll be ready! By: Richard DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

A Season For Everything

To everything there is a season. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

In the 1960s, the folk-rock band The Byrds popularized the song "Turn! Turn! Turn!" It climbed to the top spot on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and gained worldwide popularity. People seemed captivated by the lyrics. Interestingly, though, except for the last line, those lyrics are from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes.

"To everything there is a season," proclaims the writer of Ecclesiastes, "a time for every purpose under heaven" (3:1). He then lists some of the seasons in human experience: birth and death, gain and loss, tears and laughter, mourning and dancing. Just as the seasons in nature change, so do the seasons in our lives. Our circumstances never stay the same for long.

Sometimes we welcome change in our lives. But often it is difficult, especially when it involves sorrow and loss. Yet even then we can be thankful that God does not change. "I am the Lord," He said through the prophet Malachi, "I do not change" (Mal. 3:6).

Because God remains the same, we can rely on Him through the shifting seasons of life. His presence is always with us (Ps. 46:1), His peace has the power to guard our hearts (Phil. 4:7), and His love provides security for our souls (Rom. 8:39). By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
—Luther

God's unchanging nature is our security during seasons of change.

Time: Handle With Care

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. —Colossians 4:5

If you had to buy time, would there be any difference in the way you would spend it? Would you use the minutes, hours, and days of your life more wisely?

Of course, we can't put a price tag on the minutes and hours we possess. They are given to us freely. But that doesn't excuse us from using them carefully and wisely. The giver of time is God Himself, and that places a far greater value on our time than any monetary figure could suggest. We must therefore take advantage of the opportunities time provides to serve the Lord and to do His will.

This doesn't mean that we have to be working every single moment. It's necessary to take a break every so often, to stop and smell the roses along the way, or to enjoy the beauty of a sunset. We use our time wisely when we combine the appropriate "stops" with the proper "steps." According to Solomon, there is a time for all of God's purposes to be accomplished (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

I'm so grateful that the Lord doesn't sell time. He provides it as a gift of His grace. So let's spend our days "redeeming the time," using the opportunities to live for God (Colossians 4:5).

Yes, time is precious. Handle with care! — Richard DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We do not know how long we have
Till time for us is past,
So let us live as if this day
Is going to be our last.
—D. De Haan

To spend time wisely, invest it in eternity.

Good and Bad Laughter

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh. —Ecclesiastes 3:1,4

Today's Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Doctors and psychologists tell us that laughter is good for us. This is undoubtedly true, because the Bible says that "a merry heart does good, like medicine" (Pr 17:22).

But the Scriptures distinguish between good and bad laughter. The author of Ecclesiastes declared that the laughter of people who have no place for God in their lives has no more value than the noise of crackling thorns in a fire (Eccl. 7:6). God disapproves of any humor that belittles people or makes light of immorality. Sin is never a laughing matter.

Joe E. Brown was a top-notch movie and Broadway comedian of the World War II era. When entertaining American troops in the South Pacific, he was asked by a soldier to tell some "dirty jokes." He responded, "Son, a comedian like me lives for applause and laughter. . . . But if telling a dirty story is the price I must pay for your laughter, then I'm not interested. I've never done an act that I couldn't perform before my mother, and I never will." The soldiers rocked the jungle with their cheers.

Lord, give us a merry heart. And help us be discerning so that we will laugh for the right reasons and about the right things.
By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Laughter is like music
That lingers in the heart;
And when its melody is heard,
The ills of life depart.
—Anon.

Wholesome laughter has great face value.

Seasons Of Life

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's Scripture : Luke 2:6-7,25-35

When I was a pastor, I served many women who were moms. I called on them in the hospital and rejoiced with them for their precious babies who had come into the world. I counseled with anxious mothers and tried to assure them that God was watching over their rebellious teenagers. I stood with mothers at the bedside of injured or ill children and felt their pain. And I cried with them in their grief when their son or daughter died.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, also experienced times of joy and sorrow. What joy she must have felt when the Christ-child was born! (Luke 2:7). What excitement when the shepherds and later the wise men came to worship Him (vv.8-20; Matt. 2:1-12). What uneasiness when Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul (Luke 2:35). And what heart-wrenching grief as Mary watched her Son dying on the cross! (John 19:25-30). But her seasons of being a mother didn't end with that terrible scene. She rejoiced that He rose from the grave.

Mothers, and all of us for that matter, experience many great joys and intense sorrows. But when we submit our lives to the Lord, every season of life can serve His eternal purposes. By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Thank You, Lord, for motherhood
With all its vale of tears,
For happy moments never dimmed
Through all the many years.
—Strecker

Being a mom is a sacred partnership with God.

"In His Time"

"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven." — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Have you ever felt like life was out of rhythm?

- Prayers seem delayed.
- Dreams seem postponed.
- Trials seem prolonged.

Solomon reminds us: nothing is random under heaven. There is a season for every cry, every joy, every change, and every unknown. God is never hurried and never late. He does not measure time by our watches but by His perfect wisdom and eternal purpose.

In waiting seasons, He deepens faith.
 In harvest seasons, He multiplies joy.
 In silent seasons, He refines character.
 In painful seasons, He sows seeds of future beauty.

You may not understand the chapter you are in—but you can trust the Author who writes every page.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time.”
 — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today, breathe deep and rest in Him and His sovereignty. Your times are in His hands, so you are in good hands (much better than the Allstate commercial)!

The Clock I Cannot See

“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.” — Ecclesiastes 3:1

We are often frustrated by timing:

- A job delayed.
- A relationship ended.
- A dream deferred.
- A prayer unanswered (for now).

But Solomon reminds us: our lives are not governed by chaos, luck, or random drift. They are shaped by the hand of a sovereign God, who appoints a time for everything — even if that time feels hidden or hard. There is a season for weeping and for laughing, for building and for breaking, for sowing and for reaping. The problem is not that God forgets. The problem is that we forget He sees the entire tapestry while **we see only threads**.

Trusting God’s timing means believing:

- His delays are not denials.
- His silence is not absence.
- His seasons have reasons.

"My times are in Your hand..."
 -- Psalm 31:15

Today, can you rest in the knowledge that there is an appointed time for your struggle, your growth, your breakthrough—and that God holds the clock?

ILLUSTRATION - The Farmer's Fields - A farmer knows he cannot reap in spring or plant in winter. He trusts the seasons. Similarly, God has appointed seasons in our lives — times to sow, times to reap, times to wait.

ILLUSTRATION - The Symphony Conductor - An orchestra doesn’t play randomly — each note is timed to the conductor’s baton. Life, too, is not random noise. God is conducting every event with precision, even if we only hear a few bars at a time.

ILLUSTRATION - The Weaving Loom - A weaver sits at a loom, working intricate threads into a tapestry. The tapestry looks chaotic when viewed from the back — knots, threads, tangles. But the front reveals a beautiful, ordered, intentional design. Our lives, seen from God's perspective, are intricately woven masterpieces according to the Master Weaver's pattern in Romans 8:28+ (cf Ge 50:20)! From our earthly view, life can look messy and senseless. From God's perspective, He is weaving a perfect, beautiful story.

Listen to the words from [Perfect Wisdom of Our God](#)

“Each strand of sorrow has a place
Within this **tapestry of grace**
So in the trial I choose to say,
‘Your perfect will in your perfect way.’”

ILLUSTRATION Mark Hitchcock tells the following story...Our God Reigns - Ray Stedman, noted pastor and author, once traveled to England to speak at a Bible conference. The church sanctuary was filled with people eager to hear this well-known teacher. The service began with singing and praise to the Lord. One of the songs was the chorus "**Our God Reigns**." Stedman, seated on the platform next to the pastor, glanced down at the song sheet and began to smile. Then he started to laugh. The words on the song sheet had been mistyped. The congregation was belting out "**Our God Resigns**." That's one of those funny-but-painful stories, isn't it? Sometimes we look at the world around us and conclude that God must have **resigned** and is no longer seated on His throne, ruling the nations. We need to remind ourselves that God is indeed enthroned in heaven, reigning over all. And we must never forget that God is still on His throne, ruling over the nations of the world.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.

KJV Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

BGT Ecclesiastes 3:2 καιρ ς το τεκεν κα καιρ ς το ποθανεν καιρ ς το φυτεσαι κα καιρ ς το κτλαι πεφυτευμνον

LXE Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time of birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what has been planted;

NET Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted;

CSB Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot;

ESV Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

NIV Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

NLT Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.

YLT Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to bring forth, And a time to die. A time to plant, And a time to eradicate the planted.

NJB Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted.

NRS Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

NAB Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.

GWN Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pull out what was planted,

BBE Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time for birth and a time for death; a time for planting and a time for uprooting;

RSV Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 3:2 A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;

ASV Ecclesiastes 3:2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

- **time to give birth** Ge 17:21 21:1,2 1Sa 2:5 1Ki 13:2 2Ki 4:16 Ps 113:9 Isa 54:1 Lu 1:13,20,36 Joh 16:21 Ac 7:17,20 Ga 4:4
- **a time to die:** Ge 47:29 Nu 20:24-28 27:12-14 De 3:23-26 34:5 Job 7:1 14:5,14 Isa 38:1,5 Joh 7:30 Heb 9:27
- **a time to plant:** Ps 52:5 Isa 5:2-5 Jer 1:10 18:7-10 45:4 Mt 13:28,29,41 15:13

Related Passages:

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. **Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?**" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Psalms 139:16 **"in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me**, When as yet there was not one of them."

Ecclesiastes 7:17 Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before **your time**?

1 Samuel 2:6+ "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF LIFE

In Ecc 3:2-8 Solomon presents a succession of 14 contrasting pairs of events and circumstances, moving back and forth between desirable and undesirable aspects of life, covering all the time of our lives between our birth and our death and everything in between. In effect Solomon is saying that every one of these events is part of God's plan and under God's control.

Ray Stedman - Notice how truly those (**ED**: 14 contrasting pairs of events and circumstances) apply to the physical life. None of us asked to be born; it was something done to us, apart from us. None of us ask to die; it is something done to us by God. So this is the way we should view this list of opposites, as a list of what God thinks we ought to have. It begins by pairing birth and death as the boundaries of life, "under the sun."

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#) - season) to give birth and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#) - season) to die - Not only is God in control of the time we are born and the time we die, He is control of everything in between! How much control over your birth and death do you have? None! You may say but what about suicide and I would answer that in Rev 9:6+ "men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them!" God won't let them die! God is the Giver of life and the taker of life. And in Psalm 139:16 **David affirms this truth writing "in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me**, When as yet there was not one of them." God controls the beginning of your life and the end of your life!

Notice in these 14 couplets there is generally a bad truth answering a good truth, implying that while there are good things in life, the bad things cannot be avoided for God is in control of both! He Alone knows when to insert one aspect in your life or another.

THOUGHT - In light of the truth that we do not have control over our life or our death, what is the best course of action to take? TRUST GOD! And to some degree, this applies to all 14 couplets. Now please do not misunderstand. I am not saying "Let go, let God" which is absolutely not Biblical even though it is a very popular saying. Our life is not to be passive as if we were a bunch of hand puppets, but is to be active, filled with choices of our will, and optimally as we are led by His Word and His Spirit. So a more accurate saying is "Let God, let's go!"

Michael Eaton - The fourteen couplets of Ec 3:2-8 cover the whole range of human activity. Over it all the Preacher sees God in complete control. It is a warrant at the same time for both humility and confidence....The pairing of the varying aspects of human life indicates the universality of God's control (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 78](#))

NET NOTE- In Ec 3:2-8, Qoheleth uses fourteen sets of merisms (a figure using polar opposites to encompass everything in between, that is, totality), e.g., Deut 6:6-9; Ps 139:2-3 (see E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 435).

Have you ever heard someone say "Well, it was his time to go?" While they may not be a Christian, their declaration echoes Solomon's words it was his **"time to die."** The writer of Hebrews echoes every man and woman's future appointment with death writing " it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." (Heb 9:27+) From a human perspective we see an untimely death or even a suicide and think it is a random event, when it is not. Either God is in full control of everything or He is not. There are no exception clauses to His control of life and death. Daniel reminded Belshazzar that "the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified." (Da 5:23b+) Every beat of our heart and every breath in our lungs is in the hands of the omnipotent God!

Gilbrant - There is also appointed to us a time to die. How came this time? Immortality was our original being (Gen. 1:26). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Rom. 5:12). Ever since, "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Gen. 3:19; Heb. 9:27). Our "days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:5). If our steps are ordered by the Lord (Ps. 37:23), much more is the last step of all—the step out of one world into another, out of time into eternity.

A time to plant and a time to uproot ([aqar](#); Lxx - ektillo - pluck, pull out, "eradicate" = YLT) **what is planted** - Solomon now moves from human life to plant life. What does this statement teach us about time? The **time to plant** speaks of seasons, which makes sense because winter is not a good time to plant! So even as with life and death, we do not sow on our own schedule but God's (if we want any crops!) What does Solomon mean by uproot? This is not as easy to answer. Some like Charles Swindoll think this refers to harvesting (e.g., the NLT paraphrases it as "time to harvest" [CEV](#) says "reaping" - see [how multiple versions translate this verse](#)) what was planted but others think it refers to clearing out old, dead crops or plants. I don't like to disagree with excellent expositors like Swindoll but must in this case. While planting speaks of giving life to a plant, pulling up by the roots speaks of death to a plant. . I think the latter is the primary meaning of **uproot what is planted**. Also look at the word study on **uproot** ([aqar](#)) which supports this interpretation. Virtually all

*God's control of time
imposes itself upon us.*
--New Bible Commentary

Charles Swindoll applies this verse to our lives - If you've ever looked on the back of a packet of seeds, you know there's usually a chart listing the proper growing season for different regions of the country. In order for plants to bear fruit, the seeds must be planted in the proper season and harvested neither too early nor too late. Similarly, God has planted each of our lives according to His plan and purpose, and He will uproot us according to the same plan. That is, God may sometimes make drastic changes in our lives that make us feel like we're being pulled out of the ground and replanted elsewhere. Read 1 Corinthians 3:5–7+. Who is ultimately responsible for the "planting and uprooting" of our lives? Does this knowledge bring you comfort or distress? Why?(See [Living on the Ragged Edge Workbook: Finding Joy in a World](#))

*Half of the problem of life is that we are constantly trying to run this schedule ourselves.
But God has already planned the schedule.*

Ray Stedman - The next pair deals with the supply of food: "A time to plant and a time to harvest." Everything must come in its appropriate time. If you get it out of synch you are in trouble. Try to plant a crop in the middle of winter when snow is on the ground and it will not grow. Half of the problem of life is that we are constantly trying to run this schedule ourselves. But God has already planned the schedule. **There is an appropriate time for everything.**

Wright says this couplet could (speculation) convey a figurative meaning as "in Jeremiah's call to break up the fallow ground and uproot the thorns (Jer 4:3) and also in Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13:24-30+)."

Uproot ([06131](#)) [aqar](#) from **eqr** - an offshoot, means to uproot and conveys the idea of rendering useless, uprooting and preventing further growth. Compare the Aramaic of Da 7:8. Through the uprooting process (as in Ec 3:2), the life source and the ability to grow have been cut off from the plant, delivering a type of destruction and death. In the other OT use in Zeph. 2:4 "Ekron will be **uprooted**" presents the prophet pronouncing judgment against Philistia, which meant their "uprooting" or destruction. The **Septuagint** translates "**uproot**" in Ec 3:2 with the verb **ektillo** which means to pull out, and was used to describe pulling out one's hair by the root (obviously killing the growth cycle of the hair). In Jer 24:6 Yahweh speaks of the future regathering of the nation of Israel - "I will plant them and not **pluck them up** (Septuagint - ektillo)." (cf same idea of ektillo in Jer 42:10 = "not uproot")

Time (season, opportunity, epoch, proper time) ([2540](#)) [kairos](#) means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It describes the period as especially appropriate and favorable (the right time). Stated another way **kairos** is distinguished from **chronos** (time) because **kairos** views TIME from the aspect of the strategic opportunity it provides, and not simply a change from the past into the

present into the future, not mere duration. ([Trench](#)) Something that lasts for a season and so is transient, temporary or enduring only for a specific period of time. Kairos is a period which is especially appropriate - a favorable time (at the right time).

Peter Kennedy - Make the most of Time - Eccl 3:1-8 [From Generation to Generation: Devotional Thoughts](#)

The extinct Mayan culture was obsessed with time. They studied the movement of the planets and charted the stars. They devised intricate calendars that are as accurate as our modern calendar. Plantings, harvests, and sacrifices were strictly based on this calendar.

The ninth Caesar of Rome, Vitellius (A.D. 69), offered a sum equivalent to \$250 million to the priests in the empire if they could recover one minute of lost time. The best they could do was turn their clocks back.

We are no different than these ancients. In our time-conscious world we want to make every minute count. The best way to do this is to invest our lives in things that have lasting value. Do you spend enough time in the Word of God and with other people? Today in prayer give thanks that the Lord has given you the time for your life. Ask that you may use that time to bring Him glory.

"We never shall have any more time. We have, and we have always had, all the time there is."—Arnold Bennett

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - Ecclesiastes 3:2-3 24. TIMES AND SEASONS

A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build. Ecclesiastes 3:2-3

The meaning of the above verses is transparent: In this changing world, nothing stays the same. We move from one thing to another: from joy to sorrow, from war to peace and back to war again. We search for a while, then we give up. We are silent, then we speak; then we are silent again. We love and we hate-and we do it over and over again. We are born, we grow up, we give birth; our children grow up, they give birth. We die, our children die, and our grandchildren grow up and give birth.

That's what life is all about. It is part of God's plan. Some of these things we do ourselves and some are sent to us by God Himself. But they all fit into His plan. No one scatters stones all the time and no one gathers all the time (see Ec 3:5).

Consider how this applies to the marriage relationship. If you stay married long enough, you will see it all. Everything that can happen will happen. Any couple married more than twenty years can testify to this fact. There is indescribable joy and the deepest sorrow. There is hatred and there is love. There is birth and there is death. There is success and there is failure-often back-to-back. All these things have their place and if you stay together long enough, you will see them all.

I remembered this truth when I attended the wake for a dear friend who died of cancer. About fifty people were in the room when I arrived. As I walked to the casket to pay my respects, I passed several good friends who were chatting together. There she was-resting in the casket-and not five feet away the young people were talking about cars and sports and their jobs and smiling to each other. Life and death were eerily juxtaposed against each other.

Were the others being disrespectful? No, they loved my friend as much as I did. But life goes on. Even in the midst of sorrow, those who remain speak of life. Later that evening a young couple came by with a baby barely two weeks old. There it was, plain as day, right in front of my eyes, life and death in the same room. Joy and sorrow. Hope and sadness. Yesterday and tomorrow all mixed together, all happening at once. Someone dies and we weep. Another person is born and we rejoice.

That's what Solomon was talking about. In this ever-changing world, God alone can give meaning to life; He alone does not change. He directs the jumbled events that seem to have no rhyme or reason. So cling to this truth: God is in charge and does not change, and He makes no mistakes.

My God, You are the Lord of the changing seasons of life. Without You I could hardly face tomorrow; but as long as You are with me I will have no fear. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What "season" of life are you in right now? If you are married, how have you experienced the ups and downs of life?
- Name a circumstance in which you have seen God's faithfulness in an unexpected way.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Ezekiel 18:30-32; 1 Peter 4:1-5; and Revelation 1:17-18.

[A Daily Companion to My Utmost for His Highest](#) applies several passages in Eccl 3 - There will be a time to plant new habits and a

time to uproot old ones. There will be a time to tear down idols and a time to build altars to remember God's provision. There will be a time to weep over sin and a time to laugh in the joy of God's goodness

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to plant and a time to uproot \(Ecclesiastes 3:2\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG?](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon introduces a series of fourteen opposing seasons and events in the cycle of life (birth and death, mourning and dancing, war and peace, etc.). “There is a time for everything,” begins Solomon, “and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot” (verses 1–2).

All of the moments in Solomon's list combine to represent the whole of human activity in its varied expressions. Our lives in this world are a blend of joy and sorrow, ups and downs, harmony and discord, rooting and upheaval. Solomon acknowledges that every moment has its proper place and time appointed by God. From beginning to end, the Lord is in control. He is sovereign. He has a purpose in every season, whether we understand it or not.

The first two pairings—“a time to be born and a time to die” and “a time to plant and a time to uproot”—represent beginnings and endings, new life, and the inevitability of death. Plant life starts with sowing or planting but ends when uprooting occurs. Those who work in the world of agriculture understand that there is a proper time to plant and an appropriate season to harvest.

When a seed is buried in the ground and then nurtured, the potential for germinating life is established. By contrast, to “uproot” is to pull up or tear out by the roots. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the term is used figuratively for the destruction of cities and nations (Zephaniah 2:4; Jeremiah 12:17). The New Living Translation renders “a time to uproot” as “a time to harvest,” whereas the English Standard Version uses “pluck up what is planted.”

Life is full of contrasts. Birthing and planting represent the giving of life. There are occasions when we produce life by giving birth or planting seeds in the ground. Yet, for every person, there is also an [appointed time](#) to die (Job 14:5; Hebrews 9:27), just as there are designated agricultural seasons for uprooting and harvesting crops. In a metaphor, the prophet Jeremiah confirms there are times in life “to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:10).

In the New Testament, Jesus illustrates an important spiritual truth through a similar metaphor of planting and uprooting: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity” (John 12:24–25).

Jesus was speaking about His impending death. Only by sacrificing His life would new life come. His glorification would proceed from His death. Like a kernel of wheat planted in the soil, Jesus would die to give life to a glorious new plant that would bear much fruit. Resurrection life for the many would come through the sacrifice and death of the One (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). Jesus was the grain of wheat that had to fall into the ground and die before becoming fruitful in the Father's purpose—to provide [eternal life](#) for all who would believe in Him (John 3:16).

By the same token, as followers of Christ, it is in dying that we live (Romans 6:4–8; 1 Corinthians 15:36; Galatians 2:20). Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:24–25; see also Mark 8:34–35).

Christ's teaching helps us understand why God sometimes allows us to experience difficult seasons of upheaval and mourning. For every Christian, there is a time to plant and a time to uproot (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2; Psalm 126:5), a time to be born again (John 3:3–7), and a time to die to self (Luke 14:27; Galatians 5:24). We can't experience the joy of birth or the glorious sprouting of new life that bears abundant fruit unless we pass through times of travail, uprooting, and death.

Ecclesiastes 3:3 A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up.

- **time to kill:** De 32:39 1Sa 2:6,25 Ho 6:1,2
- **a time to heal:** Nu 26:6-9 Isa 38:5-20 Jer 33:6 Lu 9:54-56 Ac 5:15,16
- **time to tear down:** Isa 5:5,6 44:26 Jer 31:28 45:4 Eze 13:14 Da 9:25-27 Zec 1:12
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Galatians 2:18 “For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

THE TIMING AND WISDOM OF DESTRUCTION AND RESTORATION

A time ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) **to kill** ([harag](#); Lxx - [apokteino](#)) **and a time** ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) **to heal** ([rapha/rophe](#); Lxx - [iaomai](#)) - Solomon continues his catalog of opposites in life, showing that different seasons, even harsh ones like killing and tearing down, are under God's appointed control. In ancient life, killing might occur in war, judgment, or defense. Note that some commentaries say that since this Hebrew word was not the one used in Ex 20:13+ for "you shall not murder ([ratsach](#))," that "kill" here does not include murder (Mt 26:4+). That is not correct because the first use of [harag](#) in the OT was of Cain murdering Abel (that was "a time to kill")! In addition the Lxx translates with [apokteino](#) which is used to describe the murder of Jesus. Clearly, God is not advocating murder but Solomon recognizes that in a fallen world, such tragic events are permitted by God. **A time to heal** speaks of seasons of restoration, recovery, and mercy after injury, brokenness, or conflict. How we all praise God for mercifully allowing these seasons in our lives!!! The idea of healing includes restoration, repair, making whole (physically, spiritually, emotionally).

Note that all the uses of **time** in these 14 couplets are the same Hebrew and Greek words ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)). Note that the Greek word is not *chronos* (time in general) but is [kairos](#) which speaks of a specific time, a season and an opportunity. See the related discussion of Redeem the Time (the opportunity).

[Ray Stedman](#) has an interesting thought on "a time to kill, and a time to heal" writing that "That may sound strange to us, but the process of dying goes right along with the process of living. Doctors tell us that every seven years all the cells in our bodies die. But our bodies do not die. What you are now is not what you were seven years ago, yet you are the same. Man's physical body is one of the miracles of human history. As the psalmist says, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." How can we understand the fact that each cell seems to pass on to the cell which replaces it the memory of the past so that, even though our brain cells have changed, the memory goes back beyond the life of the cell itself? There is "a time to kill, and a time to heal." God brings it to pass."

Michael Eaton feels that "heal does not always refer to medical needs (cf. Isa. 6:10 following up the imagery of 1:5-6; Isa. 19:22; 57:19; Jer. 33:6 and often elsewhere). (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes](#))

A time to tear down and a time to build up - Here we see the rhythms of breaking and building. Solomon is reminding us that nothing is permanent. A good example of this verse is urban renewal! In my old neighborhood probably 30 homes 50 years old have been demolished as rich people move in and build veritable mansions! You may have even carried out this verse in your home by remodeling your kitchen! One can also think of this figuratively of our lives which have a "tearing down time" and "building up time!"

A surgeon cuts (a violent action!) to remove disease for only then can healing begin. Sometimes wounding must precede healing. Dead branches must be cut off for the tree to grow strong and bear fruit. Cutting is painful, but it is an act of life-giving care.

THOUGHT - Which season are you in (tearing down, building up)? Are you trying to cling to something that God is dismantling? Trust Him, for when God tears down, He rebuilds for His glory and our good.

Structures, relationships, or systems that are corrupt, broken, or harmful sometimes must be demolished. After tearing down, there is a season to rebuild, renew, and restore. In summary, life includes both destructive and constructive phases, and wisdom is knowing when each is appropriate, all under God's sovereign design.

Charles Swindoll applies this passage - The second pair of opposites Solomon described centers on the appropriateness of certain actions in specific situations: "A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up" (Ecclesiastes 3:3). Real life involves a strange mixture of battlefields and hospitals, mortality and medicine, demolition crews and construction workers. According to the following passages, what are some examples of when it is time to "build up" or time "to heal"? 2 Corinthians 2:6-9+ James 5:14-16+. (See [Living on the Ragged Edge Workbook: Finding Joy in a World](#))

[Ray Stedman](#) There is "a time to break down, and a time to build up." Youth is the time for building up. Muscles grow, abilities increase, coordination gets better. Then, if you hang on long enough as I have and you reach that 65th milestone, there is a time when everything starts to fall apart -- "a time to break down." Type gets smaller and smaller, steps get higher and higher, trains go faster and faster, people speak in lower and lower tones -- "a time to break down." But that is appropriate. We should not fight it. It is not evil, it is right. God has determined this, and no matter what we may think about it, it is going to continue that way. That is what this is telling us.

Kill ([02026](#)) **harag** means to kill or slay. To slay or cause death, often in contexts of justice, warfare, or defense, but not the first use! **Harag** is first use in the Bible is in the murder of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:8). The word is employed for war and slaughter (Josh.

8:24; 1 Ki. 9:16; Esth. 8:11); God's killing in judgment (Gen. 20:4; Ex. 13:15; Amos 2:3); humans killing animals (Lev. 20:15; Num. 22:29); animals killing humans (2 Ki. 17:25; Job 20:16).

Vine - This term is commonly used in modern Hebrew in its verb and noun forms to express the idea of "killing, slaughter." The fact that it is found in the Old Testament some 170 times reflects how commonly this verb was used to indicate the taking of life, whether animal or human. Hārag is found for the first time in the Old Testament in the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4:8; also vv. Gen. 4:14-15).

Rarely suggesting premeditated killing or murder, this term generally is used for the "killing" of animals, including sacrificially, and for ruthless personal violence of man against man. Hārag is not the term used in the sixth commandment (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). The word there is rāṣaḥ, and since it implies premeditated killing, the commandment is better translated: "Do not murder," as most modern versions have it.

