

Ecclesiastes– Better Together

Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

In this text the teacher points out that “again” I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. We can immediately recognize that this is something that is a recurring theme in humanity. This text illustrates man’s inability to try and be the engineer and architect of his own happiness. These illustrations are just some of the things that interrupt or destroy man’s pursuit of his own happiness. The theme throughout this passage is regarding the loneliness that comes in life and how life is better with others.

1. There are four groups that Solomon seems to use as illustrations in this passage. The oppressed, the worker, the friend, and the leader. His main point is that it is better together and to have someone there. The first group he points out is the oppressed. He makes the point that “there is no one there to comfort them.” What are some examples of oppression in our day? What does it look like to comfort the oppressed? What are some ways that you can partner to bring comfort?
2. Solomon then moves to work and toil and relationships we experience there. He points out the extremes of the workaholic and the sluggard. He is pointing out motivations for work. There appears to be a calling of attention to motivations regarding envy, laziness, contentment, and greed. Which motivation do you tend to lean towards? How do you respond when you see someone who is “successful” or who makes it? Are you content in your work? Are you content doing whatever you do all for the glory of God? Why or why not? What moves you away from the contentment?
3. The idea of having relationships that we share life with is such a deep desire for most people. However, our highly individualistic culture here in the west makes this difficult for many. Even in the church there are high expectations of “community” and relationships that can lead to disappointment, hurt, and anger when not met. Oftentimes, we look for relationships like a vending machine and make our selections based on what we want. Once that relationship community is built, we tend to protect it at all costs. This can make it hard for new people in a church or new to the faith to make connections. How do we properly value the relationships that are found through the church? How do we help others connect through relationships? How does this avoid becoming an isolated affinity group and instead a part of the larger faith family?
4. The final group mentioned is leaders. It speaks of the fact that the leaders will not be remembered. There is a picture of a leader who became older and

stopped listening. There was no teachable spirit. How do we avoid losing a teachable spirit? How do we cultivate a spirit of wisdom instead of foolishness? What areas of your life do you find it difficult to listen to someone older or younger when it comes to taking direction? Do you believe you are getting wiser or are you just getting older? What does it take to grow in this wisdom?

5. What practical steps can you take this week to bring comfort to someone, help someone, connect with someone, or “lead” someone in wisdom?