

# "A Season for Everything"

## A Study on the Book of Ecclesiastes

### Lesson 2: Ecclesiastes 3-4

#### Panel Discussion: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup> For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every matter under heaven:  
<sup>2</sup> a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is  
planted;  
<sup>3</sup> a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
<sup>4</sup> a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

<sup>5</sup> a time to cast away stones, and a time to  
gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from  
embracing;  
<sup>6</sup> a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
<sup>7</sup> a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
<sup>8</sup> a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

- **How would you describe your current season?**
- **Would you feel comfortable sharing about a season in your life where you saw the Gospel of God clearly?**

#### Group Discussion

##### Introduction

1. **Describe a time in your life that was marked by contrast – a beautiful moment next to a hard moment.** It may be something like the birth of a child in the midst of a medical emergency, or a profound loss that brought about a spiritual awakening. If you don't feel comfortable sharing with the group, keep that "moment" in your mind as you consider the sovereignty of God in this passage.

##### God's Timing (3:1-15)

After the first two chapters deal with the futility and vanity of life, it would be expected that the author would deal with time in a more discouraging way. He may have argued that time is short, or that time is fleeting. Or he may have even expanded on the tyranny of time: the clock continues to run without emotion or mercy. Instead, the author writes a poem about the rhythm and order of time: For everything there is a season (3:1). *(Excerpts taken from Phil Ryken's commentary on Ecclesiastes)*

(3:1-8) This poem is composed of fourteen pairs – an intensification of the Hebrew number of completion: seven. These phrases are representative of all aspects of living.

2. **In your own life, what have you tried to rush toward? Or on the other hand, what have you tried to rush *through*?**
3. **What is implied in these verses about mankind's responsibility or control?**

God is the King of Time. He is sovereign over time and everything which happens in time. Westminster Shorter Catechism 11 speaks to this: "What are God's works of providence? God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." He regulates our minutes and our seconds. He rules all our moments and all our days. Nothing happens in life without his superintendence. — *Ryken*

4. **Why do we buck against the idea of God's sovereign providence?**

Notice that God is involved both in planting and uprooting. Similarly, there is a time for building up as well as breaking down, and God does them both. God broke down the Tower of Babel that was built because of human pride (Genesis 11:8-9). He also built up a house for Israel and a kingdom for David. The complete work of God includes both creation and devastation. Many people prefer a one-dimensional deity. They like to think of God giving life, but not appointing the time of death. They would rather see God planting and building than uprooting and tearing down. But instead of taking him by halves, we must consider his complete character. There is a time for him to kill as well as a time for him to heal—in other words, a time for capital punishment (see Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:3-5) as well as for skilled medical care and the healing of a nation's soul (2 Chronicles 7:14). This is part of God's perfection in his sovereign dealings with the human race. As God said in the days of Moses, "there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39). — *Ryken*

5. **Do you believe in a God who orders times of creation and times of devastation? How might a faithful believer respond to God in times of devastation?**

As the Creator God, Jesus ordered the rhythms of creation. Now, by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus rules the universe with sovereign authority over time and eternity. Matthew Bridges aptly said in his marvelous hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns" that Jesus Christ is "the Lord of years" and "the Potentate of time." To the day he died, Jesus knew the right time for everything. He still does. He knows the time to love, showing mercy to lost and needy sinners who ask him to be their Savior. He knows the time to hate, standing against evil and injustice. He knows the time for war, as his church does battle against Satan and all the enemies of God. Soon it will be the time for peace, when the Son of God will "make wars cease to the end of the earth" (Psalm 46:9) and bring us the everlasting shalom of the kingdom of God. From beginning to end, Jesus has perfect timing. God's sovereignty over the seasons is gloriously displayed in his life and saving work. — *Ryken*

6. **Is there a story about Jesus that reminds you of His perfect timing? (Gal. 4:4, John 7:30, Rom. 5:6, Luke 24:45-46, 1 Cor. 15:4, Luke 19:45, Matt. 16:15-18, John 11:35, 38, Luke 19:41-44).**

### **Injustice in this World (3:16-4:16)**

7. **(3:16-17) In a fallen world, people experience injustice and wickedness at the hands of others. How does 3:17 make this reality tolerable? What other passages in Scripture teach that the wicked and the unjust will one day experience God's ultimate justice?**

In his righteousness. God vindicates his people (Ps. 4:2-3; 7:9; 9:4; 35:24; 103:6; Isa. 50:8; Mic. 7:9; Rom. 8:33). This shows his faithfulness to them (Neh. 9:8; Zeph. 3:5; Zech. 8:8) and his justice (Jer. 11:20; 2 Tim. 4:8). God's righteousness is clearly seen in his judgments (Ps. 7:11; Mal. 3:5; Rom. 2:2, 5) and contrasts sharply with human unrighteousness (Rom. 3:5ff.). God's righteousness shows a true pattern for how we are to live (1 John 2:29; 3:7-12); his righteousness is worthy of our praise (Isa. 24:15-16); and it is seen most clearly in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-22). As we see the righteousness of God clearly revealed in the cross of Christ, we can trust that his judgments on the wicked and oppressors will come eventually and will set creation to right (Rom. 8:20-21). – *Holcomb*

**8. (4:1-16) Today, where do you see oppression, a preponderance of evil, a lack of wisdom, and rampant foolishness?**

The fuel that feeds the fires of human striving after gain is in 4:4 for the first time in Ecclesiastes identified. It is envy that drives us on the mad rush after "gain". The suspicion or realization that others are gaining more from life than we are leads us on to compete with them in the insane rat race, striving to outdo them. – *Provan*.

When faced with the question of evil and oppression, the Christian must first turn to his or her own heart before turning to the news outlets.

## Conclusion

**9. How content are you in your life? Does envy steal your contentment? Or impatience?**

Jesus invites us to live the better way that we see in Ecclesiastes. Work hard, but be content with what you have. Find your satisfaction in the goodness of God, like the little girl who misquoted Psalm 23 but spoke better than she knew. Rather than saying, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," she said, "The Lord is my shepherd; that's all I want." Most of us want so many other things in life that it is hard for us to say that, but whether Jesus is all we want or not, the truth is that he is all we need. – *Ryken*