

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

“Its Lonely At The Top”

Eccl. 4:7-16

May 10, 2020

Ecc1 4:7-16

7 Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.

8 There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.

9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?

12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

13 A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction.

14 For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.

15 I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him.

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“Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.”

- Solomon is finding life that is meaningless everywhere.
- Aren't we all glad for the “looking” Solomon did?
- Ecclesiastes in such a unique way gives us a perspective on the world.
- The reason Ecclesiastes is so deep and there is so much to see and learn, is because of the wisdom of Solomon.
- His thoughts, his words help us to see the world the way it really is. That's good! Takes us to the depths of despair and then tells us our only hope, our only purpose for living is GOD.
- It rids us of envy, jealousy, competition, greed, and supplants it with contentment.

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- Solomon is looking at 4 different categories of men and their labor:
- 1. The Workaholics** – these are the men who are the rats in the rat race. They are greedy. They will sacrifice everything to climb the corporate ladder. They spend their lives in competition to out-do, out-spend, out accumulate their fellow workers.
 - 2. The Lazyaholics** – these are men have dropped out of the rat race. They are fools. They fold their hands. They will waste away.
 - 3. The Balanced Man** – these are men who live balanced lives. They get along with less. They are content. They have a handful of labor and a handful of rest. They enjoy their work and they enjoy their leisure.

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- Solomon now introduces to us a 4th man –

4. The Independent Man – he has no friends, no business partners, no wife, no children, no family. If he did, he's left them far behind in the dust. He is going it alone. He only thinks about 1 thing: "How much money can I make?" He is so focused on riches that he spends no time enjoying life. It's just – work, work, work, accumulate, accumulate, accumulate. He is his own "Declaration of Independence."

Remember: He who dies with the most toys, still dies.

Solomon explains it this way:

- ***"There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother,"***
 - He has no dependents or family.
- ***"yet there was no end to all his labor."***
 - He puts in a 70-80 hour week and even that was not enough.

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- ***“his eyes were not satisfied with riches”***
 - No matter how much he makes, he always wants a little more. Totally driven by money. He wanted to work by himself so he could have all of the profit. He didn't want friendships, relationships, and companionship because they lead to expenses and a drag on your time. People slow you down. He's a miser, and a scrooge. His companion in life is his money.
- ***“he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?"”***
 - He never asks the obvious basic question, “Why am I doing this?”, and he has no one to ask it for him. He is isolated and alone.
 - He gives up enjoying the pleasures in life for his quest for riches.
- ***“This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.”***
 - Solomon says that this is a meaningless life filled with grief.

“How many mothers and fathers have shortchanged their children in exchange for \$10,000 or \$20,000 extra a year? How many young consultants make great money but don’t have friends because they travel every week? How many wealthy people have accumulated huge nest eggs but no friends? Do you have anyone to enjoy life with? Are you taking the time to smell the coffee?”

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“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.”

- So the independent man makes his way to the top by himself. It's lonely.
- Solomon is now going to argue that 2 working together is better than 1.

Here are 5 advantages of laboring together:

- 1. Production efficiency.** 2 working together can get more work done in the same amount of time than one working alone.
- 2. Production capacity.** There are some jobs that one person can't do. You need two people to do it.
- 3. Production profits.** 2 working together maximizes profits. This is true even though the profits will be divided because they are able to produce more in less time and accomplish greater tasks.
- 4. Production benefits.** two working together is good for both persons working together. When you help someone else with a task it is beneficial for you and for them. When you help someone there is a positive benefit for you, knowing that you served another. At the same time there is appreciation from the one who received your help.
- 5. Production relationships.** 2 working together makes close friendships and builds bonds. It may be doing yard work, mission trips, service projects, or local church ministry. If someone is independent or a loner and does not have any or many friends, one of the things he can do to build friendships is do things with other people, work on projects together, accomplish something together.

