

**For Everything a Season**  
**From the Series “King Solomon Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life”**  
**By Phil Brainerd**

**Introduction**

In the 1950s a songwriter named Pete Seeger did what songwriters do - He wrote a song. Apparently, few people thought anything about it. In 1962, the song was recorded by a musical group “The Limelighters”. You all remember that, right? No? Apparently, few people thought anything about it. You might think that a song like that would quietly disappear. However, two years later, the song was picked up by a group called “The Byrds”. On December 4<sup>th</sup> 1965, the song hit number one on the charts. Its title was, “Turn, Turn, Turn”.



*Pete Seeger, 1955*

Here are some of the words:

To everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
And a time to every purpose, under Heaven

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep

To everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)  
And a time to every purpose, under Heaven

(Turn, Turn, Turn by Pete Seeger)

Now, you’ve heard me tell how this works. When I was young, I usually liked songs for the tune. So, you might have caught me singing: “Na na na na – turn turn turn - Na na na na – turn turn turn”...

It wasn’t until I was in college that I learned the song had other words. One of my music professors mentioned an old song that had words from the Bible. So, not only does the song have other words, but the words come from the Bible.

What were these words that propelled a song from nowhere to the top of the music charts? What were these words that captured the hearts and minds of millions of people? It happens that these are words from a man we’re studying at the moment.

His name is Solomon. We're in our series, "King Solomon teaches us about the meaning of life." In our last session, we asked: Does life have meaning? We found that the answer is yes - But you must believe in God. More than believe, you must have awesome respect for God - a respect that leads you to do what he says.

Today, we're going to learn more about finding meaning in life. In order to find meaning in life, you must learn that ***God is sovereign, and he has a plan.***

Let's read the text that Pete Seeger used for his song. We'll read it first in the King James Version.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1 KJV)

We have been studying from a popular translation that was not available when Pete Seeger wrote his song: The New International Version. Let's read from there:

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

In some ways, that feels the same. In some ways it feels different. That's because the English language has traded some meanings over the years. The NIV uses more modern meanings for the words of the Scripture.

Let's take this apart:

## **Time**

There is a time...

Time is funny stuff. It's a very complex topic. For now, let's look at one aspect of time. Imagine that you want to ride on a bus. You see someone standing at the bus stop and you ask: "When is the next bus?" The person answers, "7:30". How did they know that? Are they psychic? No, they know what time the bus is coming because there is a schedule.

A schedule is what results when someone has a plan. In the case of busses, it's a very complex plan. A plan is something you need when you have a purpose, or a goal. With busses, there's a need: People need to get places. Lots of people. Lots of places.

To accomplish that goal or that purpose, you would need some things. You would need knowledge. You would need to know how to do it. You would need resources. You would need busses and drivers and mechanics. You would need power. What happens if you get driver who doesn't want to follow the schedule? They want to drive to the beach when his passengers

want to go to work? If you have all those things and more, you can announce a schedule - a list of times when the busses will arrive at different locations.

That's how the universe works. The universe and everything in it has a purpose, a goal. God has everything he needs to run the universe. He has everything he needs to reach his goals. He has knowledge, resources, and power.

That's why there is a time for everything. A time is when a specific event occurs. A season is a group of events.

Right about now is when someone says: "Let's go back to that bus illustration. I have on more than one occasion expected a bus to come at a certain time, and it didn't." We've all been in that situation. That's because humans are limited. We have some level of resources, knowledge, and power. However, not enough to guarantee that we'll reach our goals. So, the busses don't always arrive on time.

God, on the other hand, is infinite. He has all the resources, knowledge, and power he needs to accomplish his purposes - to reach his goals. This attribute of God, his ability to accomplish anything he chooses, is called his **sovereignty**. The prophet Jeremiah once prayed to God and said:

Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32:17)

Nothing is too hard for God. That's why Solomon teaches us: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens,"

## Activities

Now that we understand this idea of time, let's ask: What kinds of activities occur? Let's read on.

a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
(Ecclesiastes 3:2)

There is a time to be born. We don't plan it. Have you ever been to a birthday party and the birthday person says, "Yeah – I remember picking this day. It was a tough choice." No, everyone is born on the day that God picks.

