

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15
October 20, 2024

Tips and Tricks:

The sermon notes are designed to be used as a guide for discussion. Don't feel like you have to use every question. Some questions will take a while to work through and others will be over in a few seconds.

1. Don't teach the lesson. The sermon was just preached. Just ask the questions and let everyone else talk.
2. Let other people ask questions. It's OK to go "off topic" for a while. Sometimes those conversations are more interesting anyway!
3. Have fun. Don't forget to laugh and crack up. Relationships, not curriculum, are the heartbeat of our ministry. Remember: We have to build a relational bridge strong enough to hold the truth!

Agenda for Group Time

1. Ice Breaker - Lighthearted ice breaker question (10 minutes)
2. Discussion - Bible study, sharing and application. (25 Minutes)
3. Prayer - Pray together (5 minutes)
4. Planning - Remember to talk about what's coming up.

Icebreaker: If you could make one candy not bad for you, what would it be?

"Life in God's world is gift, not gain"
— David Gibson

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

1. The Good News of Not Being in Control

"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven" (3:1)

Question: What are some of the things that stick out about the list here in vv1-8? Is it just good and bad stuff? How is it ordered? What's special about how many things are listed?

Discussion: We all realize that we don't get seasons back. After they pass, they're gone forever. What are some of the ways that we often reckon with this?

- Melancholy
- Regret that we didn't enjoy the moment
- Reminiscing on the glory days
- Nostalgia
- Grumbling at the way things are now
- Comparison

Discussion: Sometimes we can divide up God's will like this: God is in control of the big stuff (the nations of the world, the fate of the church, the survival of the ozone layer), but not so much the small stuff (who will win the Super Bowl, whether I can find my child's missing blanket, how many dust mites live in my carpet). What happens when we start thinking about God this way?

Question: What is technically incorrect about calling someone "middle-aged?"

Question: The whole sermon can be summarized like this: "We don't have _____. _____ does. And He has a _____."

2. What is God Up To?

Answer I: Making Things Beautiful (Eventually)

"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." (v11)

Question: What are some of the ways that we can see that humanity (even unbelievers) still has "Eden in its veins"

Discussion: What are some of the reasons that we struggle to believe that God is *"making everything beautiful in its time"*

- The overwhelming nature of how bad things seem
- The regret that I often feel for the things I've done
- The bad seems like it could never outweigh the good.
- It just makes no sense from our perspective

Answer II: Giving Us Good

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

Question: The logical conclusion of God being in control is that we don't live in anxiety and fear, but in joy and gratitude for the gifts of life. What gifts of life does the Preacher highlight?

Discussion: What are the things that often get in the way of our enjoyment of the "ordinary things" that the Preacher talks about?

Answer III: Collecting All the Strays

"That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away."

Question: Have you ever had a situation in your life where something seemingly "random" happened and it then led to something massively significant?

Discussion: There is no part of our story that is insignificant or forgotten by God. How does this give us great comfort as we think about God's Providence? How might it also make us uneasy as we think about God's judgement? What hope does it give us as we think about God's grace?

Discussion: Consider the words of Peter in Acts 2:22-24 — *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, [a] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."*

How does this passage bring together many of the themes that we've discussed here in Ecclesiastes 3:1-15?