

ECCLESIASTES SERIES SIX
LIFE IS TOUGH: HUDDLE UP!
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ECCLESIASTES 4:1-12
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The book of Ecclesiastes is the personal diary of a king who had everything—except fulfillment and satisfaction. Ecclesiastes is Solomon’s cumulative record of his search for life’s meaning and significance. While his is a rather depressing search, the lessons he learns and the insights he shares are priceless.

We began studying the book in January. We will now reengage in mining its treasures during the next several Sundays.

Remember:

In Chapter One Solomon protested the meaninglessness of life (Ecclesiastes 1: 1-2). The things of life were just fleeting vapors—morning mists—if you will.

In Chapter Two he explored the pursuit of pleasure—wining and womanizing to his heart’s discontent. He then poured his energies into massive building projects only to discover that he was still not fulfilled (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11).

In Chapter Three he concluded that life was hopelessly unfair as it moved toward death (Ecclesiastes 3:16, 18-20).

Nevertheless, he did conclude to enjoy life as long as we had it. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-14).

Solomon’s use of the term, “Under the Sun,” described what life looked like without God’s perspective. When our relationship with the Lord disintegrates like Solomon’s, when things fall apart on the vertical, decay naturally extends to the horizontal level.

Solomon’s Thesis in Ecclesiastes 4:1-12 might well be stated: “Life is tough. A support system is indispensable.” More succinctly we might say: “Life is tough. Huddle up!”

☉ THE WORLD IS A MISERABLE PLACE FOR MANY PEOPLE (ECCLESIASTES 4:1-3).

In the Bible, “oppression” describes the abuse of power, financial and otherwise, perpetrated on those not so powerful and indeed vulnerable—the poor, widows, and orphans—as well as without regard to the needs and rights of other people.

Solomon understood the emotions which overwhelm the man or woman who has just heard some trite phrase like, "Reorganization has made it necessary for us to terminate your position."

It is lonely at the bottom. It is also lonely at the top. The irony is that Solomon began to see himself more as one of the oppressed than as one of the oppressors.

☉ WE LIVE IN A DOG EAT DOG WORLD (ECCLESIASTES 4:4).

In a desperate attempt to climb the ladder of success many men and women will happily kick and trample on the heads of those beneath them.

Cutthroat competition is simply the way the world is. The implication here is that we should not be surprised by it.

☉ SOLOMON RECOMMENDED A HAPPY BALANCE (ECCLESIASTES 4:5-6).

Some people fall into the trap of striving for success at any price. Others just give up and depend on the system to take care of them as they live off the labors of others. Both perspectives are horribly out of balance.

A single handful with peace beats fighting for two handfuls any day.

Proverb 15:17: "Better is a dish of vegetables where love is, than a fattened ox and hatred with it."

● **THE WORKAHOLIC ("Having No Second Person") IS A TRAGEDY TO HIS MISERABLE SELF AND TO OTHERS (ECCLESIASTES 4:7-8).**

Notice the progression. This passage begins with many people oppressed and many doing the oppressing. In the second scene there are two people—one against the other in competitive rivalry. In this third scene there is only one—"a man all alone." As we climb higher on the ladder of "success" we get increasingly lonely...we have fewer friends...family...relationships... and less accountability.

The reasons for workaholic behavior vary:

1. Escaping from pain
2. Shoring up a poor self image
3. Searching for approval
4. Struggling with knowing how to love
5. Yielding to fear
6. Surrendering to pure unadulterated greed

● **LIFE IS TOUGH. HUDDLE UP (ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12).**

Companions calm the troubled waters of our souls.

Companions build bridges of hope and reassurance when we are vulnerable, exposed, and self-conscious.

Companions take our part when others take us apart.

In community our lives are strong and enduring, like the rope "of three strands". Two friends are great! Three are even greater.

The fool's individualistic life is, by contrast, weak and destined to be "broken".

● **LET ME SHARE A FEW WORDS OF PASTORAL ADVICE.**

Be Proactive In Making Friends.

Resist The Temptation To Turn To Self (Reliance, Centeredness, Condemnation) Instead Of Turning To Others.

Cultivate Good Social Skills.

Keep Your Relationships Current.