

“TO LIVE IS CHRIST”**A Time for Everything Ecclesiastes 2:17—3:22**

“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

Day 1: Read Ecclesiastes 2:17–26.

1. Up to now the Teacher has been pondering the question posed in 1:3. What is his conclusion and how does it impact his outlook on life? (2:17–18)
2. As he contemplates the destiny of his life’s toil, what brings him such despair? (2:19–21)
3. Moving beyond the realization of the futility of striving for meaning in life, what does the Teacher deem to be the only worthwhile preoccupation? (vs. 24)
4. Who is it that gives the ability to enjoy simple pleasures in life?
5. What makes a Christian’s toil more than “chasing after the wind” (vs. 26)? How can God redeem life that includes mind-numbing tasks or grumpy bosses? (See Col. 3:23–24.) What kind of work has lasting value? (Read Mt. 6:28–33; Mt. 25:34–36, 40.)

Day 2: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

6. Describe your initial reaction to this “big-picture” perspective on time.
7. The word for time in this passage signifies opportunity (a specific point in time or season) rather than “clock” time. Who is the one who sets these times, regardless of human effort? (vs. 1; also see Ps. 31:15.) How does the Christian have a more meaningful relationship to time? (Eph. 5:15–21)
8. Share a struggle that you are having with accepting the time or season that God is calling you to at this point. Reflect on the following verses and allow your heart to be encouraged by Jesus, the center of all time. (Jn. 1:1–4; Gal. 4:4–5; Acts 3:19–21; 2 Tim. 1:9–10)

Day 3: Read Ecclesiastes 3:9–15.

9. What is the human desire and longing behind the question in verse 9?

10. The Teacher admits that there is beauty and a glimmer of eternity in man's heart. (vs. 11)
 - a. What is his gripe about these?

 - b. How does the coming of Jesus illuminate these baffling mysteries? (Eph. 1:7–10; Jn. 1:14)

11. When all is said and done, what does the Teacher consider to be the most worthwhile way to spend your life? (vs. 12; compare 3:22; 5:18–20; 8:15; and 9:7) The Teacher did not know Jesus; nevertheless what can we learn from his insight? (Titus 2:4–5; 1 Thess. 4:11; Psalm 131)

Day 4: Read Ecclesiastes 3:9–15.

12. What truth about God causes people to revere him? (vs. 14) How does this contrast with the quality of man's work?

13. How is knowing that everything God does will endure forever good news for those to whom God's mysteries have been revealed? (Eph. 1:9–10, 18–23; Col. 2:2–3)

Day 5: Read Ecclesiastes 3:16–22.

14. Contrast the Teacher's understanding of human law courts with divine justice. What are his two conclusions? (vss. 16–17)

15. What bleak deductions does the Teacher come to as he contemplates the difference between a human and the average cat? (vss. 18–20) How does the glorious light of Genesis 1:26–27 and 1 Cor. 15:12–22, 42–44 transcend these assertions?

16. In the end the Teacher concludes that there is nothing better than enjoying the simple pleasures of life. List a few scripture verses that you, as a Christian woman with the benefit of knowledge of Christ, might use to convince him otherwise.