The word hārag often means wholesale slaughter, both in battle and after battle (Num. 31:7-8; Josh. 8:24; 2 Sam. 10:18). The word is only infrequently used of men's killing at the command of God. In such instances, the causative form of the common Hebrew verb for "to die" is commonly found. In general, hārag refers to violent "killing" and destruction, sometimes even referring to the "killing" of vines by hail (Psa. 78:47).

Harold Stigers - ([TWOT](#) page 222) - The root includes the ideas of murder and judicial execution, as well as the killing of animals.

The first use of the word (Genesis 4:8) reports Cain's crime, shedding Abel's blood which "cried to God," i.e. for vengeance. David ordered the execution of the murderers of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 4:11-12). The same word is used for both murder and judicial execution in agreement with the command of Genesis 9:6. The murderer is to be executed on the grounds that failure to do so signifies consent to the crime and breaks the covenant with God. Furthermore it denies God's image in man.

If a householder killed a robber who broke into his home during the night, he would not incur blood guilt, since the nocturnal housebreaker would not stop at murder to accomplish his purpose.

Parallels to biblical laws on murder are few in the literature of Mesopotamia. There loss of life could be compensated for through payment of a fine. Only in aggravated cases was the death penalty imposed.

There is much overlapping in the use of the various words for "kill." This word is seldom used of killing animals. Usually it is used of killing men and numerous times of violent killing in war or intrigue. It is never used for the killing of sacrificial animals and very seldom for the killing of animals for food. The word is common in the histories of the judges and the monarchy as the thing represented was itself all too common. Numbers of these instances refer to murder (for which rāṣaḥ is more characteristic, cf. Exodus 20:13), but many refer to such items as Jezebel's killing the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:13), Levi and Simeon's slaughter of the Shechemites (Genesis 34:26), and Joab's killing of Abner (2 Samuel 3:30). The word is used sometimes of God's judicial judgments, e.g. the slaying of Egypt's firstborn (Exodus 13:15), but such uses are rare. In the angel's slaughter of Sennacherib's army, the word nākā is used. Usually hārag is used of violent killing of men by other men—sometimes with justification, often, alas not!

HARAG - 157V - destroyed(1), kill(44), kill me as you killed(1), kill me at once(1), killed(58), killing(3), kills(2), murdered(2), murderer(1), murderers(1), occurs(1), slain(16), slaughter(1), slay(14), slayer(2), slays(2), slew(11), smitten(1), surely kill(1). Gen. 4:8; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 4:15; Gen. 4:23; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 12:12; Gen. 20:4; Gen. 20:11; Gen. 26:7; Gen. 27:41; Gen. 27:42; Gen. 34:25; Gen. 34:26; Gen. 37:20; Gen. 37:26; Gen. 49:6; Exod. 2:14; Exod. 2:15; Exod. 4:23; Exod. 5:21; Exod. 13:15; Exod. 21:14; Exod. 22:24; Exod. 23:7; Exod. 32:12; Exod. 32:27; Lev. 20:15; Lev. 20:16; Num. 11:15; Num. 22:29; Num. 22:33; Num. 25:5; Num. 31:7; Num. 31:8; Num. 31:17; Num. 31:19; Deut. 13:9; Jos. 8:24; Jos. 9:26; Jos. 10:11; Jos. 13:22; Jdg. 7:25; Jdg. 8:17; Jdg. 8:18; Jdg. 8:19; Jdg. 8:20; Jdg. 8:21; Jdg. 9:5; Jdg. 9:18; Jdg. 9:24; Jdg. 9:45; Jdg. 9:54; Jdg. 9:56; Jdg. 16:2; Jdg. 20:5; 1 Sam. 16:2; 1 Sam. 22:21; 1 Sam. 24:10; 1 Sam. 24:11; 1 Sam. 24:18; 2 Sam. 3:30; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 4:11; 2 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 10:18; 2 Sam. 12:9; 2 Sam. 14:7; 2 Sam. 23:21; 1 Ki. 2:5; 1 Ki. 2:32; 1 Ki. 9:16; 1 Ki. 11:24; 1 Ki. 12:27; 1 Ki. 18:12; 1 Ki. 18:13; 1 Ki. 18:14; 1 Ki. 19:1; 1 Ki. 19:10; 1 Ki. 19:14; 2 Ki. 8:12; 2 Ki. 9:31; 2 Ki. 10:9; 2 Ki. 11:18; 2 Ki. 17:25; 1 Chr. 7:21; 1 Chr. 11:23; 1 Chr. 19:18; 2 Chr. 21:4; 2 Chr. 21:13; 2 Chr. 22:1; 2 Chr. 22:8; 2 Chr. 23:17; 2 Chr. 24:22; 2 Chr. 24:25; 2 Chr. 25:3; 2 Chr. 28:6; 2 Chr. 28:7; 2 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 36:17; Neh. 4:11; Neh. 6:10; Neh. 9:26; Est. 3:13; Est. 7:4; Est. 8:11; Est. 9:6; Est. 9:11; Est. 9:12; Est. 9:15; Est. 9:16; Job 5:2; Job 20:16; Ps. 10:8; Ps. 44:22; Ps. 59:11; Ps. 78:31; Ps. 78:34; Ps. 78:47; Ps. 94:6; Ps. 135:10; Ps. 136:18; Prov. 1:32; Prov. 7:26; Eccl. 3:3; Isa. 10:4; Isa. 14:19; Isa. 14:20; Isa. 14:30; Isa. 22:13; Isa. 26:21; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 27:7; Jer. 4:31; Jer. 15:3; Jer. 18:21; Lam. 2:4; Lam. 2:20; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 3:43; Ezek. 9:6; Ezek. 21:11; Ezek. 23:10; Ezek. 23:47; Ezek. 26:6;

THOUGHT - "When Breaking Is Healing"

"A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up." — Ecclesiastes 3:3

Some seasons of life feel like tearing, breaking, or ending. Dreams crumble. Relationships fracture. Plans collapse. We wonder: "Why is God allowing this?" But Solomon reminds us: there is a time for both tearing down and building up. God often tears down what will not last to build what is eternal. Old ways must die for new life to spring forth. Sinful strongholds must be demolished for grace to rebuild. Sometimes loss makes room for greater restoration.

Jesus said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." — John 12:24

If you're in a season of tearing down, trust the Master Builder.

He wounds to heal.

He removes to renew.

He tears down only to rebuild something better in its place.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to kill and a time to heal \(Ecclesiastes 3:3\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon recognizes that God controls the times and seasons of every human life. Through fourteen juxtaposing statements, Solomon establishes that God is always working out His good purposes, accomplishing His will in each moment of our lives (Romans 8:28). Every occasion between our birth and our death happens at a God-appointed time according to His plan. One of the more challenging couplings to understand is that "there is a time to kill and a time to heal" (Ecclesiastes 3:3).

God's law plainly states, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). How, then, is there a time to kill? In the original Hebrew, the word translated "to kill" means "to cut down or stab; cause to die; put to death, usually intentionally or knowingly." Sin brought decay and death into the world, and it wasn't long before humans became involved in the act of killing (Genesis 4:8).

According to one commentator, *a time to kill* "probably refers, not to war (v. 8) or self-defense, but to the results of sickness and plague in the land" (Wiersbe, W., *Be Satisfied*, Victor Books, 1996, p. 45–46). One such instance is noted in 1 Samuel 2:6: "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (ESV).

Solomon is not advocating for capital punishment or mercy killing. He could be speaking of killing to defend the innocent, such as by law enforcement, or the act of [self-defense](#). One thing is sure, the author is reflecting on a reality of life—that some people die while others live on and are healed.

It's impossible to understand why God would allow millions of people to die in the coronavirus [COVID-19 pandemic](#) or any of the other widespread outbreaks of disease that have occurred throughout history. Yet God in His inscrutable sovereignty permits some to perish and others to be healed.

Solomon's observations are not concerned with the ethical questions surrounding killing and murder. He is merely asserting some central facts of life: "There is a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2); "There is a time to kill and a time to heal" (verse 3). Destruction and death are unavoidable aspects of life (Hebrews 9:27). Thankfully, healing and rebuilding are part of our existence as well.

The word for "to heal" in the original Hebrew means "to provide a cure for or make healthy again (whether physically or spiritually); repair, rebuild." The prophet Isaiah saw that God would bring Egypt to repentance, healing, and salvation: "So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them" (Isaiah 19:21–22). In this passage, we see the revelation of God's good purpose in "a time to kill and a time to heal."

Sometimes, for physical healing to occur, certain bacteria, micro-organisms, or hostile cells, must be killed before the human body can be restored to health. Likewise, spiritual healing often follows a season of [brokenness](#): "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds" (Hosea 6:1; see also Psalm 147:3). When we cooperate with God, trusting that even the most painful and challenging seasons serve a purpose in His plan, He makes everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

There is a time to kill and a time to heal also parallels a metaphor for the process of sanctification. In the Christian life, we are called to “put to death” the misdeeds of our sinful nature so that we can live a new and wholesome life by the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5). We are to consider ourselves “dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11, NLT).

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to break down and a time to build up \(Ecclesiastes 3:3\)?](#)
[GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - [King Solomon](#) points out that human existence is a progressive cycle of beginnings and endings, births and deaths, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Through a series of fourteen contrasting times and seasons of life, he concludes that God is sovereign over them all (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8). God deliberately designs each moment to create the beautiful tapestry of our lives (Ecclesiastes 3:11). As believers, we must trust Him to mix the fibers and strands according to His good purpose (Romans 8:28).

Paired with “a time to kill, and a time to heal” is “a time to break down, and a time to build up” (Ecclesiastes 3:3, ESV). In the original Hebrew, the words translated “break down” mean “to cause to fall or collapse, tear down, pull down.” The contrasting term “build up” refers to “develop, enlarge, construct, or increase by degrees or in stages.”

Solomon’s “time to break down” and “time to build up” refer to the processes of destruction and reconstruction. As a master builder and developer of ancient architectural wonders, Solomon would have been well acquainted with the need to tear down and remove old, crumbling buildings before rebuilding new structures in their place. In the construction process, there is an appropriate time for both breaking down and building up.

In the Old Testament, Jeremiah’s prophecies forecast the breaking down and building up of peoples, nations, and kingdoms (Jeremiah 1:10). He foresaw a future time when God would rebuild and plant so that His people and their land could be restored (Jeremiah 31:27–29).

In a spiritual sense, believers experience seasons of breaking down the old way of life and building up the new. Christians are to “put to death” or destroy [the flesh](#)—the “earthly nature.” We must do away with or tear down our old way of life and “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:5–10, ESV). God has given us spiritual weapons “to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5, NLT).

The process of [sanctification](#) involves the Holy Spirit working within us to rebuild and reshape us according to the pattern and image of Christ (Romans 8:29–30). The apostle Peter describes the process: “And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God” (1 Peter 2:5, NLT).

Those who are lifted up with pride are destined to endure seasons of breaking down: “Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18, NLT; see also Proverbs 18:12). The Bible speaks of a broad highway that leads to destruction for those who do evil (Matthew 7:13; Isaiah 59:7; Isaiah 28:22). “Give them the punishment they so richly deserve! Measure it out in proportion to their wickedness. Pay them back for all their evil deeds! Give them a taste of what they have done to others. They care nothing for what the LORD has done or for what his hands have made. So he will tear them down, and they will never be rebuilt!” declares Psalm 28:4–5 (NLT).

Being torn down and destroyed is the destiny of the ungodly, but building up is the ministry of the body of Christ, the church (Ephesians 4:11–12, 16; 1 Corinthians 14:12). God gave His servants authority not to tear each other down but to build one another up (2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; Romans 14:19). The words we speak ought not to be “unwholesome” but instead “helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29). Paul taught, “Encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11; see also Romans 15:2).

There are times when God must break up the fallow ground of sin in the believer’s heart (Hosea 10:12). He often uses painful seasons to discipline us and bring us back to Him in repentance (Proverbs 3:11–12; Hebrews 12:5–11). He does this because He loves us. James says that the result of the Lord’s discipline is stronger, more steadfast faith (James 1:2–4), as well as the breaking down of sin’s hold over us (John 8:31–36).

Just as there is a season for every matter under heaven, there is a time to break down and a time to build up. In times when you feel torn asunder, when everything seems to be falling apart, remember and trust that God is rebuilding your life on the firm, unshakable, and everlasting foundation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 6:46–49; 1 Corinthians 3:10–17; Ephesians 2:19–22).

- **time to weep:** Ne 8:9-12 9:1-38 Ps 30:5 Ps 126:1,2,5,6 Isa 22:12,13 Mt 9:15 Mt 11:17 Joh 16:20-22 Ro 12:15 2Co 7:10 Jas 4:9
- **a time to laugh:** Ge 21:6 Lu 1:13,14,58 6:21-25
- **to dance:** Ex 15:20 2Sa 6:16
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passage:

Nehemiah 8:9-12 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." 12 All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

Psalm 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Psalm 126:5-6 Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. 6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

TEARS AND TRIUMPHS

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to weep and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to laugh - Life has emotional highs and lows and both are appointed by God and appropriate in their season. God doesn't demand perpetual happiness or perpetual grief for both have a place. Perpetual pleasure is reserved for our glorious future for David writes...

Psalm 16:11+ You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; **In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

[Ray Stedman](#) notes that in this verse "the Searcher moves into the realm of the soul, with its functions of thinking, feeling and choosing, the social areas, and all the interrelationships of life that flow from that....weep...laugh...mourn...dance. All these things follow closely, and they are all appropriate. No one is going to escape the hurts and sorrows of life, is what he is saying here. God chose them for us. The proof of that is when God's own Son came. He was not handed a beautiful life with everything pleasant and delightful, free from struggle and pain. No, he was, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," (Isaiah 53:3b). In a fallen world it is right that there will be times of hurt, of sorrow and weeping. But there will be times too when it is right to laugh, to be happy and carefree. There is a time of grief and tears, "a time to mourn," but there is a time to celebrate and to enjoy a festive occasion. Jesus attended the celebration of the wedding at Cana of Galilee. He entered into it and even provided part of the feast.

C S Lewis said "Pain is God's megaphone. He whispers to us in our pleasure [when we laugh], but He shouts to us in our pain [when we weep]." (from [Swindoll](#))

Tommy Nelson - A day will come in God's sovereign plan when you will receive a phone call telling you that your parents are dead. Your time will be to weep. But it won't last forever because there will be a time when you will get a big promotion or finally move into your dream home, and then you will laugh. Solomon says life is going to be like this and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. You'll have children and you will laugh. Then one day you'll cry because of those children. That's the way it is. There are times of happiness and times of pain. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 46](#))

[Ray Stedman](#) - "There is a time to weep and a time to laugh" (Verse 4). Throughout this chapter the idea is propounded that there is an appropriate time for all of life's experiences. Have you ever laughed at the wrong time? I have. I was at a funeral once, and the leader asked all present to stand upon their feet. One of my friends whispered to me, "What else could you stand on?" I broke up --

and it was very obviously the wrong time to do so. Ron Ritchie won a kind of immortality for himself at Dallas Theological Seminary when, on the day of graduation, that most solemn occasion in educational life, he walked down the aisle, dressed in his sombre graduation robe, holding a coffee cup in his hand. He is remembered in the annals of Dallas Seminary as a man who did not know the appropriate action for a certain time.

A time to mourn and a time to dance - Mourn (מָוַן – *sāpaq*) speaks of formal grieving (often at funerals). Mourning is proper in its proper time but then that time ends and then comes a time to dance or celebrate. **Dance** (רָצָה – *rāqāq*) describes joyful, public celebration. God's plan includes times of happiness as well as sorrow so we should not be surprised by circumstances in life that allow for these emotions. One week, you might attend a funeral, the next week a wedding. Both are sacred

One is reminded of the song in Fiddler on the Roof "[Sun Rise, Sun Set](#)", swiftly fly the years. One season following another. Laden with happiness and tears."

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh \(Ecclesiastes 3:4\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - "A time to weep and a time to laugh" is one of fourteen couplets of contrasting times and seasons of life depicted by King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Within these statements, Solomon condensed every human "activity under the heavens" (verse 1), concluding that there is a God-appointed time for each moment and that [the Lord is ultimately in control](#) over them all.

Extreme emotional seasons are the focus of Solomon's observation that "**there is a time to weep and a time to laugh**" Sorrow and happiness, crying and rejoicing, mourning and merriment are all part of life. Feelings of disappointment, loss, and rejection are inevitable. More than once, Jesus Himself was overcome with sorrow to the point of weeping (John 11:32; Luke 19:41). If we live very long, we'll eventually endure times when we want to say, like the psalmist, "My tears have been my food day and night" (Psalm 42:3). Conversely, we will experience seasons of joy and laughter. King David acknowledged that "weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

In Romans 12:9–21, the apostle Paul taught that the mark of a true Christian is [sincere love](#) demonstrated through sacrifice and service toward fellow believers. Paul seemed to have had Ecclesiastes 3:4 in mind when he urged believers, "Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15NLT). When we identify with one another in our joys and sorrows, weeping and laughing together at the appropriate times, we prove the authenticity of our heartfelt affection and love. Instead of distancing ourselves from the emotional experiences of others, genuine love motivates us to weep freely, to laugh out loud, to sing and dance, to enter deeply into their experiences, and to feel solidarity with those we care about, regardless of their mood.

In Christ's [Sermon on the Mount](#), He informed His disciples, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Luke 6:21). Poverty, hunger, persecution, insult, denial, hatred, and being falsely accused were some of the miserable conditions the Lord's closest followers faced during their sojourn on earth. Our loyalty to Jesus in this world is sure to cause us to weep now (Matthew 5:3–11). But Christ encourages us to "rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12).

In John 16:20, Jesus promised His faithful ones, "Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." As Christians, we can expect to face some of the harshest circumstances imaginable in this world. But eternal life with Jesus awaits. We may weep now as the world rejoices, but we will laugh and celebrate with the Lord for all eternity.

While we live in this [fallen world](#), "a time to weep" is an inevitable part of the ongoing cycle of life. But we do well to remember that God is with us through every painful moment, working out His good purposes (Romans 8:28). Moreover, eternity holds the Lord's marvelous promise: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). In eternity, the "time to weep" will be over, and "a time to laugh" will be our blessed reward.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to mourn and a time to dance \(Ecclesiastes 3:4\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - "A time to mourn and a time to dance" is one of fourteen juxtaposed seasons of life observed by King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. While looking back across his years, Solomon sums every human "activity under the heavens" (verse 1). He concludes that life is an ongoing cycle of beginnings and endings, ups and downs, gains and losses. Solomon has learned that there is a [God-appointed time](#), place, and purpose for every moment and that the Lord is ultimately in control of them all.

In Ecclesiastes 3:4, Solomon focuses on the emotional seasons of human existence, pairing "a time to mourn and a time to dance" with "a time to weep and a time to laugh." In the original Hebrew, the word translated as "mourn" means "to observe the customs of mourning after the death of a person." Mourning is the natural process of working through the heartache that follows a significant loss. It is normal and healthy to grieve for a period after a loved one has died. Ultimately, God uses mourning to produce healing.

The term *dance* is just as direct, meaning “to move in a pattern; usually to musical accompaniment.” With this expressive coupling, Solomon contrasts a funeral gathering and a celebratory feast such as a wedding. Humans weep and mourn at a funeral but laugh and dance at a wedding reception.

Later, in Ecclesiastes 7:2, Solomon explains, “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.” Here Solomon expresses the wisdom of admitting our own mortality. At a funeral, we are forced to confront the inevitable fate of all humanity—we are all destined to die (Job 30:23; Hebrews 9:27).

God gives us one opportunity—this life on earth—to know Him and receive His gift of salvation. If we live only to party and have fun, we will be ill-prepared for eternity.

Seasons of mourning serve a good purpose—they remind us of our need to put our faith and hope in God: “LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath. . . . We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth, not knowing who will spend it. And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you” (Psalm 39:4–7, NLT).

Mourning is part of the human experience. The Christian life is not only rejoicing and laughter. While seasons of mourning are painful, they provide opportunities for us to see the weight of our sin and the depth of our spiritual bankruptcy. In His [Sermon on the Mount](#), Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). Only when we truly recognize and feel sorrow over the wretched condition of our hearts can God’s grace and forgiveness be poured out on us. Only then can we say, like the psalmist, “You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy” (Psalm 30:11, NLT).

There is a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time for sorrow and for celebration, for repentance and for refreshing. In the kingdom of God, [those who mourn](#) are blessed because they are destined to dance and celebrate at the marriage supper of Lamb (Revelation 19:7–10). They have had their hearts broken by their own sin and the depths of this world’s suffering. Yet they will receive God’s comfort and live with joy forever in the Lord’s presence.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) A TIME TO LAUGH

A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain. Ecclesiastes 3:4-5

Several years ago I traveled to Russia on a speaking tour of evangelical churches. Although I don’t speak much Russian, it was easy to communicate because the Russian people are by nature warm and friendly. I found two things true of every Russian Christian I met: They love to sing and they love to laugh. Everywhere I went, from St. Petersburg to the Volga River, we sang together, traded stories, and told jokes. They laughed at my fractured Russian (delivered with a Southern accent), and I laughed at their stories, even when I didn’t understand (which was most of the time).

My travels through Russia taught me that laughter is the universal language. If you have a sense of humor about life, you can go anywhere on earth and have a good time. Someone has said that laughter is the shortest point between two people. It is the best way to break the ice, to cut the tension, to settle a quarrel, or to liven up a boring meeting. Laughter is a universal language that needs no translator.

It may surprise you to know that some of God’s greatest saints loved to laugh. Martin Luther said, “If you aren’t allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there.” He also said, “If the earth is fit for laughter then surely heaven is filled with it. Heaven is the birthplace of laughter.” The great English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon laughed so much that when a parishioner reproached him for using too much humor in his sermons, he replied, “If only you knew how much I held back!” C. S. Lewis used to say that his favorite sound in all the earth was hearty male laughter.

By the way, can you name the first two people recorded in the Bible who laughed? It was Abraham and Sarah who laughed (at God!) when they heard they were going to have a baby in their old age. They thought God was playing a joke on them. I take it that laughter is one of God’s gifts to the human race. It keeps us from taking life too seriously—as if it all depends on us. Ed Howe said it this way: “If you don’t learn to laugh at trouble, you won’t have anything to laugh at when you grow old.” Yes, there is a time to laugh, and laughter is a blessing from God as we endure the travails of this temporary world.

Father, thank You for the healing gift of laughter. I pray for a sanctified sense of humor today. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Do you think Jesus had a sense of humor? Do you agree with Martin Luther that heaven is the birthplace of laughter?
- Why is laughter so important in handling the trials of life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 21:1-7; Psalm 126:1-3; and Luke 6:21.

Seasons Of Ups And Downs

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. —Ecclesiastes 3:4

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Most of us would agree that life has its ups and downs. Wise King Solomon believed this and reflected on our responses to fluctuating circumstances. In Ecclesiastes, he wrote: "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (3:1-4).

Solomon's father, David, was called "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Yet David's life illustrates how life is filled with seasons of ups and downs. David wept over his and Bathsheba's first child who was fatally ill (2 Sam. 12:22). Yet he also wrote songs of praise and joyous laughter (Ps. 126:1-3). With the death of his rebellious son Absalom, David experienced a time of deep mourning (2 Sam. 18:33). And when the ark was brought to Jerusalem, David, in spiritual ecstasy, danced before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:12-15).

We do a disservice to ourselves and others when we portray the Christian life as peaceful and happy all the time. Instead, the Bible portrays the believer's life as consisting of seasons of ups and downs. In what season are you? Whether a time of joy or sadness, each season should motivate us to seek the Lord and trust Him. By: Dennis Fisher (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Dear Lord, help us to turn to You not only in sadness but also in joy. We know You give us both good times and bad to draw us to You and help us grow. May we learn to trust You in all seasons of life. Amen.

Every season needs faith to get us through it.

Ecclesiastes 3:5 A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.

- **to throw stones** Jos 4:3-9 10:27 2Sa 18:17,18 2Ki 3:25
- **A time to embrace:** Ex 19:15 1Sa 21:4,5 Song 2:6,7 Joe 2:16 1Co 7:5
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Genesis 11:3+ They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly."**And they used brick for stone**, and they used tar for mortar.

Genesis 31:44-45 "So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." Then Jacob took a **stone** and set it up as a pillar.

2 Kings 3:19; 25 "Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with **stones**." (3:25) Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one **threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it**. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees, until in Kir-hareseth **only they left its stones; however, the slingers went about it and struck it**.

Isaiah 5:1-2+ Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, **removed its stones**, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones.

A Time to Throw a Stone!

SCATTERING AND GATHERING

EMBRACING AND RELEASING

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to throw stones and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to gather stones - The natural reference would be to casting away of stones when they were useless as in a field that one desired to plow and plant, or perhaps a hindrance to the soil, and gathering them when they were used for some profitable purpose such as building a fence. In ancient Israel, throwing stones could symbolize hostility, destruction, or hindering (e.g., scattering stones over a field to prevent farming — 2 Kings 3:25). Throwing stones could symbolize breaking down, war, or removing obstacles.

Gathering stones could symbolize preparing to build, clearing a field, or reconciliation after conflict. Stones were the memorials of the covenant between Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:44-51). Stones were used to commemorate God's miracle in the passage of Jordan (Josh 4:1-9). Stones were used as a memorial to Achan's sin (Josh 7:26.) Stones were gathered and marked the victory over Absalom (2Sa 18:17). In every case there was a divine purpose and a suitable season for gathering the stones.

This verse reminds me of the "season" in David's life when he gathered 5 smooth stones from the brook (1Sa 17:40+) and slung (cf "throw stones") one of the stones at Goliath so that the stone sank into his forehead and Goliath fell on his face to the ground (1Sa 17:49+)! This stone gathering and throwing season (ordained by God) marked a significant change in the course of his entire life.

John Trapp - "Many a man loseth his soul, as Saul did his kingdom, by not discerning his time. Esau came too late; so did the foolish virgins. If the gale of grace be over-past, the gate shut, the drawbridge taken up, there is no possibility of entrance." (Trapp)

Tommy Nelson - There is a time that you destroy something by throwing stones, but there's also a time that you gather stones to build something. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing - Embracing speaks to relationships in which there are seasons to draw close and seasons to set healthy boundaries. Is this not life? There will be a time for you to embrace, but there will also be times when you don't want anyone around. During the COVID-19 pandemic, embracing was shunned for a season to protect health.

Ray Stedman There is a time when we need to embrace others, to show our support for them. But there is a time when we ought to refuse to embrace them, when our support would be misunderstood and would be tantamount to complicity with something evil. Those times come from the hand of God.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them \(Ecclesiastes 3:5\)?](#) **GOTQUESTIONS**

ANSWER - "A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them" is the seventh of fourteen couplets of contrasting seasons in life listed by [King Solomon](#) in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Within these stanzas, Solomon compresses every human "activity under the heavens" (verse 1), concluding that there is a God-ordained time for each moment and that God is the ultimate authority over them all.

The meaning of "a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them" (Ecclesiastes 3:5) is probably the most difficult to decipher of all the pairings. A season of scattering stones most likely refers to the Old Testament practice of a conquering army to throw stones on the enemy's field to render it unproductive. In 2 Kings 3:25, when the Israelites advanced on Moab, they "destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree."

Soldiers used slingshots to launch stones as weapons of war. [King Uzziah](#) invented engines for Israel's defense towers, enabling his warriors to hurl great stones at their enemies (2 Chronicles 26:11–15). Perhaps the most famous stone-throwing victory in the Bible was when "David prevailed over the Philistines with a sling and a stone" (1 Samuel 17:49–50).

A season of gathering stones might indicate the clearing of fields to cultivate them, as in Isaiah 5:2, or the preparation of highways for the advance of victorious soldiers, as in Isaiah 62:10. In the Bible, stones were collected to build altars (Exodus 20:25), monuments (Genesis 31:45–46), and temples (1 Kings 5:17).

One commentator interprets the scattering and gathering stanza to suggest the harmful distribution of stones to destroy crops and soil versus the useful and profitable arranging of stones, as in building a fence or a memorial to God. Another scholar mentions an ancient practice of tossing stones into a grave at the time of burial as opposed to the arranging of stones to build a house for the living.

The Aramaic version of Ecclesiastes perceived "scattering stones" as tearing down an old building and "gathering stones" as preparing to build a new one. One possible explanation for "scattering stones" and "gathering them" may be a simple allusion to demonstrating hostility versus friendship. This interpretation seems to agree with the associated stanza, "a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing" (Ecclesiastes 3:5).

