

# Trust God in order to find meaning for existence

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the passage by many is that since life is full of changes, we simply need to enjoy it as all there is.

Most people, even believers, look at this passage without much attention to its context. In truth, Solomon was teaching something quite different from what popular understanding would have us believe.

The most significant difference in understanding is that God, not man, is at the center of Solomon's teaching. It is God who orders our lives and brings about changes. The passage is not really a celebration of life's variety but a reminder that without God it is just a profitless round of activities (see Ecc. 2:26, 3:9). God has set "the world

(eternity" (Ecc. 3:11) in our hearts. We are to experience what He sends as tokens of His love and as an encouragement to look to Him as the only answer to our longings.

God Appoints All That Happens-Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.)

1. What does Ecclesiastes 3:1 teach about all the events that happen in the world?

Contrary to the notion that the book of Ecclesiastes sets forth the pessimistic ideas of a man writing "under the sun," this verse really declares that there is an underlying purpose to all that happens in this world. The key is what our starting point is. Without God we cannot make sense of life. But if we acknowledge Him, then we can interpret all that happens through that lens.

The psalmist declared, "My times are in Your hand" (Psalms 31:15 NKJV). It is clear from the context of Ecclesiastes 3:1 that there is a proper time for everything that happens in the world because God has made it so. The very assertion of purpose presupposes a Purposer. Believers can take comfort in the fact that a powerful and loving God is directing our lives.

2. With what fundamental contrast did Solomon begin in verse 2?

Solomon began his list of fourteen pairs of contrasting events that sum up the experience of living in this world. He began with the most fundamental contrast of all—between life and death. God determines when we come

into the world and when we will leave it as well. He sets the boundaries of the duration of our lives. The realization that death is an irrefutable part of existence in this fallen world should greatly affect our priorities and choices. Because our life will not live forever, we should not live as if it will—centering all our hopes on this present world Jesus reminds us, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36 NKJV).

3. How should we understand the statement that there is "a time to kill" (Ecc. 3:3)?

There may be some who

reject the notion that there is ever "a time to kill." Of course, without the presence of sin in the world, there would not be the horrible violence we read about in our newspapers. We also know that God is not the author of sin. On the other hand, we would not want to give up the precious doctrines of God's sovereignty and providence over all that transpires. Somehow, all the activities of man, whether constructive or destructive, ultimately serve to advance His purpose.

Many believers would argue that there are some occasions when killing is necessary, whether in self-defense or in the case of executing murderers or the killing of enemies

during a government-sanctioned war. It is also important to heal, even in the places of killing, perhaps as America sought to do in the countries of Germany and Japan after World War II.

4. What are some of the time when it is appropriate to cry?

Most of us would rather never have to cry, unless we are crying tears of joy. But in God's providence, He sees fit to sometimes bring sorrow into our lives. Sometimes the weeping will involve sorrow over sins—whether our own, those of loved ones, or those of the nation. It was for the nation that Jeremiah became known as "the weeping prophet."

## Family miracle: Boys remember their harrowing days at sea

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — One year ago, Deb Fowler made a deal with God to give up her daily nightmare if only he would return her son from the Atlantic Ocean.

She hasn't had a nightmare since. Her ex-husband, Tony Driscoll, prayed for a modern-day miracle.

Several days had passed since their teenage son, Troy Driscoll, and his best buddy, Josh Long, launched a small boat from Sullivan's Island and disappeared.

Out at sea, Troy and Josh looked out into an endless field of cold blue where water and sky meld and made their own deals with God. They sipped rainwater from the bow, regretted the loss of their fishing tackle and sung their hymns to the sea.

Many people had given up hope when one of the region's largest coastal searches turned up nothing. Hundreds of spotters in boats, ships, helicopters and airplanes had scoured more than 1,000 square miles of sea and shore.

The teens were nowhere in

sight. The Coast Guard suspended its search after three days, and the droves of people who had stood watch on the beach slowly diminished.

Few believed the young men could survive with no provisions in a 15-foot boat with no engine or sail. The boys had been swept out to sea before anyone realized they were gone.

During interviews then, Tony Driscoll declared that his 15-year-old son was alive, and that the search should resume.

A year later, however, the six-year Navy veteran admits his inner thoughts were much different.

"I had to look strong for the other parents. I didn't want to tell people that really, deep down inside, I believed my son was dead," he said. "I didn't want the search to end until they found something—a piece of clothes, a shoe, a body."

Tony Driscoll unconsciously talks about Troy as though the teen had returned from the dead. Tony had prayed

that if God would bring his son back, he would turn his life around and give it to God. Josh's father, Eddie Long, said he prayed for the same miracle for his 17-year-old; he made his own bargain.

On the seventh day, Tony Driscoll answered his cell phone, expecting the call that would inform him of Troy's death. Instead, he was shocked to hear his son's voice on the other end.

"It was like God said, 'Well, here's that miracle that you asked for,'" Tony Driscoll said. "It was an incredible feeling."

A man on a North Carolina fishing vessel had spotted something floating in the ocean and decided to get a closer look after Josh and Troy had made their last prayer—they were out of energy to struggle any longer.

The boys had been rescued after a week at sea. They had drifted 111 miles up the coast. Since then, Tony has reaffirmed his commitment to God and started Bible study classes.

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J.M. Little, Teacher  
April, 2006 Newsletter - Last Part

For nearly 34 years, by God's grace, I have been setting forth before you the Way of Righteousness. Many of you, the vast majority, have laughed and made fun. You've turned the truth down! There is nothing left for you but God's judgment. There is the truth if eternal retribution! You are not going to get around dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ, You'll meet the Lord here, and be broken in repentance, or He'll fall upon you, and grind you to powder. (Lk. 20:18; Mt. 21:44) You may say you don't believe the Lord will grind you to powder. You had better go read His Word! Which is it going to be in your case? I praise the Lord He gave me grace to repent. Which way are you in? You are either in the broad way that leads to destruction, or you are in Christ, the narrow way. Which is it? I know many of you will say these things I'm setting forth are hard. Remember this, my friend: no matter how hard I am, I can't be as hard as God's Word. You are going to repent or perish! Turn or burn! It is Christ or Hell! Which will it be in your case?

Your Gospel Editor and Teacher,  
J.M. Little

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