Man was not meant to be alone:

- Adam and Eve.
- Jesus sent them out 2 by 2 –

Luke 10:1

10 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Survivalist reality tv show, **“Alone”**.

“In unforgiving terrain, ten men endure extreme isolation and psychological distress while documenting the experience themselves. No camera crew, no producers: It's the ultimate test of man's will to make it in the wild **Alone**.”













As the Lone Ranger and Tonto were riding along towards the north, they spotted a war party of about 50 Apaches coming at them. They turned south, but another war party appeared. They turned east and met another party of 100 braves. They turned west as their last remaining hope and saw a party of 500. The Lone Ranger turned to his friend and said, "Well, faithful friend, this is the end, there's not much we can do." Tonto looked back at the Lone Ranger. "What you mean WE, white man?"

How can people make friends?

By being a friend.

Why doesn't a person have friends?

1. It's possible that they just don't want any friends and don't try to make friends. They are the "self-sufficient" persons who never even try to have friends.
2. Sometimes a person is just not nice to be around. People who have trouble with making friends may tend to be "selfish". They are more concerned about what they're going to get from a friendship than what they're going to put into it.
3. Friendship is learning to get rid of "self", whether it's from being "self-sufficient" or being "selfish".

“Friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief.”

- Cicero

Orator, lawyer, politician,
linguist, and writer in the
Roman Empire

“Are you cultivating friends? Are you being a friend? Are there a few folks who will stand near you, sheltering you with their branches?

Jay Kesler, my long-time friend and currently the president of Taylor University, has said that one of his great hopes in life is to wind up with at least eight people who will attend his funeral without once checking their watches. I love it! Do you have eight people who'll do that?”

- Chuck Swindoll

“Actually, some of the loneliest people in the world live in the midst of thousands and thousands of other people. And Solomon is talking about them. They may have their job, they may have their car, and they may have their pension fund, but actually they've got nothing. And they don't have a friend and they don't have a companion.”

- Ligon Duncan

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“For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.”

- Solomon gives a second reason why 2 are better than 1, and these next 3 examples are all related to travel in Israel. They are very serious because you could die from any one of these.

Example #1 – taking a fall.

- In Israel the roads and paths were not paved or even leveled.
- There were loose stones in paths that crossed fields and it was not uncommon for people to stumble and fall, breaking a bone or falling into a hidden pit or ravine.
- No cell phones, no traffic, no 911, no ambulances, no air evacuation, no way to call for help.
- But if you have a friend to lift you up, that is a wonderful thing. If you don't, you are stranded and left desolate to be robbed or possibly to die.

Simon & Garfunkel in the early 1970's wrote a song about one coming to the aid of another -

When you're down and out,

When you're on the street.

When evening falls so hard, I will comfort you.

I'll take your part - when darkness comes

And pain is all around,

Like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down.

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“Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?”

Example #2 – keeping warm.

- As one traveled in Israel he often did not make it to the next town to find shelter.
- No Holiday Inn along the road and path.
- They didn't even use tents, just too heavy to carry.
- They would just lie down in a field and try to stay warm through the night.
- On a cold desert night you could freeze. Travelers had nothing but each other to keep them warm.
- It was a wonderful thing if you had a companion to lie down with to keep warm.
- This is not necessarily your husband or wife, although that would apply, but a friend, and it was acceptable for two men or two women to lie close to one another in order to stay warm. So two is better than one when it comes to keeping warm.
- Physical warmth = Companionship. Emotional warmth = Friendship. Spiritual warmth = Fellowship.

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Example #3 – keeping safe.

- Traveling alone in Israel was dangerous.
- Robbers and criminals littered the roadways.
- They were looking for easy targets.
- The easiest target was a lone traveler because a lone traveler could be easily overpowered.
- However, two could resist a criminal.
- So Solomon ends this verse giving us a formula for friendships: 1 is not good. 2 is better. 3 is best.