While it may be challenging to pinpoint Solomon's specific application of "a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them," we can

be confident of its general connotation. There are appropriate times in life to damage and destroy, to conquer enemies and bring about their ruin. Alternatively, there are proper seasons for clearing out harmful and useless things to cultivate, grow, build, and protect.

Looking back on his life, Solomon had come to understand that God has a good purpose in everything. Whether we demolish an enemy or work to build and protect, “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, ESV).

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing \(Ecclesiastes 3:5\)?](#)
[GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon observes that God has a plan for all people at all times and in every season. Through the ongoing cycles of life—through beginnings and endings, joys and sorrows, highs and lows—God is always with us, working out His good purposes (see Romans 8:28). If we learn to trust Him, we’ll grow to appreciate that the Lord’s timing and intentions are perfect.

“There is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,” says Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:5. This couplet is the ninth of fourteen contrasting seasons in which Solomon catalogs and condenses all human activity in its myriad forms.

The word for “embrace” in the original Hebrew means “to grasp or hold (something or someone) tightly in your arms, usually with fondness.” Thus, the focus of this stanza seems to include friendships, family interactions, and sexual relations between husbands and wives.

The same verb for “embrace” is used often in Scripture to describe two people greeting one another. We find it in Genesis 29:13, when Laban enthusiastically welcomes his nephew Jacob, and in Genesis 33:4, when brothers Esau and Jacob have their emotional reunion. In the New Testament, believers regularly embrace and greet one another with “a holy kiss” (2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16; Galatians 2:9; Acts 20:10, 37).

A *time to embrace* can also be used as a euphemism for sexual unions, as in Song of Solomon 2:6 and Proverbs 5:20. The law detailed specific “times to refrain from embracing” in Leviticus 15. Sexual relations and touching of any kind were expressly forbidden if either the man or the woman had a bodily discharge. A seven-day purification process was required before sexual relations could resume.

With the hope of holding off a dreadful judgment of sin, God called the people of Israel to consecrate themselves in solemn acts of repentance: “Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning” (Joel 2:12, NLT). This season of repentance also involved a time to refrain from embracing. The crisis was so devastating that every occasion for joy and personal enjoyment had to be put aside. All the people were to gather in a sacred assembly to mourn and to plead with God for deliverance: “Gather all the people—the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room” (Joel 2:16, NLT).

The apostle Paul also alludes to a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing in his teaching about principles for marriage: “The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s needs. . . . Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:3–5, NLT).

Christian couples are not to deprive one another sexually except by [mutual consent](#). There is an appropriate “time to refrain from embracing,” but only for an agreed-upon period and purpose—to devote themselves to prayer. Once the dedicated season of prayer is over, Paul urged couples to get back to “embracing” so that Satan could not tempt them into immoral sexual relations.

Ecclesiastes 3:6 A time to search and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep and a time to throw away.

- **time to seek**, Ge 30:30-43 31:18 Ex 12:35,36 De 8:17,18 2Ki 5:26 8:9, an a time to lose, Mt 16:25,26 19:29 Mk 8:35-37 10:28-30 Lu 9:24,25
- **time to throw away**: Ec 11:1 2Ki 7:15 Ps 112:9 Isa 2:20 Jon 1:5 Ac 27:19,38 Php 3:7,8 Heb 10:34,35
- See [over 50 translations](#)

SEASONS OF SEEKING AND KEEPING

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to search (baqas; Lxx - [zeteo](#)) and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to give up as lost - These seem to deal primarily with possessions. Sometimes you just need to give up looking for a lost item! I remember one day I lost my retainer and searched the entire house without success. And then I prayed and checked the garbage that was ready to be set out to be picked up. You guessed it - I found my retainer in the garbage! If I hadn't, I would have given it up as lost. **Search** (שׁוֹמֵר - [baqas](#)) means to seek diligently. **Give up as lost** (תָּבַח - 'āḇaḡ) means being willing to accept loss. And remember that God often grows us more in what we lose than in what we find.

In Luke 15, the shepherd searches for the lost sheep until he finds it illustrating the importance of seeking when it's right.

[Ray Stedman](#) feels that "The last six of these opposites relate to the spirit, to the inner decisions, the deep commitments. There is "a time to seek [work, marriage, new friends], and a time to lose," (Ecclesiastes 3:6a RSV). There comes a time in life when we should curtail certain friendships, or change our jobs, for instance, and lose what we had in the past. It is proper and appropriate that these times should come."

Tommy Nelson - There will come a time that you will be full of hope and will want to search. There will also be a time when you will be hopeless and want to give up. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

A time to keep ([shamar](#)) and a time to throw away - Solomon describes the seasons of keeping and casting. Keep (שָׁמַר - [shamar](#)) means to guard, protect, preserve carefully. Throw away (הִשָּׁל - *hišl*) means to hurl, cast off, discard completely. This implies decisive, forceful action, not passive letting go but deliberate throwing away.

Every few years, you realize some clothes must stay, but others are no longer useful. Keeping everything leads to clutter; throwing away wisely leads to order and freshness. In a storm, a captain may throw heavy cargo overboard to save the ship. Some things, though once precious, must be discarded to preserve life.

Nothing in this world is ours forever.

-- Duane Garrett

Tommy Nelson - The things you own will be useful for a while, and you will want to keep them and implies intentional protection. But one day you will take your stuff to Goodwill; it's time to throw it away. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

[Ray Stedman](#) is a bit more applicational in his interpretation of this verse - There is "a time to keep and a time to cast away," (Ecclesiastes 3:6b RSV). There are values and standards which must never be surrendered, while there are other times when we need to throw away things -- clean out the attic, the garage, throw away the old clothes, etc. This is true of habits and attitudes at times. Resentments need to be thrown away. Grudges and long-standing hurts need to be forgiven and forgotten.

THOUGHT- "The Wisdom to Let Go"

"A time to keep and a time to throw away." — Ecclesiastes 3:6

Life with God is not just about gathering blessings. It's also about releasing weights that no longer serve His purpose for you. Sometimes you must keep memories, relationships, godly commitments. Sometimes (I would add this is always best) you must throw away bitterness, pride, unhealthy patterns, idols of the heart. The enemy wants you cluttered. God wants you clear and free.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also **lay aside every encumbrance** and the sin which so easily entangles us..." — Hebrews 12:1+

Ask the Spirit today: What do I need to hold tightly? What do I need to throw into the sea of God's forgetfulness?

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to search and a time to give up \(Ecclesiastes 3:6\)?](#) [GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - Through fourteen diverging events listed in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon illustrates that God has an appointed time and purpose for every activity and season of human existence. There is "a time to search and a time to give up," he contends in Ecclesiastes 3:6. This couplet seems to address the times and seasons of life that are beyond our control.

The Bible says there is a time to search for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (Proverbs 2:4–6). We are to seek the Lord, His strength, and His presence with all of our hearts (1 Chronicles 16:11; Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:13). There are appropriate times to

search for answers to prayer persistently and earnestly: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).

But there is also a time to give up seeking and [be content](#) despite our losses (1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5). The apostle Paul told the Philippians, “Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” (Philippians 3:7). He had “learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11–13).

When we consider “a time to search and a time to give up,” as it relates to our material possessions and the things we try to hold onto in this life, we can’t help but think of Jesus’ challenge in Matthew 10:39: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (ESV).

The faithful follower of Christ will give up His search for anything and everything that might distract him from his real treasure (Matthew 6:19–21). Like Paul, he will “consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8). In “giving up” our earthly search, we find our true worth and purpose; we gain everlasting joy and eternal reward (Isaiah 35:10).

In Luke 15, Jesus presents the parables of the Lost Sheep (see also Matthew 18:12–14), the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son, revealing the relentless love in God’s heart and His steadfast mission to seek and save lost souls. God wants no one to die and be lost for all eternity without Him (Luke 19:10). He desires everyone to repent and be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Yet the sobering truth is, there are times when even God must give up His search. When Judah stubbornly persisted in idolatry, the Lord told His prophet, “Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, and don’t beg me to help them, for I will not listen to you” (Jeremiah 7:16, NLT; see also Jeremiah 11:14).

“A time to search and a time to give up” reminds us that some things in life are within our control while others are not. We may work hard, scraping and saving to buy a home, only to lose it when the housing market crashes. We may wait years to find the love of our life and then lose that person in a tragic accident. Indeed there are times to seek, but there are also times to give up and lose. We must remember to hold everything in this life loosely.

After Job had lost everything, he still trusted God. Of the Lord, Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15). As an old man, Joseph looked back on all his losses and saw that not one of them, including the evil done to him, had prevented God’s purpose from being accomplished. While others had meant to harm Joseph, God had used every season of loss to fulfill His good plan (Genesis 50:15–21).

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to keep and a time to throw away \(Ecclesiastes 3:6\)?](#)
[GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - If you’ve ever sorted through your belongings for a garage sale or yard sale, you can probably relate to King Solomon’s observation in Ecclesiastes 3:6 that “there is a time to keep and a time to throw away.” This statement is part of an extended passage (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8) in which Solomon parallels fourteen positive and negative times and seasons of life. Together they represent the sum of human existence. Ultimately, Solomon concludes that God controls each moment and works out His good purposes through every experience.

“A time to keep and a time to throw away” almost certainly applies to how we deal with our personal possessions. Scripture states that nothing in this life is ours to keep forever: “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Timothy 6:7; see also Ecclesiastes 5:15; Job 1:21). Since we can’t take anything with us when we die, the focus of our existence ought not to be on acquiring things (Psalm 49:17).

The Bible reveals that everything we have comes from God (John 3:27; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 11:12). Our heavenly Father is generous and blesses His children when they are charitable, too (Proverbs 22:9). Jesus taught this principle of giving: “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back” (Luke 6:38, NLT).

The same rule is applied in Proverbs 11:24–25: “Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed” (NLT).

Even though generosity is the rule, the apostle Paul spoke of an appropriate “time to keep” and not give to one in need. Believers are not obligated to provide for those who are lazy, idle, and unwilling to work. Within God’s family, there should be no freeloading or

expecting handouts (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12).

“A time to keep and a time to throw away” also reminds us of Jesus’ challenge in Matthew 10:39: “If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it” (Matthew 10:39, NLT). There are times and occasions when getting rid of our possessions is better than keeping them. Sometimes we cling too tightly to our stuff. For this reason, Jesus warned, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Instead, Jesus instructed, “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be” (Matthew 6:19–21, NLT).

According to Paul, our heavenly assets are the only ones worth keeping in the bank: “Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life” (1 Timothy 6:17–19, NLT).

Just as sailors throw their cargo overboard to save a ship (Jonah 1:5; Acts 27:18, 19, 38), so must we jettison any sinful baggage that might keep us from eternal salvation (Matthew 5:29–30; Matthew 18:8–9; Mark 9:43–47). The devoted follower of Christ will give up anything and everything that might distract him from his real treasure. Like Paul, he will “consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

Recognizing there is “a time to keep and a time to throw away” means living with an eternal perspective. We may acquire things while on earth, but we must always be prepared to let them go.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) A TIME FOR WAR

A time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:6-8

For generations Christians have struggled to reconcile their faith with the terrible demands of war. The biblical perspective seems to be that war is sometimes in the will of God.

I realize that to say that war may sometimes be in the will of God is to jump into a firestorm of controversy. Such a view is not popular today. I ate lunch with several fellow pastors and heard one of them say emphatically that war is always a sin.

Let me say that I think my pastoral friend is partly right and partly wrong. War is terrible in all its aspects, and I would never want to be known as someone who is “for” war. I’m not even sure what a statement like that would mean. I don’t know any sane person who is for war.

I think my friend is right to this degree: Wars come about because of the sinfulness of the human race. Warfare comes from the fallen nature of man. Whenever two nations go to war, sin is never absent. There may be sins of pride and oppression, or there may be sins of brutality and naked aggression, but sin is always part of the equation.

I would go a step further and say that there is rarely a war so “pure” or “clean” that one side is totally right and the other side is totally wrong. Even where such a case exists, there will almost always be some wrong motives on both sides.

But is going to war always and in every case sinful? I think not. Just before the Persian Gulf conflict started, Billy Graham said, “There come times when we have to fight for peace. Unfortunately, that’s been true of the whole history of the human race.” That doesn’t make every war right, but it does mean that some wars are indeed justified in the eyes of God.

Better days are coming. In the last days God’s kingdom will finally be established on the earth and all the nations will be at peace. The law of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem and the Lord Jesus Himself will settle the disputes that today end in war. So wise will be His rule that weapons of war will become obsolete. People will take their tanks and turn them into combines; their cruise missiles will become tractors; B-52 bombers will be melted down and transformed into solar-powered water purifiers. Bullets will become obsolete. All the gas masks will be thrown away. They won’t be needed in the kingdom Jesus will establish.

Best of all, the nations will not take up swords against one another. The old spiritual says it very well: “Gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside. Ain’t gonna study war no more.”

That’s how God intended it to be. Between now and then, nations will still go to war, but let us keep our eyes on the goal and let us

work and pray for that day of lasting peace to come.

Prince of Peace, show me what it means to be a peacemaker in a world filled with war. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Do you agree that God has a place in His plan for everything—even war, sorrow, hatred, and death?
- Do you believe that war may sometimes be justified in the will of God? Under what circumstances would you as a Christian refuse to go to war?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Joshua 23:9-10; Isaiah 2:2-4; and Romans 13:3-4.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 A time to tear apart and a time to sew together; A time to be silent and a time to speak.

- **A time to tear apart** : Ge 37:29,34 2Sa 1:11 3:31 1Ki 21:27 2Ki 5:7 6:30 Jer 36:24 Joe 2:13 Ac 9:39
- **a time to sew together**: Job 2:13 Ps 39:2 Isa 36:21 Jer 8:14 La 3:28 Am 5:13 8:3 Mic 7:5
- **and a time to speak**: Ge 44:18,34 1Sa 19:4,5 25:24-44 Es 4:13,14 7:4 Job 32:4-37:24 Pr 24:11,12 31:8,9 Lu 19:37-40 Ac 4:20
- See [over 50 translations](#)

SEASONS OF TEARING AND SEWING

A time ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) to tear apart and a time ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) to sew together - In ancient culture, tearing garments symbolized grief, mourning, or anger (e.g., Genesis 37:34, Job 1:20). There is a time to tear clothing which was part of the Jewish ritual of mourning but then there is a time to sew together that which was torn. Some commentators write that sewing together garments symbolized the end of mourning, healing, and moving on.

GOTQUESTIONS has a wonderful example of a time to tear that had eternal consequences writing that "When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the [temple veil](#) was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51+). Through this divine tearing, God in His justice and mercy opened the way for us to experience "a time to mend.""

Tommy Nelson - There will be a time for agony. You will hurt so bad, you will want to tear your clothes. And then there will be a time to sew up the tears because the pain is gone. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

A time ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) to be silent and a time ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) to speak. - Even human speech is under the control of divinely arranged times. There are seasons when silence is wiser than speaking, times of mourning, listening, or reverent waiting. Other seasons call for speaking boldly — proclaiming truth, offering comfort, taking a stand.

Gilbrant writes "A time of sorrow also must be mentioned as a time of restraint. Precious words are often wasted at this season. The time of silence is more soothing. We had better restrain our words till the waters have somewhat assuaged. A talkative comforter adds to the trouble he professes to heal. He is rather a sore than a balm. Great wisdom is required to know when, as well as what, to speak. The wise improvement of the time to speak brings a diversified and fruitful blessing. The fool is restrained (Prov. 26:5). The afflicted is comforted (2 Thess. 4:18; 5:14). Christian rebuke is rightly and lovingly administered. The ignorant is instructed (Prov. 10:21; Isa. 50:4). Succor is given in the time of extremity (Est. 7:4; Prov. 31:8f). Sound knowledge is dispersed in our respective spheres (Prov. 15:7). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Ray Stedman has an excellent comment on "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak," (Ecclesiastes 3:7b) writing that "There are times when we know something, a piece of gossip, and we should not say it; we ought not to speak. There are times when we ought to speak, when something we are keeping secret would deliver someone or bring truth into a situation; a time to speak up."

Tommy Nelson - "There will be times when you will want to keep your mouth shut and times when you just have to tell somebody something." (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to tear and a time to mend \(Ecclesiastes 3:7\)? GOTQUESTIONS](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, the Teacher (King Solomon) uses fourteen pairs of opposing seasons to illustrate that everything we experience in this life is in the hands of God. To modern readers, the meaning of the eleventh couplet—“a time to tear and a time to mend”—may be obscure, but in biblical times the implication would have been clear. In general, the expression has to do with tearing and mending a garment. More specifically, it refers to times when we receive bad news versus when life is good.

In the original language, the word translated as “tear” means “to separate abruptly or violently, to rip, cut, tear to pieces.” The verb for “mend” refers to “stitching together as in sewing or needlework.”

In ancient days, if a person received terrible news, the custom was to [rend one's garment](#) in an expression of intense grief. When the tragedy resolved, it was customary to mend one's garment by sewing it back together.

King David ripped his robes when he heard the crushing, albeit exaggerated, news that Absalom had murdered all of his remaining sons (2 Samuel 13:31). When Reuben discovered that his brother Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief (Genesis 37:29). In the New Testament, Paul and Barnabas rent their garments in anguish when they saw that the people of Lystra were about to pay homage to them as deities (Acts 14:14–15).

“A time to mend” is a graphic analogy for the inner healing and recovery that gradually takes place through the process of grieving. The Lord “heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). As believers, we can expect to endure times of sorrow and bereavement, but we do not grieve like unbelievers (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

One commentator suggests that “a time to tear” includes a broader application: “It can involve the tearing of a garment into smaller patches to be used to mend another garment. It could even apply to personal relationships. Most of us on occasion have had to sever relationships with long-time friends, painful though this may be. For example, a recovering alcoholic sometimes has to give up his old drinking buddies if he is to recover from his addiction” (Pechawer, L., *Poetry and Prophecy*, Vol. 3, Standard Publishing, 2008, p. 100).

There are times when relationships must be broken (1 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:7), and there are times when we must get out the symbolic “needle and thread” to patch things up (Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:15; Mark 11:25; Colossians 3:13). Sometimes we break ties with people, and at other times we make new friends.

“A time to tear” is similarly associated with God's judgment in the Old Testament. When King Saul rebelled and rejected God's Word, Samuel the prophet declared, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone else—one who is better than you” (1 Samuel 15:28, NLT).

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the [temple veil](#) was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). Through this divine tearing, God in His justice and mercy opened the way for us to experience “a time to mend.” The prophet foretold, “He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed” (Isaiah 53:5, NLT). The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the “one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity” (1 Timothy 2:5, NLT), opened up for us a new and life-giving way to experience restored fellowship with God the Father (Hebrews 10:20).

Mending also represents an everyday, ordinary task. There are times when [tragedy](#) will knock us off balance, and there are seasons when our existence will consist of normalcy and routine. “A time to tear and a time to mend” not only reminds us that there are good and bad seasons but also that there are both ordinary and extraordinary times in this life.

We won't always understand the Lord's purpose in the diverging cycles of birth and death, joy and sorrow, gain and loss, good and bad, but we can humbly accept that God knows the reasons because He sees the whole picture (Proverbs 16:4). We can trust that He is working out His [perfect plan](#) for our good (Romans 8:28).

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to be silent and a time to speak \(Ecclesiastes 3:7\)?](#)
[GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon affirms that God is sovereignly [in control](#) and at work in our individual lives. God has a time and a purpose for everything that happens (Romans 8:28). With “a time to be silent and a time to speak,” Solomon focuses our attention on human speech.

A theme often dealt with in Scripture is the idea of life having appropriate times to be silent and times to speak. In wisdom literature, [the fool](#) is portrayed as one who talks too much and always at the wrong time, but the wise person knows when to be silent and when to speak: “The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating. The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives” (Proverbs 18:6–7).

Proverbs 10:19 warns, “When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent” (CSB, see

also Psalm 39:1). In severe adversity and evil, “the prudent keep quiet in such times” (Amos 5:13; see also 2 Kings 2:3, 5). “Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity,” advises Solomon in Proverbs 21:23. “Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues” (Proverbs 17:28).

Jesus exemplified the wisdom of silence when He stood before Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:11–14). To His followers, Jesus said, “You must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you” (Matthew 12:36–37, NLT). For this reason, James taught those who genuinely want to be godly examples in the church to learn to control their tongues (James 3:1–12).

The apostle Paul stressed the importance of letting our “conversation be gracious and attractive so” we might “have the right response for everyone” (Colossians 4:6). The proper word spoken at the right time, “how good it is!” says Proverbs 15:23. Our [words](#) contain “the power of life and death,” states Proverbs 18:21. What we say can either save lives or destroy them (Proverbs 12:6).

A time to be silent is sometimes associated with grief and mourning. Often the best comfort to offer a person suffering through a tremendous loss is to sit with him or her in silence. When Job’s three friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they came and sat with him for a week in silence. They recognized that Job’s anguish was too overwhelming for words (Job 2:11–13).

Silence is golden, says the proverbial expression, but there are times when God’s people must speak. The Bible commands us to speak out against injustice (Isaiah 1:17; 10:1–3). Believers are not to keep silent about their faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:17–20; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; 1 Peter 3:1[5](#)).

When the Jews faced national annihilation, the brave [Queen Esther](#) recognized her God-appointed purpose and time to speak. Her cousin Mordecai urged, “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:12–14). Esther obeyed, risking her life to save her people. She knew it was “a time to speak,” and she received God’s abundant blessing.

Solomon’s emphasis on “a time to be silent and a time to speak” ought to remind us that it’s generally wise to keep our mouths shut, let our words be few, and learn to control our tongues (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Still, we must discern when it’s time to speak out on the Lord’s behalf (Isaiah 58:1) for the glory of God (Joshua 6:16; Psalm 34:1; Luke 19:37–40) and the building up of His church (Ephesians 4:29; 5:17–21).

A Time to Speak

There is a time for everything . . . a time to be silent and a time to speak. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7

Today’s Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:1–7

For thirty long years, the African American woman worked faithfully for a large global ministry. Yet when she sought to talk with co-workers about racial injustice, she was met with silence. Finally, however, in the spring of 2020—as open discussions about racism expanded around the world—her ministry friends “started having some open dialogue.” With mixed feelings and pain, she was grateful discussions began.

Silence can be a virtue in some situations. As King Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: . . . a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7).

Silence in the face of bigotry and injustice, however, only enables harm and hurt. Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoeller (jailed in Nazi Germany for speaking out) confessed that in a poem he penned after the war. “First they came for the Communists,” he wrote, “but I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.” He added, “Then they came for” the Jews, the Catholics, and others, “but I didn’t speak up.” Finally, “they came for me—and by that time there was no one left to speak up.”

It takes courage—and love—to speak up against injustice. Seeking God’s help, however, we recognize the time to speak is now. By: Patricia Raybon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Why is it important not to be silent during discussions about injustice? What hinders your willingness to engage in such dialogue?

Dear God, release my tongue and heart from the enemy’s grip. Equip me to see and feel the harm of injustice so that I may speak up for those hurt by this sin.

Don't Say It!

[There is] a time to keep silence. — Ecclesiastes 3:7

Today's Scripture : Proverbs 10:8-21

In Discipleship Journal, Cynthia Heald told of a time she and her husband Jack were talking about remodeling their house. He said he wished he had his brother-in-law's skill for carpentry. "For a brief second," Cynthia wrote, "I was ready to make a snappy reply by saying, 'Maybe my next husband will be more handy.'" She went on, "For once in my life I thought before I spoke and asked myself, 'Will this benefit Jack?' Of course the answer was no! So I was quiet for a moment and responded in a much more positive way."

The Bible tells us that we can accomplish much good with kind, thoughtful, and wise words (Prov. 10:31-32; 16:23; Eph. 4:29). We can all think of times we have been blessed by the gentle, encouraging words of a brother or sister in Christ.

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is also "a time to keep silence" (3:7). Sometimes we can accomplish more by not saying anything. We avoid inflicting pain, creating conflict, or damaging someone's reputation or future.

When we're tempted to say something critical, damaging, confidential, boastful, whiny, or patronizing, we need to stop and think of the effect. Let's follow Solomon's advice about "a time to keep silence" and don't say it! By: David C. Egner (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

There are some silent people
Whose praises should be sung;
They preach a mighty sermon
By guarding well their tongue.
—Posegate

If you hold your tongue now, you won't have to eat your words later.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace.

- **time to love:** Eze 16:8 Ps 139:21 Eph 3:19 5:25,28,29 Tit 2:4
- **a time to hate:** 2Ch 19:2 Lu 14:26 Rev 2:2
- **a time of war:** Ge 14:14-17 Jos 8:1-29 11:23 2Sa 10:6-19 1Ki 5:4 2Ch 20:1-29,30
- See [over 50 translations](#)

A TIME TO LOVE AND HATE A TIME FOR WAR AND PEACE

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to love and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) to hate - When we were young and fell in love, it was the appropriate time and appropriate response. When we see evil being promoted as good, it is an appropriate time to **hate**.

[Ray Stedman](#) When is it time to **hate**? Think of young Abraham Lincoln the first time he saw human beings sold on the slave blocks in New Orleans. He felt hatred rising in his heart. He resolved that if he ever got a chance to smash slavery he would do so. Lincoln's hatred of slavery was perfectly appropriate. There is "a time to love," when it is right that we should extend our love to somebody who is hurting, someone who is feeling dejected or rejected, lonely or weak.

Gilbrant - All this is not chance. It is the providence or permissive control of the Great Ruler of the universe. War is his chastisement; peace his returning blessing. It is his prerogative to "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 46:9); to "scatter the people that delight in war" (Ps. 68:30); and, when the sword has done its appointed work, to "make peace in the borders of his people" (Ps. 147:14). "When he gives quietness, who then can cause trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only" (Job 34:29). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

A time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) for war and a time (et/eth; Lxx - [kairos](#)) for peace - When the US was attacked at Pearl Harbor in December 7, 1941, it marked the time for war. When the atom bombs fell on Japan, it marked a call to peace, although at a price.

[Ray Stedman](#) There is "a time for war, and a time for peace," (Ecclesiastes 3:8b RSV). We ought to remember this as we consider some of the issues before us today. When tyranny rides roughshod over the rights of men there is a time when a nation properly makes war. But there is a time when war is absolutely the wrong thing, when no provocation should be allowed to start one because

war can explode into violence far beyond anything demanded by a particular situation. How much is permitted in that regard is a perfectly moot subject, one that is being widely debated today.

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Daniel Hill - When these words were made a part of the song Turn, Turn, Turn, the writer did as what the secular world so often does, it TURNED the meaning all around and ended with the question I hope we are not too late to stop the war? But we find in the Bible that there is a time for war, and Jesus observed that there would be wars and rumors of war until He returns at the second advent. However, we must choose our conflicts carefully. Knowing that living in a fallen world means that there will be times of war and times of peace. ALL THESE THINGS SHOW US that we are not as in control as we might think and that we have a choice, depend upon the one who is in control or try to be the captains of our own destiny in a sea of uncertainty and doubt.

Ray Stedman offers some concluding thoughts on these 14 couplets that occur at the appropriate time - "I point out that all of this is God's wonderful plan for your life. The problem, of course, is that it is not our plan for our life. If we were given that right we would have no unpleasantness at all in life. But that would ruin us. God knows that people who are protected from everything almost invariably end up being impossible to live with; they are selfish, cruel, vicious, shallow, unprincipled. God sends these things in order that we might be taught. There is a time for everything, the Searcher says."

POSB sums up Ec 3:2-8- These fourteen contrasts illustrate that God's plan for our lives involves a collection of diverse experiences. Opposite extremes in life—and everything in between—are controlled by the One who designs our days and years. God takes these dissimilar experiences and works them out for the good of all who love Him (Ro.8:28). He uses every experience of life to mold us into what God desires us to be. This is the first truth the Teacher imparts to us that elevates us above the rest of God's creation, that gives meaning and value to human life. Our lives are not controlled by fate, nor do things happen by chance or coincidence. Life is controlled by the One who appoints the activities of our lives and alters their occurrence according to His plan, purpose, and schedule. God controls all of the above and everything else that we experience. This makes us uniquely valuable, far above all of God's other creatures. ([The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible - Vol. 22](#))

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time to love and a time to hate \(Ecclesiastes 3:8\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - [King Solomon](#) reflects in Ecclesiastes 3:8 that "there is a time to love and a time to hate." This statement, however perplexing, can be understood when examined in context. The verse is part of an extended passage (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8) in which Solomon catalogs fourteen contrasting times and seasons of life (birth and death, planting and harvest, weeping and laughing, loving and hating, etc.). Together they represent the sum of human activity. Solomon concludes that God is in control of each moment of our existence in this world. God has a proper time and a good purpose for every experience (Romans 8:28).

