

WEEK 6: October 15, 2017	Ecclesiastes 3:16 – 4:16	<i>Timing Is Everything</i>
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Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16 (NIV84)

¹⁶ And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there. ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ I also thought, “As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. ²¹ Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” ²² 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? ¹ Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed— and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors— and they have no comforter. ² And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. ³ But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. ⁴ And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ⁵ The fool folds his hands and ruins himself. ⁶ Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind. ⁷ Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: ⁸ There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless— a miserable business! ⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: ¹⁰ If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. ¹³ Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take warning. ¹⁴ The youth may have come from prison to the kingship, or he may have been born in poverty within his kingdom. ¹⁵ I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king’s successor. ¹⁶ There was no end to all the people who were before them. But those who came later were not pleased with the successor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

GOD SHEPHERDS EVERY SEASON OF OUR LIVES

- Birthdays and Funerals, vs. 2

- Life's brokenness, vs. 3
- Matters of the heart, vs. 4
- Cycles of opportunity, vs. 5-8

GOD IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF DISCOVERING PURPOSE

- Frustration, vs. 11
- Satisfaction. a God-given gift, vss. 12-13
- Devotion to God, vs. 14
- Recognition of God's Sovereignty, vs. 15

Acts 17:24–31, ²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

For further study . . .

1. After studying Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, how would you answer a coworker, friend or family member who challenges your belief in the essential goodness of God?
2. Notice how the principle of God’s appointed time is applied to Jesus:

Galatians 4:4–5, ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

John 7:1–9, ¹ After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. ² But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus’ brothers said to him, “You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. ⁶ Therefore Jesus told them, “The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify

that what it does is evil. ⁸ You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.” ⁹ Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.

3. Read the following verses and notice how God’s timing applies to our salvation:

Mark 1:15, ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Romans 5:6, ⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.