

Hebrew phrase means “to fear, revere, or be afraid”. Why should we both revere and be afraid of God? What are the dangers of one without the other?

*Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 NLT - 16 I also noticed that under the sun there is evil in the courtroom. Yes, even the courts of law are corrupt! 17 I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everyone, both good and bad, for all their deeds."*

*Hebrews 9:27-28 NLT - 27 And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, 28 so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.*

As we live out our lives enjoying the gifts God has given us, we need to remain aware that God is the final authority. His judgement is just and not based on human standards of right and wrong, but of His. He doesn't weigh good and bad deeds to see which is greater, either you are found without sin, or you are condemned.

*Hebrews says Christ's sacrifice took away the sins of many. How do you know if you are one of the "many" whose sin He removed?*

### **WRAP-UP**

None of us escapes the tough times in life. We are all destined to live out the number of days God has determined for us and then we will die. But rather than waste our efforts chasing the wind, we can spend those days enjoying the gifts of everyday life God gives us in reverence and fear. And if Jesus has removed our sins, we need not fear the judgement that awaits us all. We will be welcomed into the kingdom.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God.  
-Ecclesiastes 2:24 NLT

### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

*Challenge –Pause throughout your day to take pleasure in the little gifts that God has given you.*

## **A Season for Everything**

Living Life Backwards #3

### **INTRODUCTION**

The book of Ecclesiastes doesn't sugar-coat the hard truths of life. In chapter 3 we are told that in contrast to our good times, there will be tough times as well. We can't escape them, and we shouldn't try to ignore them either. So how do we make sense of the bad times we all go through? The wars, death, hate and tears in life? The good news is that they have a purpose, but the bad news is that we may never fully understand what that purpose is, and it is all outside of our control. But when we bring God into the picture, things begin to make sense.

### **Ice Breaker**

Do you know the song Turn! Turn! Turn! By the Byrds?  
(if not Google it)

### **Key Passage**

***Ecclesiastes 3:1 NLT - 1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.***

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Our Limitations**

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a NLT - 1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. 2 A time to be born and a time to die...*

*Job 14:5 NLT - 5 You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer.*

Solomon begins this poetic section of Ecclesiastes stating two basic facts; there is a season for everything, and our season lasts between

our birth and our death. In other words, we have a limited time in this world.

*Who in your family lived the longest? Is there someone you feel left this world far too early? How do you feel about the statement in Job that God determines the length of our lives?*

Knowing that God is in control may bring us comfort or it may cause us frustration. We inherently desire to be in control of our own lives, but we are limited in our wisdom, our understanding and of course in our power to do so. So, we may struggle with God for control, but that results in “hevel” or chasing the wind, because we aren’t in control.

*Hebrews 11:6 NLT - 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*

*If you are struggling with the fairness of one person living 100 years and another only 20, you need to ask God to reveal His true character to you. Is He just? Is He loving? Does He care about us? Do we have faith (assurance, conviction, firm belief) that God rewards those who seek Him? In light of this, can you trust Him with the lives of those you love?*

## 2. The Meaning of Life

God is in control. Although we may not understand why we must face life’s challenges, we can trust that God knows what He is doing. And it all has a good purpose.

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV - 11 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.*

*Isaiah 46:9-10 NLT - 9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. 10 Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.*

Verse 11 says everything is beautiful in its time. But how can war and hate and mourning be called beautiful? The word used here for beautiful is also translated as “appropriate in its time”. It is a beautiful fit into God’s plans even when it doesn’t fit our plans.

In light of our lack of control, how should we approach life? Solomon has an answer for that.

*Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 ESV - 12 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.*

*Philippians 1:21-24 NLT - 21 For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22 But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. 23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.*

As long as we are convinced that we control our destiny, we will strive to grasp the vapor in life that we think will bring us meaning and pleasure. But when we understand that God is the one in control, we rely on him each day to fulfill his will in our lives.

*What does Solomon say is God’s gift to us? What are the things, people or circumstances in your life that bring you the most joy? What does Paul view as his purpose in life (Phil 1:21-22)? How does this relate to what Solomon said? What is one way you can increase the time you spend taking joy in God’s gifts to you this week?*

Solomon repeats his point seven times in Ecclesiastes (2:24, 3:12-13, 3:20, 5:18, 8:15, 9:7 and 11:7). We should take joy in the little things in life, like food, drink, and our daily tasks. God takes pleasure in giving us these gifts and in our enjoyment of them.

*Have you ever felt you had as much joy in giving a gift as the person who received it? What was the gift and who received it?*

God wants you to have joy, not guilt or anxiety. So slow down and enjoy the little things in life fully. God is delighted when you do.

## 3. A Time for Judgement

*Ecclesiastes 3:14 NLT - 14 And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him.*

*Verse 14 assures us that God has absolute authority- whatever He does is final. Solomon says that God intends for man to fear Him. The*