

# *Welcome To Sunday Night Bible Fellowship*

Every word inspired.



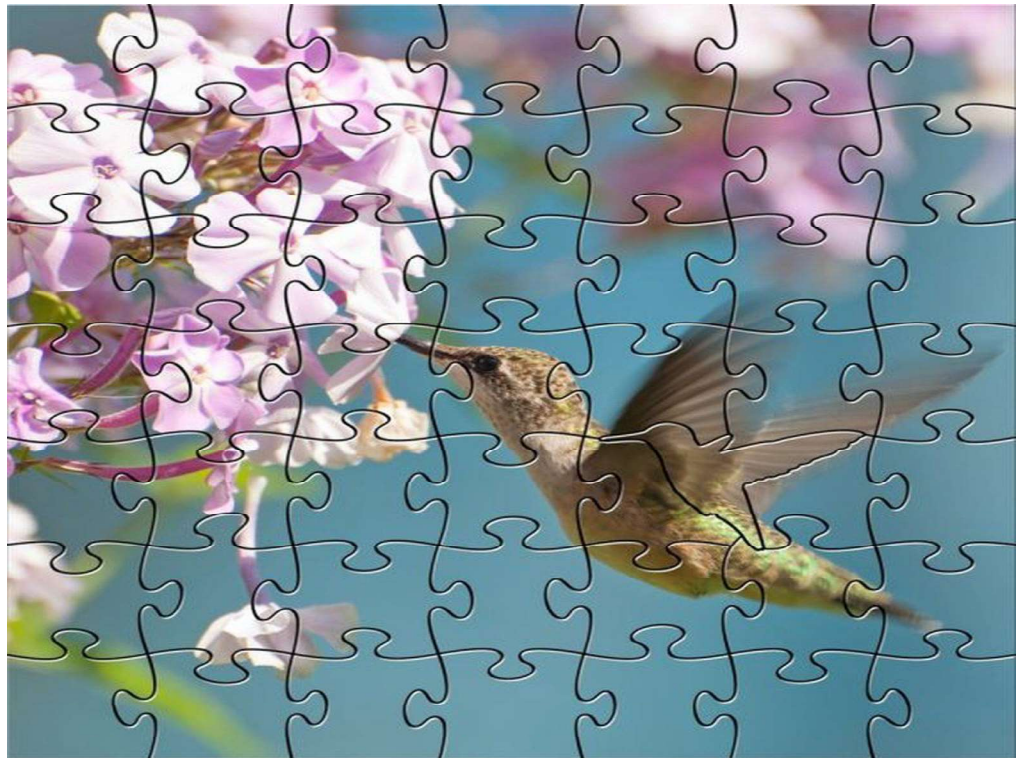
Every word proclaimed.

