

# ECCLESIASTES

## THE QUESTIONS AND THE QUEST ECC 4:1-16 | THE QUESTION OF THEODICY

Previously, in Ecclesiastes 3:16-22, Solomon observed wickedness in the place of justice, and wickedness in the place of righteousness. In short, Solomon observes the perpetual and prevailing injustice in the world – right after he observed that God is in control of the times and seasons of life. Now, Solomon’s inquiry is regarding theodicy, which is the vindication of the providence of God while there is evil in the world.

What are we to think about oppression, injustice, and wickedness in the world? While Solomon doesn’t give exhaustive answers on what to think about it all – he does give us several answers on how to live in the midst of it all.

There are five “better than” sections in Ecclesiastes 4 – and the goal of this passage is introspection so that we would facilitate the flourishing of our neighbors. The five sections inform us that (1) we should not seek to oppress people (4:1-3), that (2) we are to live contentment and not be workaholics (4:6), we are to (3) work for others and not just ourselves (4:7-8); we are (4) to work together as a society (4:9-12); and (5) we should never be beyond counsel and advice – no matter what our status in life (4:13-16).

Let’s take a look and see how we are doing in each of these areas.

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## ECC 4:1-16 | THE QUESTION OF THEODICY

**1. READ ECC 4:1-16.** Any thoughts, questions, or comments about the sermon or text this morning? What stood out the most?

**2. ECC 4:1.** How accurate is this statement considering the current situation of our world? Do you think that the blessings of being largely sheltered from suffering makes it difficult to hear?

**3. ECC 4:4.** If you're being honest – how much motivation in your heart comes from a desire to keep up with others? Are there situations where you have found yourself motivated by envy?

**4. ECC 4:6.** Do you lean toward two handfuls of toil, rather than a handful of peace? In other words – do you tend to work too much, which then has a negative effect on the home?

**5. ECC 4:13.** Do you think there is a tendency in yourself to be beyond advice? Do you have people that speak into your life or advise you on important decisions? Why, or why not?

**6. MOTIVES.** Although Solomon doesn't use the words oppression and injustice in this passage – what are some of the motives we might share with those who do oppress others?

**7. PRAYER.** How can we pray for each other to have godly motivations and ambitions in this life, so that we are not accomplice to injustice?