

## Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

### May 10, 2026. "Fight Club: Fighting aloneism"

#### I Intro.

It's Mother's Day, but we're celebrating all women. We're in a new series. We're glad you've chosen to use this resource. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

#### II Recap.

We're in our series; "**Fight Club**". I didn't share this last week. The birthplace for these specific things to fight came from a curator of great content that I get in an email twice a week. Maria Popova publishes an online curation of content called; "*The Marginalian*". A while back she published "**18 Life Lessons**". So, for the month of May, we're hitting five of these important life lessons. Last week we talked about fighting "*unnecessary urgency*". We live in such a fast paced society that values efficiency, speed that pushes this sense of urgency over quality and even emotional and mental health. We learned we have to trust in the timing and work of God.

Today, it's fighting "*aloneism*". The very real danger of not having, being in community.

#### III Sunday.

One of the things I love most about Janet, (a mom and grandmother JJ) and I find the most challenging is Janet will not let you, or her kids, go through something alone. One of her Love Languages is presence (with a "c"). She wants to be 'with' you. We're leaving this week to go to Asheville to help our youngest with their new baby. Then we're driving straight to Fayetteville to help our oldest son, by watching their kids while his wife has a medical procedure next week. Janet says "yes" without question or hesitation. I have to complain and moan about what a huge adjustment I have to make. Then I eventually come around, knowing what she's doing is the right thing to do. Yes... you will have a guest preacher next Sunday. And you're in for a real treat!!

Even on a day we celebrate moms, we say; "*this isn't just a mom thing*". We have so many women in this church, of all types, (biological moms and women with the gift) who practice the ministry of presence. On this day, we celebrate the ministry of presence and "*fighting aloneism*".

Being isolated, "aloneism" is an important health issue. The former Surgeon General, Vivek Murphy said that one of the greatest dangers to our health, and our society, is the lack of social connection. We're seeing it become an epidemic. Not just knowing people. We all know people. It's having people. Our public health crisis of real physical issues, is made worse by loneliness, isolation, and

just being socially disconnected. So much so that in 2018 The UK created a new cabinet position. The Minister for Loneliness. To address the real health issues (mental, emotional, and physical—being alone is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day!!) of “*aloneism*”.

Netflix did a documentary you may have seen. Called: “*Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones*”. It covered 9 principles of living longer. 2 of those principles were around physical activity. 2 were about diet. 3 if you include a couple glasses of wine per day. 1 was about knowing your purpose.

### **The other 3 principles:**

Belong to a faith community.

Put loved ones first.

Belong to a tribe of people who live like you.

A research group went to five locations around the world, found not being alone is THE most important practice to your mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Not being alone actually requires all three of these different social areas. If you're lacking in one or two of these, you will over depend, put too high of expectations on the one you do have, to meet the needs the other two provide.

“*Aloneism*” is such an important thing to fight. Our culture worships this weird, very unnatural, rugged individualistic independence. “*I don't need anyone!*” is actually a sign of weakness rather than a sign of strength. This very unhealthy belief is just woven through the DNA of our society. If you think you got to where you are and who you are all by yourself, just ask either your biological mom, or the women in your life about when you were a kid. Trying to go it alone, doing it by yourself, is so unnecessary, and unwise. We need to invite and encourage people to need people.

This “fight” is going to be one of the most obvious truths. But sometimes we just need a reminder. ***Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 I observed yet another example of something meaningless under the sun. This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, “Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?” It is all so meaningless and depressing. Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.***

Ecclesiastes is about all the things that are meaningless, just vapor, has no substance. The writer finds that one thing that is super powerful and meaningful. Anything you do, pursue, value, or make important in your life means nothing... unless you have someone to share it with. From the Blue Zone study you need all three of those social elements. If you rely too heavily on one or two, you're going to place all of your expectations on one particular group of people in your life to provide for you what another group should do. So, have some relationships with actual family (whatever that looks like for you). With a community of faith. And then a circle of like-minded people you are doing life with. Some of the relationships will have overlapping similarities. But each one of these provides a unique function in your overall emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Here's where it gets technical. I'm not talking about just knowing people. I'm not talking about having friends. I'm not talking about being 'around' other people.

**How many of you have been in a crowd of people, people all around you, and you feel alone?**

As a minister, I feel this often. Especially at weddings of people I sort of know. There are all sorts of people around me. But I'm basically a one use element. To fight "aloneism" there must be an intentional effort to build and grow these three types of communities around you.

Some truths about fighting aloneism from this passage. Again, these are not surprises and very straight forward. Fighting sliding into "aloneism", need to be reminded of the truths from this passage.

