

CHASE

"FIT TO BE TIED" ECCLESIASTES 4:7-12

This Week's Core Competency

Biblical Community – I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world. Acts 2:44-47 *All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

The Teacher saw something disturbing "under the sun" in his day. *The Message* describes what he saw in this colorful paraphrase: "I turned my head and saw yet another wisp of smoke on its way to nothingness: a solitary person, completely alone—no children, no family, no friends—yet working obsessively late into the night, compulsively greedy for more and more, never bothering to ask, "Why am I working like a dog, never having any fun? And who cares?" More smoke. A bad business."

This lonely miser willingly sacrificed the priceless benefits of companionship and community on the altar of avarice for nothing. "There was no end to his toil, yet *ironically* his eyes were not content with his wealth" (Ecc 4:8). His high-priced obsession inevitably proved to be "a miserable business" (v. 8). It cost him *help in the time of difficulty* (v. 10), *comfort in the time of need* (v. 11), and *protection in the time of danger* (v. 12) and left him feeling impoverished.

Two are better than one.

— the Teacher

James and Melissa Tepera can testify to the value of friends and community. Their son, battled a rare form of leukemia but not alone. In July of 2012, Hailey Winston, staff reporter @dallasnews.com wrote:

Ethan was found to have chronic myelogenous leukemia, a rare cancer of the white blood cells. An avid sports fan and football player, he learned of his disease just days after playing the "best game of his life," scoring three touchdowns for his Grace Preparatory team, said his mother, Melissa Tepera.

Treatments, including chemotherapy, had the leukemia in remission for a while, but Ethan relapsed in late May. Doctors say a bone marrow transplant offers his best chance for survival.

To locate a suitable donor, Ethan and his family have partnered with DKMS Americas, a nonprofit based in New York that is the world's largest bone marrow donor center.

It's no easy task to match donor and patient, especially for those of Hispanic heritage, like Ethan. Only 10 percent of potential donors in its database are Hispanic, DKMS says. Even Ethan's two younger brothers, who are twins, are not a match.

"Finding a donor for a patient in need is like finding a needle in a haystack," said Amy Roseman of DKMS.

Ethan and his family hope to find that needle Saturday. Grace Preparatory, at 330 W. Interstate 20 in Arlington, is hosting a marrow donor drive from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Over 850 people showed up to the bone marrow drive. One young man named Colt, who was in town for vacation from Boston did not know one soul in town, but heard about Ethan's need on the news and came to see if he was a match.

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"Can I still do this?" he asked, "since I live in Boston?"

Melissa asked Pantego's Spain missions team to come and perform, but it did more than entertain the crowd.

"This team was our Mission Team family from last year's Mission trip when we went to Spain," wrote Melissa in an email. "Ethan really wanted to go back to Spain this year, and he and I were planning to go, then we found out he had relapsed so we brought the team to him today!"

This boost of energy and joy was certainly needed, as the crowd understood the seriousness of their mission.

Ethan got his bone marrow transplant last year and is on the road to recovery, but not alone. He still has his family, friends, and community.

For Discussion

Stories are like mirrors in which we see ourselves and others. Read the Teacher's description of a lonely miser in Ecclesiastes 4:8. Do you know anyone like that?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

7 Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

8 There was a man all alone;

he had neither son nor brother.

There was no end to his toil,

yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.

"For whom am I toiling," he asked,

"and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"

This too is meaningless-
a miserable business!

9 Two are better than one,

because they have a good return for their work:

10 If one falls down,

his friend can help him up.

But pity the man who falls

and has no one to help him up!

11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered,

two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Cf., another translation

4:7 So I again considered another futile thing on earth:

4:8 A man who is all alone with no companion,

he has no children nor siblings;

yet there is no end to all his toil,

and he is never satisfied with riches.

He laments, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?"

This also is futile and a burdensome task!

4:9 Two people are better than one,

because they can reap more benefit from their labor.

4:10 For if they fall, one will help his companion up,

but pity the person who falls down and has no one to help him up.

4:11 Furthermore, if two lie down together, they can keep each other warm,

but how can one person keep warm by himself?

4:12 Although an assailant may overpower one person, two can withstand him.

Moreover, a three-stranded cord is not quickly broken.

(NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Underline "again I saw" in v. 7.

* Circle "meaningless" in vv. 7, 8.

* Underline "under the sun" in v. 8.

* Bracket "neither son nor brother" in v. 8.

* Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 8.

* Circle "eyes" in v. 8.

* Circle "he asked" in v. 8.

* Bracket "a miserable business" in v. 8.

* Highlight v. 9.

* Box "because" indicating *reason* in v.9.

* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 10, 11.