There is also a time to die. It may sound a bit morose, but you have to take this into account in life. If you pretend it will never happen, things often go badly. Everybody needs to save for retirement. Having a will is a good idea.

Birth and death are two events that occur on God's schedule. It's interesting that Solomon starts his list with these events. This will set a pattern. There are happy events in life that we enjoy. But there are also sad events. ***We must allow for both.***

There's a time to plant, and a time to uproot. Planting is full of hope. You want something to grow, but sometimes what you intended to grow fails. Then it's time to dig up the plant. Sometimes you can save a plant. Sometimes you can't.

a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
(3:3)

"A time to kill" – Wow! We don't like to hear that. It sounds extreme. We like the healing part. But Solomon, the wisest man in history, says sometimes we have to take an extreme route.

Building always feels good. But sometimes even the best structures are in the way. Sometimes buildings get old, and they have to come down.

a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
(3:4)

We all like the laugh part. We all like to dance. We all like the good times. We all like the celebrations. But then the good times stop rolling. At those times it does no good to pretend that nothing's wrong. God has given us tears for those times. Maybe it's good to let them out? It's especially good to have a friend or loved one to share your pain. But those friends and loved ones will never know if you cover your grief. No one will be able to help you if you spend your life pretending that everything is all right.

a time to scatter stones and a time to  
gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain  
from embracing,  
(3:5)

Sometimes with the Bible, we forget that we're reading an ancient document. So we say, "Gee, I wonder what that means." Such is the case when we talk about things like gathering and scattering stones. Here's how things worked in ancient times: Sometimes after a war, if the winner wanted to absolutely crush the loser, they would destroy the ability of the losers to recover. One way to do this is to ruin farms. You do that by spreading rocks all over a field. When you do that, you make it very difficult to plow and plant. If the winner believes they have properly humbled the loser, they can help to gather the stones again.

Someone might say, "That's mean!" Yes, it is. However, if the winner thinks the loser might come back to start a fight again in the future, sometimes you have to take extreme measures.

If you read the entire body of Scripture, you know that we are encouraged as individuals to show compassion and mercy. Remember however, Solomon is a king. A good king has to take into account the safety of his people. Sometimes a lenient hand is good when dealing with enemies. Sometimes, more force is required.

Embracing is much more personal. We like to embrace. But sometimes we have conflicts. - Interpersonal conflicts. Sometimes the way to resolve a conflict is to offer an embrace. Sometimes, though, you need to put up the stop-sign hand. You need to say, "I have a bone to pick with you - Until we talk this out, we can't act like everything is OK."

a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
(3:6)

There are times in life when things disappear. The question when something disappears is this: How valuable is it? How important is it? Is it a paperclip? In that case, you give a quick scan around. If you see it, great. If not, you grab another clip.

Sorry to be scary, but is it a child? If a child wanders off, you look until you find them. If you can't find them you call friends and neighbors. From there you call the police. Most times, the child turns up. Sadly, sometimes not. At some point, no matter how much you love your child, the search ends. Fortunately, that's rare. However, it happens.

At the other end of the spectrum is stuff where there's some question about value. There are things in our lives that wouldn't make us sad at all if they wandered off. In that case, it's a question of keep or throw away.

a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
(3:7)

Once again. How valuable is something? Suppose an article of clothing is torn. Do you tear it more and use it for scrap, or do you pull out the sewing kit?

That's pretty straight forward. Now, a time to be silent, a time to speak - That's deeper. Much deeper. There are situations where you see something wrong. If you let people know, you might prevent a big problem early on. There are situations where the damage is done. If you explain why things went wrong, you could prevent similar problems in the future.

Or, if you speak up, you might make things worse. You might be speaking before you really understand the problem. You might be angry- Angrier than you think. Sometimes it's better to take that deep breath and wait until you've had a chance to cool down.

King Solomon closes this section with some heavy hitters:

a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.  
(3:8)

Everyone loves love. The Beatles taught us: "All you need is love." And there's a time for that. Hate is another thing. Hate is always bad - Or, so many people think. So why does Solomon tell us otherwise?

