

Vanity: Week 3 Discussion Questions

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

1. This chapter opens up with a poem about the reality that there are various seasons of life, and that everything that happens takes place—including these seasons—happen under God’s sovereign rule. In other words, God is the one directing history and yet from our perspective it is difficult to discern the rhythm and rhyme of God’s plan.

- a. How would you characterize the season of life that you are currently in?
- b. What is beautiful about it (v. 11)? What is difficult about it?
- c. What are you learning about God from in this season?
- d. What are you learning about yourself?

2. Up to this point the Preacher has mentioned again and again how he finds life enigmatic and how it leads him to despair.

- a. Can you relate to the Preacher? If so, how do you personally deal with the elusive and mysterious nature of the human experience (i.e. the fact that things often don’t seem to make sense or work out the way that we think they should)?
- b. In vv. 12-13, the Preacher himself offers his own conclusion on how we ought to operate in the fact of the enigmas of life. Do you find this answer satisfying? Why or why not?
- c. In light of the difficult and confusing nature of life, what does it take for us to be able to simply “be joyful and do good . . . eat and drink and take pleasure in all [our] toil?” How do we pull this off?

3. In vv. 16-17 the Preacher laments the reality that there is no such thing as perfect righteousness or justice in this world.

a. How does the Gospel help us to have hope in the midst of the apparent lack of justice and righteousness in the world around us?

b. What strategy does the Gospel give us for addressing this reality? In other words, how does the way that God addresses injustice and wickedness through Jesus provide an example for how we should do it too?

4. The Preacher ends this passage by comparing human beings to animals.

a. In what way are they the same?

b. What does this lead the Preacher to think?

c. How are humans and animals different according to Scripture?

d. Why is it important for us to remember that humans are distinct from animals because they were created in the very image of God? How does this affect the way we treat or view other human beings?

e. How should this affect the way we view ourselves?