Is there ever a time for Christians to hate? The Bible mentions several things [God hates](#) and, therefore, believers should also hate (Revelation 2:6, 15). Jeremiah highlights God's hatred of idolatry (Jeremiah 44:4–5; see also Deuteronomy 12:31; 16:22). Isaiah and Amos speak of the Lord's hatred of hypocrisy (Isaiah 1:14–17; Amos 5:21–24). Proverbs 6:16–19 lists arrogance, deception, murder, wicked plotting, evil inclinations, slander, and troublemaking as seven things that are detestable to God.

The psalmist declares, "Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 97:10). In his wisdom literature, Solomon instructs, "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech" (Proverbs 8:13).

Loving God means hating sin. The whole truth of God's love includes getting angry about sin and its effects on humanity (Psalm 7:11). Jesus was furious when He cleansed the temple, but His anger did not change His nature as a loving God (1 John 4:7–21).

"A time to love and a time to hate" covers the full range of human affections and emotions. Our capacity to both love and hate is part of being created in God's image. Therefore, sometimes hatred and anger are manifestations of the fullness and intensity of our love.

Jesus explains the high cost of loving and following Him: "If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26, NLT).

While there are times when hatred is appropriate, love is the defining characteristic of true believers (John 13:34–35). Jesus calls us to love in His two greatest mandates: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). In addition, He asks us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43–44).

Scripture is filled with examples of “a time to love.” We love because Christ first loved us (1 John 4:7, 19; Romans 5:8). Even our ability to love comes from Him (Galatians 2:20). When we feed the hungry, care for the poor and needy, visit the sick and those in prison, not only are we loving and caring for people, but, ultimately, we are serving Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 25:34–46). Believers are to “be devoted to one another in love” (Romans 12:10), serve one another (John 13:1–17), and live in unity with the same attitude and humility as Christ (Philippians 2:1–4). Everything we do is to be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Solomon’s reflection on “a time to love and a time to hate” is also an excellent reminder to [love sinners](#) while hating their sins. God accomplishes this perfectly, but how do we in our human imperfection love sinners as God loves them, in holiness and without malice? We love them by sharing the truth of the gospel message with them so they can find forgiveness and freedom from sin in Jesus Christ. We love sinners by showing them kindness, acceptance, and respect even as we disapprove of their behavior. We hate sin by not excusing it, ignoring it, or partaking in it.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is a time for war and a time for peace \(Ecclesiastes 3:8\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)

ANSWER - In Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, King Solomon presents a series of fourteen contrasting seasons and events that together represent all human activity in its varied forms. Our lives contain a mixture of joy and sorrow, birth and death, harmony and conflict. Solomon resolves that God is in control of each moment. He has a good purpose for everything we experience (see Romans 8:28).

In the final couplet, Solomon states that there is “a time for war and a time for peace.” In the original language, the term for “war” refers to “the waging of armed conflict against an enemy.” “Peace” ([shalom](#) in Hebrew) is the state of “harmonious relations and freedom from disputes, especially during the absence of war.” *Shalom* also describes an inner condition of total well-being. In general, “a time for war and a time for peace” could represent the spectrum of national concerns and sociopolitical conditions humans confront in life.

In ancient times, people did not wage war during harvest season. Soldiers went to battle only at specific times of year (2 Samuel 11:1). Today, nations go to war only in response to certain situations.

While war can never be classified as good, Scripture reveals that God has an appointed purpose for it (Psalm 144:1; 2 Samuel 22:35). In the Old Testament, the Lord at times commanded His people to go to war to bring judgment on sinful nations (Deuteronomy 20:1–4; Numbers 31:7; Joshua 8:1, 10:40; Isaiah 13:3–4).

War is part of the reality of living in a fallen world (Exodus 17:16; 2 Samuel 3:1; 2 Samuel 3:1). Humans are flawed and sinful (Romans 3:10–18), and war results from hatred and sin (James 4:1–2; Psalm 140:1–2; Proverbs 10:12; 29:22). Evil people such as Adolf Hitler make going to war unavoidable and necessary to prevent even greater atrocities from being committed.

“A time for war” is also associated with end times. In Matthew 24:3–14, the disciples ask Jesus, “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” (verse 3). Jesus answers, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. . . . All these are the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:6–8).

On this earth, perfect peace is only found in God and preserved through having a close relationship with Him (Philippians 4:6–7). “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you,” declares Isaiah 26:3. “A time for peace” is the opportunity and blessing of every believer in all circumstances (Romans 5:1–5; John 16:33; Philippians 4:11–13). Life in the Holy Spirit offers righteousness, joy, and peace (Romans 14:17–19; 8:6; Galatians 5:22).

“A time for peace” is the reward of those who love and obey God’s Word (Psalm 119:165–167; Philippians 4:8–9). The Bible says that “those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die” (Isaiah 57:2, NLT).

The Lord is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and, ultimately, it is His will that wars cease to exist on earth (Psalm 46:9; Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). There will come a day when weapons of war will become instruments of peace.

A future “time for peace” is promised in the [New Jerusalem](#) when God Himself will make His home among His people (Revelation 21:1–4; 22:3–5). “In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD” (Isaiah 11:6–9, NLT).

The fact that there is “a time for war and a time for peace” reminds us that we are utterly dependent on God to make it through the ever-changing, often turbulent seasons of this life. In all circumstances and every relationship, God holds us firmly and forever in His

sovereign hands. Even in the most hostile situations over which we have little or no control, we can know peace by trusting and resting in God, knowing that He orders our times according to His good pleasure.

A Time to Fight - Robert Morgan - Borrow [From This Verse](#)

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Today's text is widely remembered as President John F. Kennedy's favorite passage of Scripture, but he is far from the first American leader who appreciated its value. Peter Muhlenberg once used it with powerful effect.

Muhlenberg was a native of Pennsylvania, where his parents had settled as Lutheran missionaries from Germany to the American colonies. Much of Peter's youth, however, was spent in Europe, for his father had wanted him educated in Germany (just as many American missionaries today send their children back to the States for boarding school). Young Peter, however, wasn't good educational material, and he spent most of his teen years working in a grocery store and serving in the army.

He returned to Pennsylvania in 1767, wanting to follow his father's footsteps into the ministry. He was ordained by the Anglicans, and began pastoring a church among German people in Virginia. In 1774 he was elected to the Virginia Legislature and was present at St. John's Church in Richmond when Patrick Henry proclaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!" Peter was so moved that he promptly joined George Washington's army.

He resigned from his church, and on a bitterly sad Sunday preached his farewell sermon. He read Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." Looking up, he said, "There is a time to preach and a time to pray, but there is also a time to fight, and that time has now come." Then to the shock of his congregation, he suddenly flung off his ministerial robe to reveal underneath the uniform of a militia colonel.

He recruited other men in his church, and they became known as the "German Regiment" under the command of Peter Muhlenberg, who achieved the rank of major general. After the war, Peter returned to Philadelphia a hero and spent his remaining days serving in local and national government. *

Today's Suggested Reading Ecclesiastes 3:1–8

Ecclesiastes 3:9 What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?

- Ec 1:3 2:11,22,23 5:16 Pr 14:23 Mt 16:26
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:3+ What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 2:11+ Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.



**THE QUEST FOR
LASTING PROFIT**

What profit ([yithron](#); [Lxx](#) - [perisseia](#) - that which is beyond the regular or expected amount) **is there to the worker from that in which he toils** - This is a rhetorical question and the implicit answer is that people get nothing for their hard work! Human labor, seen apart from God, cannot produce lasting meaning. **Profit** ([yithron](#)) appears 10 times in Ecclesiastes and each time it questions what is the lasting benefit or eternal value of all this effort? **Profit** ([yithron](#)) is a commercial term so the idea is life "pays no dividends."

Ray Stedman What is "left over" to provide a permanent sense of satisfaction after the momentary pleasure is extracted from some pleasurable experience? That is the question with which the Searcher examines everything. He has already asked it three times in this book. The answer follows.

NET NOTE - This rhetorical question is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: "Man gains nothing from his toil!" Any advantage that man might gain from his toil is nullified by his ignorance of divine providence.

Children build beautiful sandcastles at the beach — intricate, impressive. But when the tide rises, the castle is washed away completely. Without God's eternal touch, human accomplishments are just sand before the tide. Imagine a hamster running endlessly on a spinning wheel — lots of effort, but going nowhere. Human labor, apart from divine purpose, can feel similarly exhausting and fruitless.

Solomon isn't belittling hard work. He's warning us: If our work is disconnected from God's greater purpose, it will feel hollow. But when work is done unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23–24), even mundane labor becomes sacred and eternal.

Tommy Nelson - Solomon says that God is not your genie. God does not cooperate with us the way we think He should. He doesn't behave as was said of Aslan in the Chronicles of Narnia, "He is not a tame lion." And when we realize this, it leads us to a very human response. What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? (v. 9) We say to ourselves, "Why should I work so hard when it's all going to be destroyed? Why get married when you just end up fighting and hurting one another? Why have a child and deal with the stress and disappointment? Why should I go on living when I know at some point I'm going to get the twenty-four-hour stomach flu?"...Solomon is playing the devil's advocate here. He is saying what all of us think and sometimes wish we could say. What profit is there? Everything gets undone and it's all been ordained anyway. It is easy to get cynical. Do you ever feel like that? What's the use? Why not punt? Solomon put this into perspective. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 47](#))

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) GRASPING AT SHADOWS

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. Ecclesiastes 3:9-10

When the final examination grades at Cambridge University were published, Henry Martyn's highest ambition had been realized. He was the honors man of the year. Strangely, his first sensation was keen disappointment. "I obtained my highest wishes," he said, "but was surprised that I had grasped a shadow."

This is part of the "burden" that seemed to dog Solomon's steps. Everywhere he turned he found more evidence that nothing in this life seems to satisfy. Even the highest achievements often leave us feeling empty. Missionary friends wrote recently that upon completing the translation of the New Testament into a tribal language they felt exhausted and depressed. Where was the feeling of satisfaction such a monumental achievement should bring?

There is another side to the story. A young man came to Christ on the streets of Chicago. I had the privilege of baptizing him, knowing that he would go to prison for a crime committed before his conversion.

Writing from a maximum-security prison, he offered my congregation these words of encouragement:

I want you all to know that you and everyone at the church are in my prayers always. It isn't any easier out there. I just finished fasting for three days successfully. It was hard, especially not smoking. But I make it through the power of God. I really feel good about that. I mean I feel cleansed in my mind and stronger in the Lord. You all will always be in my prayers. Keep up the good work for the Lord. I got him covered in here. I'm starting with my cellie. God bless and thank you. Your brother in Christ, Shane.

Those words are remarkable, especially his statement that "it isn't any easier out there." Here's a young man in prison for up to fifteen years, yet he is fasting, praying, and setting out to win his cellmate to Christ. That kind of boldness comes only from knowing God personally.

I do not doubt that my missionary friends have gained a better perspective after their work of many years. And I'm sure that Shane

has many rough moments awaiting him behind bars. Henry Martyn was right about one thing: We live in a world of shadows where the ultimate significance of a given day's work may be hard to see. If we trust our feelings, we will soon give in to despair. But true faith rises above feelings to declare that what we do for Christ will last forever.

Lord God, in a world of passing shadows, You are the ultimate reality. Fill me with grace that I might serve You with joy Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why is it that our dreams when finally realized and our goals when finally achieved often bring less satisfaction than we had hoped—and often bring a sense of disappointment?
- What does this teach us about life and about God?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Kings 19:1-9; Jeremiah 2:13; and Mark 8:34.

Ecclesiastes 3:10 I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

- Ec 1:13,14 Ec 2:26 Ge 3:19 1Th 2:9 2Th 3:8
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 2:26+ For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

GOD'S ASSIGNMENT FOR LIFE

I have seen the task ([inyan](#) - burden, travail, difficult things) which God has given the sons of men ("Children of Adam") with which to occupy (to keep them occupied, to busy) themselves. - [AMPC](#) = "I have seen the painful labor and exertion and miserable business which God has given to the sons of men with which to exercise and busy themselves." Notice that the **task** is not random but it is something God deliberately assigns. Solomon says that God has assigned human beings a **task** of the work, responsibilities, and experiences that fill human life. Even though life feels heavy at times, Solomon says it is God-given and is part of God's wise design to occupy, test, humble, and shape mankind. Note that Solomon chose to describe life as a **task** ([inyan](#) - burden, travail, difficult things) rather than as a pleasure or a source of satisfaction.

Duane Garrett points out that "This verse should be rendered, "I have seen all the business God has given to people to afflict them." Work is not simply a part of nature but is an affliction from God (Gen 3:17–19+). (See [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Volume 14 - Page 299](#))

Tommy Nelson - In the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us that there is no hope unless we turn to God. Now we have a bigger problem because we have turned to God. We find out that He has given us this life of vanity and toil. He has appointed everything that happens in our lives. How do you live in a world that is out of your control? How do you live with a God who doesn't always make sense? Again, the Hebrew translation of "sons of men" in verse 10 is "sons of Adam," reminding us of the fallen state of man. It's just hard to be a fallen man in a fallen world. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 48](#))

Task ([06045](#)) *inyan* (from **anah** = to be occupied, busied) means a task, a burden and refers to a job to be performed, a responsibility to be met, a need to be satisfied. E.g., to examine all of life, to understand it (Ec 1:13; 2:23); both by good and evil persons (Ec 2:26; 3:10); concerning what is past, present, and future (Eccl. 8:16). It indicates the effort put forth as well as the task itself (Eccl. 5:3).

Gilbrant - Solomon spoke of the task that God has allotted to humanity (Ec 3:10) and declared that it is a grievous one, full of pain and leading nowhere (Ec 1:13; 2:23). It is significant that he chose to describe life as a task, an assignment, rather than as a pleasure or a source of satisfaction. Man just does his job over and over again, with no good result in view. The sinner spends his life gathering resources, only to give them to the good (Ec 2:26). Even the good gathers riches only to die and have them pass to someone else (Ec 4:8). In a

slightly different idiom, the writer declares that hoarding riches and not receiving the benefit is an evil affair, a bad business (5:14). Solomon said that he tried to determine the nature of life, the meaning of man's task, but found the inquiry impossible (Ec 8:16). In Ec 5:3, the Preacher declares that a dream comes through a task, perhaps an idiom for much effort. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

INYAN - 8V - effort(1), investment(1), task(6). Eccl. 1:13; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:10; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 5:3; Eccl. 5:14; Eccl. 8:16

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

KJV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

BGT Ecclesiastes 3:11 σ ν τ π ν τ α πο ησεν καλ ν καιρ α το κα γε σ ν τ ν α να δωκεν ν καρδ α τ ν πως μ ε ρ νθρωπος τ πο ημα πο ησεν θε ς π ρ χ ς κα μ χρι τ λους

LXE Ecclesiastes 3:11 All the things which he has made are beautiful in his time: he has also set the whole world in their heart, that man might not find out the work which God has wrought from the beginning even to the end.

NET Ecclesiastes 3:11 God has made everything fit beautifully in its appropriate time, but he has also placed ignorance in the human heart so that people cannot discover what God has ordained, from the beginning to the end of their lives.

CSB Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but man cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end.

ESV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

NIV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

NLT Ecclesiastes 3:11 Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

YLT Ecclesiastes 3:11 The whole He hath made beautiful in its season; also, that knowledge He hath put in their heart without which man findeth not out the work that God hath done from the beginning even unto the end.

NJB Ecclesiastes 3:11 All that he does is apt for its time; but although he has given us an awareness of the passage of time, we can grasp neither the beginning nor the end of what God does.

NRS Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

NAB Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without men's ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work which God has done.

GWN Ecclesiastes 3:11 It is beautiful how God has done everything at the right time. He has put a sense of eternity in people's minds. Yet, mortals still can't grasp what God is doing from the beginning to the end of time.

BBE Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything right in its time; but he has made their hearts without knowledge, so that man is unable to see the works of God, from the first to the last.

RSV Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

- **He has also set eternity in their heart;**; Mt 13:22 Ro 1:19,20,28
- **yet so:** Ec 8:17 Job 11:7 Job 37:23 Ps 104:24 Mt 11:27 Ro 11:33
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 8:17 and I saw every work of God, I concluded that **man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun**. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man should say, "I know," he cannot discover.

Job 11:7 "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? (Rhetorical! Answer: NO!)

Romans 11:33+ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

1 Corinthians 13:12+ For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Psalms 139:16+ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; **And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me**, When as yet there was not one of them.

THE DIVINE CLOCKMAKER

He has made everything (kol) **appropriate** ([yapheh](#); Lxx - [kalos](#) - beneficial) **in its time** ([et/eth](#); Lxx - [kairos](#)) - Other titles for this verse might be "God's Work Beyond Our Sight," "Living Between Time and Eternity," "The Unsearchable Work of God." **KJV** = "He hath made everything beautiful in his time" **AMP** = "He has made everything beautiful *and* appropriate in its time." What Solomon is saying is that God in His sovereignty and His providential plans has an appropriate time for every activity. In Ge 1:31+ "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very **good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." Note that **good** in Lxx is the same word [kalos](#) used in this verse for **appropriate** (or beautiful)! And notice also that this verse also spoke of His **time**. While you may wrestle with this truth, the truth is that God orchestrates all things — even joy, sorrow, life, death — with perfect timing. Every event fits into God's greater design, even if we don't see the full picture. Think about this for a moment. If God were not in control of everything "under the sun" (and above heaven), could we say that He was truly, completely sovereign? That's rhetorical of course. Of course this truth creates a tension so that on one hand, we live in a world that is purposefully arranged by God, but on the other hand we do not always grasp how everything fits. This leads to humility, dependence, and walking by faith, not by sight! (2Co 5:7+).

*When an appointed thing occurs, it may not seem that it has any purpose whatsoever,
but God sees it from a totally different perspective.*

-- Tommy Nelson

John MacArthur on **appropriate**. - The phrase echoes "God saw... it was good" (Ge 1:31+). Even in a cursed universe, activity should not be meaningless. Its futility lies in the fickle satisfaction of man and his failure to trust the wisdom of sovereign God. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

*We want to be in charge, we want to limit the term of hurt or pain.
But God will not allow us to take His place and be in charge*

Ray Stedman **Everything is appropriate** ([yapheh](#)) and helpful to us, what appears to be the negative as well as the positive. These are not curses and obstacles; they are God's blessings, deliberately provided by him. Even our enemies are a blessing. I received a letter from a businessman friend of mine in Dallas, a very thoughtful man, giving me his thinking along this line. He said that there were five types of people whom he had learned from in life, "heroes, models, mentors, peers and friends." He continues "I have added another: Enemies. They have a very important place in our lives."..."Love your enemies," Jesus said (Matthew 5:44, Luke

6:27), because they are valuable to you. They do something for you that you desperately need. Our problem is that we have such a shallow concept of things. We want everything to be smooth and pleasant. More than that, we want to be in charge, we want to limit the term of hurt or pain. But God will not allow us to take His place and be in charge. There is a rhythm to life which even secular writers recognize. The book, [Passages](#), speaks of the various experiences we pass through as we grow through life.

[Daniel Hill](#) - The things that are given by God are given according to His appropriate timing. The Hebrew word **APPROPRIATE** is [yapheh](#) and looks at that which is beautiful. Now beauty is in the eye of the beholder and this requires capacity on our part. With out capacity, which is developed with God in our relationship with Him as we grow, we may not see the things of God as being beautiful. With Him, we can look back over the list of contrasts and see that what is given by God according to His proper timing, is beautiful, [yapheh](#).

*There is an appropriate time
for each activity*

William MacDonald writes that Solomon "concluded that God has made everything beautiful in its time, or, better, that there is an appropriate time for each activity. He is not so much thinking here of the beauty of God's creation as the fact that every action has its own designated time, and that in its time it is eminently fitting....God's works and ways are inscrutable to man. There is no way in which we can solve the riddle of creation, providence, or the consummation of the universe, apart from revelation. In spite of the enormous advances of human knowledge, we still see through a glass darkly. Very often we have to confess with a sigh, "How little we know of Him!" (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

THOUGHT - How would it change our perspective if we really understood that everything (how much?) that comes into our life, good, bad or ugly, is a reflection of God's timing (it is all "**appropriate**"). He either allows it or sends it but He is always purposeful. My daughter just had a psychotic break on drugs, wrecked her car, completely tore up her apartment, tried to kill herself and is now in a mental hospital and tomorrow (May 2, 2025) is going to 90 days rehabilitation unit. Prayers for Lauren's salvation are coveted and appreciated! Ecclesiastes 3:11 has allowed me to see that this event as "appropriate" and useful and beneficial, even beautiful! The result is I have been able to sleep 8 hours most of the nights since it happened a few days ago and have sincerely given "thanks in everything for this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus." Amen? Amen! (1 Th 5:18+)

He has also set eternity ([olam](#)) in their heart ([leb](#); Lxx - [kardia](#)) - **AMP** = "He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]." The idea is that God has placed a sense of eternity in every heart. People can claim that death brings annihilation, but the implication of this verse is man knows he is an eternal creature. We get a sense of this "implantation" of eternity in men's hearts in Romans 1

because that which is known about God is evident within them (cf "eternity in their heart"); for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:19-21+)

As an aside it is surprising to find that the English word "**eternity**" occurs only 6 times in the **NASB** - Eccl. 3:11; Isa. 43:13; Isa. 45:17; Mic. 5:2; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:18. In the **KJV** it is only in Isa 57:15 In the **ESV** it is only 4x - Eccl. 3:11; Isa. 45:17; Isa. 57:15; 2 Pet. 3:18. In **NIV** only 3x - Ps. 93:2; Prov. 8:23; Eccl. 3:11. In **NLT** 6x - Ps. 89:4; Eccl. 3:11; Isa. 9:7; Isa. 43:13; Isa. 57:15; Jn. 12:25. In **NRSV** only 3x - Isa. 45:17; Isa. 57:15; 2 Pet. 3:18. So as you can easily discern, the use of "eternity" while infrequent varies considerably depending on which version you are reading.

ESV Study note - God has also placed **eternity** (that is, a sense that life continues beyond this present existence) **into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end** The word "**find**," or "**find out**" (Hb. *matsa'*) has the sense of "figure out, comprehend by study" in this verse and other places in the book (Ec 7:14, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29; 8:17). The Preacher thus realizes that both his desire to understand all of life, as well as the limitations on his ability to do so, have been ordained by God. (See [ESV Study Bible - Page 396](#))

[Ray Stedman](#) on **eternity into man's heart** - There is a quality about life, about humanity, that can never be explained by the rationale of evolution. No animal is restless and dissatisfied when its physical needs have been met. Observe a well fed dog sleeping before the fire on a cold day. He is with his family, enjoying himself, not worried about anything. Put a man in that position and pretty soon he will feel a sense of restlessness. There is something beyond, something more he is crying out for. This endless search for an answer beyond what we can feel or sense in our physical and emotional needs is what is called here "**eternity in man's heart**." St. Augustine said, "*Thou has made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they learn to rest in Thee*" Man is the only

worshipping animal. What makes him different cannot be explained by evolutionary procedure. He is different because he longs for the face of God. C.S. Lewis said, "*Our Heavenly Father has provided many delightful inns for us along our journey, but he takes great care to see that we do not mistake any of them for home.*" There is a longing for home, there is a call deep in the human spirit for more than life can provide. This itch which we cannot scratch is part of God's plan.

Life Application Study Bible - God has "**planted eternity in the human heart.**" This means that we can never be completely satisfied with earthly pleasures and pursuits. Because we are created in God's image, (1) we have a spiritual thirst, (2) we have eternal value, and (3) nothing but the eternal God can truly satisfy us. God has built in us a restless yearning for the kind of perfect world that can only be found in his perfect rule. He has given us a glimpse of the perfection of his creation. But it is only a glimpse; we cannot see into the future or comprehend everything. So we must trust God now and do his work on earth. (See [NLT Life Application Study Bible](#))

John MacArthur on **set eternity in their heart** - God made men for His eternal purpose, and nothing in post-Fall time can bring them complete satisfaction. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Michael Eaton - "The Preacher's vast researches have found nothing in the finite earthly realm which can satisfy the human heart intellectually or practically . . . This is the nearest he comes to Augustine's maxim: 'You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you.'"

Donald Glenn - People have a longing or desire to know the extratemporal significance of themselves and their deeds or activities. Solomon added that people cannot know **the works of God... from beginning to end**, that is, they cannot know the sovereign, eternal plan of God. Human labor is without profit because people are ignorant of God's eternal plan, the basis by which He evaluates the appropriateness and eternal significance of all their activities. Because of this ignorance there is an uncertainty and latent temporality to the value of all one's labor. (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 263](#))

F B Meyer - "God made man in his own image; and nothing more surely attests to the greatness of our origin that those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. . . . Every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction."

The missionary and author **Don Richardson** used the phrase **eternity in their hearts** to describe the phenomenon of redemptive analogies in most ancient cultures. Almost every culture has traditions, customs, or ways of thinking that reflect basic Biblical truth, and these can be used by missionaries to explain the gospel. This book makes for fascinating reading! Borrow [Eternity in their hearts](#).

Yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end: **AMP** = "yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end." **NLT** - "people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end." The "work which God has done" refers to His unfolding plan — in creation, history, human lives, and eternity. This includes both the large-scale purposes of God and the minute details of individual events. Even though God has put a sense of eternity in our hearts (Eccl 3:11a), He has not given us full access to His infinite plan. The phrase "**will not find out**" (Hebrew: אֲחַזֵּק! לֹא – lo yimtza') means we cannot grasp, discover, or comprehend the whole. **From the beginning to the end** refers to the total scope of God's sovereign work — from creation to culmination, encompassing all of time, history, and human experience — past, present, and future. This time phrase refers to God's ongoing, active role in orchestrating everything that happens in the world. This recalls Jesus' declaration that "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (And He is everything in between!)." (Rev 22:13+) As creatures in time, we only see small snapshots of God's plan, while God sees and controls the full timeline. God's plans are perfect and purposeful, but He has chosen not to reveal the entire design to us. This revelation should lead us to faith rather than presumption, to humility rather than control.

If God is sovereign, and He is, we can trust that He has everything in His hands from the beginning even to the end and can sing along with the (trusting) children "[He's Got the Whole World in His Hands](#)"

This great truth reminds me of Isaiah 55:8-9 in which God says "My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."

The exhortation of Scripture is always that we must trust the revelation of a Father's wisdom in areas we cannot understand.

Ray Stedman on **man will not find out the work which God has done** - We are growing in our knowledge, but we discover that the more we know the more we know we do not know. The increase of knowledge only increases the depth of wonder and of delight.

In the sovereign wisdom of God we cannot solve all mysteries. As the Apostle Paul put it, "we see through a glass darkly," (1 Corinthians 13:12KJV+); we are looking forward to the day when we shall see face-to-face. We cannot know all the answers to all the conundrums and enigmas of life. That is why the exhortation of Scripture is always that we must trust the revelation of a Father's wisdom in areas we cannot understand. Jesus said over and over that the life of faith is like that of a child. A little child in his father's arms is unaware of many things that his father has learned. But, resting in the father's arms, he is quite content to let those enigmas unfold as he grows, trusting in the wisdom of his father. That is the life of faith, and that is what we are to do in our experience.

We are not able to discern any plan or pattern to all of this.

God's purposes are outside our realm of control or investigation

Duane Garrett on **man will not find out the work which God has done** means "we cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end. That is, we are not able to discern any plan or pattern to all of this. God's purposes are outside our realm of control or investigation. We thus have a sense of alienation and bewilderment in time." (See [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Volume 14 - Page 299](#))

David Guzik on **man will not find out the work which God has done**- Though God has given man a longing for and awareness of eternity, God has not revealed very much about His eternal work. This keeps the yearning for eternity alive in the heart of man as a yet-to-be-fulfilled longing.

