

# can i change - part 4 - we are better together

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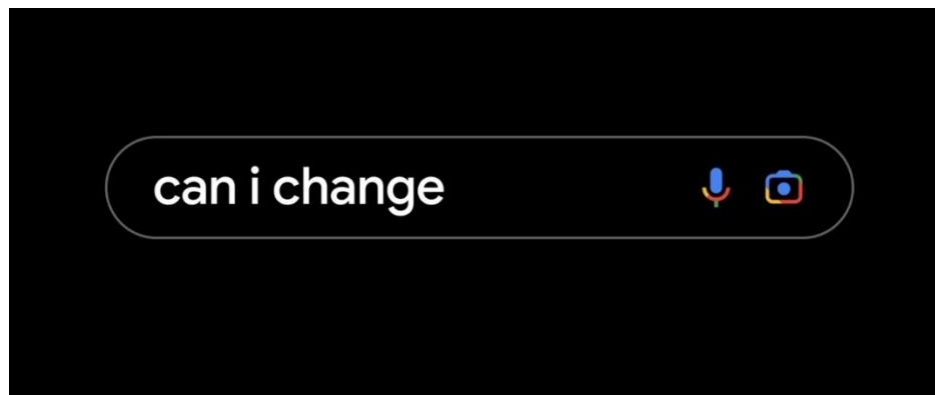
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## BIG IDEA - Doing life-change together

**scripture focus - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NLT** “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.”

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Why attempt to do change alone? What is up with our fierce **independence** instead of cooperative **interdependence**. **Like fire and ice, coals burn hotter together and cubes are much cozier cold with each other. Take a coal from the fire and it grows cold. Take a cube from the ice chest and it melts away quickly.**

We are meant to do life together! And we are **meant to change and help each other change together.**

Whether it's your own child that frustrates the poop out of you or the friend that camps on your last nerve. You do realize they bug you because they reflect a part of **you** that you don't like? We can handle what life throws at us together,

**Do we need proof from God that we are NOT supposed to be doing life alone, or trying to change all by ourselves?**

Ok, here's your sign!

**Doing life-change, changing and being changed with one another is the most delightful way to do it!**

## **1. Wisdom says, it's just SMART!**

Ecclesiastes - if one falls and cord of three

- **The Advantages of Companionship** - Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 NLT "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.**

Solution:

- **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."**

**Cultural and conventional wisdom might say "three's a crowd," but Solomon says, if you're hanging off a cliff to save your life, a three stranded rope is better! Don't hang your life in hopes that an Apple iPhone is going to auto-call a rescue team via satellite 😊**

**The Talmud says, "A man without a companion is like a left hand without the right.**

**Plus, friends SHAPE who you become!**

- **Proverbs 27:17 NLT** "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend."
- **Proverbs 13:20 NLT** "Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble."
- **1 Corinthians 15:33 NLT** "Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character."

## **2. Jesus joins us when we are together! MULTIPLYING your chances to change.**

Matthew records Jesus words in Matthew 18:18-20 - "I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you

permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. **For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.**"

**Effectively saying, look when you gather, I'm right there with the group of you.**

Jesus physically did this with two of his friends **after** his resurrection from the dead.

Two of his followers, one of which was likely Luke himself and possibly Mark, we're **defeatedly walking back home after the devastating weekend** of Jesus' death by crucifixion. On the road to Emmaus, Luke (24:13-23) writes, "That same day **two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus**, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. **As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them.**"

**As if to say, "I told you I would join with you whenever you get together!"**

Hebrews (10:24-25 NLT) famously writes, "**Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.** And **let us not neglect our meeting together**, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

**But where and how we gather is not the point - it's that we do it.**

We **meet in our homes with Life Groups or game nights**, we **gather over meals at Mi Casa**, we text or Zoom with each other and **get together in our shared space, here on Candlewood** to worship, pray, learn and **celebrate in a larger context.**

Whether it's donuts in the fellowship hall on Sunday morning, potluck meals once a month, board meetings or coffee on the patio **we are here for each other and Jesus joins us.**

Pastor, Teacher, Vanguard Prof, Bill Dogterom said in an email to his friend group, "**We are not built for comparative competition but for cooperative collaboration** - each being and doing our own life will, interconnected with those around us and with the larger creation."

**3. Jesus said he wants us to be ONE! Together!**

Jesus' prayer that we're one, and not a bunch of disconnected followers.

