



**MIND**  
session page

## **Turn, Turn, Turn!**

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 | Session 9.01**

#### **Before the Session**

Facilitator: In advance of the session

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- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).

#### **Context**

Start by asking:

- What does it mean to have a "balanced" life?
- How do you feel about your abilities at finding and keeping this balance?
- What might you do to improve your ability to find balance, as you describe it?

#### **Content**

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, then watch the Bible Background Video and ask:

- At first reading, does today's passage seem to you to be optimistic? Pessimistic? Neutral?
- The first eight verses are a poetic expression of the Teacher's point. Why do you think the writer intentionally chose to use opposites (to be born and to die, etc.)? · The activities mentioned are mostly simple... why use such simple images?
- In what ways does this use of everyday images reinforce the Teacher's point?
- What in this list most surprises you and why?
- Rather than expression of things we should do, or a simple description of life, how does this list remind us that there's balance in all of life?
- Why does the Teacher claim that God gives us work to do and what does this imply about the meaning of that work?
- In what way is even work a beautiful thing in its appropriate time?
- The Teacher claims God has intentionally kept God's plans hidden from us. To what degree is this frustrating or patronizing, or freeing?
- Since we cannot know – or influence – the eternal designs of God, how should we live our lives?

## Closure

Read today's passage again in the style of lectio divina where you have someone read the passage aloud, while others listen for a phrase that the Spirit brings to the forefront. Do this three times, asking the group to consider one of these questions, respectively, and encouraging volunteers to share what they heard as the scripture was read with this question in mind:

- What part of this reading most stands out to you and why?
- Where is your life unbalanced?
- Where is God showing you something you can do in this New Year?

Close with prayer.

**Writer: Jon Parks**



# CURRENT

session page

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#### Context

Ask the group to see if they can recite the words from The Byrds' song "Turn! Turn! Turn!", then play the song and ask:

- If none of you have ever heard this song before, what do you think of it now that you have?
- Which of the most important phrases did you know by heart, which phrases did you miss?
- Why did you remember some phrases more than others?
- Why do you think this song was such a hit back when it was first released?

## Content

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- What impact is made in these verses by naming moments that are common to so many of life's rhythms? Laughing, healing, sowing, dying, speaking. Do these verses give some importance to these every day moments?
- Some of the things named in these verses are things we try to avoid: war, losing, throwing away, death. In what ways does it impact our faith life that these unavoidable moments are named in scripture?
- "He has put a sense of the past and future in their minds." When do you have the greatest sense of the past and the future?
- What kinds of things do you think of when you have the past and future in mind?
- The Bible background video names the idea that we do not have control over the events in life, yet, we take action; speak out against injustice; protest; and offer care to others. Why do we do this?

## Closure

Share the video from Sky Roosevelt-Morris and remind the group:

*The women of Standing Rock are from the Sioux Reservation in North Dakota and have been part of a protest against the construction of a crude-oil pipeline that planned to cross sacred burial and prayer sites and cause a threat to the water supply of the Native American community.*

*After months of protesting this pipeline, the people experienced some sense of victory when the Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit for the construction of a section of the Dakota Access Pipeline.*

Ask:

- In the video, Sky says “We believe in something that cannot be stopped.” Which of your beliefs have this sense of power and why?
- What does Ecclesiastes say that echoes the kind of connectedness discussed in this video? - If there is a time for every matter under heaven, at what points does that connect us with others in our communities?
- In what ways do faith practices matter to you during life’s turns?
- What things like prayer, confession, worship, giving help you make sense of every season or time under heaven?
- What practices will you focus on in this new year?

Pray together to end the session.

**Writer: Erin Robinson Hall**



# MYSTIC

session page

## Turn, Turn, Turn!

### Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 | Session 9.01

#### Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- Make a "2016 evaluation sheet" as described below, as well as something with which to write for each person. The sheet should have each of the following words printed on its own line, with space for writing comments between each:
- Print a copy of the prayer (used at the end of this session) for each person:
  - L - Let us proclaim the sacred power of this day.
  - P - As the new year begins, the height of God's dominion is established.
  - L - In truth, only God is our judge and arbiter.
  - P - Only God can accurately measure, record and recount the days past.
  - L - In truth, only God is our sovereign guide.
  - P - Only God can open the days that lie before us.
  - L - We know that we are dust and to dust we will return
  - P - We do not know what this year will hold.
  - L - We do not know what the future holds.

All – But we know who holds our future. God alone is our creator and king. God is our ruler and helper. We will trust God with all of our days. Hallelujah! Amen.

## **Context**

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 then play the Bible Background Video.

In today's session, the group will share in an examination of the past year and an affirmation to begin the new one.

## **Reflection Discussion**

Tell the group:

*The writer of Ecclesiastes describes life as a perpetual cycle of extremes in Ecclesiastes 3. Sometime we live on the edge of these extremes and other times we are relatively untouched or unaware of the particular cycle.*

Distribute a copy of the 2016 evaluation sheet and a writing instrument to each person and invite the group to look at it and meditate upon memories of the year past, then put a number between zero and ten to describe the extent to which they experienced each extreme last year. The number might be very high or low for some extremes and on others closer to the middle if they have no memory of particular experiences with those things.

