

Ecclesiastes 3 New International Version (NIV)

¹ There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under
the heavens:

² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to
build,

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time
to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to
refrain from embracing,

⁶ a time to search and a time to give
up,
a time to keep and a time to throw
away,

⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to
speak,

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I
have seen the burden God has laid on
the human race. ¹¹ He has made
everything beautiful in its time. He has
also set eternity in the human heart;
yet^[a] no one can fathom what God has
done from beginning to end. ¹² I know
that there is nothing better for people
than to be happy and to do good while
they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat
and drink, and find satisfaction in all their
toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that
everything God does will endure forever;
nothing can be added to it and nothing

taken from it. God does it so that people
will fear him.

¹⁵ Whatever is has already been,
and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.^[b]

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 said to myself,
“God will bring into judgment
both the righteous and the wicked,
for there will be a time for every activity,
a time to judge every deed.”

¹⁸ I also said to myself, “As for humans,
God tests them so that they may see that
they are like the animals. ¹⁹ Surely the
fate of human beings is like that of the
animals; the same fate awaits them both:
As one dies, so dies the other. All have
the same breath^[c]; humans have no
advantage over animals. Everything is
meaningless. ²⁰ All go to the same place;
all come from dust, and to dust all
return. ²¹ Who knows if the human spirit
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 person than to enjoy their
work, because that is their lot. For who
can bring them to see what will happen
after them?

a. [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) Or also placed ignorance in the human heart, so that

b. [Ecclesiastes 3:15](#) Or God calls back the past

c. [Ecclesiastes 3:19](#) Or spirit

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think is the writer's point in presenting the "mini-poem" in v. 1-8? Why do you suppose this passage continues to resonate even today?
2. What is meant when the writer states that God "has set eternity in the human heart"? What are the implications that we should take from this?
3. The writer plainly states God's purpose in the toil and burden placed upon humanity. What is it? Is this widely recognized today?
4. The concept of time again features prominently in v. 15-17. Is time treated here in the same "ever-revolving circular fashion" as in the beginning of the chapter? What is different?
5. The chapter ends (v. 18-22) with what seems like a bit of a digression. Does anything seem contradictory to you, relative to what had just been concluded in v. 17?