### John 17:20-23 NLT

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. **I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you.**

### 4. **The Apostle Paul said we're a body not a weird limb or lung flopping around!**

### 1 Corinthians 12:12 NLT

"The human body has many parts, but the **many parts make up one whole body**. So it is with the body of Christ."

**How are we supposed to love you if you're not around enough to be loved? I'm not talking about church attendance; I'm talking about doing life together!**

5. **Jesus sent out his disciples in twos...** for companionship, camaraderie, and corroboration.

### Mark 6:6b-9 NLT

"Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. And he called his twelve disciples together and **began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits**. He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler's bag, no money. He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes."

**When you do life together, you have built in encouragement, natural correction, challenging one another** to good and witnesses to what God has done and is doing in your life.

Change is much easier and far more fun when we are doing life together. Robin and I witnessed a close friend being supernaturally filled with the Spirit. Years later, when they try to tell us that the moment wasn't real or that it never happened – we are there to say, **"I witnessed it! I saw you change!"**

**Or when we remember a time when God spoke or used someone in amazing ways to help another person. It's that moment when you say to someone, "remember that? I was there and saw what God did, you can't deny that!"**

Listening to God's voice through His Word and the Holy Spirit as well as being obedient **means that God does all the work within us to CHANGE US.**

I am determined to do things alone if I must, but I find a thousand-fold joy in working or serving together.

## The VA Psych Ward Visit

Years ago, I decided to take two friends to do a hospital call on a friend locked up in a Veteran's psychiatric facility.

I was in my "going the extra mile" mode when one of our Singles had to self-check into the Veterans Psych ward.

**I was determined to go alone but apparently having two friends with me either made me dumb or brave - probably a little of both.**

We arrived at our destination where I looked for the main building where I could just get information on our friend. And I was told it was Building 401 or something like that. NONE of the buildings had familiar names or even markings on them. All of them were the same color with just these huge numbers on the top of each one. We walked to where we believed was the visitor's entrance of the building, but the door was solid, no windows and locked.

We walked completely around the building and found there was no entrance, no doorbells, no way in. We went back to a non-descript door on the back of the building.

We had driven a long way and I wasn't going to let a locked door stop me. So, I used some old skills I told you about a couple weeks ago to just let ourselves in. My two friends were a little reluctant, but I told them that I had Pastor/Patient rights to be there, so they joined me.

We all walked into a long, well-lit hallway. As we took a few steps, one of the guys noticed that the door shut behind us, which made sense. Then he told us, **we can't get out this door - it's locked and there's no push bar or lever to let us exit. We were locked inside the VA psych ward.** Of course, we can't get out I said, "they can't have patients escaping!" They bought the story and we kept moving down the hall.

None of the many doors had windows and everyone of them was locked shut. We walked all the way to the end of the hallway thinking we would see a reception or an attendant's desk. But there was nothing but more doors with no windows.

**Things began to make more sense at this point. There was no visitor's nor reception's desk because this place didn't allow for any visitation, especially without an appointment and an escort.**

A few doorways back there was a gal working in her office and happened to have the door partially open. We made our way to that door, and I announced that I was there to visit a patient. This startled and scared the lady half to death -

she stammered out, "You gentlemen are NOT supposed to be in here!" Then followed up with "how did you get in here?"

Both guys instantly turned pale, and I thought they were going to be sick. In my best **Pastoral, authoritative voice** I told the lady that I was a minister and was told that I could visit my congregant here in this building. Before we knew it, two big guys in white coats appeared in the hallway and were heading towards us.

The woman got on the phone while the security/orderlies started escorting us out of the building. But just before we got to some big doors in middle of this long hallway. The woman approached us and said, "I spoke with my supervisor and if you'll wait right here, she will allow you to visit with your congregant." Which we did. We were able to encourage him and pray for him right there in the patient's private lounge area.

**When I'm with friends I am much braver and more confident than when I am alone.**

**And, as it turns out I am willing to more obedient and take risks because of a blend of accountability and courage!**

**We can do life-change better together!**

**As your Pastor, I can lead you to friends, but I can't make you friendly! You must do that.**

**You must be bold enough to make that first step to change and be changed with the help of others.**

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## NOTES

### Scriptures

#### **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NLT**

“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.”

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#### **1 Corinthians 15:33 NLT**

“Don’t be fooled by those who say such things, for “bad company corrupts good character.”

#### **Matthew 18:18-20 NLT**

“I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”

#### **Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT**

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

#### **John 17:20-23 NLT**

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.”

### 1 Corinthians 12:12 NLT

“The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.”

### Mark 6:6b-9 NLT

“Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits. He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler’s bag, no money. He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes.”