* Highlight v. 12b.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How "alone" was the person the Teacher saw? Elaborate.
2. Was he was he alone by choice or misfortune? What makes you think so?
3. Explain the *irony* of his situation.
4. What is the presumed answer to the *rhetorical* question in verse 9, and why does it matter?
5. Explain the *reason* why "two are better than one" in verse 9.
6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 10.
7. Explain the *contrast* in verse 11.
8. What three words would you use to express the three benefits of companionship illustrated in verses 10-12?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what you infer from verse 12 regarding companionship.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Thus far the Teacher's research into "all that is done under heaven" (1:13) has proven to be "futile," given it has not uncovered the meaning of life. The ultimate meaning of life remains a mystery. His research has proven to be of relative value, however, given it has demonstrated that humanity's reason for being cannot be found solely in any activity "under the sun." All human endeavors are at last meaningless. Wisdom brings sorrow and grief (1:18), and while it's clearly better to be a wise person than a fool, death overtakes them both (2:14), and both are soon forgotten (v. 16). Pleasure accomplishes nothing (v. 2), and achievements are little more than their own reward (vv. 10, 11). To make matters worse, all the material things people work hard for all their lives must be left to others, who unfortunately may be fools (vv. 18, 19). How senseless! There may be a time for everything, but because God's ways are immutable and inscrutable, people can neither fathom nor change what he is doing and so, what's the use? And then there are the "twisted things that cannot be straightened" (1:15)—things like injustice (3:16), oppression (4:1-3), envy (vv. 4-6), avarice (vv. 8-12), and fickle fame (vv. 13-16).

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 can be divided into two parts. In the first (vv. 8, 9) the Teacher censures senseless avarice. In the second (vv. 9-12), he commends companionship and community. In the words of one commentator: "This section opens with an observation about a man who had no close relative but who toiled unceasingly and never asked why he did so and deprived himself of pleasure. Three examples underscore the stupidity of such conduct: a traveler needs a friend in case he falls into a pit or off a cliff; a person needs a companion to stay warm at night; and a victim in a robbery needs assistance from a friend. Qohelet concludes the unit by citing an aphorism about the strength of a threefold cord, which forsakes the thematic words 'one' and 'two' for an even larger number" (James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL, 110).

In verses 7 and 8, the Teacher describes a person who is both a miser and a workaholic, a person who is "all alone" perhaps by choice. He

has no time for friends and relatives because he works 24/7. For him wealth and contentment are inversely proportional. More wealth leads ironically to less contentment, which drives him to work even more. *The Message* describes him as "a solitary person, completely alone—no children, no family, no friends—yet working obsessively late into the night, compulsively greedy for more and more." One commentator observes, "In the end, Solomon stated, such a greedy person would wake up and realize that it was futile or meaningless to toil incessantly to gather wealth which he neither shared nor enjoyed. Such a greedy person's questions, asked rhetorically, show his disparaging of his behavior" (Donald R. Glenn, "Ecclesiastes," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 987). Finally, the lonely miser asks, "Why am I working like a dog, never having any fun? And who cares?" (*The Message*). How pathetic!

In verses 9-12, the Teacher lists three benefits of companionship over going it alone. He begins by quoting a proverb to make his point. "Two are better than one," he says, and then explains, "because they have a good return for their work" (v. 9). Next he illustrates what he means. Some believe "all three illustrations are taken from the risk of travel: pits and ravines along the way (10), cold nights (11) and wayside marauders (12a)" (Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, TOTC, 94). First, companionship offers *help in a time of difficulty*. "If one falls down, his friend can help him up" (v. 10). He uses contrast to emphasize his point. "But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" Second, companionship offers *comfort in a time of need*. "If two lie down together, they will keep warm" (v. 11). Traveling companions can huddle together on a cold night in the desert to keep warm. And again the contrast, "But how can one keep warm alone?" And if having one companion is better than going it alone, how much better to have second! "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Third, companionship offers *safety in a time of danger*. A solitary traveler can be overcome, but safety is found in numbers. The Teacher's first two illustrations speak to the value of having friends; his last one to the value of belonging to community.

The Message of the Passage
*The person who trades the pleasures and benefits of companionship
and community for material wealth makes a fool's bargain.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Fit to Be Tied”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 7 **Again I saw**

"The character described in this particular story embodies traits both of the previous section (4:4-6: meaningless toil) and the following section (4:9-12: loneliness) . . . Then I turned and observed signals a new topic, but also provides continuity with the preceding sections" (Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT, 139).

v. 7 **meaningless**

The exact nuance of the Heb. word (*hebel*) is often difficult to discern. Here it connotes "senseless" behavior. In verse 8 the word is paired with two Heb. words (*'inyan ra'*) variously translated: "sore travail" (KJV, ASV); "sad travail" (YLT); "unhappy business" (RSV, NRSV, NJPS); "sorry business" (NEB, Moffatt); "miserable business" (NIV); "worthless task" (NAB); "grievous task" (NASB); "sorry situation" (MLB); "depressing" (NLT). In verse 7 it connotes something "useless," "vain," or "futile:" "There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth." One commentator refers to "the *stupidity* of such conduct" (Crenshaw, 110 italics added).