***"We proclaim Him, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ." Col 1:28***

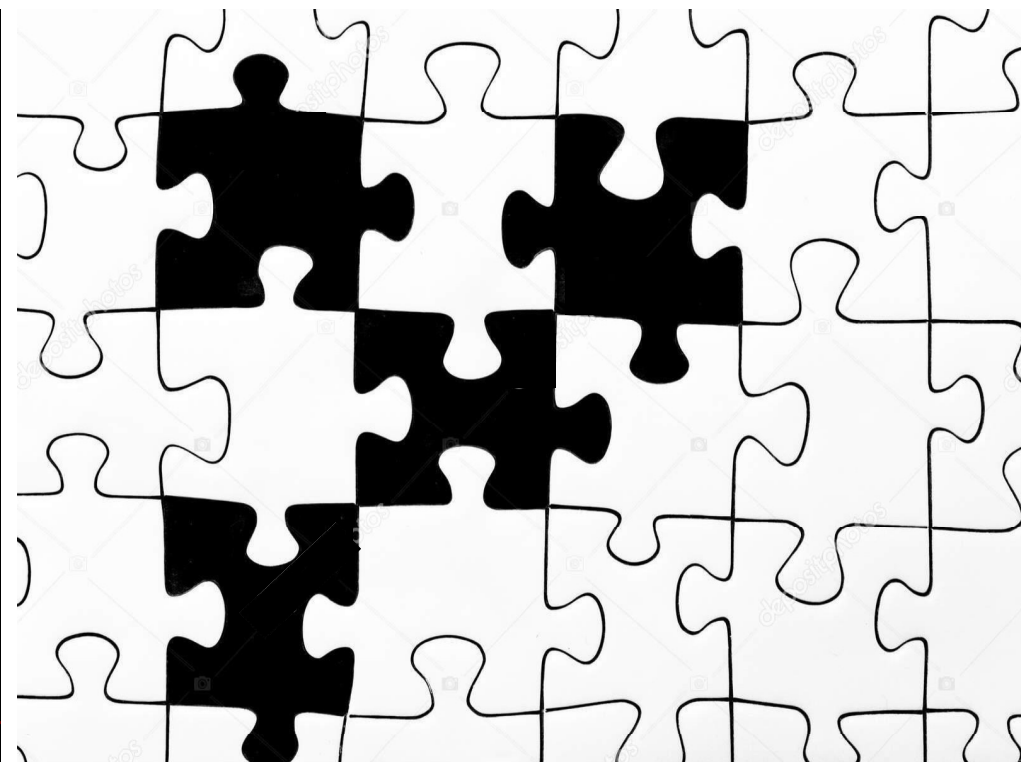
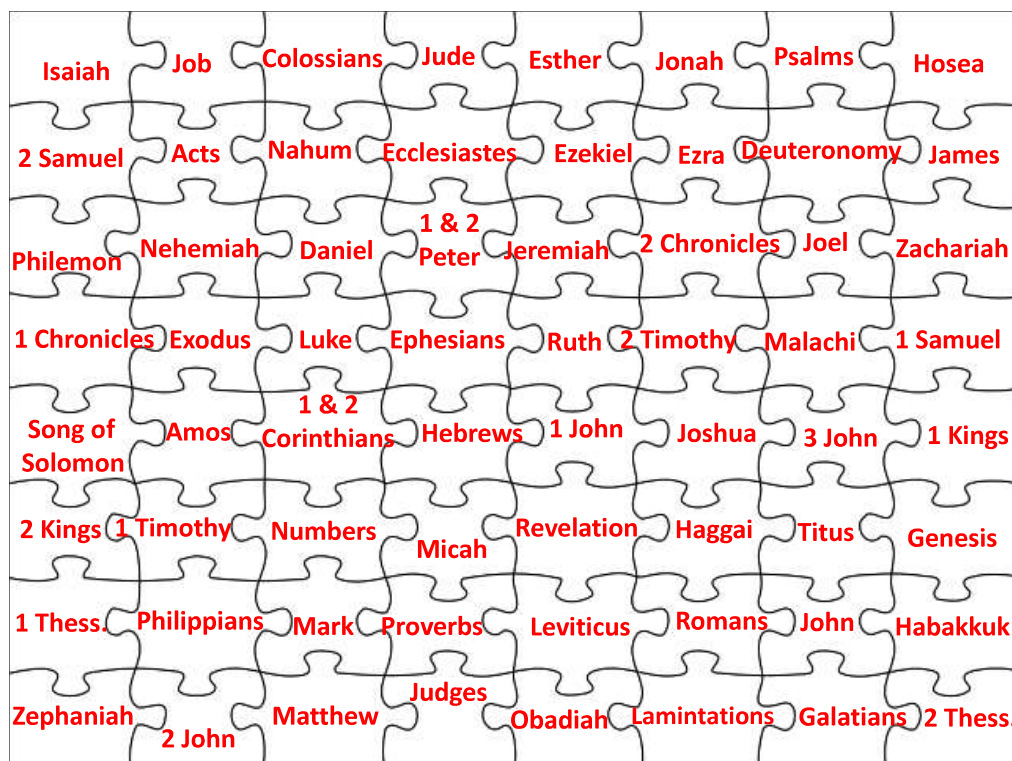
## ***"Bullies and Rats"***

***Eccl. 4:1-6***

May 3, 2020







## Ecc1 4

1 Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.

