

world mission offering

Global Servant Valerie Osterbrock teaches seminary students at Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia.

LEADERS' GUIDE

Engage your church in world mission

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He has made
everything beautiful
in its time. ECCLESIASTES 3:11

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on humankind. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of humankind; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

ECCLESIASTES 3:9-11

As the world moves into an endemic stage of the pandemic, we acknowledge that out of difficult places, loss of loved ones, internal and external stressors, we may still carry emotional scars from the experience. We are like people who have come through the fire together.

Still, the Lord sees everything that is going on in the world in any given moment of time. In the midst of earthquakes, war and disease, God's kingdom continues to show signs of budding life.

First, through the ministry of Global Servants David and Joyce Reed, in their role as IM's Global Coordinators for Spiritual Care, the development of several online spiritual formation groups for global servants has been "like a lifeline" for many. This emphasis on member care emerged in response to the needs within our global servant community.

Then, we heard about online Bible study and discipleship groups that many of our global servants were leading and participating in because of the pandemic. In Debrecen, Hungary, the English Bible study group that Jon and Amanda Good were leading grew into a newly formed church!

In the home office, we were able to make important changes to the global servant support infrastructure, including a major overhaul of our finance system. This new system has made our financial reporting smoother and more timely than ever.

As our global servants and staff return to traveling, we see the signs of all that God changed and renewed while we were "laying in the ground." God is making everything beautiful in its time. God's perfect timing is an aspect of divine sovereignty, and we can know that God acts when the timing is optimal for accomplishing kingdom purposes.

My prayer for you, our dear IM family, is that as you pray with us over these ministries that God is growing all around us, you will feel new life and hope budding in your hearts as well. God set eternity in our hearts, and, together, we were built to long for God's kingdom. May you see the beauty of God at work in God's *kairos* time around you, even as you and I live out our lives in linear *chronos* time.



Sharon Koh

Rev. Sharon Koh
Executive Director/CEO

Children's Sermon



Children at Teleios Christian School in South Africa, where Global Servant Faye Yarbrough serves.

MAIN THEME

God has made everything beautiful in its time.

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 3:6-9: The Apostle Paul wrote, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."

OBJECT(S)

- Fall bulbs (tulips, crocus, daffodils, hyacinth, etc.) from a store.
- Pictures or printed photographs of spring flowers.

LESSON

1. Show the children the fall bulbs. Say something like, "I love daffodils and tulips, and all the lovely flowers in springtime. Do any of you like spring flowers?" Allow children time to share.
2. Say, "I know it is strange to talk about spring flowers in the fall." Expect the students to be surprised that you are talking about spring flowers in the fall.
3. Say, "These are flower bulbs. A gardener can plant them in the fall, leave them underground all winter, and see them bloom in the spring."
4. Ask, "Isn't that amazing?" Share your wonder and delight by saying something like, "I am always amazed at God's creation, that a little seed like this can sleep underground all winter and then pop up in the spring to make beautiful flowers months and months from now. God has stored up creative power in these bulbs, which God brings to life at the right time."
5. Say, "What also amazes me is the timing. Gardeners must plant these bulbs in the fall or there will be no flowers in the spring." Share about having to plan, prepare, and plant now to harvest later in time.
6. This is part of God's wonderful creation: we plant, God and we water, and God causes things to grow.

MAIN POINT

God planted a seed of faith in each of our hearts, which will come to life at the right time.

A CHRIST-CENTERED CONCLUSION

Say, "It is the same plan God has for our faith. Just as these bulbs have a small seed inside of them that we plant and water and wait until God causes them to grow—so, too, the Apostle Paul says God puts a seed of faith in our hearts. At the right time, it will grow ... and be beautiful."

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you are the Creator and Miracle Worker who gives life and causes all things to grow. Plant in our hearts today the seed of faith that someday, in your perfect timing, will come to life in Jesus' name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

There is a dazzling sugar maple across the street from our house. Each autumn, it has the most vibrant fire-orange and sun-drenched yellow leaves. It looks like an evening fireball has perched in its branches on full display for everyone to see it and say, "Wow! That is amazing!" My spirit rejoices when I see it in its spectacular beauty. It is one of my favorite moments of the season when it catches my eye whenever we are coming or going.

I know it will not last forever. The leaves eventually fall as the silhouetted branches are destined to dance against the meandering clouds and grey skies of winter. Snow and frost cling to its bare limbs in the winter, giving a breathtaking platform to enjoy the scarlet red cardinals. In the spring, we watch for the robins to appear in the budding branches, marking the return of spring.

