

 **STRENGTH TO STAND****Week 1: Life Changes All the Time, the Gospel is Timeless**

Ecclesiastes 3:2-8

*“There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die. There is a time to plant, and there is a time to pull things up. There is a time to kill, and there is a time to cure. There is a time to pull down, and there is a time to build up. There is a time to weep, and there is a time to laugh. There is a time to be sad, and there is a time to dance. There is a time to scatter stones, and there is a time to gather stones together. There is a time to hug, and there is a time not to hug. There is a time to search for something, and there is a time to lose something. There is a time to keep things, and there is a time to throw things away. There is a time to tear things, and there is a time to mend things. There is a time to be silent, and there is a time to speak. There is a time to love and there is a time to hate. There is a time for war, and there is a time for peace.”*

Have you ever heard your parents, grandparents, or even your teachers talk about how things were different back in their day? Sometimes it is hard to believe how different things can be in a short span of 10 years, let alone 50 or 100. However, one thing that never changes with the culture, time, or year is the need that we all have for redemption in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is timeless, and the message of reconciliation is necessary now, then, and forever. Before any of the following lessons can make sense, you must first examine your relationship with the Gospel. Is it a thing of the past? Have you been putting it off or avoiding God because you aren't looking forward to the life change? If nothing else has been made clear to us this year, it's that we can not put our faith in what we expect for time to be like.

Ecclesiastes 3 speaks to the ever-changing ways of the world. It compares the different seasons of life, pointing out the continual tension of change. At times we will weep, but other times we will laugh! For a season we may lose something, or experience loss. During other times we might gain back what we have lost or receive something wonderful for the first time. As soon as you think you have adjusted to life, things change. Your car breaks down, or you get offered a dream job in a city far away. You might start dating someone great or have a falling out with a best friend. However, a Christian has hope in the One that never changes and anchors their life in Him. Hebrews 13:8 says “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.” He does not change with the times or become different from Himself to be popular in the prevailing trends of the day.

1 John 2:6 says that those who abide in Christ should live their lives like Him. If Jesus walked in a timeless way, what does that say about how we should live our lives? There are times for each of the things listed in the verses above, but we will only know the appropriate time if we live by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us through the work of Jesus Christ. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the salvation that it brings, then not only have you been saved

from an eternity of death, but you have been given a new life and understanding of the world around you!

### Questions to Consider

- After reading Ecclesiastes 3, do you struggle knowing when it is the appropriate time for any of these activities?
- How do you differentiate between 'feelings' and discernment?
- Who is someone you admire for their obedience when it comes to living a godly life in God's timing?

### A Prayer for Your Students

Pray Psalm 107:1-14 aloud with your students.

*"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story— those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains, because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains."*

As you close, open the floor for your students to talk about their understanding of the Gospel. Identify students who may not yet have a relationship with Jesus and try to meet with them.

## Student Take Away

Each week you will be given a parable to read and think over. This week your parable is Luke 18:1-8:

*"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!' And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'"*

Your challenge is to read this parable each day. At the end of the day, reflect on how this parable changed your understanding of the events that happened. If you need help, ask these three questions:

How does this parable change the way I understand people?

What do I learn about God in this parable?

Are there any questions that this parable raises?