John Stevenson - What does it mean that God has set eternity in our heart? It means that God has given to us a sense of eternity - a sense of thinking of and imagining life beyond our own short lives. It also means that man desires this eternal life. It means that man has a desire to understand God's entire program. This is why man has pursued science and philosophy as well as theology. We have been gifted with a desire to understand all of creation. It also means that man has a hunger for God Himself. "Our Heavenly Father has provided many delightful inns for us along our journey, but he takes great care to see that we do not mistake any of them for home." (C.S. Lewis). There is a longing for home - a call deep in the human spirit for more than life can provide. This itch which we cannot scratch is part of God's plan.

THOUGHT - Ecclesiastes 3:11 teaches that God rules all time with wisdom, places a longing for eternity in our hearts, and calls us to live humbly within the mystery of His greater purpose. How can we apply the beautiful, mysterious truth to our lives? Let me suggest three approaches: **(1) Trust in God's timing** — even when life seems chaotic, His plan is unfolding (that's like "[Ripley's Believe it or Not](#)") and build this trust by staying in His Word daily and allowint His Word to transform your thinking and grow your faith (Ro 10:17+) **(2) Embrace mystery** — not everything is meant to be figured out so don't demand full answers; walk by faith, not by sight (2Co 5:7+); **(3) Live for eternity** — your soul was made for more than this moment. Cultivate values that transcend time. Above all Redeem the Time you have because is precious and is all the time you will ever have. Read Redeem the Time.

Everything (always, entire, every, everyone, etc) ([03605](#)) **kōl** is a particle used almost 5000 times in the OT and conveys the meanings each, every, all, everything, the whole, entire. The root **kalal** from which **kol** is derived means to be complete or whole. Kol can be used alone, meaning "the entirety," "whole," or "all," as in: "you shall put all these (WHAT? Ex 29:23) in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons" (Ex. 29:24+). "**Kōl** can signify everything in a given unit whose members have been selected from others of their kind: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Ge 6:2+)." ([Vine](#))

John Oswalt in the [Theological Wordbook of the OT](#) (page 440) writes kol means "every, any, whole, none. A very common particle, occurring about 5400 times. Of these all but about 800 are in a genitive relation with the following word, signifying thus, "the whole of something." It is commonly translated "all" if the following word is plural, and "every" if the word is singular and without the article. It can also have a suffix attached to it: "the whole of it, all of it." This particular formation may then follow a given noun, stressing the aspect of totality (2 Samuel 2:9). It can also be used in this way with the noun understood, as does Isaiah when he expressed the corruption of the entire people by saying, "All of it loves a bribe" (Isaiah 1:23; cf. also Isaiah 9:17 [H 16]). In some contexts it denotes "all kinds of," "of all sorts." Thus Eliezer took with him "all of the good thing of his master" i.e. "a great variety of good things" (Genesis 24:10; cf. Leviticus 19:23). **Kōl** can also stand by itself, or absolutely, to express "**everything**." The sense in which "all" is to be taken must be gathered from the context (cf. Jeremiah 9:3). When used with the article it refers to something just mentioned (Leviticus 1:9; etc.), or, in a wider sense, to the whole of creation. Such passages as Psalm 103:19; Psalm 145:9 and Jeremiah 51:19 use this construction when expressing the idea of God's lordship over all things.

Appropriate (beautiful) ([03303](#)) **yapheh** is an adjective meaning lovely, beautiful, describing beauty of women (Ge 12:11, 14, 2Sa

13:1, Esther 2:7). Good looking or handsome men (2Sa 14:25). Jerusalem was described as "beautiful in elevation." Note that 11/38 uses of yapheh are in the Song of Solomon = Song 1:8, 15, 16; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10. Yapheh can describe a beautiful voice (Ezek 33:32).

Lxx translates **yapheh** in Eccl 3:11 with the Greek adjective **kalos** which describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices.

YAPHEH - 38V - appropriate(1), beautiful(28), beautiful one(2), fair(1), fitting(1), handsome(4), sleek(3).
Gen. 12:11; Gen. 12:14; Gen. 29:17; Gen. 39:6; Gen. 41:2; Gen. 41:4; Gen. 41:18; Deut. 21:11; 1 Sam. 16:12; 1 Sam. 17:42; 1 Sam. 25:3; 2 Sam. 13:1; 2 Sam. 14:25; 2 Sam. 14:27; 1 Ki. 1:3; 1 Ki. 1:4; Est. 2:7; Job 42:15; Ps. 48:2; Prov. 11:22; Eccl. 3:11; Eccl. 5:18; Cant. 1:8; Cant. 1:15; Cant. 1:16; Cant. 2:10; Cant. 2:13; Cant. 4:1; Cant. 4:7; Cant. 5:9; Cant. 6:1; Cant. 6:4; Cant. 6:10; Jer. 11:16; Ezek. 31:3; Ezek. 31:9; Ezek. 33:32; Amos 8:13

F B Meyer - He hath set eternity in their heart. - Ecclesiastes 3:11- Our Daily Homily

The Preacher has been enumerating the various extremes and alternatives of existence, and the natural conclusion might seem to be that since each neutralizes the other, it might be as well for a man to do nothing at all. But a deeper thought is suggested. Man is greater than the changes around him; he has eternity in his heart, and therefore all the varied circumstances of human life resemble the wheels of some great machine, the cogs of which turn in different directions, but the effect is a forward motion, and the manufacture of a fabric that will outlive the machinery that made it. We are greater than circumstance, or change, or things. We have the capacity for the Eternal and Infinite. As the sea-shell sighs for the ocean, so our hearts cry out, though sometimes inarticulately, for God, for the living God. Christ said that foxes have holes and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head; and this is true in another sense. The noblest men are those least able to rest anywhere short of God.

God made man in his own image; and nothing more surely attests the greatness of our origin than those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. And every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction.

Let us come to Him who has the words of eternal life, who is Himself the Bread that endureth unto eternal life. He that cometh to Him shall never hunger; he that believeth in Him shall never thirst.

"Here would we end our quest; Alone are found in Thee The life of perfect bliss — the rest Of immortality."

J R Miller - When men travel in stage coaches in grand mountain countries, some ride in the inside with the curtains fastened down. They see nothing of the beauty of the scenes through which they pass. Others ride outside, and see every grand thing by the way. This illustrates the way different persons go through God's world. Many pass through shut up inside a dark, dismal coach, with all the curtains drawn tight, themselves shut in, and all of God's joy and beauty shut out; others ride outside, and catch a glimpse of every fair and lovely thing by the way. They breathe the fresh air, hear the joyous songs of the birds, see the fields, brooks, rivers, mountains and skies, and quaff delight everywhere.

Phillips Brooks - Everything in the world must be in its true place and time, or it is not beautiful.... You lay your own stumbling-block in your own way. God made the block indeed, but He made it for a part of the strength and beauty of the walls. It was you who dragged it down to the floor and insisted upon laying it where you could stumble over it.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) A GOD-SHAPED VACUUM

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. Ecclesiastes 3:11

Ecclesiastes 3:11 contains good news and bad news. The good news is that everything has a purpose in God's plan. The bad news is that no one

can figure out the good news, that is, what the actual purpose is. To make matter worse—from a human perspective—God has put "eternity" inside every human heart. That means there is something inside each of us that yearns to understand what life is all about.

Commentator James MacDonald points out that this verse teaches a high view of God's providence. He asserts that there is a beauty in the way the events of life fit together, like the successive cogs in a wheel, each fitting into its proper groove, with a steady

movement carrying forward God's plan. It is as if Solomon is observing the grand machine with all its parts functioning in perfect timing. Solomon listens and hears no grinding, no jarring noises. "Beautiful!" he exclaims.

Admittedly, from our limited standpoint we see many things that in themselves seem far from beautiful. Sometimes it seems as if there is no "grand machine," or if there is, it's badly in need of repair. But that's because we see things from a human level and not from God's point of view.

This brings us face-to-face with Pascal's famous statement that there is a "God-shaped vacuum" inside each person. God made us to know Him. He designed us so that we would want to know Him—and then He guaranteed we wouldn't be happy unless He Himself filled the void within.

Romans 1:18-20 describes the knowledge of God seen in creation and found to some degree in the heart of every person. When Paul preached in Athens, he complimented the Athenians by calling them very religious people. The city was filled with idols, including a shrine "to the unknown God." Anthropologists tell us that man by nature is incurably religious. There is something in him that drives him to seek ultimate meaning outside himself. He may turn to God or he may worship idols of his own making or the evil spirits of his ancestors.

That "something" inside him is put there by God. Augustine gave us this oft-quoted prayer: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

We see ugliness, but we know there must be beauty somewhere. Deep inside we yearn to know God and to understand His plan. Yet the more we search to understand the big picture, the less we truly know. So in the end we are left with God and God alone.

Lord God, in a world of hard questions, You are the one eternal answer. Thank You for having the answers,
and may I trust in Your goodness when the answer is not clear to me. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why would God put us in a world where we are guaranteed to end up frustrated? What possible divine purpose could that serve?
- What does your own "God-shaped vacuum" look like?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD

Read Jeremiah 23:18; 1 Corinthians 2:16; and Revelation 6:12-17.

The Mystery Of Time

He has made everything beautiful in its time. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Time is a tyrant that has us under its control. Little by little it makes us feel and look older as it relentlessly pushes us toward the day when we will die. Time determines when we plant or reap, when we laugh or cry, when we keep something or throw it away (Eccl. 3:1-8). And sometimes it seems as if we are just helpless pawns in a cosmic game.

But once we understand that the God who established time and controls everything is our Friend, it all looks different. Solomon said that "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl. 3:11). This enables us to trust God to weave His loving purposes for us into the tapestry of time. There are times when its beauty can be clearly seen, but at other times His design remains a mystery to us because of our human limitations.

I have a friend who finds himself in this dilemma. He's still quite young, but he has an incurable disease that doctors say will allow him no more than 2 years to live. We are praying for healing, but he is ready to go to be with Christ. The other day he cheerfully said, "I'm in a win-win situation. I can't lose either way." The "why" remains a mystery to him, but he is thoroughly convinced that God "has made everything beautiful in its time." By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

God gives to us the gift of time
To use as best we can,
To live each moment in His will
According to His plan.
—Sper

The right view of eternity reveals the real value of time.

The Beauty Of Life

He has made everything beautiful in its time. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Author and scientist Carl Sagan says that the material world is the only reality. If we accept this premise, then nature has been cruel to us, giving us, as someone has cynically phrased it, "the endowments of a god and the career of an insect."

King Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes that from a purely human standpoint everything is meaningless (1:2), but he also considered God's view. He observed the creative and destructive cycle of our existence (3:1-8) and concluded that everything is beautiful in its time (v.11). He knew that when we see life from the perspective of eternity we will see the beauty of God's ways.

But Solomon also realized that God hasn't given us the answers to every question (v.11). He advised us to accept life's good things with gratitude, and to face its difficulties with faith, not despair.

Shirley De Jong, who at 58 knew she had terminal cancer, followed this advice. With her husband she enjoyed doing what her strength permitted. She looked back over her life and spoke of the beauty of each stage. She saw her illness as the means by which God would soon take her to heaven.

Real faith enables us to see that even a terminal illness can be "beautiful in its time." By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, of the days that are left to me,
I give them to Your hand;
Take me and break me and mold me to
The pattern You have planned.
—Snell

The more a diamond is cut, the more it sparkles.

ILLUSTRATION - David Hubbard - In some ways the red book is the most important piece of equipment in my office. About the size of a church hymnal, it sits in a prominent place on Denise's desk. Denise is my assistant, and, like Vera and Inez before her, she is the keeper of that red book. If I call her, she will automatically pick up the book and bring it to my inner office, so that together we may consult it.

To some extent that book stands between us and utter confusion. It tells us which Tuesday to have lunch with a bishop, which Thursday to take the 8:45 A.M. flight to Chicago for a conference, which Monday the seminary board will meet—and a thousand other things.

The red book on the desk contains our calendar for the year. In it all appointments are recorded—often months ahead of time. Once the schedules are set, that book comes close to being the governor of our lives. It sets the times by which we do things; it controls with almost rigid regularity our comings and goings.

And in so doing, it greatly limits our freedom. We cannot face each day with the open question, what shall we do? We have to face it with the closed question, what have we already committed ourselves to do? Whatever regulates our time curtails our freedom.

That was the struggle the Preacher faced in one of his most famous passages. For him life was a red book in which all the key events were written by the hand of God with the result that men and women had freedom neither to alter them nor completely understand them.

Futility, the Preacher called this lack of freedom. Futility—because our plans are limited, our ability to change our schedules is confined, and our potential for affecting our destiny is almost nil. (SEE [The Preacher's Commentary - Vol. 16: Ecclesiastes](#))

Tommy Nelson - From verse 11 to the end of chapter 3, Solomon gives us four platforms that can help us stand. The first one is that God's plan is wise. God is wise, and even bad things have a purpose. He makes everything appropriate or beautiful in its time. When an appointed thing occurs, it may not seem that it has any purpose whatsoever, but God sees it from a totally different perspective.

I was teaching this idea in our church and had asked Norma, a wonderful pianist, if she would play for the congregation. I asked her to play "Jesus Loves Me" using only the white keys. When she played, it had a very simple sound. Frankly, it wasn't very interesting.

Next I asked her to play it using as many black keys as she wanted. If you've ever played a piano, you know that by themselves the black keys don't sound very good. That's where all the sharps and flats are. But when Norma played "Jesus Loves Me" and included the black keys, it created a lush, beautiful sound. I asked my congregation to vote on whether they liked it with the white keys only or with the black keys added in. Without a doubt, the song sounds better with the black keys.

Life is just like a song played on the piano. It is a caricature without the black keys. It's not heroic without sin, evil, and pain. You don't know or appreciate the heroism, love, and patience of God until evil enters the world.

I enjoy a good movie, and one of the most interesting and unique movies I've seen in a long time was *The Truman Show* with Jim Carey. I went to see it with my wife and son and did not know anything about the plot before the movie started. After about fifteen minutes of watching the movie, I leaned over to my wife, Teresa, and said, "Something's wrong here." Everything going on in the movie was perfect—no difficulties to move the plot forward—and it was obvious that Jim Carey was overacting. Frankly, it was boring.

Then a few things start to unravel, and you find out why his life is perfect. Ed Harris's character has contrived this world for Truman where there is no evil and nothing bad can happen to him. But there is also no heroism, no real friendship, no real love, no virtue, and certainly nothing worth living for. Ultimately, Truman refuses to live in this "perfect" world any longer.

That's what life would be like if you didn't have black keys.

The parts of our lives that don't feel right at the time are woven together by God to form a beautiful tapestry. God's plan is wise—it's just that He doesn't ask you and me for our opinions. There is no suggestion box in the tabernacle. We have to trust Him.

When I was eleven years old, one of the most tragic incidents in my life happened. If you have ever been involved in Little League baseball, you know that there is almost nothing more important than making the cut as an eleven-year-old All-Star. I was not selected for the team, and what's worse, two of my eleven-year-old buddies were. I was utterly devastated.

My mother sat down with me on my bed and said, "Let me tell you a story." She told me about a guy in the Bible who had a promise from God that he would be a ruler. But he was thrown in a pit and sold into slavery. Then he was thrown into jail and forgotten. Through all of his disappointments, he kept doing the right thing because he believed in trusting God's promise. Later when Joseph looked back on those harsh experiences, he saw that God used them to get him in a position to save his family.

My mother said to me, "Tommy, there will be a lot of times in your life when God does things that don't seem to have any rhyme or reason whatsoever. You've got to trust Him even when He doesn't give you the answer." Pretty good counsel, wasn't it? Believing that God is wise is the only thing that will sustain you when He plays your life on the black keys.

Solomon shows us that not only is God's plan wise, but it is also mysterious. Solomon says in verse 11 that God has one plan from beginning to the end. He doesn't react to the devil's activities as though a cosmic tennis match is being played.

It's not as though God created man, then Satan tempted him. Then God decided to kick man out of the garden. So Satan caused Him to corrupt civilization. Then God countered with a flood ... and so on.

No, God has a plan like a Beethoven sonata, beautifully intermingling white keys and black keys. The white keys by themselves are boring. The black keys by themselves are troublesome. When you put them together, they're lovely.

Still, there is mystery. God put eternity in the heart of every person, and in every person is the question why. All through the Bible we see men of God ask why bad things are happening. Habakkuk says,

Why hast Thou made men like the fish of the sea,
Like creeping things without a ruler over them? (Hab 1:14)

He is asking God, "Where are You?"
Jeremiah says to God,

Why has my pain been perpetual
And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Wilt Thou indeed be to me like a deceptive stream
With water that is unreliable? (Jer 15:18)

Jeremiah is saying to God, "You promised, and it sure seems like You are not there."

Have you ever wondered where God was or whether He cared? Why do we ask those questions? Because He has set eternity in our hearts. We intrinsically know that there has to be some order and purpose to life.

So even though we can recognize God's work or purpose in some things, we squint our eyes and try to figure out all the things we can't see. We ask questions like, "Why was I born this way? Why did my father treat me that way? Why did You take my friend? Why am I missing out on this blessing?" We squint but we can't see. He's put eternity in our hearts but won't give us all the answers.

As one author said, "There is a deep-seated, compulsive drive to transcend our mortality by knowing the meaning and destiny of life."

It's troublesome. We want to see the future outcome of problems and say, "So that's why You let this happen to me." But God says, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to show you." He does things in our lives that are not pleasing or pleasurable, but they are wise. Solomon says we have to trust Him. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 52](#))

Eternity In Our Hearts

He has put eternity in their hearts. —Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:9-17

I once came across a scene of beauty outside Anchorage, Alaska. Against a slate-gray sky, the water of an ocean inlet had a slight greenish cast, interrupted by small whitecaps. Soon I saw these were not whitecaps at all but whales—silvery white beluga whales in a pod feeding no more than 50 feet offshore. I stood with other onlookers, listening to the rhythmic motion of the sea, following the graceful, ghostly crescents of surfacing whales. The crowd was hushed, even reverent. For just a moment, nothing else mattered.

The author of Ecclesiastes would have understood the crowd's response. He sees with dazzling clarity the beauty in the created world and that God "has put eternity in their hearts" (3:11). Such an elegant phrase applies to much in human experience. Surely it hints at a religious instinct. Our hearts perceive eternity in ways other than the religious.

Ecclesiastes presents both sides of life on this planet: the promise of pleasures so alluring that we may devote our lives to their pursuit, and the haunting realization that these pleasures ultimately do not satisfy. God's tantalizing world is too big for us. Unless we acknowledge our limits and subject ourselves to God's rule, unless we trust the Giver of all good gifts, we will end up in despair. By: Philip Yancey (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Amid the measured music
What watchful ear can hear
God's voice amidst the garden?
Yet hush! for He is here!
—Charles

To make the most of today, keep eternity in mind.

The Heart's True Home

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE Ecclesiastes 3:10–11

We had a West Highland Terrier for a number of years. "Westies" are tough little dogs, bred to tunnel into badger holes and engage the "enemy" in its lair. Our Westie was many generations removed from her origins, but she still retained that instinct, put into her through years of breeding. On one occasion she became obsessed by some "critter" under a rock in our backyard. Nothing could dissuade her. She dug and dug until she tunneled several feet under the rock.

Now consider this question: Why do we as humans pursue, pursue, pursue? Why must we climb unclimbed mountains, ski near-vertical slopes? Run the most difficult and dangerous rapids, challenge the forces of nature? Part of it is a desire for adventure and enjoyment, but it's much more. It's an instinct for God that has been implanted in us. We cannot not want to find God.

We don't know that, of course. We only know that we long for something. "You don't know what it is you want," Mark Twain said, "but you want it so much you could almost die."

God is our heart's true home. As church father Augustine said in that most famous quotation: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

And what is the heart? A deep void within us that only God can fill. David H. Roper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Reflect & Pray

Help me, Lord, to recognize my deep longing for You. Then fill me with the knowledge of You. Draw me near.

Beneath all our longings is a deep desire for God.

Today's Insights Ecclesiastes was written by one who calls himself "the Teacher" and identifies himself as the "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1). In this book, Solomon shows that a life not centered on God is without meaning and purpose (1:14; 2:11). He also shows how and why God must be a part of our lives. In chapter 3, he paints a picture of a life trapped between birth and death, experiencing the mundane repetition of life's recurring seasons and cyclical activities (vv. 1–8). Such a life is both frustrating and burdensome (v. 10). But Solomon hints that life is not supposed to be like this. We were made for far grander things—God created us for Himself "in his own image" (Gen. 1:27). And God has "set eternity in the human heart" (Eccl. 3:11). We were created for fellowship with the eternal God. C. S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, put it this way: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Without God, life will be purposeless and meaningless. What are some ways that our culture offers false fulfillment?

What's the Occasion?

Everything God does will endure forever. Ecclesiastes 3:14

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:9–17

Four-year-old Asher's gleeful face peeked out from beneath his favorite hooded sweatshirt. His alligator-head hooded sweatshirt, complete with plush jaws that seemed to swallow his head! His mom's heart sank. She wanted the family to make a good impression as they visited a family they hadn't seen in a long time.

"Oh, Hon," she said, "that may not be appropriate for the occasion."

"Of course it is!" Asher protested brightly.

"Hmm, and what occasion might that be?" she asked. Asher replied, "You know. Life!" He got to wear the shirt.

That joyful boy already grasps the truth of Ecclesiastes 3:12—"There is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live." Ecclesiastes can seem depressing and is often misunderstood because it's written from a human perspective, not God's. The writer, King Solomon, asked, "What do workers gain from their toil?" (v. 9). Yet throughout the book we catch glimpses of hope. Solomon also wrote: "That each of [us] may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all [our] toil—this is the gift of God" (v. 13).

We serve a God who gives us good things to enjoy. Everything He does "will endure forever" (v. 14). As we acknowledge Him and follow His loving commands, He infuses our lives with purpose, meaning, and joy. By: Tim Gustafson (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Restore to us childlike joy that appreciates Your good gifts.

Read more about making God the center of your life at discoveryseries.org/hp152.

The Lord who made you wants you to make Him the center of your life.

A Fitting Time

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:1–14

Yesterday I purchased an airline ticket to send my firstborn child to college. I'm surprised the keyboard on my computer still functions, given the waterworks my eyes unleashed on it during the flight selection process. I have so enjoyed my eighteen years of daily life with her that I am saddened by the prospect of her departure. Yet I wouldn't rob her of the opportunity that lies ahead simply because I'll miss her. At this juncture in her life, it is fitting for her to embark on a new journey to discover adulthood and explore another part of the country.

As this season of my parenting draws to a close, another one begins. It will undoubtedly bring both new challenges and new delights. Solomon, Israel's third king, wrote that God appoints "a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). We humans have little control over the events of our lives—whether we view those events as favorable or not. But God, in His mighty power, makes "everything beautiful in its time" (v. 11).

In seasons of heartache, we can trust God to bring something good from them in time. Our comforts and joys may come and go, but God's works "will endure forever" (v. 14). We may not relish every season—some are quite painful—yet He can bring beauty to them all. By: Kirsten Holmberg (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Father, You have permitted this season in my life. Help me to be content in the midst of it, and to recognize Your power and might are at work.

God brings beauty from all seasons.

Enjoying Beauty

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:9–13

The painting caught my eye like a beacon. Displayed along a long hallway in a big city hospital, its deep pastel hues and Navajo Native American figures were so arresting I stopped to marvel and stare. "Look at that," I said to my husband, Dan.

He was walking ahead but I hesitated, bypassing other paintings on the wall to gaze only at that one. "Beautiful," I whispered.

Many things in life are beautiful indeed. Master paintings. Scenic vistas. Inspired crafts. But so is a child's smile. A friend's hello. A robin's blue egg. A seashell's strong ridges. To relieve the burdens life can bring, "[God] has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). In such beauty, Bible scholars explain, we get a glimpse of the perfection of God's creation—including the glory of His perfect rule to come.

We can only imagine such perfection, so God grants us a foretaste through life's beauty. In this way, God "has also set eternity in the human heart" (v. 11). Some days life looks drab and futile. But God mercifully provides moments of beauty to ponder.

The artist of the painting I admired, Gerard Curtis Delano, understood that. "God [gave] me a talent to create beauty," he once said, "and this is what He wanted me to do."

Seeing such beauty, how can we respond? We can thank God for eternity to come while pausing to enjoy the glory we already see. By: Patricia Raybon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How do you respond to the beauty God has placed in this world? How does beauty reflect Him?

Father, help me in the moments of this day to see and enjoy the beauty You bring into my life as I also look forward to eternity.

James Smith - ETERNITY IN THE HEART: A KEY TO ECCLESIASTES - Ec 3:11

Newberry's rendering of this text enables us to see the meaning of this book in a clearer light. "He hath set eternity in their heart, without which no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." The word translated "world" here only occurs in one other place, where the meaning is ages, or eternity. This book deals with "things under the sun": the mundane things of earth, seen in the light of Nature's revealer. The "Preacher" begins with "Vanity of Vanities," then proceeds to demonstrate the truthfulness of his convictions. He gave "his heart to search out," and to "see all the works that are done under the sun," and to "prove" his heart with every earthly good. He made "great works," and "withheld not his heart from any joy." Yet he pronounced it "all vanity and vexation of spirit." So deeply did he drink of all the waters of the world's pleasures that he said: "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" (Ec 2:12). What man can have any chance of satisfying his heart with the material things of earth, when he, the richest and wisest man on earth, failed? Why did he fail so miserably after such an earnest, favourable and exhaustive experiment? Here is the answer: "God hath set eternity in the heart." That which belongs to eternity cannot find its counterpart in those things which are only temporal. Although there is "a time" to every purpose under the heavens, there is nothing circumscribed by time that is not "vanity and vexation of spirit" to that which is eternal. As God hath set eternity in the heart. He means to set eternal things there. Observe—

I.—THE FACT OF IT. "Eternity is in the heart."

In its very constitution, as the workmanship of God. The heart, here, may stand for man's essential character, as distinct from the lower animal creation. When Duncan Matheson prayed, "Lord stamp eternity upon my eyeballs," he was uttering words which revealed the most profound characteristic of the human soul. God hath set eternity in the heart by setting there the thought of it, the desire after it, kinship to it, and capacity for it.

II.—THE EVIDENCE OF IT.

The evidence of this truth is apparent in the universal belief in immortality found among the early Egyptians. Babylonians, Persians, Hebrews, Hindus, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Druids and Celts. But perhaps one of the most convincing proofs of it may be seen in the universal restlessness of the human heart. Towards the things of this world, like the sea, it is ever crying: "Give, Give," and never fully satisfied therewith. One of the wealthiest men in modern times declared to a friend "I am not to be envied; How can my wealth help me? I would give you my millions if you could give me your youth and health." Youth and health in themselves could only enable him to repeat his own and Solomon's abortive experiment. "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth," but in the things which God possesseth. Surely the capacity of the human heart for the love and fellowship of the eternal God is an argument of no mean force. The heart's desire, in its truest and best moments, is for the "things which are eternal." Even pagan philosophers have acknowledged this. "The presage of a future life," says Cicero, "is most discoverable in the greatest and most exalted souls." When the glamour of sunny circumstances vanishes in some calamity or domestic affliction, then the deeper and more enduring instincts of the soul assert themselves.

III.—THE PURPOSE OF IT. "Without which no man can find out the work that God maketh." It takes the attribute of eternity in the heart to contemplate the character of God and His work Eternity in the heart is—

1. A Witness to the Eternity of God. It has been set there as a testimony to the fact of His eternal Personality, and man's kinship to Him.
2. A Protest against Worldly-mindedness. Just as a man can profit nothing by gaining the world, and losing his life, so the eternity in the heart can only be deceived by loving and resting on the things of time—he layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:19–21). Those who "mind" earthly things" are enemies of that Cross which stands for heavenly and eternal things.
3. An Incentive to seek eternal things. The fact that God hath set eternity in the heart, is surely meant to be a powerful incentive to seek those things which are above. "Like draws to like."
4. An Evidence of God's love. Let the deep in the heart call unto the deep that is in God. God hath set that deep there that He might fill it out of the deep of His own infinite fulness.
5. A Warning against the neglect of Salvation. To neglect eternal salvation is to choose eternal death. Eternity is in your heart whether it is found or lost. "Son, daughter, give Me thine heart." He who hath set eternity in it is best able to meet and satisfy its every need.