The Teacher (Qoheleth) and writer of Ecclesiastes made the point clear with poetic brilliance. There is a time, a reason and a season "for every activity under heaven" (v. 1). In this well-known record of wisdom literature (chapter 3), the writer reminds us: **God has a plan!** The Lord has bookended our lives with birth and death (v. 2). Our knowledge of our limited experience (i.e., time) gives meaning and urgency of purpose to our existence. We cannot do everything and should not fear missing out. In what may appear to be chaos and confusion, God reminds us there is a plan and purpose for every experience. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). The fourteen extreme couplets (v. 2-8) show us that life, in all its complexity and extremes, is beautifully crafted and lovingly designed to live with God and others. **Humans are to accept and enjoy life as a gift from God.**

The Teacher is trying to show us that **God is alive, active, and the agent of God's timing.** The ancient Greeks had two words for time, *chronos* and *kairos*. They understood *chronos* as quantitative time, an exact time

MAIN THEME

God has made everything beautiful in its time.

measured with clocks and calendars. It is where we get the word "chronological." *Kairos* is different. It is qualitative time, measured in moments when something occurs at the right moment or opportune time. God created both *chronos* and *kairos* moments; God was alive and active within time and the agent of the mysterious moments when miraculous things happened.

We are invited to participate in God's wonderful timing and to engage in God's work. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Verse 11 is the highlight: "The Lord has made everything beautiful in its time." Beautiful can also be translated as "lovely, fulfilling, or awe-inspiring." Like the sugar maple, it catches our attention as we become mesmerized by the mystery of God's grace.

As we receive the World Mission Offering, you are invited to join Christ's church as we participate in God's ongoing work.

We gather and receive the offering now.

We store and share God's riches by investing in God's global mission work.

We send and receive servants at the right time (*chronos*) of the year.

And God's mysteriously perfect timing (*kairos*) brings timeliness and beauty.

In all of these activities, occurring in the right season and time, the church can witness God's lovely work of bringing God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

Sermon Starter

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

SUPPORTING TEXT: Romans 8:28 and Ephesians 2:10

SUGGESTED TITLE: “God has made everything beautiful in its time.” (v. 11)

THEME: God is perfect in God’s timing, both in chronological history and the Lord’s mysterious moments.

QUESTION: Can you listen to the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 without humming the tune to Pete Seeger’s song, “Turn! Turn! Turn!” made popular by Judy Collins and the Byrds in the 1960s? Before this song, the lyrics were popular in the Old Testament book of wisdom.

TEXT: The son of David and the king of Israel, Solomon, called the Teacher (Qoheleth) in Ecclesiastes, shares a wisdom poem with his people contemplating the meaning and purpose of life. Observing the world around him, from nature and human activity, he concludes there are two outcomes for human life: dread and despair (i.e., meaninglessness, vanity) or divine delight.



Global Servant Faye Yarbrough

POINT 1

v. 1: Sets the framework for his reflection: look at life. There appears to be a pattern or reoccurring periods, times and seasons, which all humans can see, which is God’s design (“under the heavens”).

POINT 2

v. 2-8: These fourteen couplets show the extremes of God’s created order: life/death (limits of our human existence), and a spectrum of negative and positive experiences. God uses all of them for God’s purpose.

POINT 3

v. 9-10: Humans are invited to participate in God’s created order (*chronos*) by enjoying life and experiencing life’s fullness as a gift from God.

POINT 4

v. 11-13: The meaning of life comes from experiencing the moments (*kairos*) when God makes life lovely, full, beautiful—like sending Jesus.

Prayer Guide

1 Lord, give hope to those who are in search of a home, and strength to those who continue to provide welcome.

RAY SCHELLINGER, GLOBAL

2 Lord, we pray for the people of Lebanon, who are going through immense suffering and trials, particularly financially.

DAN & SARAH CHETTI, LEBANON

3 Lord, we pray that all trafficked women with whom we work will experience comfort from God and from our staff at NightLight.

ANNIE & JEFF DIESELBERG, THAILAND

4 God, we pray for healthcare workers around the world, that they will turn to you for their peace and strength.

KRISTY ENGEL, GLOBAL

5 Holy God, we pray for all those who have experienced trauma, that you would restore them to safety and wholeness.

KIT RIPLEY, THAILAND

6 Lord, we pray for perseverance as Nicaraguan immigrant women pursue tutoring to pass through their elementary school-level exam.