2 So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.

3 But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

4 I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

**1 “ Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.”**

• Solomon looked around his world. Have you looked lately around your world? Let’s see if you see what Solomon saw.

“**oppression**” - עֲשׂוּק - awshook - tyranny, authoritarianism, bullying, oppression.

• Solomon observed all forms and places (“under the sun”) of oppression, where the acts of abuse of power and authority took place. He witnessed the burden, the trampling, and the crushing of those who were weak and powerless.

- Oppression can come from bullies on the playground to rich bankers, to gov't officials, to politicians, to judges, to police officers.
- Men, women, and children are oppressed generally throughout their lives in business, in marriage, in various relationships, by anyone with power.
- Oppression comes from positions of power – either those with superior physical strength or from those with superior wealth.
- These are the bullies of the world. The ones with the power.
- Abusive power will always exist in human society; drive it out at one door, and it will re-enter by another.
- Solomon saw how sad it all was, for he saw the tears in the eyes of the oppressed.
- Tragically no one was there to bring comfort. Oppressed persons feel helpless and hopeless, because they have “no one to comfort them”. He was so touched by this that he repeats the phrase twice.
- Do you think Solomon looked at himself as an oppressor? He had taxed the people more than they could bear. He had drafted men into virtual slavery to construct his great monuments. He had lived in unreasonable luxury while others were hungry around him.



### **Oppression in the O.T.**

- Oppression of people by a king (Prov. 28:16).
- Oppression of a slave by his master (Deut. 24:14).
- Oppression of the poor by the affluent (Prov. 22:16).
- Oppression of the poor by the bureaucratic (Eccl. 5:8).
- Oppression of the poor by other poor people (Prov. 28:3).
- Oppression of the alien, the fatherless, and the widow (Jer. 7:6; Ez. 22:7; Zech. 7:10).
- Oppression by charging high interest (Ez. 22:12, 29).
- Oppression by using false weights and measures (Hos. 12:7).



“Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the morrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,  
But that cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;  
The young birds are chirping in the nest;  
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly!  
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
In the country of the free.”

**\*\*Through all the centuries tears have flowed enough to float  
a navy.**

**2 “So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more  
than the living who are still living.”**

**“congratulated” - שָׁבַח - shabach – to commend, to praise, to  
congratulate,**

- Solomon proclaims that people in despair are better off dead, because death removes them from the clutches of the oppressors.
- He is not promoting suicide, but using an extreme to make the point that when he saw all the oppression to which people were subject, and noted their tears, he decided that the dead, who had already died, are in a better place than the living, who are still alive.

## **Eccl 4**

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**2 So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.**

3 But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

4 I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

## **Job 3:3,11**

3 "Let the day perish on which I was to be born,

11 "Why did I not die at birth,

Come forth from the womb and expire?

## **Jer 20:18**

8 Why did I ever come forth from the womb

To look on trouble and sorrow,

## **Ecc1 4**

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**3 “But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.”**

- Solomon says, better still than those who are dead, are those who have never been born and witnessed the oppression of the world.
- The dead have suffered from oppressions, the living are suffering; but the man not yet born, is not yet a sufferer, and until he is born, is better off than they are.
- Oppression “under the sun” shows the moral necessity of an eternity and a coming judgment.
- The oppressors will someday be brought to justice.