James Smith - OUR INHERENT GREATNESS

"He hath made everything beautiful in His time, also He hath set the world (eternity) in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Eccles. 3:11).

Introduction.

PUZZLING.

1. What a puzzling and bewildering sentence is, "He hath set the world in their heart."
2. It has been a trouble to many thoughtful Christians.
3. How is it possible to believe that God is responsible for the love of the world within our hearts?
4. The fact is that the word translated "world," does not mean this material world, but duration; not place, but time.
5. R.V. margin clears away the difficulty, where it
 - a. Refers not to space,
 - b. But to duration of time.

DIFFICULTY.

1. It is not only a difficult phrase, but difficult to understand what precise meaning is to be attached to these words, and connection with context.
2. Ecclesiastes is the autobiography of a backslider, and therefore we need not wonder at its haziness. Get away from God and you will soon get hazy views, soon be in a fog, in a spiritual fog of your own creating, and floundering about.

NOT TRANSIENT.

1. He has been speaking of the change and decay he saw in all around.
2. He was gloomily meditating on the transitory character of all earthly things.
3. But it was then he declared that man is not a transient creature, for he has eternity in his heart, i.e., is eternal, and is conscious of the fact.

4. He is an immortal being, or better, an endless being.

INHERENT GREATNESS.

1. We were reminded of these verses when reading Carlyle on "Greatness:" "Man's unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his greatness: it is because there is an Infinite in him, which, with all his cunning, he cannot quite bury under the Finite" (Sartor Resartus).

2. That is to say, man is naturally great—there is eternity within him.

3. In a former study we were thinking of greatness in His sight (Luke 1:15).

4. That was a greatness made possible through Redemption.

5. We are now thinking of our inherent greatness.

6. This side is often neglected.

7. We generally leave it to the Materialists and Rationalists to declare.

8. But we must rescue it from such sordid surroundings and place it in its rightful evangelical setting.

THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD. The sense of beauty is one of the things that allies us to God. God must be glad when one loves His world so much.

THREE THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY TEXT.

1. The world in the heart—a sad and woeful fact.

2. Eternity in the heart—a glorious and blessed fact.

3. The Eternal One in the heart—a marvellous possibility for all.

ANOTHER WAY OF PUTTING IT. But in order to bring out the fact of man's greatness, let me put it another way.

I. Man's Greatness Proved beyond Doubt by the Fact that, though the World is in his Heart, he is not Satisfied.

A SAD FACT.

1. The world is in our hearts by nature, by our natural birth; not only are we in the world, but the world is in us.

2. Of that we are only too conscious; even Christians sometimes discover this to be so.

3. We are so occupied with the world that many have no time for Divine things.

4. We are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and so exercised concerning them, that many have little heart for eternal things.

BLACKWOOD.

1. Sir Arthur Blackwood discovered this.

2. During the Crimea War he became serious and decided for God.

3. But on his return home he found it very difficult to keep on in the good way in the whirl of social life.

4. Under date April and May, in 1856, he writes: "Troublous times—undecided—world in my heart—God in my conscience."

5. Take those four sharp, finely cut sentences—what a portrait of many a one.

a. Troublous times. First experience of one who faces the current.

b. Undecided. Halting between two opinions.

c. World in my heart. Ah, that's the tragic fact; the magnet is there!

d. God in my conscience. A troubled conscience.

WHO PUT IT THERE?

1. Not God.

2. "An enemy hath done this."

RESULT.

1. Does the world in the heart satisfy it? No!

2. "Man's unhappiness comes of his greatness."

3. Great though the world is, man is too great for it to satisfy him.

4. He has a hunger for eternal things.

5. Only eternal things can satisfy him.

6. The worldling tries to satisfy the craving of his being for eternal things by the material, yet is like the prodigal at the swine trough.

SOLOMON.

1. Solomon is an illustration.

2. Getting away from God, he sought satisfaction in wisdom, learning, letters, science, wealth, etc.

3. But "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," was his verdict.

II. Man's Greatness is Proved beyond Question in that Though in the World, he has Deeply Rooted in him the Thought and Fact of Eternity.

REVISED VERSION.

1. That is the teaching of the rendering of the R.V.

2. It suggests four thoughts: (1) Consciousness; (2) Fact; (3) Longing; and (3) Dread of Eternity.

EVERLASTING PROBLEM.

1. "If a man die shall he live again," is the question in Job.

2. This is the everlasting problem.

3. "He thinks he was not made to die." Ah, how sure!

SOLUTION.

1. Revelation and reason give incontestible proofs of immortality.

2. But there is another—intuition.

3. God not only has made man immortal, but He has put the consciousness of immortality within our hearts.

4. He made us eternal, and put within us the consciousness of that fact.

ONLY BEINGS.

1. "We are the only beings on earth who can speak the Word or think the thought of eternity." Ponder on that phrase.

2. God has put the consciousness of eternity in our hearts.

3. And now the Gospel has cleared away all mists. "Life and immortality has been brought to light through the Gospel."

BURNS.

1. James Drummond Burns was in poor health for 20 years.

2. His last words were: "I have been dying for 20 years; now I am going to live."

SHELL FROM THE SEA-SHORE.

1. Man, so small, so tiny, that from a hill-top he appears but as a speck in the valley below, yet within him the roar of the infinite sea of eternity is for ever sounding.

2. Just as a man will pick up a shell from the sea-shore and carry it 3000 miles inland, and listening, he hears the beating music of the waves that made it so.

3. O man, no matter how far thou hast wandered from God, in thy heart is the passion of Deity, the sounding of the billows of eternity!

4. The whirl and noise of day may silence that music, but in the silence of the night there comes back the call of the infinite. It is a call that surges through him.

III. Man's Greatness Proved by the Fact that though in the World, he has a Heart that the Eternal One Claims and can Fill.

HAS MAN THE CAPACITY?

1. Has he the capacity of becoming the Sanctuary of the Lord?

2. Those who know anything about the Bible know such is its teaching.

3. And those who know anything of the human heart know this is so.

HOW TO GET RID OF WORLD. The only way of getting rid of the world in the heart is by letting the heart's rightful Guest in.

HOW TO GET PEACE.

1. If God is in your conscience—troubling you. The precious Blood of Christ and

2. God in the heart will bring peace.

TOO BIG FOR WORLD. We are too big for the world. The world cannot fill our hearts and lives.

Treasure the Moments

[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 3:1–14

Su Dongpo (also known as Su Shi) was one of China's greatest poets and essayists. While in exile and gazing upon a full moon, he wrote a poem to describe how much he missed his brother. "We rejoice and grieve, gather and leave, while the moon waxes and wanes. Since times of old, nothing remains perfect," he writes. "May our loved ones live long, beholding this beautiful scene together though thousands of miles apart."

His poem carries themes found in the book of Ecclesiastes. The author, known as the Teacher (1:1), observed that there's "a time to weep and a time to laugh . . . a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing" (3:4–5). By pairing two contrasting activities, the Teacher, like Su Dongpo, seems to suggest that all good things must inevitably come to an end.

As Su Dongpo saw the waxing and waning of the moon as another sign that nothing remains perfect, the Teacher also saw in creation God's providential ordering of the world He'd made. God oversees the course of events, and "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (v. 11).

Life may be unpredictable and sometimes filled with painful separations, but we can take heart that everything takes place under God's gaze. We can enjoy life and treasure the moments—the good and the bad—for our loving God is with us. By: Poh Fang Chia (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What are some things you're afraid to try because of life's unpredictability? How can you lean on Jesus as you step forward in

courage to forge new friendships and deepen relationships?

Thank You, loving Father, for watching over all seasons of my life. Help me to trust in You and enjoy the life You've given me.

Adrian Rogers sermon ["It's Time for You to Get a Life" \(full sermon on page 3\)](#)

Outline

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- I. The Complex Mystery of Life
 - A. Where Is the Answer?
 - 1. The Answer Is Not in Nature
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 - 1. Apart from God, Wisdom Is Meaningless
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- II. The Challenging Adventure of Life
 - A. Because God Is Good, We Should Live Life Joyfully
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- III. The Comprehensive Test of Life
 - A. Learn to Rejoice
 - B. Learn to Rest
 - C. Learn to Remember

Conclusion

I. The Complex Mystery of Life

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call the complex mystery of life—the complex mystery of life, if you will. Again, verses 1 and 2: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:1–2).

Now why does he say, "Vanity of vanities"? (Ecclesiastes 1:2). For emphasis. When the Bible wanted us to know how holy the sacred place was, in the tabernacle, what does it call it? The Holy of Holies. When our Lord wants to emphasize the truth, what does He say? "Verily, verily, I say unto you ..." When we talk about the majesty of Jesus, we say, "He is the Lord of lords." What Solomon is saying is, "Hey, this is king-sized. This is vanity of vanities." He said, "I can't figure life out." Life is a puzzle; life is a mystery. And every thinking person knows that it is. And I want to tell you, if you think you've got it figured out, you don't.

Some college students were asked to give a definition of life. Here are some that won honorable mention:

"Life is a joke that isn't even funny."

"Life is a jail sentence that we get for the crime of being born."

"Life is a disease for which the only cure is death."

That sounds cynical, doesn't it? And I'm afraid many college students are just like that. But life is empty. Life is vain apart from God. Now I'm going to tell you a secret. God engineered it that way.

Did you know that God does not want life to make sense to you? That may surprise you, but God, in His infinite wisdom, makes life a mystery. Let me give you a New Testament verse that'll back up what I'm about to say—Romans chapter 8—put it in your margin—verses 20 and 21: "For the creature"—that literally means, "the creation"—"was made subject to vanity, not willingly,"—that is, "we didn't choose it"—"but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Romans 8:20). In plain English, God made everything confusing. God took all creation, and God said, "There it is, but you're not going to be able to figure it out."

Now He did that not because He doesn't love us, but because He does love us. And God knows that, if you and we, in our wisdom, and ingenuity, and sagacity, could figure it all out, we would never come to Him—if we could find meaning apart from Him. And so this vanity—this confusion, this mystery—is a tool that God uses to draw us to Him. This word vanity appears almost with monotony here in the Book of Ecclesiastes more than 30 times. And what is Solomon saying? Life without God is a dead-end road. You will never, never, never, ever figure it out—I don't care who you are. And every wise person knows that he cannot figure it out. And yet, man has a desire—he wants to know the deepest meaning of life.

Go over to Ecclesiastes 3:10-11: "I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time:"—now, notice this next phrase—"also he hath set the world in their heart,"—a better translation may be, or at least another translation may be, "He hath set eternity in their heart"—"so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:10–11). No one can figure it out. You say, "I've figured it out." You haven't. God put eternity in our heart. God put something in man's heart that He did not put into the hearts of other creatures, other animals. God gave us a desire to see life from an eternal perspective, because nothing seems to make sense here on this earth.

When Joyce and I took a vacation, one time—which I loved, but she didn't like it that much. She endured it; I loved it—we went to an island down in the Bahamas. They didn't have any restaurants on that island, so you can understand why I liked it better than she did. But we both had a good time. We lived in a little cottage. It had no air conditioning. There were no automobiles on that little island; only, we had a little boat there, in front of the island. We could go from place to place in that little boat with an outboard motor. And a beautiful beach—hey, it was great! For recreation, we went out and would lie on the dock at night and just look up at the stars. Super! Man, it was wonderful. Well, get off of that. Anyway, what did we do for recreation? We had an incredible jigsaw puzzle—I mean, a big one, king-sized. It was the face of a great big pig. And we worked from time to time, just sitting there, putting the pieces of that pigsaw—pigsaw—jigsaw puzzle together—putting it all together. Pigsaw is not a bad name for it. And anyway, can you imagine the joy to put the last piece in place?

Now I want you to imagine a puzzle like that with the last piece missing—or two or three pieces, or half a dozen pieces, missing. Or, I want you to imagine a puzzle like that, where somebody slips in some pieces from another puzzle, and you're trying to put it together. That's what life is like—that's what life is like. God has life confusing. And friend, it's very confusing. And you're going to find out that, sometimes, you think that you've got it all worked out, because everything is going so smoothly. Just wait a while—just wait a while. You know, God has a way of putting the good and the bad together. Have you noticed that?

Look, if you will—go over to chapter 7, and look in verse 14: "In the day of prosperity be joyful,"—are you having prosperity, right now? I'm happy for you. Rejoice—"but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him" (Ecclesiastes 7:14). What does that mean? You can't figure it out. I mean, God takes good times; and then, God takes bad times. Now when everything is working out fine, you say, "Boy, do I have a great philosophy of life! I've got a ... I know, man, I've got it. I've got the world by the tail in a downhill pull. It is all making sense to me now. I've finally got it figured out." And then, adversity comes.

Brother Whitmire, you remember down in Merritt Island—we had a tornado come through Merritt Island. There was a lady who lived in a trailer—house trailer—perhaps a block from the church. That house trailer was absolutely devastated. In that house trailer, she had a parakeet. She had no children. She had no other pets. This parakeet was like one of her children. She loved that parakeet. And the house trailer was gone. The tornado took the whole thing and took the bird—gone. She was heartbroken. About three or four days later, somebody saw a parakeet sitting in a tree. Would you believe they coaxed that bird out of that tree into their hand? And would you believe, by fortuitous circumstances, they found out this woman had lost this bird, and they brought the bird back? Miracle story—miracle story. Then, you know what happened? The cat ate it. True story. The cat ate it. I mean, after all this miracle—all this good stuff—then the cat ate it. Figure that out. That's what Solomon is saying.

You know, the Chinese tell a story about a man who had a prize horse, and the horse escaped. And they said, "Oh, how sad!" But then, the horse went out, and began to consort with some other horses, and led them back to the corral. They said, "How wonderful! Look!" And then, the man's son tried to train one of the wild horses and broke his leg. He said, "How bad!" But then, a war came, and the boy didn't have to go off to war. "How good!"

That's the way life is. God takes the good; God takes the bad. And God puts one against the other, and they both seem to happen at the same time. If you're having a good time right now, you've got a problem, right now. If you're having a problem right now, you've got some blessings, right now. It's not like we have 40 miles of good road and then 40 miles of bad road. It's like it's a railroad track. Over here is the good rail, and over here is the bad rail. And that's the way life is. God just sets the one against the other. And Solomon says, "You can't figure it out." He tries to figure it out. He says, "Where is the answer?" (See full sermon for "the answer" ["It's Time for You to Get a Life" on page 3](#))

Eternity In Our Hearts

He has put eternity in their hearts. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:9-17

I once came across a scene of beauty outside Anchorage, Alaska. Against a slate-gray sky, the water of an ocean inlet had a slight greenish cast, interrupted by small whitecaps. Soon I saw these were not whitecaps at all but whales—silvery white beluga whales in a pod feeding no more than 50 feet offshore. I stood with other onlookers, listening to the rhythmic motion of the sea, following the

graceful, ghostly crescents of surfacing whales. The crowd was hushed, even reverent. For just a moment, nothing else mattered.

The author of Ecclesiastes would have understood the crowd's response. He sees with dazzling clarity the beauty in the created world and that God "has put eternity in their hearts" (3:11). Such an elegant phrase applies to much in human experience. Surely it hints at a religious instinct. Our hearts perceive eternity in ways other than the religious.

Ecclesiastes presents both sides of life on this planet: the promise of pleasures so alluring that we may devote our lives to their pursuit, and the haunting realization that these pleasures ultimately do not satisfy. God's tantalizing world is too big for us. Unless we acknowledge our limits and subject ourselves to God's rule, unless we trust the Giver of all good gifts, we will end up in despair. By: Philip Yancey (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Amid the measured music
What watchful ear can hear
God's voice amidst the garden?
Yet hush! for He is here!
—Charles

To make the most of today, keep eternity in mind.

The Beauty Of Life

He has made everything beautiful in its time. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Author and scientist Carl Sagan says that the material world is the only reality. If we accept this premise, then nature has been cruel to us, giving us, as someone has cynically phrased it, "the endowments of a god and the career of an insect."

King Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes that from a purely human standpoint everything is meaningless (1:2), but he also considered God's view. He observed the creative and destructive cycle of our existence (3:1-8) and concluded that everything is beautiful in its time (v.11). He knew that when we see life from the perspective of eternity we will see the beauty of God's ways.

But Solomon also realized that God hasn't given us the answers to every question (v.11). He advised us to accept life's good things with gratitude, and to face its difficulties with faith, not despair.

Shirley De Jong, who at 58 knew she had terminal cancer, followed this advice. With her husband she enjoyed doing what her strength permitted. She looked back over her life and spoke of the beauty of each stage. She saw her illness as the means by which God would soon take her to heaven.

Real faith enables us to see that even a terminal illness can be "beautiful in its time." By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, of the days that are left to me,
I give them to Your hand;
Take me and break me and mold me to
The pattern You have planned.
—Snell

The more a diamond is cut, the more it sparkles.

Time Enough

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE Ecclesiastes 3:1–13

When I saw the massive volume of Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace on my friend's bookshelf, I confessed, "I've never actually made it all the way through that." "Well," Marty chuckled, "When I retired from teaching, I got it as a gift from a friend who told me, 'Now you'll finally have time to read it.'"

The first eight verses of Ecclesiastes 3 state a familiar, natural rhythm of the activities of life with some arbitrary choices. No matter what stage of life we find ourselves in, it's often difficult to find time to do everything we want to do. And to make wise decisions about managing our time, it's helpful to have a plan (Psalm 90:12).

Time spent with God each day is a priority for our spiritual health. Doing productive work is satisfying to our spirit (Ecclesiastes 3:13). Serving God and helping other people is essential to fulfilling God's purpose for us (Ephesians 2:10). And times of rest or leisure aren't wasted but refreshing for body and spirit.

Of course, it's easy to become too focused on the here and now—finding time for the things that matter most to us. But Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has “set eternity” in our hearts—reminding us to make a priority of things that are eternal. That can bring us face to face with something of the greatest importance—God's eternal perspective “from beginning to end.” Cindy Hess Kasper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What different choices might you make about the way you're spending your time? What did the author of Ecclesiastes mean about God setting eternity in the human heart?

Jesus, give me a glimpse of Your eternal perspective and help me to search for the right balance of time that better fulfills Your purpose.

Today's Insights Ecclesiastes tells the story of a gifted mortal who loses his way “under the sun” (1:9). Fitting the description of King Solomon, the writer (who calls himself “the Teacher” v. 1) begins well, using his God-given wisdom to seek justice for even the most troubled members of his kingdom (see 1 Kings 3:16–28). But he loses his way when he forgets that his wisdom and wealth weren't given primarily for his own satisfaction. Only as an apparent afterthought does he remember that lasting significance is found by living in the light and goodness of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

The Trail

He has made everything beautiful in its time. — Ecclesiastes 3:11

Today's Scripture : Psalm 104:16-25

High in the mountains near our home is a trail that threads its way, rising and falling down the side of a steep canyon. It leads to a stream that passes first through a castle-like heap of boulders, then flows gently through deep, mossy woods. It's a peaceful, quiet area where wild flowers bloom in fragile beauty—a secluded, seldom-visited place.

Even if no one ever saw this place, it would still be beautiful, because God creates beauty for its own sake. But the marvelous thing is that He created this beauty for anyone who will receive it, as a visible expression of His creativity and His love. This is my reason to look into nature, my reason to explore.

I worship and thank God for this restful hideaway. With David, I exclaim, “O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions” (Psalm 104:24).

I feel sorry for those who worship nature itself and who do not know God, its Creator. When they come to places like this, they have no one to thank.

We who know God recognize Him in creation, and can always thank Him for showing His love in such beautiful ways. — David H. Roper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The wonder of creation speaks
To everyone in different ways,
But only those who know the Lord
Can for His handiwork give praise.
—Sper

Creation is filled with signs that point to the Creator.

Play the simple Maranatha Chorus [IN HIS TIME](#) based on the Eccl 3:11KJV

In his time, in his time
He makes all things beautiful
In his time

Lord please show me everyday
As you're teaching me your way
That you do just what you say
In your time

In your time, in your time
You make all things beautiful
In your time

Lord my life to you I bring
May each song I have to sing
Be to you a lovely thing
In your time

Ecclesiastes 3:12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime;

- **than to rejoice and to do good:** Ec 3:22 9:7-9 De 28:63 Ps 37:3 Isa 64:5 Lu 11:41 Ac 20:35 Php 4:4-9 1Th 5:15,16 1Ti 6:18
- See [over 50 translations](#)

THE "GOOD LIFE" REJOICING AND ENJOYING GOOD

I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime;-NET = "I have concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they live" **Do good** does not have its common meaning but means to practice a happy life, or 'Enjoy good'. What Solomon is saying is since we cannot control the changing seasons (we are ignorant of the timing), and since life is full of both joy and sorrow, the best thing we can do is to rejoice and enjoy the fruit of our labor as long as we have life (**in one's lifetime**).

Note that there are 6 times in which Solomon gives the reader some relief from the otherwise pessimistic view of life. Those passages are Ec 2:24-26, 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9.

[Ray Stedman](#) on **nothing better...** - Yes, everybody agrees with that. That is what the commercials tell us: "Live life with gusto. You only go around once. Seize it now." All right. The Searcher says so too.

William MacDonald - Because man's life is governed by certain inexorable laws and because all his activities seem to leave him where he started, Solomon decides that the best policy is to be happy and enjoy life as much as possible. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Duane Garrett - This verse does not mean that we should just forget about our longing for eternity (Ecc 3:11) and try to have a good time....While he urges the reader to accept personal mortality for what it is, he recognizes that life and joy and love are preferred by all. (See [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Volume 14 - Page 299](#))

[The Believer's Study Bible](#) - These verses are the second occurrence of the refrain (**Ed**: See comment above). Nothing within man's power on this earth alone will deliver to him true and lasting happiness. However, there is happy appreciation and enthusiastic enjoyment of pleasures which God offers to those righteous ones who live according to His laws and commandments (cf. Ec 12:13, 14)

*Since we cannot master time,
we must master how we live inside it — with joyful hearts*

Arnot - See that well on the mountain-side,—a small, rude, rocky cup full of crystal water, and that tiny rill flowing through a breach in its brim. The vessel is so diminutive, that it could not contain a supply of water for a single family a single day. But ever getting through secret channels, and ever giving by an open overflow, day and night, summer and winter, from year to year, it discharges in the aggregate a volume to which its own capacity bears no appreciable proportion. The flow from that diminutive cup might, in a drought or war, become life to all the inhabitants of a city. It is thus that a Christian, if he is full of mercy and good fruits, is a greater blessing to the world than either himself or his neighbors deem.

Longing For Spring

Nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives. —Ecclesiastes 3:12

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

It's been a long, cold winter, and I am eager for warm weather. I'm tired of seeing bare trees and lifeless brown leaves covering the ground. I long to see wildflowers poke through the dead leaves and to watch the woods turn green once more.

Yet even as I anticipate my favorite season, I hear my mother's voice saying, "Don't wish your life away."

If you're like me, you sometimes hear yourself saying, "When such and such happens, then I will . . . or, If only so and so would do this, then I would do that . . . or, I would be happy if . . . or, I will be satisfied when . . ."

In longing for some future good, we forget that every day—regardless of the weather or our circumstances—is a gift from God to be used for His glory.

According to author Ron Ash, "We are where we need to be and learning what we need to learn. Stay the course because the things we experience today will lead us to where He needs us to be tomorrow."

In every season, there is a reason to rejoice and an opportunity to do good (Eccl. 3:12). The challenge for each of us every day is to find something to rejoice about and some good to do—and then to do both. By: Julie Ackerman Link (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Just as the winter turns to spring,
Our lives have changing seasons too;
So when a gloomy forecast comes,
Remember—God has plans for you.
—Sper

Every season brings a reason to rejoice.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.

- Ec 2:24 5:18-20 6:2 9:7 De 28:30,31,47,48 Jdg 6:3-6 Ps 128:2 Isa 65:21-23
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? 26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 3:22 I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. 19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

Ecclesiastes 8:15 So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 Go then, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. 8 Let

THE GIFT OF GOD ENJOY YOUR LABOR

Moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.- RSV = "also that it is God's gift

to man that every one should eat and drink and **take pleasure** in all his toil." [CEB](#) = "Moreover, this is the gift of God: that all people should eat, drink, and **enjoy** the results of their hard work." [EXB](#) = "God wants all people to eat and drink and be happy in their work [toil], which are gifts from God [Eccl 2:24–26; Ecc 3:22; Ecc 5:18–20; Ecc 8:15; Ecc 9:7–10; ^Cthe little pleasures are distractions from the meaningless world]." What does Solomon say about our labor. (1) It is a gift of God and (2) Every man is to enjoy the fruit of their labor.

*True enjoyment is the gift of God,
it is what God wants.*

[Ray Stedman](#) - Underline the words, "take pleasure." (**ED**: Eccl 3:13RSV) That is what the Searcher finds that man cannot produce. Things in themselves give a momentary, not lasting, pleasure. True enjoyment is the gift of God, it is what God wants. That is what the Searcher has been arguing all along. What a different picture this is of life under the sovereign Lordship of a Living God from what most people think God is like! I saw a book on sex the other day entitled, "Designed for Pleasure." That is true. But it is not merely sex that is designed for pleasure, all things are designed for human pleasure. If you think the thing in question is going to produce lasting pleasure, however, you will miss it. The secret is that it is the knowledge of God in that relationship that produces enjoyment. God wants it so. We are not in the grasp of the Great Cosmic Joykiller, as many people seem to view God. God delights in human enjoyment.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) LIVING IN THE HERE AND NOW

I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

Have you ever wished you could sit down with God and have a good talk with Him about your own life? Have you ever wished you could just look Him in the eye and say, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" All of us have moments when we want to hear God's voice or receive some

definite sign regarding a relationship, a business decision, a career choice, or a major expenditure.

With all my heart I believe the following statement: God wants you to know His will more than you want to know it; therefore, He takes personal responsibility to see that you discover it. Knowing God's will is ultimately God's problem, not yours. Let that last thought sink into your mind for a moment. You've probably never heard it put that way before.

Let me suggest what this really means:

1. God can put you exactly where He wants you to be.
2. He can arrange all the details years in advance.
3. He can open doors that seem shut tight.
4. He can remove any obstacle that stands in your way.
5. He can take your choices and fit them into His plan so that you end up at the right place at just the right time.
6. He can even take your mistakes and bring good out of them.
7. He can take tragedy and use it for your good and His glory.

All He needs—the only thing He requires—is a willing heart. He just needs you to cooperate with Him. This doesn't mean that you won't have to make decisions. But it does take the pressure off, because it means that you can trust God to take your decisions and use them to accomplish His will in your life.

Proverbs 20:24 tells us that "a man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?" There is something hidden in the Hebrew text that you wouldn't know simply from reading the English translation. The word translated mans in the first phrase comes from a Hebrew word that refers to a mighty warrior, a ruler, or a potentate. Solomon means to say that even the steps of a mighty man are ordained by God. The word anyone in the second phrase comes from a Hebrew word that stands for the whole human race. We might paraphrase it this way: "If God directs the steps of the mighty, how then can an ordinary man understand his own way?" The answer is, he can't!

That's the whole point of the verse. We're like a herd of sheep stumbling around in the darkness, bumping into things, tripping over ourselves, trying to find our way forward. We can't say for sure where we've come from, where we are right now, or where we're going to be tomorrow. Only God can see the big picture of life. When you understand that truth, you can enjoy each day as it comes—and let God take care of the future.

Father, teach me the joy of the present moment and the pleasure of living in the here and now. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- If you were given a sealed envelope containing the record of the next ten years of your life, would you open it? Why or why not?
- Are you satisfied with your life right now? Do you agree that knowing God's will is His problem, not yours?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD

Read Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 20:24; and 2 Corinthians 4:7-8.

Relevant Routine

Every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God. — Ecclesiastes 3:13

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Here we are at the beginning of a new week. For many people, Monday represents the start of another monotonous cycle of work. Maybe it's a mountain of washing and ironing, an endless quota of parts from a machine, the same dull routine on the assembly line, or the tedium of sitting at a computer.