After everyone has completed the evaluation, encourage volunteers to share – as they are comfortable – those incidents for which they had the highest scores, reminding everyone to hold all stories in confidentiality and in prayer.

Conclude the session by reading responsively the revised, Jewish prayer traditionally recited during Rosh Hashana – Jewish New Year (L – leader, P – people).

**Writer: Jim Dant**



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#### Context

Play the Reduce my Body video and ask:

- Why do people make New Year's resolutions?
- What resolutions have you made this year that you can tell us about?
- Knowing that the most common resolutions revolve around losing weight and making healthy lifestyle choices, when is the best time to make a resolution that you might be able to keep?
- Since we are celebrating a new year, what do you think it is time for you to do with your life?

#### Content

Play the Symmetry video and ask:.

- What do you think of the wisdom of this video and why?

Ask questions like these:

- Since we call this type of Biblical book "wisdom literature," what do you think of its wisdom in this case?
- How well known are the words to this passage to you?
- When have you experienced a time of dissatisfaction with life and how did that change your perspective?
- How do you feel about the thought that nothing in life truly changes and why?
- How do you feel about the idea that only God makes things change?
- In what ways might someone find the words of the teacher to be depressed or inspiring (or neither)?

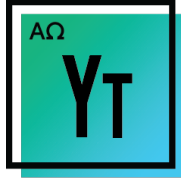
## **Closure**

Play the Dear Younger Me music video and ask:

- If you could give any advice to your younger self, what would you say and why?
- What advice would you like to give your future self for the coming year?
- In what ways does your relationship with God define your hopes for the future or inform your past?
- What can you do to help other people remember and plan well for the things God has done, or will be doing for them?

Close in prayer

Writer: Jon Self



# YOUTH

session page

## Turn, Turn, Turn!

### Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 | Session 9.01

#### Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.
- Have pencil and paper ready.
- Have a pencil and piece of paper available for each person.
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session ahead of their gathering.
- Be prepared to show a web site to the group (see below).

#### Intro

Show the Facebook year in review clip and ask:

- What was your favorite thing about 2016?
- What was your least favorite thing about 2016?
- What do you think 2017 has in store for us?
- What images from this video stick out to you the most and why?

## Context

Using the ace through six cards, separated by suits, from a standard deck of playing cards, give each person a card at random, telling them not to show anyone else their card. Use each suit's cards before giving out additional cards. Once everyone has a card, have each person pick a partner and show them their card, but not let anyone else know what is on it.

Have the pairs add the total number on their cards (for example if one has an ace and another has a four, their total is five), then roll a pair of six-sided dice, and call out the sum of the roll. If any pair's cards equal the sum of the rolled dice, each person in that pair scores a point. Reform different pairs and repeat this process until someone has scored ten points. Ask:

- In what ways was this about luck or about strategy?
- How did you feel not having much control over your outcome?
- How much control do you think you have over your own life?
- Given as how you have the ability to make your own choices, how much control does God have over what happens in your life?
- In what ways do those two conflict?

## Content

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- How do you feel about this list of things that will happen to you?
- In what ways does this passage make things seem like we have no control over our own lives?
- In what ways does this passage teach us that we do control our own lives?
- What parts do we control?
- According to this passage, how does God want us to respond to the unpredictable and uncontrollable things that happen to you?
- In what ways does it bother you or give you peace to know that you do not make this world turn?

## Closure

Continue by asking:

- Even though God is in control, how can we make a difference at our school, our jobs, and or our homes?
- How might enjoying your life help you to better handle the difficult things that life throws at you?

Give each person a piece of paper, envelope, and pen and tell them to write on the envelope "Do not open until December 31st, 2017". On the piece of paper, encourage them to write how they plan on making the world a better place in 2017, and how they plan to enjoy life even in the midst of the uncontrollable things that will happen to them. Each person can write it as a letter to themselves, or in whatever form they wish. When they are finished, allow volunteers time to share their paper with the group if they wish, then put have everyone place their paper in their envelope and seal it. Invite individuals to put the letter in their bible, take it home and put it in a sock drawer, or do something else to preserve it so they can open it again on New Years Eve.

Close this session in prayer to wrestle with difficult questions and the courage to hear difficult answers.

**Writer: Don Breeden**



MIX  
session page

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### Context (From the Current Session Page)

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### Content (From the Mind Session Page)

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- Since we cannot know – or influence – the eternal designs of God, how should we live our lives?

## **Closure (from the Media Session page)**

Play the Dear Younger Me music video and ask:

- If you could give any advice to your younger self, what would you say and why?
- What advice would you like to give your future self for the coming year?
- In what ways does your relationship with God define your hopes for the future or inform your past?
- What can you do to help other people remember and plan well for the things God has done, or will be doing for them?

Close in prayer