**4 “I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.”**

- Solomon now observes the problem of competition.
- These are the people in the work force.
- They not only want to “keep up with the Jones’” they want to get ahead and beat the Jones’.
- They are the “rats” in the rat race.
- The “**Rat race**” is, according to Cambridge Dictionary, an expression describing “a way of life in modern society, in which people compete with each other for power and money”.
- Bumper sticker: ***Even if you win the rat race, you’re still a rat.***
- A sign by the roadside : ***“I’m getting sick of the rat race. The rats keep getting bigger and faster.”***



- Solomon is describing the rat race. He's describing someone who's living all his life trying to acquire all the things, all of the toys that he can get. He has both hands full, but he still has toil.
- What are you prepared to do to get to where you want to be? How many lives are you willing to trample upon? And Solomon says the motivation is envy and greed.
- Their competition is motivated by their greed.
- You will find greed in every form of government and economy whether capitalism, socialism, or communism.
- Makes no difference if you work in a salt mine, coal mine, or gold mine, or whether you work in an oil field, baseball field, or an corn field – it is all the same – it is all competition to get ahead.
- The young, upwardly mobile, working all the hours there are, sacrificing everything; a marriage, friendships, and children, just to climb that corporate ladder and make it to the top so they can be what they thought they ought to be. Ambition becomes necessity and necessity becomes a god,
- ***Karoshi*** is a Japanese word which means “death from overwork.” The syndrome is now so common in Japan that it claims as many as 30,000 victims each year. Its increase has caused such concern that since 1990, the Japanese government has been forced to provide restitution to *karoshi* widows.

- Men work hard and exercise their skill because they are envious of each other.
- Think about it: People really don't need all that they are accumulating. So why are they doing it?
- Research indicates that nine out of ten office workers suffer from “professional envy” of colleagues they perceive to have more glamorous or better paid jobs.

### **Luke 18:22-25**

22 When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

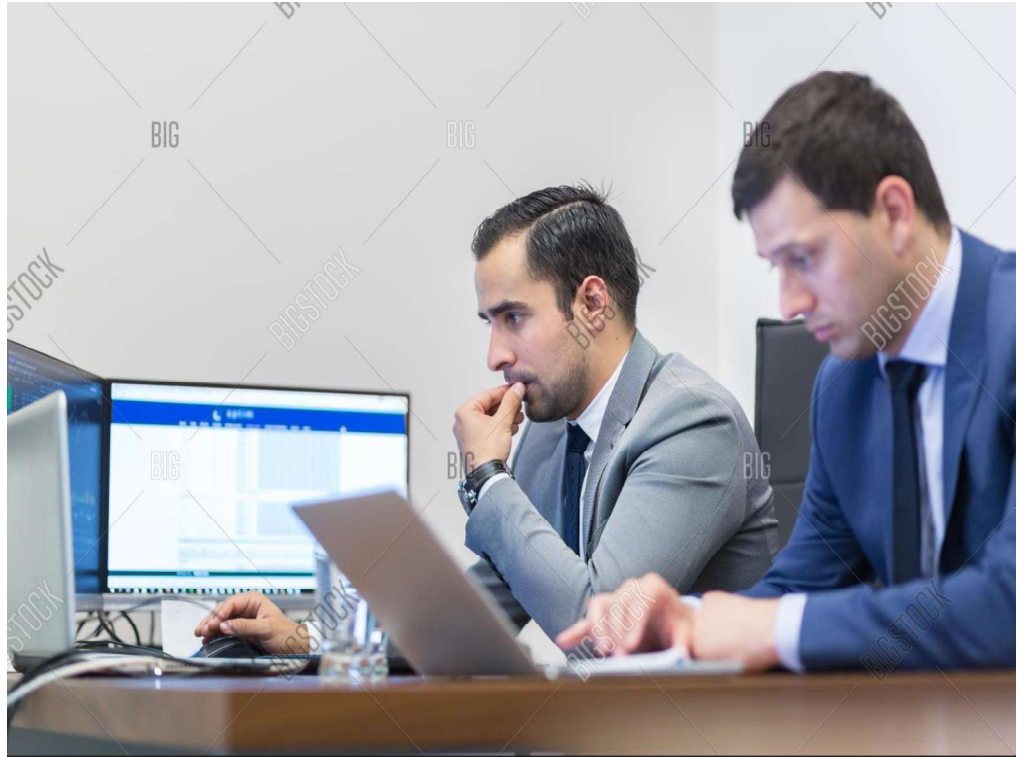
23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