Application:

1. Having one or two true friends in life makes for a strong cord.
2. You don't need 500. You don't need 5,000 friends on Facebook, 99% of which you don't really know.
3. Studies have shown that a person cannot have more than about 3-5 close friends.
4. You can have a lot of acquaintances, but you can really only have a few close friends.
5. Take a look at who you call the most, and you will see that it is usually three or four people.
6. Research has shown that the explosion of social media is not making people closer but farther apart, because the time they are taking on social media is taking attention away from the two or three friends who are truly the closest to them.

Summary of the 3 examples:

A helper, a comforter, and a defender all are needed in life's many settings. The cord you form together with them will be a cord that is difficult to break.

Settlers who moved to America in the 1900's would buy a piece of property and usually would build a log cabin in the middle of their property that they owned. However because their cabin was in the middle of the property they were vulnerable to attack by thieves, robbers, and Indians. They finally realized they had a better chance of survival if they moved their houses towards the corner of their property closer to their neighbors. So they found security in companionship and not in isolation.

What about you?

Where is your log cabin on your property?

Is it time you moved your cabin closer to the corner of your field?

Is it time you installed a gate in your high forbidding fence?

It could make a difference in your life & in your survival!!!

Remember: An arch consists of two weaknesses, which leaning against one another make a strength.

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- Solomon now gives an illustration.
- Let's set the stage -

Here we have the comparison between 2 individuals:

- One is young, poor and wise.
- The other is old, a king, and foolish. He no longer receives advice and counsel.
- So the king declined in popularity with the people he had once been popular. When he was young he listened to their concerns and considered the counsel of his advisors. But now he had grown old and foolish. As a result he would no longer listen to the people.

"He has reached a pinnacle of human glory, only to be stranded there."

The first person here (lad) is better and here's why . . .

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“For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.”

- The lad attains to become king despite his prison record and being born in poverty.
- So he is an achiever, as the old king once was.
- The lad, through his wisdom, thinks all of the right things, does all the right things, says all the right things to become king (definition of a politician).
- A person's beginnings do not guarantee success, and once success is gained, it does not guarantee continued success.

Its unwise to ignore the advice of others –

Prov 11:14

4 Where there is no guidance the people fall,
But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Prov 15:22

22 Without consultation, plans are frustrated,
But with many counselors they succeed.

Prov 20:18

18 Prepare plans by consultation,
And make war by wise guidance.

Prov 24:6

6 For by wise guidance you will wage war,
And in abundance of counselors there is victory.

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- Life at the top is not only lonely but it is also fleeting.
- Since it is impossible to achieve full acceptance by everyone, it is foolish to spend one's life seeking advancement and popularity.
- It is better to stay poor and wise.
- From this position, it may be possible to influence more people than you ever thought possible. Influence must always trump popularity because popularity is temporal.

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- Here is a succession of kings, none of whom fully satisfies the populace.
- As Augustine put it, in our great affairs, the dead are always replaced by the dying.
- Kings, presidents and prime ministers may have extremely high approval ratings for a while, but they don't last.
- Wealth and position are no guarantee of success, and poverty and seeming failure are no barriers to achievement.
- Glory is fading even for popular and powerful people; even for people that have overcome great obstacles in life. All the way from poverty; to prison; to King!
- We shouldn't be concerned about our popularity with men, but rather be concerned about what God thinks about us. Are you living your life to please God or others? The only way to be successful is to live to please Him.
- “If you please God, it does not matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it does not matter whom you please.”
- The story illustrates that there is no ultimate meaning, no ultimate purpose, no ultimate significance. It's all just vanity (when viewed from the standpoint of under the sun).
- Winston Churchill was at a gathering where he was introduced and received a rousing ovation. A lady sitting next to him said, “Mr. Churchill, it must be very rewarding to get such applause from so many people.” Churchill replied, “Madam, if this was my hanging, the crowd would be twice the size.”