

“Wisdom of Friendship” Ecclesiastes 4:1-12

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed— and they have no comforter;

power was on the side of their oppressors— and they have no comforter.

2 And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.

3 But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

4 And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbour. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and ruins himself.

6 Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

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.

1. **COMMUNITY:** Two is better than one. In Genesis 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." We are not made to be alone, but for relationship and community. How have you maintained your friendships and community during this COVID pandemic? Is it easy to slide into not just physical isolation but spiritual and emotional isolation as well?

2. There is a deep sense of sadness in the opening of this chapter as the writer observes how empty and meaningless are our endless striving and toils when they are motivated by self-centredness and envy toward others. What are you toiling for and how can godly friendship bring joy and purpose to your life?

3. **PRODUCTIVITY:** Ecclesiastes 4:9 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.” How does 1 Corinthians 12 uses the illustration the body with different parts to describe the church and its members, how does 1 Corinthians 12 give you a deeper insight on the importance and productivity of working together in church ministries and in other parts of life?

4. **STABILITY:** Ecclesiastes 4:10 “If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” If you have fall, who will pick you up? Who can you count on to be by your side when you fail? How does that transform or strengthen your friendship with that person? Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

5. **INTIMACY:** Verse 11 “Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?” Genuine friendship are intimate and warm. One of the hallmark of authentic disciple of Jesus is the way we love one another. How is God’s love made complete in Christ-centred friendships (1 John 4:12)?

6. **SECURITY:** Verse 12 “And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Who has your back? Who will fight and defend you? Who is the enemy that is described in Ephesians 6:12 and what are some of the ways he attacks us? What do you do to protect your friends from the spiritual attacks in their life?

7. “A cord of three is not easily broken.” How does Christ strengthens and binds your friendships?