“The only reason people perfect their skills and work hard at their jobs is to compete with others and make more money than their neighbors. The purpose of their work was not to produce beautiful or useful products, or to help people, but to stay ahead of the competition and survive in the battle for bread.”

- Warren Wiersbe









“People really do not want things, they want to be admired for the things they have. What they want is not the new car itself, but to hear their neighbors say, "How lucky you are to have such a beautiful car!" That is what people want -- to be the center, the focus of attention.”

- Ray Stedman

“Ambition is the raving and insatiable beast that most often demands to be fed in this town. The setting is less likely to be some posh restaurant or glitzy nightclub than a wholly unremarkable glass office building, or an inner sanctum somewhere in the federal complex. The reward in the transaction is frequently not currency at all, but power, perquisites, and ego massage. For this, the whole agglomeration of psychological payoffs, there are people who will sell out almost anything, including their self-respect, if any, and the well being of thousands of others.”

- Newsweek Magazine  
What Drives People in Washington D.C.

### **Prov 14:30**

30 A heart at peace gives life to the body,  
but envy rots the bones.

### **Ecc1 4**

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### ***5 The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.***

- **Biblical definition of a “fool”:** A fool is someone who denies God, scoffs at wisdom, and laughs at eternity.
- This is a person who drops out of the work force and society. He goes in the opposite direction of the workaholic.
- They say, "We don't want to be a part of the rat race any more; we don't want to strive to be admired. We'll drop out of society."
- They say, "The rat race is over and the rats won so let's drop out."
- In the 1960s, one generation got sick of the affluence of the 1950s. So this group bailed out and claimed the title of “flower children.” Everybody gave up ambition and the drive for financial success. They let their hair grow long, quit bathing, and just sat on the grass.
- 1966 – Dr. Timothy Leary – Harvard psychology professor –  
**“Tune in, turn on, and drop out.”**
- **“Tune in”** - to the revolution, **“turn on”** – to LSD, **“drop-out”** of the rat-race of society.
- Solomon says here's the problem: You do that and you will eventually waste away.
- **“consumes his own flesh”:** “to ‘destroys himself,’ ‘brings ruin upon himself.’”

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**6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.**

### **Prov 6:10-11**

10 "A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest" —  
11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond  
And your need like an armed man.

### **Prov 24:33-34**

33 "A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest,"  
34 Then your poverty will come as a robber  
And your want like an armed man.

### **2 Thess 3:10**

10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

### **Col 3:23**

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

### ***6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.***

- Solomon has described 2 men so far in verses 4-6 – the Workaholic and the Lazyaholic. He is now going to describe a 3<sup>rd</sup> man – the balanced man.
- You have 2 hands. Are you going to use them to work all of the time to “get ahead” or are you going to fold them and “waste away?”
- Solomon says don't go to extremes- use one hand for each – work and rest.
- It's better to have a few things (one handful) and be satisfied, than to have many things (two handfuls) and lose your health and peace of mind. Bring your labor and leisure into balance.
- **A Balanced Life Is a Wise Life! Blessed are the Balanced!**



“The industrious man thinks that money will bring him peace, but he has no time to enjoy it. The idle man thinks that doing nothing will bring him peace, but his life-style only destroys him. The integrated man enjoys both his labor and the fruit of his labor and balances toil with rest.”

- Warren Wiersbe

“Rather than putting two hands in for eighty hours a week, why don’t you put in forty hours with one hand and with the other hand eat some French Silk pie?”

- *“dj simplified” translation of vs. 6*