Monotony can be a breeding ground for envy and discontent, or it can be the training ground for the development of character and a life of service. It all depends on whether we can see God in the ordinary duties of life.

There was a woman in Boston who for 40 years did the same cleaning tasks in the same office building. She was interviewed by a reporter who asked her how she could stand the monotony of doing the same thing day in and day out. The woman said, "I don't get bored. I use cleaning materials that God made. I clean objects that belong to people God made, and I make life more comfortable for them. My mop is the hand of God!"

Are you looking for the Creator in your occupation? He's there. He uses the hands, bodies, and minds of people who accept their tasks and do their work for Him. Any routine task is relevant to God's work in and through us—for time and for eternity. By: Dennis J. DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

For Further Study

Are you wondering what God's call on your life should look like?

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.

- **I know that everything God does will remain forever:** Ps 33:11 119:90,91 Isa 46:10 Da 4:34,35 Ac 2:23 4:28 Ro 11:36 Eph 3:11 Tit 1:2 Jas 1:17
- **nothing:** Ps 76:10 Pr 19:21 21:30 30:6 Isa 10:12-15 Da 8:8 11:2-4 Joh 19:10,11,28-37 Ac 5:39
- **God has so worked** Ps 64:9 Isa 59:18,19 Rev 15:4
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 5:7 For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, **fear God**.

Ecclesiastes 7:13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

Ecclesiastes 7:18 It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for **the one who fears God** comes forth with both of them.

Ecclesiastes 8:12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for **those who fear God, who fear Him openly**. 13 But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, **because he does not fear God**.

**STANDING IN AWE OF
GOD'S PERMANENT WORK**

I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, [AMPC](#) "I know that whatever God does, it endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it." God's works are permanent, perfect, and complete. Human efforts are fleeting, but God's actions endure eternally. E.g., it is like comparing a monument carved in stone versus human projects crumbling with time.

*Until a man recognizes and trusts the superior wisdom of God
he has not begun to fear God.*

[Ray Stedman](#) - the Searcher says is that it all must be discovered by realizing that God is in charge and He will not bend His plan for anyone. God has sovereignly, independently, set up the plan of life in a way that we cannot interfere with. He has done so, in order that men should fear before him. All through the Bible we read that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10). Until a man recognizes and trusts the superior wisdom of God he has not begun to fear God. This fear is not abject terror of God, it is respect and honor for Him. If you attempt to live your life without the recognition of God, ultimately you will find yourself, as the Searcher found himself, empty, dissatisfied and restless, feeling that life is miserable and meaningless. **The secret of life is the presence of God Himself.** Most of the struggle of life comes from us wanting to play God ourselves, wanting to be in charge of what happens to us. That is true even of Christians. When God refuses to go along we sulk and pout and get angry with him. We throw away our faith and say, "What's the use? I tried it but it doesn't work." What a foolish statement! God will not surrender His prerogatives. "Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it -- God has made it so in order that men should fear before him." This is taught us through many repetitions.

ESV Study note - The short-lived "vanities" of this world reveal all the more clearly the enduring work of God, to which nothing can be added. (See [ESV Study Bible - Page 396](#))

[John Stevenson](#) - What we do is temporary. Even man's greatest and most enduring monuments will one day crumble into dust. In modern Egypt there is a team of construction workers whose task it is to maintain and occasionally rebuild and reinforce the Sphinx. It has lasted for over 4000 years. But it is decaying. And like all of man's works, it will one day pass. God is Eternal. And His work brings about eternal results. His plans are long range in nature. He is building for eternity. When God wants to grow a squash, He does so in 6 months. When He grows an oak tree, He takes 20 years. When He raises up a man, He takes a lifetime. **For God has so worked that men should fear Him.** - [AMPC](#) "And God does it so that men will [reverently] fear Him [revere and worship Him, knowing that He is]." Ecc 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) NOTHING LEFT BUT GOD

I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it, so men will revere him. Ecclesiastes 3:14

I believe that God orchestrates the affairs of life—both the good and the bad—to bring us to the place where our faith will be in God alone.

Slowly but surely as we go through life, He weans us away from the things of the world. At first the process touches only our possessions (which we can replace), but eventually it touches our relationships (which may not be replaced), our loved ones (who cannot be replaced), and finally life itself (which is never replaced). Then there is nothing left but us and God.

Through all this process our heavenly Father leads us along the pathway of complete trust in Him. Slowly but surely we discover that the things we thought we couldn't live without don't matter as much as we thought they did. Even the dearest and sweetest things of life take second place to the pleasure of knowing God. In the end we discover that He has emptied our hands of everything and then filled them with Himself.

In writing these words I am keenly aware that I understand only dimly their full meaning. At this point in my life I still have many things in my hands: my wife, my three boys, my friends, my career, my health, my dreams, my plans for the future. But the process of growing older is nothing more than this—learning to hold lightly the things God has given you, knowing that you can't keep them forever anyway. At any moment, He can take them away—one by one, two at a time, or all of them together. Or He could take back the life He gave me five decades ago.

If I have any advice for you, it is this. Learn to hold lightly what God has given you. You can't keep it forever, and you can't take it with you.

Some of you who read these words are in the midst of a great struggle in your life. You feel pressured about something and you don't want to give it up. But you must . . . and you will. I can't spare you the pain that comes in yielding your dearest treasures to God, but I promise you the joy will far outweigh the pain you feel right now.

Eternal Father, teach me to let go of the things I can't keep and to hold fast to that which lasts forever. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why must we "let go" before we can experience the fullness of God Himself? What happens when we try to "hold on" too tightly?
- How have you experienced this truth (of letting go or holding on) in your own life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 33:11; and Revelation 15:2-4.

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by.

- **That which is has been already:** Ec 1:9,10
- See [over 50 translations](#)

THE ETERNAL CIRCLE OF LIFE

That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by- TLB = "Whatever is has been long ago; and whatever is going to be has been before; God brings to pass again what was in the distant past and disappeared." **AMPC** = "That which is now already has been, and that which is to be already has been; and God seeks that which has passed by [so that history repeats itself]."

Ray Stedman - The Searcher is here referring to the repetition of the lessons of life. We do not seem to learn these very well. I have learned some lessons in life and said, "Lord, I see what you are after. I've got it now. You don't have to bring this one back again." Down the road, however, I make the same mistake again. Some circumstance painfully recalls to mind what I had once seen as a principle in life. I have to come with hat in hand and say, "Lord, I'm a slow learner. Have patience with me." God says, "I understand. I'm prepared to have patience with you and teach you this over and over and over again until you get it right." Have you found life to be like that? The Searcher tells us that he too had to learn this. That is the Searcher's thesis. God desires us to learn the secret of enjoyment. That enjoyment will not come from a variety of experiences. Those will bring but momentary pleasure, but not the secret of contentment, of continual enjoyment. A plaque on my bedroom wall which I read every morning says,

No thought is worth thinking
that is not the thought of God.
No sight is worth seeing
unless it is seen through his eyes.
No breath is worth breathing
without thanks to the One
whose very breath it is.

Franz Delitzsch summarizes the thought of this statement: "The government of God... does not change; His creative as well as His moral ordering of the world produces with the same laws the same phenomena.... His government remains always, and brings... up again that which hath been" ("Ecclesiastes" in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, 6:264).

NET NOTE on this difficult verse gives 4 interpretative options - "Hebrew "God will seek that which is driven away." The meaning of **יִבְקֵשׁ אֶת־נִדְאָף** (yévaqqesh 'et-nirdaf) is **difficult to determine**: **יִבְקֵשׁ** (yévaqqesh) is Piel imperfect 3rd person masculine singular from **בָּקַשׁ** (baqash, "to seek") and **נִדְאָף** (nirdaf) is a Niphal participle 3rd person masculine singular from **רָדַף** (radaf, "to drive away"). **There are several options:**

(1) God watches over the persecuted: **יִבְקֵשׁ** ("seeks") functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to protect), and **אֶת־נִדְאָף** ("what is driven away") refers to "those who are persecuted." But this does not fit the context.

(2) God will call the past to account: **יִבְקֵשׁ** functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to hold accountable), and **אֶת־נִדְאָף** is a metonymy of attribute (i.e., the past). This approach is adopted by several English translations: "God requires that which is past" (KJV), "God will call the past to account" (NIV) and "God summons each event back in its turn" (NEB). **(ED: THE NKJV RENDERING FAVORS THIS**

INTERPRETATION - "God **requires an account** of what is past.")

(3) God finds what has been lost: שָׁכַח functions as a metonymy of cause for effect (i.e., to find), and אֲתֵּינָהּ refers to what has been lost: "God restores what would otherwise be displaced" (NAB).

(4) (ED: THIS INTERPRETATION SEEMS TO FIT WITH WHAT RAY STEDMAN SAYS ABOVE -[SEE NOTE](#)) - God repeats what has already occurred: שָׁכַח functions as a metonymy of effect (i.e., to repeat), and אֲתֵּינָהּ is a metonymy (i.e., that which has occurred). This fits the context and provides a tight parallel with the preceding line: "That which is has already been, and that which will be has already been" (3:15a) parallels "God seeks [to repeat] that which has occurred [in the past]." **This is the most popular approach among English versions:** "God restores that which has past" (Douay), "God seeks again that which is passed away" (ASV), "God seeks what has passed by" (NASB), "God seeks what has been driven away" (RSV), "God seeks out what has passed by" (MLB), "God seeks out what has gone by" (NRSV), and "God is ever bringing back what disappears" (Moffatt). **NET TRANSLATION** - "for God will seek to do again what has occurred in the past."

Note: [See the 50+ translations](#) and you can identify in most which of the 4 options the translators favored.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) HERE COMES THE JUDGE

Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account. Ecclesiastes 3:15

The wrath of God is a forgotten doctrine, even in the evangelical church. Part of the problem lies in our definition. When we use the word wrath we tend to think of uncontrolled anger. While that may be true of human wrath, it is far from the truth about God's wrath. Here's a working definition: God's wrath is His settled hostility toward sin in all its various manifestations. To say it is "settled" hostility means that God's holiness cannot and will not coexist with sin in any form whatsoever.

God's wrath is His holy hatred of all that is unholy. It is His righteous indignation at everything that is unrighteous.

Please note these distinctions. God's wrath is not uncontrollable rage, vindictive bitterness, or God losing His temper. The Bible says in

more than one place that God is "slow to anger" (Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8). God never "loses His temper" the way we do.

Wrath is what happens when holiness meets sin.

Wrath is what happens when justice meets rebellion.

Wrath is what happens when righteousness meets unrighteousness.

Wrath is what happens when perfect good meets pure evil. Wrath is God's "natural" response to sin in the universe. He cannot overlook it, He cannot wink at it, He cannot pretend it is not there. As long as God is God, He cannot overlook sin. As long as God is God, He cannot stand by indifferently while His creation is destroyed. As long as God is God, He cannot dismiss lightly those who trample His holy will.

God's judgment on sin (in this life) is generally not of the fire-and-brimstone variety. That rarely happens. When God wants to judge a community or a nation, He simply lets sin take its natural course. If we insist on destroying ourselves, God says, "OK, go ahead and destroy yourselves. I won't stop you." He lets us go our merry way. The true judgment on the human race is that man has turned away from God and does not realize it.

What is the judgment of God when men turn away from Him? God "gives them up" to their own devices. He lets them follow their own desires. He doesn't try to stop their meteoric descent into the abyss. God "abandons" the human race by letting men reap what they sow. Nothing more terrible could ever be contemplated. When men "abandon" God in their thinking, God "abandons" them. He respects the choices we make. If a man or a woman decides to live without Him, He says, "Fine. You can live without Me. In the end, you'll be sorry. But if that's your decision, I'll respect it."

Righteous Judge, I pray for the grace to choose the path of righteousness today Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- According to 1 Peter 4:17, where does God's judgment begin? On what basis will God judge unbelievers?
- In what sense is God's judgment also a sign of His grace?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness.

- Ec 4:1 5:8 1Ki 21:9-21 Ps 58:1,2 82:2-5 94:21,22 Isa 59:14 Mic 2:2 7:3 Zep 3:3 Mt 26:59 Ac 23:3 Jas 2:6
- See [over 50 translations](#)

CORRUPTION UNDER THE SUN

Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice([mishpat/mispat](#); Lxx - [krisis](#)) there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness ([tsedeq](#); Lxx - [dikaios](#)) there is wickedness. - Sadly injustice exists in places meant for justice because sinners are flawed and thus earthly systems are flawed.

*Human courts are designed to correct injustice,
but they are often filled with wickedness and injustice.*

[Ray Stedman](#) - points out that Ec 3:16 begins a section that will go through Ec 5, "in which a series of objections to this thesis are examined by the Searcher.... Someone says, "Wait a minute. You say that God has a wonderful plan for my life, that he is a God of justice, but last week I was seeking justice in a courtroom and I found that the cards were stacked against me; all I got was the rawest injustice. How do you square that with this 'wonderful plan for my life?'" The Searcher takes this up, Ec 3:16: Human courts are designed to correct injustice, but they are often filled with wickedness and injustice. Just last week I was a witness in a case in which a man's business was being destroyed by legal maneuverers. Everyone knew this was unjust, but because of certain legalities no one could get hold of the matter to correct it. That kind of injustice creates anger and frustration in many hearts. People say, "What do you mean, I am to accept that as from the hand of God?" The Searcher picks that up and says there are three things he wants to show us about it. (**ED**: Stedman then comments on each of these things in the following passages - [1] Ec 3:17, [2] Ec 3:18ff and [3] Ec 3:22.)

[John Stevenson](#) - When you look at life as it exists only "under the sun" there does not seem to be much in the way of justice. Bad people do bad things and get away with it. This even extends to places of judgment and places of righteousness. You can find evil within the courts of law. Lawyer jokes abound - and there is good reason for it. In this life you will find perversions of justice. You will also find evil in places that are supposed to be righteous. The church has been rocked by scandals. And this has happened in every age. Those who are in positions of spiritual leadership are seen to have feet of clay.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that there is nothing new under the sun? GOTQUESTIONS](#)

ANSWER - Ecclesiastes 1:9 is the origin of what has become a common proverb, "There's nothing new under the sun." The verse reads like this: "What has been will be again, / what has been done will be done again; / there is nothing new under the sun." As a modern idiom, "there's nothing new under the sun" is often used as a world-weary complaint against life's monotony. When Solomon wrote the statement, he was emphasizing the cyclic nature of human life on earth and the emptiness of living only for the "rat race."

The phrase "under the sun" is used 29 times in Ecclesiastes and nowhere else in Scripture. The intended meaning in Ecclesiastes is that what happens "under the sun" in a life separated from God is universal—the point of view in Ecclesiastes is an earth-bound perspective.

To say there is nothing new under the sun means there is nothing really new on the earth. All the activity of a man during his lifetime is lost in the grander scheme of things and will soon be forgotten (Ecclesiastes 1:11).

To say there is nothing new under the sun does not ignore inventions or advances in technology; rather, these innovations do not amount to any basic change in the world. In Solomon's time, many advances took place in society, but, from the larger perspective of life, human nature has remained and always will remain the same.

The context of Ecclesiastes 1 discusses how the earth operates. The sun (verse 5), wind (verse 6), and water (verse 7) continue to function as they have in the past. Despite human efforts (verse 2), the world continues unchanged. Part of the writer's frustration from this observation is that "no one remembers the former generations, / and even those yet to come / will not be remembered / by those who follow them" (verse 11). People tend to forget the past, repeating its mistakes as a result.

Does the fact that there is nothing new under the sun mean that people should not try to improve themselves, the lives of others, or the world around them? The entire book of Ecclesiastes should be read before jumping to any conclusion. In the end, Solomon writes this: "Now all has been heard; / here is the conclusion of the matter: / Fear God and keep his commandments, / for this is the duty of all mankind. / For God will bring every deed into judgment, / including every hidden thing, / whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

In other words, life involves more than what happens "under the sun." Living for God and His glory is the goal of life. Those who do not seek this goal will be judged. Even our good deeds that have gone unnoticed in this life are seen by God and will be rewarded in the future. This knowledge should result in a life lived for God, with a deep love for others and desire to make a difference.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" The [Great Commission](#) also gives a specific mission for the Christian life: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). The Christian life is not meaningless. There may be nothing new under the sun, but Jesus promises, some day, to make all things new (Revelation 21:5).

The Search For Justice

I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. — Ecclesiastes 3:16

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:14-22

A trial has just ended, and the reactions to the verdict could not be more different. The family of the alleged murderer celebrates the declaration of a mistrial due to a legal technicality. Meanwhile, the grieving parents whose daughter has died wonder about a justice system that would allow such a decision. As they stand weeping before a mass of microphones and cameras, they exclaim: "Where is the justice in this? Where is the justice?"

We've seen this scenario played out in the news or on TV crime dramas. We instinctively long for justice but cannot seem to find it. The wisest man of his day, Solomon, faced a similar frustration and disappointment. He saw that imperfect human beings could never administer perfect justice. He wrote: "I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there" (Eccl. 3:16).

If all we trusted in were imperfect people, we would lose all hope. But Solomon wisely added in verse 17: "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work."

The search for justice can be satisfied only by trusting the God who is always just. By: Bill Crowder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Though sin seems to triumph and wrong conquers right,
Though lies can put justice to flight,
God's truth is eternal, His Word shows His might,
And He will bring justice to light.
—Gustafson

Someday the scales of justice will be perfectly balanced.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) ORIGINAL SIN

And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there. I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed." Ecclesiastes 3:16-17

No doctrine of the Bible is as easy to prove as the doctrine of original sin." When I read those words by Donald Grey Barnhouse, they seemed to leap off the page. That's the doctrine that says that left to yourself, with no outside influence, whenever you have a choice, you'll always choose to do wrong. G. K. Chesterton said it this way: "Whatever else may be said about man, this much is certainly true: He is not all that he could be."

I'm sure I don't need to spend a great deal of time debating that point. Something has gone wrong with the human race, beginning with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. No one can successfully deny that fact. We are not all that we could be. And no matter how much we

boast of our technological achievements, the sorry story of man's inhumanity to man always grabs the front page.

Call it what you will—a twist, a taint, a bent to do wrong. Or as one hymn writer put it, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love." Somehow, somewhere, somebody injected poison into the human bloodstream. That's why, even when we know the right thing to do, we go ahead and choose to do wrong. Deliberately. Repeatedly. Defiantly.

There are many ways we might discuss this truth. We could discuss it in cosmic terms, or international terms, or national terms, or local terms, but I think it's better to talk about it in personal terms. What do you see when you look at the man or woman in the mirror?

One writer answered the question this way: "There is no [person] on earth who, if his secret thoughts were fully exposed, would not deserve hanging ten times in his lifetime." My comment is, only ten times? For I know that when I look into the mirror what I see is a man who all too often knows what is right but chooses to do what is wrong. And I freely confess that sometimes impulses come into my mind that, were I to follow them, would destroy me, my marriage, my family, my career, and even my life. And yet I still think about them and I still some-times want to do those things.

Who among us would say differently? You think about things—and sometimes want to do things—that you know would destroy you if you did them. And sometimes you want to do them anyway. And sometimes—if we are honest we must say this—you go ahead and do them.

What is it that makes us repeatedly do that which can only hurt us? It is our condition of original sin. We know what is right and yet we deliberately choose to do what is wrong. There is something in us that bends us toward evil. The apostle Paul admitted that even as a Christian he struggled with this sinful nature. (See Romans 7:15-25.) He concluded that ongoing deliverance comes only in God's work "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25). Apart from God's grace there is

no telling how much greater your sin and mine would be. With the apostle we can only thank God for His lasting gift of deliverance.

Lord God, what would I do without the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ? He took m y sin; I gained His righteousness. May I never lose sight of that blessed transaction that saves me from damnation. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- We know that God will bring all things to judgment. When do His judgments begin? Can you think of ways in which God judges the wicked and rewards the righteous even in this life?
- How can we hang on to our faith when we see the wicked triumphing?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Malachi 7:2-3; Matthew 23:13-15; and James 1:27.

An Instructed Faith

Christ died for our sins . . . , He was buried, and . . . He rose again the third day. — 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3

When I witness to people about Christ, I often hear this response: "I'm all right, I have a strong faith." But our discussions soon reveal that all they have is faith in faith. Genuine saving faith, though, is based on the truth of God's Word.

Billy Graham made this clear during an interview on a TV talk show. He said he eagerly anticipates death because he expects to be with Jesus. He went on to explain that his confidence rests on what the Bible says about Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. The interviewer, an agnostic who admits his fear of death, respectfully said, "You're not afraid because you know something I don't know."

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3 reveals the need for a God-instructed faith. It depicts the unpleasant side of life: injustice everywhere and the inevitability of death (3:16,18-21). It expresses that nonbelievers, seeing no reason for hope, must conclude that nonexistence is better than life (3:22-4:3). But it also shows the believer's confidence that God will ultimately make all things right (3:17).

A Bible-instructed faith focuses on Christ—His death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Only that kind of faith can bring salvation and comfort. And it gives us confidence that we will spend eternity in heaven. By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The godless ponder death with fear—
For what's ahead they cannot see;

But those who put their faith in Christ
Look forward to eternity.
—Sper

To put your fears to rest, put your faith in Christ.

Ecclesiastes 3:17 I said to myself, “God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,” for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

- said: Ec 1:16 2:1
- God: Ec 12:14 Ge 18:25 Ps 98:9 Mt 16:27 25:31-46 Joh 5:22,26-29 Ac 17:31 Ro 2:5-9 1Co 4:5 2Co 5:10 2Th 1:6-10 Rev 20:11-15
- for: Ec 3:1 Jer 29:10,11 Da 11:40 12:4,9,11-13 Ac 1:7 1Th 5:1 2Pe 3:7,8 Rev 11:2,3,18 17:12-17 20:2,7-9
- See [over 50 translations](#)

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE JUDGEMENT

I said to myself, “God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,” for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. - Final justice is assured — God has appointed a time to judge all deeds. An apt illustration would be a scale being perfectly balanced by an unseen hand.

God may correct it even within time, and if He does not do so "in time," still He has appointed a time when it all will be brought out.

[Ray Stedman](#) - Though there is injustice, that is not the end of the story. God may correct it even within time, and if He does not do so "in time," still He has appointed a time when it all will be brought out. The Scriptures speak of a time appointed by God when all the hidden motives of the heart will be examined, when "that which is spoken in secret shall be shouted from the housetops" (Matthew 10:27+, Luke 12:3+), and justice will ultimately prevail. That is what this Searcher says. Injustice is limited in its scope.

[John Stevenson](#) - in the same way that there is a time and a season for everything under the sun, there is also a time when God shall judge all men. The books eventually **DO** get balanced. Evil **IS** eventually judged. Righteousness **IS** eventually rewarded.

Ecclesiastes 3:18 I said to myself concerning the sons of men, “God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.”

- **concerning:** Ge 3:17-19 Job 14:1-4 15:16 Ps 49:14,19,20 73:18,19 90:5-12 Heb 9:27 1Pe 1:24
- **God:** Job 40:8 Ps 51:4 Ro 3:4 9:23
- **and that:** Ps 73:22 2Pe 2:12
- See [over 50 translations](#)

THE BEASTLY QUALITY OF ALL HUMANITY

I said to myself (in my heart) **concerning the sons of men, “God has surely tested** ([barar](#); Lxx - [diakrino](#) = evaluates the difference between things) **them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.”**- [AMPC](#) ="I said in my heart regarding the subject of the sons of men, God is trying (separating and sifting) them, that they may see that by themselves [under the sun, without God] they are but like beasts." [EXB](#) = "I -decided [^Lsaid in my heart concerning the human race] that God -leaves it the way it is to test people and [^Ltests them] to show them they are just like animals." [TLB](#) = "And then I realized that God is letting the world go on its sinful way so that he can test mankind, and so that men themselves will see that they are no better than beasts."

There is a beastliness about us all. Put in a situation where we are suffering injury we react with viciousness.

[Ray Stedman](#) - In other words, there is a beastly quality about all of us which injustice will bring out. What is it about a man that makes him prey upon even his friends or neighbors? On the TV program, *The People's Court*, the other night, one case concerned a

young woman who had gotten angry at her friend and roommate, whom she had known for years. and in her anger had poured sugar into the woman's car's gas tank, absolutely destroying the engine. The judge was appalled at the vindictive spirit of this attractive looking young woman who had acted in such a vicious way. There is a beastliness about us all. Put in a situation where we are suffering injury we react with viciousness. **God allows certain circumstances to show us that we all have that quality about us.** We are like animals in other ways, too, the Searcher says. (see verse 19).

NET NOTE - The point would be that God allows human injustice to exist in the world in order to make it clear to mankind that they are essentially no better than the beasts.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) THOUGHTS FROM THE GRAVEYARD

I also thought, "As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Man 's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 3:18-19

It would be easy to draw wrong conclusions from a casual reading of verses 18-19. Perspective is all-important. Solomon is not dealing with questions of eternal life or what we might more generally call the afterlife. For there is lasting meaning—eternal meaning—to life.

Solomon is simply examining the facts of human existence versus the facts of animal existence. He concludes that for all our vaunted superiority, in one respect at least animals and humans are exactly alike: We both die.

Behind the problem of death lies the reality of sin in the universe. Before sin entered through Adam's disobedience, death did not exist. Where does sin lead? The answer is simple: When I sin, I die. Every time I sin, I die a little bit more. We sin because we think it will bring us freedom and life but we end up with bondage and death. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). First there was sin, then there was death. It is an inexorable law of the universe.

Just open any newspaper and look at the obituary section. Recently I found these names in our local paper, name after name after name: Aden . . . Canavan . . . Doohan ... Hill... Knowles... Lane ... Lyons...Ma-hone . . . Masco . . . Pelzer . . . Sheridan . . . Shubert. . . Small... Videka ... Witzel... Yuris.

Every day a brand-new list, and names never repeated. Why? Because death reigns all over Chicago. But death also reigns for you and for me. If there is one thing about which we may be perfectly certain, it is this: We are going to die someday. We say nothing is as certain as death and taxes, but death is far more certain.

When you die, the coroner will fill out a death certificate. There's a space on that certificate that says "Cause of Death." If we understand the Bible, the answer is always the same: "Sin." Not sickness, not cancer, not an accident, not old age. Those are merely symptoms of the one great cause of death: Sin.

Holy Father, my iniquity is vast and my sins beyond counting. My only hope is in the blood of Jesus. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What is the clearest proof from your own life that you are a sinner?
- In what sense is man's fate the same as the animals? In what sense is it different?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:21; and Revelation 21:4.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity.

- that which: Ec 2:16 Ps 49:12,20 92:6,7
- as the: 2Sa 14:14 Job 14:10-12 Ps 104:29
- for: Ec 2:20-23 Ps 39:5,6 89:47,48
- See [over 50 translations](#)

FRAILITY & TRANSIENCE OF MAN IS LIKE BEASTS

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. - [TLB](#) "For men and animals both breathe the same air, and both die. So mankind has no real advantage over the beasts; what an absurdity! " Men and beast share the same fate, death, have the same breath and are equally subject to frailty and limits. Death is not "biased," and is the great equalizer. Solomon is not denying that humans have spiritual value or eternal purpose. Rather, he's emphasizing that in terms of physical death, humans and animals are equally mortal, and this reveals our limitation and our dependence on God. Solomon isn't saying man and beast are identical in value, but that in observable mortality, we share the same frailty.

Solomon concludes: "**All is vanity**," temporary, enigmatic, hard to grasp. Life's brevity and the shared destiny of death make human boasting and self-importance seem hollow.

[Ray Stedman](#) - Man is frail, his existence temporary. Like the animals, we do not have very long to live on this earth. Injustice sharpens the realization that we do not have long to live rightly, honestly and truly before God.

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 3:19—Is man's fate the same as that of animals?[When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: Solomon seems to claim here that there is no difference between the death of humans and animals. "One thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other." Yet Solomon asserts later that, unlike animals, when a human dies, "the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). How can this conflict be explained?