v. 7 **under the sun**

The Teacher reflects on one solitary soul that he has seen "down here on earth" (Glenn, 980).

v. 8 **a man all alone**

Lit., "there is one and not a second;" cf., "one person who has no other" (ESV); "There is one alone, without companion" (NKJV); "A man who is all alone with no companion" (NET).

v. 8 **neither son nor brother**

"A picture is presented of a man who has neither friend (AV a second; NIV all alone) nor close relative (son . . . brother) for company" (Eaton, 93). "The Hebrew phrase, who was all alone is a general one indicating that the man had no friend, no business partner, no wife (contra all those commentators who have tried to specify one of these relationships). Furthermore, he had neither son nor brother, the two closest male relations across two generations and also the two relatives who might benefit from his toil through inheritance" (Longman, 140). The NET translates "son" and "brother" figuratively (*synecdoche* of specific for general) thinking "son" is put for offspring and "brother" for siblings and thus translates, "He has no children nor siblings." In any case, money is his only kin.

v. 8 **eyes**

The term "eyes" is used figuratively (*synecdoche* of part for the whole) to refer to the whole person. "The eye, the organ of desire, cannot be satisfied. No motive is given for the person's endless desire, whether greed or the fear of growing old and having no means to subsist" (Crenshaw, 111).

v. 8 **he asked**

"The direct discourse ('For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?') is not introduced with an introductory structure. As in the LXX, some translations suggest that these words are spoken by a lonely workaholic, e.g., "He says . . ." (NAB, NEB, ASV, NIV, NRSV). Others suggest that this is a question that he never asks himself, e.g., "Yet he never asks himself . . ." (KJV, RSV, MLB, YLT, Douay, NASB, Moffatt)" (The NET Bible, 32^{tn} on Ecc 4:8). "Up to this point, Qohelet referred to this lonely miser in the third person. Here he interjects the first person. Either he discloses the autobiographical nature of his remarks or, as most commentators think, he identifies himself so closely with the plight of the main character of the story that he has the individual speak in the first person. In either case, the effect of the question is to throw all of the efforts of this individual into doubt, and thus Qohelet appropriately concludes the verse with a *hebel* saying, compounded in this instance with another, less frequent, refrain that labels the toil of the miser as an evil task" (Longman, 140).

v. 9 **return**

What the Teacher means by "return" is ambiguous. While the term often refers to "wages," it also has a more general sense. One commentator claims, "here it refers to the success that comes through co-operation" (Eaton, 94). Another is a bit more specific claiming, "it refers to the way each person's work complements the other's efforts and therefore enables them to complete more tasks with less effort" (Crenshaw, 111).

v. 11 **lie down**

"The warmth of lying beside each other does not refer to sexual activity, nor are the two necessarily husband and wife. It is an image derived from that of travelers who must lie beside each other to stay warm on a cold desert nights. But the usage is here metaphorical for emotional comfort against the coldness of the world" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 308). "The proverb speaks of companionship in adversity, temptation or grief" (Eaton, 94).

v. 12 **three strands**

"The strength of the three-ply cord was proverbial in the ancient world, as seen in Sumerian and Akkadian texts" (Eaton, 94). "Qohelet is likely alluding to a well-known ancient Near Eastern proverb concerning the benefits of friendship" (Longman, 143).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special note to parents: Our summer series in the book of Ecclesiastes is called Life on Mission. We will be studying the same scripture as adults and will be adding an exciting missionary story each week. We are looking forward to learning about these heroes who did not chase the wind but lived life on mission!

We are a few weeks into summer and if you are like me, you are looking for ways to keep your kids from sitting in front of the TV or computer for hours on end! It might be time to go ahead and plan that summer get together with friends! Our text today is a beautiful passage on the benefits of having godly friends. Just like you, your kids need people in their lives who encourage them to take steps with God. Helping your kids choose friends wisely is an important job for moms and dads. When they see you having healthy, God-honoring friendships, they are more likely to make the same choices. Thankfully, you are still in a season of parenting where you have a lot of say over who your kids spend time with. Plan a fun get together at your house and invite those kids you want yours to know better. You can plan a board game/pizza night, a backyard campout or a themed party. Have fun!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

1. What does Solomon say is meaningless?
2. Why are two better than one?
3. Fill in the blank. "A cord of _____ strands is not quickly broken." (v.12)

What Do You Think

1. What are the benefits of having good friends?
2. How would you describe your friends?
3. Do your friends encourage you to grow in your friendship with God?

What R U Going To Do

Think of a friend you can invite to church this summer. Plan a special day for him or her to come over and play. One way we can love our friends is by bringing them to church!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Biblical Community - I spend time with other Christians to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Colossians 1:18 - "And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-five years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.