### Luke 10:1-2 NLT

“The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. These were his instructions to them: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

## Questions

**Q:** Have you tried to change on your own - SOLO? How's it going?

**Q:** Of course, Jesus is with you when you're alone. But how's it different being together?

**Q:** Why is it so difficult for us to cooperate in Jesus' prayer for us to be ONE?

**Q:** How are we supposed to love each other if people are not around?

**Q:** What's it like to have a friend that's got your back?

**Q:** Has a friend or friends helped you be BRAVE? Share that story.

## COMMENTARY REFERENCES

### Benson Bible Commentary

[Ecclesiastes 4:9](#). *Two* — Or more, who live together in any kind of society, and join their powers together in pursuit of any important object; **are better than one — Act more cheerfully, and accomplish their designs more readily, than any of them could do in a solitary state; because they have a good reward for their labour** — Have great benefit by such combinations and conjunctions of their counsels and abilities, whereby **they exceedingly support, encourage, and strengthen each other, and effect many things which none of them could have effected alone**. Gregory Thaumaturgus, says Bishop Patrick, understands Solomon as speaking here of **κοινωνία βίου, living in communion, or fellowship together**, which he shows to be profitable, both to procure us greater happiness,



which is the subject of the ninth verse, and to preserve us in the enjoyment of it when we have attained it, which is the subject of the three following verses.

### Jamieson-Faucet Brown Bible Commentary

Vs 9. Two—opposed to "one" (Ec 4:8). Ties of union, marriage, friendship, religious communion, are better than the selfish solitariness of the miser (Ge 2:18).

reward—Advantage accrues from their efforts being conjoined. **The Talmud says, "A man without a companion is like a left hand without the right."**

### The Lexham Bible Dictionary

#### **Self-Sufficiency - Oddly, Ecclesiastes also points to the pitfalls of selflessness**

The striking frequency of first-person pronouns and terms in Ecclesiastes reveals a theme of self-sufficiency and suggests a level of vain conceit and selfish ambition. Qoheleth mentions those who have "dreams" and "many words" (5:3, 7 NKJV) and repeatedly announce their selfish aspirations to God (5:1–3) without considering God's purposes. This is recalled by the recurrence of the terms "many" and "multiple" in 6:11 and 10:14. But the selfish ambition rooted in such vain conceit opposes God (6:10–11 NIV) and leads to widespread oppression (4:1–3; 5:8–9; 7:7) and alienation (4:7–12; 5:4–6 NIV). It is depicted by the figure of grasping hands that only end up empty (4:4–6; 5:6, 13–15). Of special importance to Qoheleth is the failure of self-sufficiency, which is often seen in human wisdom or knowledge (6:8, 12; 8:16–17).

### Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow,.... That is, if anyone of them fall, the other will lift him up, as they are travelling together, in whatsoever manner; if one falls from his horse, or out of his carriage, or into a ditch, the other will endeavour to raise him up again: this, as it is true in a natural, so in a figurative and metaphorical sense, with religious persons especially; **"if one of them falls upon the bed, and lies sick,"**

As the Targum paraphrases it, his friend and brother in a religious community will visit him, and sympathize with him, and speak a word of comfort to him, and pray with him, which may issue in his restoration. So the Targum,

**"the other will cause his friend to rise by his prayer;" or if he fall into outward distress, poverty, and want, his spiritual friend or friends will distribute to his necessity; if he falls into errors, as a good man may, such as are of the same religious society with him will take some pains to convince him of the error of his way, and to convert him from it, and to save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins;** and if he falls into sin, to which the best of men are liable, such as are spiritual will endeavour to restore him in a spirit of meekness; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth! for he hath not another to help him up; no companion to raise him up when fallen; no Christian friend to visit and comfort

him when sick, to relieve him under his necessities, when poor and afflicted, or to recover him from errors in judgment, or immoralities in practice; and especially if he has not Christ with him to raise him up, keep, and uphold him.

### Word Studies in the New Testament

Mark 6:7. By two and two. To **help and encourage each other**, and also for **fulness of testimony**.

### The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible

Mark 6:6b–13 (ECB): Cf. Matt. 9:35–10:1, 9–14; Luke 9:1–6.

**Jesus sends the disciples in pairs so their testimony to the gospel will hold up as valid according to Mosaic law (cf. Deut. 19:15).** “You must not convict anyone of a crime on the testimony of only one witness. The **facts of the case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.**”

## INTERNET LINKS

Companionship - <https://www.openbible.info/topics/companionship>