SOLUTION: There are both similarities and differences between the death of animals and humans. In both cases, their bodies die and return to dust. Likewise, their death is certain, and both are powerless to prevent it. In these respects, the physical phenomena are the same for both humans and animals. On the other hand, humans have immortal souls (spirits), and animals do not (Ecc. 12:7; cf. 3:21). Of no beasts does the Bible say, "to be absent from the body ... [is] to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Likewise, nowhere does the Bible speak of the resurrection of animals, as it does of all human beings (cf. John 5:28–29; Rev. 20:4–6). So there is a big difference in the spiritual realm between the death of humans and animals. Consider the following summary:

HUMAN AND ANIMAL DEATHS	
SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
Physically	Spiritually
In the body	In the soul
Life before death	Life after death
Mortality of the body	Immortality of the person
How the body decays	That the body is raised
No control over death	Experience of a resurrection

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 3:19—Is human destiny the same as that of animals?[When Cultists Ask](#)

MISINTERPRETATION: Solomon seems to claim here that there is no difference between the death of humans and that of animals: "One thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other" (NKJV). The Jehovah's Witnesses cite this verse to prove that humans do not have an immaterial nature called the soul or spirit (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, 378).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: There are both similarities and differences between the deaths of animals and humans. In both cases, their bodies die and return to dust. Likewise, their death is certain, and both are powerless to prevent it. In these respects, the physical phenomena are the same for both humans and animals.

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Walter Kaiser - Ecclesiastes 3:19–21 Man's Fate Like the Animals? - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)

If ever there were a hard saying in the Scriptures, this would surely be among the most difficult! It is bad enough that death seems to unfairly level all humans—young or old, good or bad. But this saying casts a grim shadow that appears to say that all hope is lost after death as well—a startling statement indeed! Is it true that men and beasts have about the same hope for any kind of life after death? Is it really only a matter of “fate”? These are some of the questions this text raises.

First, the word fate is an overtranslation. The word that appears here is merely the word happening. Thus, no references are made to chance, luck or ill fortune. It is solely the fact that one happening, one event—namely, death—overtakes all things that share mortality.

The text then affirms that “all go to the same place.” But the place that is intended here is not oblivion or nonexistence; it is the grave. Both men and beasts are made out of dust, and therefore it is to the dust that they will return. In that sense, as one dies, so dies the other. Death is no respecter of persons or animals!

But most disturbing about those who insist on this hopeless view of death in the Old Testament is the way they translate some texts in order to substantiate their own views. In the clearest tones possible in the Hebrew, Ecclesiastes 3:21 states that “the spirit of man rises upward, and the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth.” The verbs to go upward and to go downward are active participles with the sign of the article. There is no need to say that Hebrew has confused the article with a slightly different reading for the interrogative.

Furthermore, had not Solomon already argued in this very context that the unjust judges would face the living God at the last judgment (Eccles 3:17)? How could they do this if it was all over when they died? And did not Solomon warn just as forcibly that the final judgment of God would bring every earthly deed into the light of his justice (Eccles 12:7, 14)? But if it were the end of existence, who would care about such idle threats that warned about a later judgment?

The concept that people could and did live after death is as old as Enoch himself. That man, it is recorded in Genesis 5:24, entered into the eternal state with his body! Likewise, the patriarch Job knew that a person would live again if he died, just as a tree would sprout shoots after it had been cut down (Job 14:7, 14).

Nor should we stress too much the words “Who knows,” as if the text gives us a question for which there is no answer. In the nine places where this expression occurs in Scripture, only three are actually questions (Esther 4:14; Eccles 2:19; 6:12). In the two passages that are similar to this text, it is followed by a direct object. The statement is a rhetorical remark that calls for us to remember that it is God who knows the difference between persons and beasts, and that the spirit or soulish nature of one is immortal (and hence “goes up” to God) while the spirit of the other is not immortal (and hence “goes down” to the grave just as the flesh disintegrates into dust).

The final verse of the chapter reiterates this same rhetorical question. “Who can bring him to see what will happen after him?” From the context the answer is abundantly clear, even if the answer is not immediately verbalized: it is God who will make the final evaluation on life in its totality. Men and women should not live as if God were not to be faced in eternity and as if there were nothing more to mortal humans than their flesh, which will turn to dust in the grave just as the flesh of animals will. There is more. The undertaker cannot and does not get everything when he calls for the remains. The spirit has gone already to be with God in the case of those men and women who fear him and who wish to please him.

Therefore, I would translate Ecclesiastes 3:19–21 as follows:

For what happens to humanity also happens to the beast; one and the same thing happens to both of them; as the one dies, so the other dies: the same breath is in both of them; there is no advantage [based on this one event of death] of the man over the beast. Both go to one place, that is, the grave. Both are [made out] of the dust and both return to the dust. Who knows the spirit of an individual? He [or she] is the one that goes upward [to God], but the spirit of the beast is the one that goes downward to the earth.

Ecclesiastes 3:20 All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.

- **go:** Ec 3:21 Ec 6:6 Ec 9:10 Ge 25:8,17 Nu 27:13 Job 7:9 17:13 30:24 Ps 49:14
- **all are:** Ge 3:19 Job 10:9,10 34:15 Ps 104:29 Da 12:2
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 6:6+ "Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things—do not all go to one place?"

Ecclesiastes 9:10+ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Psalms 103:14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that **we are but dust**.

Ecclesiastes 12:7+ then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Depiction of Man Returning to Dust

DUST TO DUST BOTH MAN & BEASTS

All go to the same place- Solomon is continuing his discussion from (Ec 3:18–19) of the shared mortality of all living beings, humans and animals. The same place would be in the ground (grave). He is not distinguishing between heaven and hell. Solomon is speaking from an "under the sun" perspective, a view based on observable reality, not on divine revelation about the afterlife.

All came from the dust and all return to the dust.- **All** means man and beasts. Came from dust simply describes the physical creation of men and animals. Moses writes in Genesis 2:7+ "Then the LORD God **formed man of dust from the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." In a similar passage in Ge 3:19+ Moses writes "By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; **For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.**" Genesis does not describe animals created from the dust, but the "all came from the dust" indicates they had an origin from the dust. Every living being eventually dies and decomposes, returning to the earth. It's a universal truth of mortality, so death is the great leveler.

Here is Solomon's main point in this section - Solomon is not denying the existence of a human soul (he explores that in Eccl. 12:7), but rather highlighting that from a purely earthly point of view, humans and animals share the same fate, death. Therefore, regardless of status, wisdom, wealth, or power we all return to dust. Given this reality, this truth should be a call to humility and a life anchored not in temporary things, but in the eternal purposes of God.

[Ray Stedman](#) - We die like an animal and our bodies dissolve like a beast's. From the human standpoint one cannot detect any difference.

Ray Pritchard - Verses 20 -21 have been attacked for teaching a sub-Christian view of the afterlife. The truth is, Solomon isn't dealing with the afterlife at all. He's simply pointing out that from an earthly perspective no one can say what happens when we die. But from a heavenly perspective, from God's perspective, we do know. Jesus is truly the answer to death for all of us. As D. L. Moody lay dying he exclaimed, "Earth is receding; heaven is approaching. This is my crowning day." Many have felt that way as they came to the end of life. For those who know Jesus, death is the passageway that leads to eternal life.

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 3:20—If all return to dust, how can there be a resurrection? [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: Some have argued against a physical resurrection on the grounds that the scattered fragments of decomposed corpses cannot be reassembled, since some become plants, or others are eaten by animals or even cannibals. Yet, the Bible declares that all bodies will "come forth" from the "graves" (John 5:28–29).

SOLUTION: Several things must be noted in this connection. First, as many scholars have pointed out, if necessary, it would be no problem for an omnipotent God to bring all of the exact particles of one's body together again at the resurrection. Certainly He who created every particle in the universe could reconstitute the relatively few particles (by comparison) in a human body. The God who created the world out of nothing is surely able to fashion a resurrection body out of something.

Second, it is not necessary to believe that the same particles will be restored in the resurrection body. Even common sense dictates that a body can be the same physical body without having the same physical particles. The observable fact that bodies eat food and give off waste products, as well as get fatter and skinnier, is sufficient evidence of this. Certainly, we do not say that one's body is no longer material or no longer her body simply because she gains or loses weight.

Third, in the light of modern science it is unnecessary to believe that God will reconstitute the exact particles one had in his pre-resurrection body. The physical body remains physical even though, according to science, the exact physical molecules in it change every seven years or so. So, the resurrection body can be just as material as our present bodies and still have new molecules in it.

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 3:20–21—If there is life after death, why does Solomon declare that man has no advantage over the beasts? [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: The Bible teaches that the soul survives death (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 6:9). But, Ecclesiastes insists that “all go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Ec 3:20). Hence, “man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity” (Ec 3:19).

SOLUTION: The reference here is to the human body, not to the soul. Both men and beast die and their bodies return to dust. However, humans are different in that their soul “goes upward” (v. 21). In fact, Solomon speaks of “eternity” in the human heart (Ecc. 3:11) and of its immortality when he declares that at death “man goes to his eternal home” (Ec 12:5). He also emphasized that we should fear God because there is a day when “God will bring you into judgment” after this life (Ec 11:9). So Ecclesiastes is not denying life after death; it is warning about the futility of living only for this life “under the sun” (cf. Ec 1:3, 13; 2:18). (See prior comments under Ec 3:19.)

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 3:20–21—If there is life after death, why does Solomon declare that man has no advantage over the beasts? [When Cultists Ask](#)

MISINTERPRETATION: Ecclesiastes 3:20–21 insists that “all go to one place: All are from the dust, and all return to dust.” Hence, “man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses cite this verse to prove that human beings do not consciously survive death. “Does each human have a spirit that goes on living as an intelligent personality after it ceases to function in the body? No” (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, 383).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: The Bible very clearly teaches that the soul survives death (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9). The reference in Ecclesiastes 3:20–21 is to the human body, not to the soul. Both humans and beasts die and their bodies return to dust. However, humans are different in that their “soul goes upward” (v. 21). In fact, Solomon speaks of “eternity” in the human heart (Eccles. 3:11) and of its immortality when he declares that at death “man goes to his eternal home” (12:5). He also emphasized that we should fear God because there is a day when “God will bring you into judgment” after this life (11:9). So Ecclesiastes is not denying life after death; it is warning about the futility of living only for this life “under the sun” (cf. 1:3, 13; 2:18). See also comments under Ecclesiastes 3:19.

Ray Pritchard - - [Something New Under the Sun](#) UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

“All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? Ecclesiastes 3:20-22

Sam is twelve years old and has been raised in a Christian home. One evening he crawls up on the bed and with tears asks a question that has been troubling his heart. “What if when we die, there’s no God? What if we just die and then we can’t think anymore?”

Death is so final that you can’t help but wonder sometimes what if “nothing happens” when we die. How would you answer Sam’s plaintive question? Since we will all die someday—and since the cemeteries are adding and not subtracting people—on what basis do Christians have a hope that goes beyond the grave?

Over the past twenty years I have conducted funerals for all kinds of people. Most of them have been older people, but occasionally I do a funeral for a younger person, and sometimes I have the sad duty to officiate at the funeral of a child or an infant. The circumstances vary, but this much is certain. At the moment of death the truth about individuals comes out. You can fake your religion most days, but you can’t fake it when you stare death cold in the face. In that moment Jesus makes all the difference in the world. In the saddest moments I have seen the light of God on the faces of those who have lost their loved ones. Through their tears they smile because they know Jesus, and He has made all the difference.

Verses 20 -21 have been attacked for teaching a sub-Christian view of the afterlife. The truth is, Solomon isn’t dealing with the afterlife at all. He’s simply pointing out that from an earthly perspective no one can say what happens when we die. But from a heavenly perspective, from God’s perspective, we do know. Jesus is truly the answer to death for all of us. As D. L. Moody lay dying he exclaimed, “Earth is receding; heaven is approaching. This is my crowning day.” Many have felt that way as they came to the end of life. For those who know Jesus, death is the passageway that leads to eternal life.

Lord Jesus, I hasten toward the day when I will be with You forever. You died so that I might live forever. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How does our universal unease over death point to something greater? Is this "divine discontent" part of the "eternity" God has put inside every human heart—(Ecclesiastes 3:11)?
- What is your hope of living beyond the grave?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 23; Psalm 23:4; and Hebrews 11:13-16.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?

KJV Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

BGT Ecclesiastes 3:21 κα τ ς ο δ εν πνε μα υ ν το ν θρ που ε ναβα νει α τ ε ς νω κα πνε μα το κτ νους ε καταβα νει α τ κ τω ε ς γ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 3:21 And who has seen the spirit of the sons of man, whether it goes upward? and the spirit of the beast, whether it goes downward to the earth?

NET Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who really knows if the human spirit ascends upward, and the animal's spirit descends into the earth?

CSB Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows if the spirit of people rises upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?

ESV Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

NIV Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?"

NLT Ecclesiastes 3:21 For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth?

YLT Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of the sons of man that is going up on high, and the spirit of the beast that is going down below to the earth?

NJB Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows if the human spirit mounts upward or if the animal spirit goes downward to the earth?

NRS Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?

NAB Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows if the life-breath of the children of men goes upward and the life-breath of beasts goes earthward?

GWN Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows whether a human spirit goes upward or whether an animal spirit goes downward to the earth?

BBE Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who is certain that the spirit of the sons of men goes up to heaven, or that the spirit of the beasts goes down to the earth?

RSV Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?

ASV Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?

DBY Ecclesiastes 3:21 Who knoweth the spirit of the children of men? Doth it go upwards? and the spirit of the beasts, doth it go downwards to the earth?

- **knows:** Ec 12:7 Lu 16:22,23 Joh 14:3 Ac 1:25 2Co 5:1,8 Php 1:23
- See [over 50 translations](#)

Who knows that the breath ([ruah/ruach](#); Lxx - [pneuma](#)) of man ascends upward and the breath ([ruah/ruach](#); Lxx - [pneuma](#)) of the beast descends downward to the earth - **TLB** = For who can prove that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward into dust? **NET** "Who really knows if the human spirit ascends upward, and the animal's spirit descends into the earth?" Note that there is disagreement on interpretation of this verse. Assuming this is a rhetorical question that calls for a response "No one," Solomon is emphasizing there is not definite difference between man and beasts when they die.

Donald Glenn - Moreover, any possible advantage man might claim over an animal was, according to Solomon, beyond empirical demonstration. This is indicated by his rhetorical question, **Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?** No living person can observe or demonstrate a difference between people and animals by watching them as they die. Some commentators, it is true, say that Solomon is here affirming a difference in the destinies of men and animals. They see vestiges of a belief in man's immortality expressed here and point to the absence of an "if" in the Hebrew text before spirit (cf. KJV, NASB). However, this conflicts with several things: (a) the context where Solomon is emphasizing the sameness of man's fate with the animals (vv. 19–20); (b) the use of the word "spirit" in this passage which refers to the breath of life which man shares with the animals (v. 19); (c) the rhetorical question in verse 22, "Who can bring him to see what will happen after him?" which denies Solomon's knowledge of an afterlife; and (d) the uniform testimony of many Bible versions which do reflect an interrogative in verse 21. Solomon had earlier argued that death negates all differences between a wise person and a fool (2:14c–16). Here he argued that death negates all differences between people and animals. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 986](#))

William MacDonald agrees with Glenn writing that "Solomon's ignorance as to what happens at the time of death is evident from his question," (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#)) In other words MacDonald does not espouse the belief that Solomon is teaching a doctrinal truth (which is true elsewhere in Scripture) that on death man's spirit goes upward. However, not all men's spirits go upward when they die for unbelievers go down to Sheol.

Michael Eaton - The thought is twofold. First, there is a difference between man and beast in what follows death. Second, the generality of men cannot appreciate the difference in ultimate destiny and live as though there were no difference. (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes page 80](#))

Daniel Hill - Now man certainly does not know. We need only look at what man comes up with when it comes to death and any possibility of life after death to see that. We have everything from reincarnation to death being nothing but an eternal void. Whether man or beast, death, from our secular side, is death. Bodies decompose, they go back to the dust. So who knows? GOD KNOWS...So the question then becomes do you know the one who knows?

Ray Stedman (I mention his comment because it is what a few commentaries favor but I think he is incorrect). He writes "That really should not be a question, as it is stated here in this text (**ED: [ALL 50+ TRANSLATIONS ON THIS PAGE RENDER THIS AS A QUESTION](#) AND THUS DO NOT AGREE WITH STEDMAN**). It should read this way: *'Who knows that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth.'* That is something which only revelation tells us. Experience does not offer any help at all here. From a human standpoint, a dead man and a dead dog look as if the same thing happened to both of them. But from the divine point of view that is not the case. (**ED: TRUE, BUT THIS DOCTRINE IS NOT TAUGHT HERE BUT ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE**). Though we die like beasts, the spirit of man goes upward while the spirit of the beast goes downward. Later on the Searcher states very positively that at death the spirit of man returns to God who gave it (Ecc 12:7+), but the spirit of the beast ends in nothingness. Injustice stems from our beastliness, and God's plan for life will uncover it.

Gleason Archer - [NIEBD](#) - Does Ecclesiastes 3:21 teach that animals have a spirit just as man does?

Ecclesiastes 3:21 reads, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (KJV). Since it is usually understood that the spirit of man is the focal point of the divine image in man that enables him to reason and respond to God religiously, it sounds a bit startling to hear that the "spirit" of an animal goes downward, as its body (like man's body) turns to dust in the grave (v.20). NASB alleviates the problem by translating it as "breath": "Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?" But the basic problem still remains, for the term *rûah* ("breath," "spirit") is used for both man and beast. This is true whether we understand v.21 as a question implying that there is real doubt as to where the "spirit" of man or beast really goes after death; or whether we are to take it as a regretful question, implying, "How many people really know this fact, that the breath of man goes upward and the breath of the beast goes downward, when they die?" (I personally incline to the latter interpretation, but it is possible that the author meant the question skeptically.)

In this use of *rûaḥ*, we face a familiar phenomenon in the history of the development of transcendental terms in almost every language. From the observation that a living man or animal breathes in and out as long as it is alive, it is natural to derive a term such as “breath” and make it a symbol of life. Thus we have quite frequently in the Flood narrative the phrase *rûaḥ ḥayyîm* (“the breath of life”) as attributed to animals, both those that drowned in the Flood (Gen. 6:17; 7:22) and those that were preserved in the ark (Gen. 7:15). In Genesis 7:22 it is even combined with *nišmatû rûaḥ ḥayyîm* (“the breath of the spirit of life”—*nešāmāh* being a word used almost exclusively for literal breathing and nothing beyond). The Egyptian phrase *ṯꜥw nḥ* (“breath of life,” conventionally pronounced *tchau ‘aneḥ*) occurs very frequently in Egyptian literature, and it is possible that Moses had this expression in mind and translated it into the Hebrew equivalent.

Here, then, we have a general, nontechnical use of *rûaḥ* as applied to animals possessed of life. I am not aware of any other passages where *rûaḥ* is used with respect to animals. Apart from the 100 times where *rûaḥ* is applied to “wind” or “winds,” the rest of its 275 occurrences pertain to human beings, angels (who are essentially *rûaḥ* without any real, physical body), demonic spirits (who were formerly angels of God, before Satan was cast out of heaven), or God Himself: the Third Person of the Trinity is spoken of as *rûaḥ ‘elōhîm* (“the Spirit of God”) or *rûaḥ Yahweh* (“the Spirit of Yahweh [or, as mispronounced, ‘Jehovah’]”).

As is so often the case with terms that began with a primitive and general meaning, it later became specialized so as to acquire a technical, figurative meaning on a metaphysical level. The observation that living creatures breathe leads to the use of “breath” as a term for “life-principle.” From that point on it becomes a matter of usage whether to employ *rûaḥ*, *nešāmāh*, or some other word referring to air in motion as a symbol for the spiritual element in man’s being—that which makes him distinctively human, as opposed to subhuman creatures that also have lungs and breathe. It is not because of some inherent root meaning, then, but because of established usage that *rûaḥ* became the technical term for the image of God in man, that capacity for thinking of God and responding to Him, that ability to comprehend the difference between right and wrong and make moral decisions, that ability to reason in a generalizing, philosophical manner, which distinguishes man from beasts. The corresponding term for this in the Septuagint and in the New Testament is *pneuma*. In biblical usage, then, *pneuma* became equivalent to *rûaḥ*. Appropriately enough, *pneuma* also was derived from the verb *pneō* (“to blow”).

A closely related term for the nonphysical element in man was *nepeš* (“soul”). This too was derived from a root idea of breathing (*napāšu* in Akkadian meant “breathe freely,” then, “become broad or extended”; the noun *napištu* meant “breath” or “life”). But it became specialized to mean the individual identity of any living, breathing creature, whether man or animal (for both *nepeš* and *psychē*, its Greek equivalent, are used freely for beasts as well as men). The *nepeš* is the conscious center of emotions, desire or appetite, or inclination or mood. It is the locus of each man’s personality and the point of reference for his self-consciousness. Gustav Oehler defines *nepeš* as springing from the *rûaḥ* and as existing continually through it (a statement that could not be applied to animals, however); individuality resides in it, that is, in the man’s ego or self. It is interesting to note that *nepeš* with the appropriate possessive pronoun is the most frequent way of expressing the reflexive noun in a specific way. Thus “he saved himself” would be expressed by “he saved his *nepeš* [or ‘soul’]” (cited by J.I. Marais, “Soul,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5 vols., ed. by J. Orr [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939], p. 2838).

It is to be noted, therefore, that there is a distinction between “spirit” (*rûaḥ*) and “soul” (*nepeš*) in the Old Testament, just as there is between *pneuma* and *psychē* in the New Testament. These, in turn, are differentiated from the term for “body” (*bāšār*), which also (when used figuratively) has a psychological meaning as well as the basic physical idea of a literal, flesh-and-blood body. The *bāšār* is the seat of all sensations and the data supplied by the five senses: but it is also used in Psalm 84 in parallelism with *nepeš* as the vehicle of a spiritual longing for the living God. The same is true in Psalm 63:1: “My soul [*nepeš*] thirsts for Thee, my flesh [*bāšār*] yearns [lit., ‘faints’] for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (NASB). Again, in Psalm 16:9 it is used in parallelism with “heart” (*lēḇ*) and “glory” (*kāḇōd*—a surrogate for *rûaḥ*, which is the divine element in man): “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely” (NASB). Thus the “flesh” is capable of feeling satisfaction in a state of security in the loving presence of God.

The triune makeup of man is brought out even more clearly in the New Testament. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul expresses this prayer for his readers: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit [*pneuma* = *rûaḥ*] and soul [*psychē* = *nepeš*] and body [*sōma* = *bāšār*] be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...” (NASB). Quite clearly the spirit and the soul are differentiated here as distinct elements of the human psyche, and man is represented as triune in nature. This is exactly what we should expect, if man was really created in the image of the Triune God (Gen. 1:26–27).

A clear distinction between *pneuma* and *psychē* is unquestionably implied by 1 Corinthians 2:14–15, which defines the difference between a believer who is dominated by the *pneuma* (the *pneumatikos*, “spiritual man”) and the once-born “natural” man (the one dominated by his egoistic *psychē*): “But a natural [*psychikos*] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually [*pneumatikōs*] appraised” (NASB).

Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 15:44, 46, the same distinction is maintained in reference to the transformation from a merely physical body (prior to death and resurrection) and a spiritual body (i.e., a body especially adapted to the needs and desires of the glorified spirit of the redeemed believer): "It is sown a natural [psychikon] body, it is raised a spiritual [pneumatikon] body" (NASB). In v.46 we read, "However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual ..." (NASB). Quite clearly then, the spirit is distinct from the soul, or else these verses add up to tautological nonsense. We therefore conclude that man is not dichotomic (to use the technical theological term) but trichotomic. (The fullest discussion of this question may be found in Franz Delitzsch, A system of Biblical Psychology, reprint ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966].

Ecclesiastes 3:22 I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?

- **nothing:** Ec 3:11,12 2:10,11,24 5:18-20 8:15 9:7-9 11:9 De 12:7,18 26:10,11 De 28:47 Ro 12:11,12 Php 4:4,5
- **who:** Ec 6:12 8:7 9:12 10:14 Job 14:21 Da 12:9,10,13 Mt 6:34
- See [over 50 translations](#)

CONTENTMENT IN THE PRESENT: ACCEPTING OUR LOT IN LIFE

I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy([samah](#) - joyful; Lxx - [euphraino](#) - be glad, enjoy oneself) **in his activities for that is his lot.** -**TLB** = So I saw that there is nothing better for men than that they should be happy in their work, for that is what they are here for (ED: AKA "THEIR LOT")" **AMP** "So I have seen that there is nothing better than that a man should be happy in his own works *and* activities, for that is his portion (share). "Be happy" means rejoice, take contentment in the work and life God has given you now, delight openly, not superficial pleasure, but deep satisfaction. **Activities** speaks of the actions of one's daily life. **Lot** means portion or inheritance, the circumstances and time God has sovereignly assigned you. The corollary application is that instead of striving endlessly to know the future or control outcomes, we should accept our **lot** from God.

Solomon repeats almost word for word Ec 3:12 - "I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime." Note that there are 6 times in which Solomon gives the reader some relief from the otherwise pessimistic view of life. Those passages are Ec 2:24-26, 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9.

Michael Eaton - If God is sovereign in his disposal of earthly events (3:1–15), has a purpose even in allowing human injustices (3:16–20), and holds our ultimate destiny in his hands (21), then the attitude of the wise should be joyful confidence in the pursuit of earthly responsibilities and the pleasures they bring (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes page 80](#))

William MacDonald - From what he knew about death, and also from what he didn't know, Solomon figures that the best thing a man can do is enjoy his daily activities. That, after all, is his lot in life, and he might as well cooperate with the inevitable. He should find satisfaction in accepting what cannot be changed. But above all, he should enjoy life as it comes to him, because no one can tell him what will happen on earth after he has passed on. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

Tommy Nelson -Without revelation from God, man sees himself as just another animal. This is why man is losing his unique status in our secular culture today. Many people today are elevating animals to the status of humans. At the same time, others are dehumanizing people, especially the unborn, to the status of animals. This is a humiliating thing. But in nature, both animals and people die. Solomon says that the difference is that people will face judgment by God. (See [A Life Well Lived: A Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 62](#))

Stevenson - The Preacher repeats the conclusion to which he came in verse 12. He repeats that conclusion now almost word for word. It is that you should make the most of this time that you do have. Life is precious. And it is short. And eternity is long. Make the most of the NOW. Vince Foster, deputy counsel to President Clinton, spoke to the 1993 graduating class of Arkansas University School of Law only six weeks before his death. His words now echo back to us from somewhere in eternity. A portion of what Mr. Foster said to several hundred young lawyers on that historic day:

"You have amply demonstrated that you are achievers willing to work hard, long hours and set aside your personal lives. But it reminds me of that observation that no one was ever heard to say on a death bed, 'I wish I had spent more time at the office.' Balance wisely your professional life and your family life. If you are fortunate to have children, your parents will warn you that your children will grow up and be gone before you

know it. I can testify that it is true. "God only allows us so many opportunities with our children to read a story, go fishing, play catch and say our prayers together. Try not to miss a one of them. The office can wait. It will still be there after your children are gone."

Solomon says enjoy life that God has given you to the fullest the life, recognizing it as His gift. God has not revealed the solution to all of life's inconsistencies but has given man a life to enjoy while living in obedience to Him. This is vastly different from the solution of the Epicurean sensualists, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Solomon advises that one's life must be regulated by an awareness of future divine judgment (Ec 12:14).

For who will bring him to see what will occur after him (CSB - "after he dies") - **AMP** - "For who will bring him [back] to see what will happen after he is gone?" Solomon is explaining why we should enjoy our lot in life. He explains that no one knows what will happen after death for apart from divine revelation, the future is hidden. Therefore since the future is out of our hands, enjoy and do good with lot, the activities God has sovereignly given to each of us.

"Do not worry about tomorrow..."

-- Jesus Mt 6:34

Think of an hourglass with sand still flowing through it. We cannot reverse the process but we can use well the sand (**the lot**) that God has given each of us. Be faithful in ("each grain of") your work. Your activities matter when done with purpose and gratitude. Don't delay joy. If you're always waiting for the perfect season, you'll miss "the grain of sand season" you are in.

A corollary applicational thought is that when we accept our **lot** as from the good hand of God, such an attitude will tend to lead us into the wonderful fields of contentment. I think of Paul's accepting his lot and learning contentment as a result. In Philippians he writes

Not that I speak from want, for **I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am**. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Php 4:11-13+)