

got wisdom? Lesson 7

Read Ecclesiastes 4:7-16

Solomon while surveying at the life he has lived and the things he has seen continues on what seems to be a pessimistic replay of events and continues to assert that all is vanity. He now looks to the value of relationships, over and against, the solitude of those whose focus is on gain under the sun **Vs. 7-8**.

In this instance he says, being without life companions is a travesty because all of the work and wealth without someone to share the experience with or leave the legacy to is useless. If we remember his previous statement was that it was better to have a little with contentment than two hands full still feeling empty (4:6).

This speaks to the overarching theme throughout his writing; The key to tranquility is to be content with what you have, with the lot God has given you. As we've have discussed, contentment is being satisfied with where you are in God and with what you have by His grace. Complacency is a smug and often unbothered state that keeps one stagnant.

From Solomon's perspective we could reason that these two are matters of the eyes; where the key to contentment is to stifle the insatiable desire of the eyes. The insatiable eye is always looking for more, bigger and better. The eye of contentment sees more, bigger, and better but is not *driven* by desire for it. The complacent eye sees but couldn't care less.

Vs. 9-12

These four verses show us the great value of human relationships, when purposed by God, give us an increasing advantage in life and in labor. Living and working together is a great advantage to living and working alone, and adds productivity, advocacy, comfort, and safety and security.

As much as we understand the benefits of solitude as a spiritual discipline, Solomon is not suggesting that we don't have moments or seasons that we spend alone to draw closer to God. He is suggesting that going at life on our own is often less productive, less beneficial, and less fruitful.

From the Preachers' viewpoint, companionship is more profitable than such selfishness. Not only is companionship profitable, it's purposeful (Gen. 2:18). If doing life alone was 'not good' in Paradise, it can't be good in the wilderness of the world under the sun. Family, friendship, companionship, marriage, religious communion, are all better than the selfish solitariness of the "laborer".

Support, ideas, encouragement, a helping hand, comfort, are all derived from fellowship; especially the fellowshipping of the saints (Heb 10:24-25). It enables us to pour and to be poured into (Prov 27:17). It's through this connectedness that we find the ability to live in the purpose and prosperity that God has planned for us.

The Greek word used for assembling is "episynagoge," which suggests an official meeting that could include worship, praying, reading, teaching, hearing, and studying the Word. It could also mean simply being community. This is the idea of the strength of New Testament fellowship (Mt 18:19-20; Acts 2:42; Phil 2:1-2).

More than an official meeting, it's a call to be empowered by God and to do life together (Rom 12:4-6). So many times, we miss out on the benefit of doing life together with other believers. When

there is no fellowship, there is no stirring up love or exhorting one another. Forsaking fellowship gives place to discouragement, doubt, and depression. They multiply in isolation.

Fellowship can also protect us from attacks of the enemy, prevent hardened hearts, alleviate the pressures of temptation, promote rebuke and restoration (Gal 6:1-2; Heb 3:12-14). Much of this could be why Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs; because they were strength in their spiritual fellowship.

It is commonly understood that the third cord is God Himself, and that a relationship intertwined with God is a threefold cord that is not quickly broken. However, in practical terms there is strength in numbers, which means we are better together than we are by ourselves, and even better yet, when God is in the midst.

Vs. 13-16

The moral of Ecclesiastes 4:13: it is better to be poor (and without influence or popularity) than to be powerful and influential. Why? Because power, influence, and prestige are all transitory. The desire for prestige and advancement, two incentives which often motivate a person's labor, is, like envy and greed, futile or meaningless.

As Solomon thought of this young man who achieved much and became famous, he understood that the fame would be short-lived. Even if it lasted his entire lifetime (which would be rare and remarkable), it would not live on much beyond his own life. With his *under the sun* premise, this brought the same conclusion to Solomon: Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

This is the final vain pursuit of chapter 4; that the pursuit of or the posturing for popularity is useless. Primarily because popularity is only popular for a season. As we have seen in numerous cases "under the sun" every shining star dims and is soon replaced with the next rising star. This too is vanity and a vicious cycle.

THE TAKE HOME:

1. **What relationship did you have in the past that you did not value, that you now wish you could take greater advantage of? To receive from or to pour into?**
2. **Name a season in your life where you found the strength of the fellowshiping of the saints to life-changing?**