This is a topic worthy of its own sermon. For now, we will simplify: We are to love people, but we are to hate evil. Over in the book of proverbs, Solomon tells us: "To fear the Lord is to hate evil... 9 Proverbs 8:13)"

War and peace are like love and hate. Everyone loves one and hates the other. In the 60's people chanted: "All we are saying is give peace a chance." Some people think that if we are clever enough, noble enough, and loving enough, that we will end all war.

To this, Solomon says, "sorry, no". We will never end war. War has its time. War has its place. Pursue peace, of course. However, groups that sit around relying on the possibility of ending all war have a funny way of being swept away by evil people who are very much ready to use violence to get what they want.

### **Whose Plan?**

So, King Solomon has shown us all kinds of events that occur in his great plan. But someone might say, "Some of the things on that list are clearly things we don't control. - Like our birth. So, we can see that those things are God's plan. Other things are very much under our control. Things like tearing or mending. Keeping or throwing away. Are those things God's plan, or our plan?"

Solomon begins to give us an explanation:

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 no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:9-11)

You see, God has done something that only an infinite being can do. As the sovereign king of the universe, he has developed a plan. He knows every detail of his plan. He knows exactly what is going to happen at any given time. That includes the creation of billions of human beings. Every one of those human beings has the ability to make choices.

You know what? God knows exactly how each one of those billions of people are going to choose. They will make choices based on a series of conditions that God controls. Technically, that means we don't make choices. But you know what? It sure feels like we make choices! And the Scriptures contain many statements saying that people will be rewarded or punished based on their choices.

Only an infinite God can create a plan based on his choices that allows us to participate with our choices. Only he can make that work. For us, this is a burden. If we try to figure it out on our own, we will go nuts. We are told, no one can fathom what God has done. We can't figure it out.

And God can't tell us all the details. Why not? Because his plan is based on infinite knowledge. If he told us why he's done everything, our heads would blow up. And God doesn't want your head to blow up.

There is only one thing we need to know.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. (v 11)”

God does not just have a plan - It's a beautiful plan. It's a perfect plan. It's the best plan.

How can we understand all this?

“He has also set eternity in the human heart.” (v 12)

When God created humans, he gave us all a special gift. We are made in his image. He has given us the ability to understand his eternity. He has given us the ability to understand his beauty. No other created thing has that.

The most practical application of this comes when we hurt. Many of you have heard the story of Joni Eareckson Tada. When she was a teenager, she went swimming with some friends. At one point she dove off a platform. Tragically, the water was not as deep as she thought, and she hit her head hard on the bottom. This resulted in her losing all control of her body below the neck. She was told that she would never be able to return to a normal life. This made her spend a long period struggling, as anyone would expect.

Then, at some point she came to realize that her life was not hopeless. She met Jesus Christ. As painful as any individual moment might be, she came to realize that God had a plan for her life. That knowledge brought about a transformation. She began to see each event in her life as

a piece of an eternal puzzle. Joni was changed from a hopeless, confused person to someone who inspires and gives hope to others. Why? Because God makes all things beautiful in his time.

Let's pull this all together.

## Conclusion

King Solomon has taught us important things about the meaning of life.

To find meaning, you must believe in God. More than that, you must have an awesome respect for God - A respect that makes you do what he says.

Today, we've learned more. We've learned that you find meaning when you realize that God is sovereign, and he has a plan. That plan has parts that we would expect, and which make us happy. That plan has parts that we would not expect, and which bring sorrow and pain. The happiness and the pain come together with meaning when you realize that he makes all things beautiful in his time.

If this is hard to understand, then here's where you can start: One of the most important events of history occurred when God's plan made Jesus Christ, the Son of God come to the earth. Once there, he died on a cross to take away our sin. Because God is Sovereign, he could take one of the most terrifying moments in history and make it beautiful. He did that by raising Jesus from the dead.

That's where we start. Let us tell you how you how Jesus can help you turn pain and sorrow into beauty. There is important contact info at the end of this article.

For those who already know Jesus, ask him to help you to better understand this wonderful truth: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

---

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church: [TrinityTeaneck.org](http://TrinityTeaneck.org)

Phil's Site: [PhilBrainerd.com](http://PhilBrainerd.com)

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site: [PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net)

---