**1. Your work, and the things of your life, will be more meaningful TO YOU, if you have others to share it with.** Achievements and milestones are important. But are substantively more important when you share them with others. I lived by myself for several years, after sharing a room my entire growing up. It was difficult to come home to just me. I had to build a community around me, in a completely new place. Some of you come home to a place where you are all by yourself. That makes building community even more important. Not having people in your life to share things with, virtually makes everything meaningless. You can be wildly successful, and utterly empty if you're alone. EVERYTHING you do will be enhanced when you can share it with others.

**2. There is a momentum/inertia effect of two people working together towards the same goal.**

There is a tired, worn out cliché that sometimes makes my teeth hurt. But it's so true. "Teamwork makes the... dream work." Working together with other people makes tasks easier.

The psychological world calls this Gestalt. The sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This means something new and greater is created that's over and above just the parts that make it up. Think about your phone. You can have all the parts for your phone sitting on a table. But nothing will happen until you put all those parts together. This happens here with our church-wide fellowships. There is this extra magic that happens at our fellowships that's more than just the stuff of the fellowship. Mark your calendar. July 5th. We're celebrating our diversity as a church, and of this country. This truth of people working and serving together towards the same goal, brings a unique importance to each of us. When you're here, there is this over and above thing that happens that only happens when you're here. The opposite is also true. When you're not here, there is more than just the absence of your presence. We feel the presence of your absence. Mind blown huh?

**What in your life are you trying to do alone, exhausting yourself, draining yourself, that would go better if you had others in your life?**

-Build the three communities mentioned in The Blue zone around you.

**3. Warmth requires proximity.** Yes, physical warmth. My wife is worth about a blanket and a half. She brings a lot of warmth. But proximity also brings emotional, and spiritual warmth that requires the risk and vulnerability of closeness. One coal taken out of a fire will grow cold faster than if it is left in the fire with the other coals. Health and wholeness requires proximity, and that builds warmth. When we are in community, open, vulnerable with each other, we create heat.

**4. You are much more likely to battle the things that come your way if you have people in your life.** Going back to the Blue Zone list of 3 social groups. Most of the requests, not all, we get for help, are from people who don't have anyone else in their life. Broken or strained relationships with family. They never joined a group of like-minded people. A tribe. And they never sought out a faith community to just do life with. Because they didn't need it at the time, when they found themselves in a difficult situation. They have no place or no one to turn to. This sounds harsh. No judgment or condemnation. We haven't lived their life or gone through what they've gone through. But it's a real

truth we run into over and over. Now we always help them as much as we are able to. Sometimes directly, and sometimes walking with them to find other places to help them. But community wasn't important for them...until it was.

Truth is: we are all more vulnerable when we're alone. The person who "*falls alone*" did not just say physically. Think about it. How do apex predators catch their prey? They find one and isolate them. How do herd animals protect themselves? They circle up. The central truth of this passage is NOT about having people in your life. The central truth is about "*fighting aloneism*".

**Who are your go to's? How will you be there for each other?**

#### **IV Challenge.**

I'm going to push this continually. We're so glad you join us on Sundays. Virtually also. But belonging to a group of people to do the more difficult and challenging things of life with. I talk about Man Cave and After Party all the time. Even though I lead them, the people in those groups have created a safe place to be brave that allows me to say things I could never say in public. I feel safe to share personal things, struggles, and issues I only can with a friend or two. They listen, care, and encourage. And when I need it they speak some truth. Once I was sharing a struggle in After Party several months ago, and a couple of people helped guide me on how I should handle it. I needed to hear it. And I appreciated their honesty and courage to say some hard things to me.

What's more amazing about this teaching in Ecclesiastes is what follows what we read.

**Ecclesiastes 4:13. *It is better to be a poor but wise youth than an old and foolish king who refuses all advice.***

**Closing questions.** We want you to flourish. So...

**Who do you have in your life that you can depend on?**

**Who do you have in your life that can depend on you?**

You need both.

**Where are you the most alone, isolated?**

**Where can you take that one first step away from aloneism towards community?**

We have several groups you can join. Two women's Bible studies. Man Cave. After Party. Volunteer service groups that serve as a type of community group. Promiseland. Student Ministry. Coffee Spot. Greeters. Social Media. Worship (praise team, tech team, decoration team, and we would love a communion team) If you're interested, fill out a Connection Card online or at the kiosk in the lobby. And if we don't have one that works for you, come to us, contact us, and we'll work on putting one together. In August we're going to do a two session gifts class to help you find you PLACE.

So— build your threefold cord.

**Belong to a faith community.**

**Put loved ones first.**

**Belong to a tribe of people who live like you.**

"*Aloneism*" is a dangerous and unhealthy place to slide into. The enemy isn't community. Our fight is against individualism, "*aloneism*". We want to be a community of faith, family, and like-minded tribe for you. Those of you who join us virtually also. You are family!