SUE HEGARTY, COSTA RICA

7 Lord, we pray that the International Baptist Church in Debrecen, Hungary, will faithfully lift up Jesus Christ through the unifying power of the Holy Spirit.

AMANDA & JON GOOD, HUNGARY

8 Lord, we pray that Jesus' followers among the Myanmar (Burmese) refugees in Malaysia would be strong witnesses to God's love and justice.

ANN & BRUCE BORQUIST, GLOBAL

9 God, we pray that you will give strength and encouragement to all the community leaders and AMOS staff providing health care access to 24,000 people living in poverty.

CHRISTINE LAFFERTY, NICARAGUA

10 Lord, we pray for the churches and leadership of the Japan Baptist Union.

SARAH MCCLOY, JAPAN

11 God, we pray that the Baptists in Bosnia will be a witness for Jesus, and that political tensions will not result in war.

NORA & PIETER KALKMAN, EUROPE & THE MIDDLE EAST

12 Lord, we pray that you will open up opportunities for the House of Blessing to reach more families in our community.

ALISE & MARK JUANES, THAILAND

13 God, please help the church to find its prophetic voice to denounce social and political violence in El Salvador.

ELIBERTO & MOLLY JUÁREZ, EL SALVADOR

14 Lord, we pray for the students at Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College as they prepare to serve you.

ERIC & YUREE LEMBKE, THAILAND

15 Lord, we pray for peace and security in Haiti.

KIHOMI NGWEMI & NZUNGA MABUDIGA, HAITI/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

16 Lord, we ask you to raise up Congolese women and men with a heart to serve in medicine.

KATHERINE & WAYNE NILES, DR CONGO



Seminary students in Malaysia, where Global Servants Aaron and Valerie Osterbrock teach.

17 Lord, we pray for wisdom as we help the leadership team at Company of Grace, a vocational training center for youth with disabilities.

MARK & NGOC PHAM, VIETNAM

18 Lord, we pray for wisdom as we partner with Arab-background Christian leaders in Türkiye, and for your provision as we seek to help.

LAURA & RICH FREEMAN, TÜRKIYE

19 Lord, we pray for soul care, self-care, and community care practices to take root and flourish in the lives of spiritual leaders.

DAVID & JOYCE REED, GLOBAL

20 God, we pray that your spirit of peace and reconciliation would rest over the entire island of Hispaniola.

STACY & TIM REESE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

21 God, please open our hearts and minds to find ways to care for those in need, near and far.

APHIWAN & SCOTT COATS, MYANMAR & THAILAND

22 Lord, we pray for a spiritual renewal in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in our lives as well.

KATHY & TIM RICE, DR CONGO

23 Lord, bring teachers, administrators, and volunteers to Chiang Rai International Christian School.

KATRINA & KYLE WILLIAMS, THAILAND

24 Lord, we pray for support for global leaders to creatively equip their communities with spiritual and faith practices that nurture wholehearted thriving.

MYLINDA BAITTS, GLOBAL

25 Lord, we pray for the faculty, staff, and students at Cape Town Baptist Seminary in South Africa.

TOYA RICHARDS, SOUTH AFRICA

26 God, we pray for those teaching in our Christian school and our Sunday school in Azacualpa, Honduras.

DILIA ZELAYA, HONDURAS

27 Lord, please help all of us who follow you to communicate the gospel clearly.

AARON & AMYESTELLE TROUT, SOUTHEAST ASIA

28 Lord, we pray for all the Telugu Baptists in India and around the globe.

DAVID SAGAR, INDIA

29 Lord, we pray for all of our Master in Theological Studies students as they prepare to do your work.

JAE STOCKTON, MEXICO

30 Lord, give faith to the recipients of the gospel all over Japan.

SHIGEMI TOMITA, JAPAN

31 Lord, we pray that you will help us to encourage new believers, as they grow a love for Jesus.

JEANINE & WALT WHITE, GLOBAL



Children from Jityaza
Combined Primary
School in South Africa

The World Mission Offering provides an opportunity for individuals and churches to participate in God's life-changing mission around the globe. Special thanks to IM board director Rev. Dr. Ivan E. Greuter, pastor of West Side Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, for his contributions to the content of this year's Leaders' Guide.

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