

**Community Discussion Guide [3.21.10]**  
**Ecclesiastes: Losing Your Illusions**  
**Week 5 – Ecclesiastes 3.1-15**

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

Big Shift - Solomon has been exploring life 'under the sun', but now "life under heaven" under the authority and rule of a sovereign Creator. God is in control. So we need to discern with wisdom the seasons of life that we are in. Yet we typically respond with:

- Regret: many of us have a tendency to live with our attention focused on the rearview mirror living with a great cloud of 'what if' and 'if only'.
- Anxiety: others live in a constant state of anxiousness about what lies ahead...nervousness about the future...is what we need in place?

Result: we miss life in the present. We never really live!

**College. Single. Married, no kids. Married 5 kids. Single (again). Which season are you in? Where are you feeling inconvenienced? Could these be moments that God has given you to enjoy, yet because we are living (in our heads) somewhere else (in another season) we don't savor? Does knowing that seasons will change and soon these moments will be gone help you in any way? Does it sadden you?**

The seasons:

<sup>2</sup> *a time to be born, and a time to die;*

From the cradle to the grave God is in heaven overseeing the time of both and all that is in the space between.

*a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;*

There is a time to begin things and end things...this is hard for those who don't like change.

<sup>3</sup> *a time to kill, and a time to heal;*

there is possibility to find joy in God in the midst of both...when your body is healthy and broken...you need to see the grace in them all...hunt the grace down

*a time to break down, and a time to build up;*

construction metaphor...this is life. You may start something, have a good run and then it needs to change.

<sup>4</sup> *a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*

- Sometimes you will cry...there will be hurt and tears. God is in control.
- Mourning can be connected to repentance and a deep conviction of sin over the pervasiveness of your sin. This leads to the magnitude of grace and joy for the grace of God.

**Share with your community a time when you have been in deep sorrow. What did you see of God during that time? What truth about the gospel comforted you during that time?**

**Share a time when you were devastated by your sinfulness. Did you do something you swore you would never do? What was that sin? What comfort do we find when "our sins go over our head"?**

<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;*

People are in our life for a season...maybe to return, maybe not. There may be some people in your life that you need to be released and others that you need to embrace.

**What relationships need to be set aside for a time so that you can invest where God is leading you? Why is this difficult? What will you lose? Security? Reputation? Legacy? Do these bring more joy than simple obedience does?**

<sup>6</sup> *a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;*

There is a season for gathering and one for purging...from our soul and from our house...lent.

**What do we need to lose that we are holding on to?**

*<sup>7</sup> a time to tear, and a time to sew;*

In Scripture tearing is often associated with grieving (over sin and over loss) We need to go through (not around) On the other side is mending...is healing.

*a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*

There is a time to keep your mouth shut. Maybe prayer is better than speech sometimes...letting people make their mistakes. There are times to confront and be honest...but is there grace to be seen first?

*<sup>8</sup> a time to love, and a time to hate;*

If you love God you hate sin...there is an appropriate anger to have. There is also a time to love sinners.

*a time for war, and a time for peace.*

Never time for war? We live in the illusion that we're all essentially good and that a 'coke and a smile.

**Which one of these seasons can you identify the most with? Where are you struggling to see God's purpose? Ask your Community to help you see what faith and character is being formed in you. How is Christ being made precious to you and not just useful?**

So, there is a season for everything in this life under heaven and there is a purpose:

*<sup>9</sup> What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

God will make it all, everything that you go through, beautiful in **its** time. We were wired to know the character and make up of the world...it's our desire for purpose and destiny. Yet, sin severed our relationship with God, so we are in darkness and cannot see how he is working all things out. Without this knowledge we are dependant on the One who holds it all in His hands.

**What are you struggling to see the purpose in? Let your community speak to that right now to help you see what God is teaching you.**

Doug Wilson's loom analogy. The underside is all knots and snarls (life under the sun.) But when you get the perspective from above the loom you see how all those knots served to create this beautiful tapestry (life under heaven).

**We need to quit trying to make sense of it and see and trust him instead. We will lose our minds and try to make up stuff that is not right, (for ex. bad things are my fault, God promises that all things will improve in the end, etc.) Where are you missing this?**

What does this look like?

*<sup>12</sup> I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; <sup>13</sup> also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.*

Enjoy life right where God has you. He is on His throne in heaven and he is with us. No matter if we're planting, building, gathering, etc. There is grace to enjoy.

**They are you struggling to enjoy life right now? What preoccupies your mind instead? What are you afraid of? Worried about or consumed with?**

What is the obstacle? Control.

*<sup>14</sup> I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.*

What in your life you actually control? Where and when you were born. (Imagine your life if you were born in Afghanistan?) Did you choose your family? Period of history? World events that you've lived through? The technology you've experienced?

**We have to let go of our illusions of personal sovereignty...until we do we will be frustrated b/c we are trying to wrestle control away from the One who rightfully has it. When you face that you are not ultimately in control...you'll be ready to turn to the One who is. This is where joy is found.**

He is shaping us. The seasons of life are not 'in the way' of us living...but are tools of cultivating the character of Christ in us. Under heaven, God is at work in the planting and the pulling up. God will allow seasons in our lives to shake our comfort and interrupt our plans to complete what he has begun in us.

**Where are we responding with cynicism or doubt, instead of love or wisdom. Work out how this is illogical because God is in control. How can we respond to the seasons of life with worship?**

*Fear of the Lord means that I carry around with me such a deep awareness, awe, and reverence for the power, holiness, wisdom, and grace of God that I would not think of doing anything other than living for His glory. Fearing the Lord means that this worshipful awe is the single and unchallenged motivator of everything that I think, desire, say, and do." - Paul Tripp*

### Watch Jesus

He is a great high priest who is able to sympathize with the seasons of our life. He was tempted to respond sinfully, yet he lived through them, in our place, without sin. Jesus knew the season He was in:

- 'In the fullness of time' He came died for the ungodly and rose from the grave on the third day
- He knew when to heal, when to plant...He knew when it was time to break it down (temple) and build it up (on the confession of His deity)..
- He knew the seasons to mourn (the man of sorrows) and over the lost city of Jerusalem and he knew to laugh and rejoice.
- Jesus knew when to embrace (tax collectors and hookers) and He knew when to hold back...(scribes / pharisees who had own righteousness)...
- He knew when to speak and to not speak (at His trial trial and suffering the cross in silence).

**Through life Jesus knew the struggle of each season (and he still does). How does this comfort you? (Hint: He still shows mercy to those who come in dependence.) How is this making a difference for you in your season?**

*<sup>15</sup> That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.*

You and I will never be able to completely understand what God is doing. We'll always wonder how can this be 'good'...how can this be made 'beautiful'? Yet we know God is in control. Joy is found, not in controlling it all, but in knowing that there is One who does...for His glory and your joy.

### So

- Don't try to run around your season of life...run to Jesus to guide you through it.
- Live with the urgency of eternity: there is a day appointed for every one of us...will you be ready? How can you live differently in light of this? We get God for eternity, death is an enemy that has been conquered.
- Moses in Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Make good use of your time: time is a priceless currency that God has given us to do what he has called us to do.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- Can you see what season of life you are in?
- What would a wise and skillful response be?
- Have you hunted for the grace and joy to be found in it?
- How can you keep from living in the past or being obsessed with the future?