



SONGS: “Freedom”, “Goodness of God”, “Rest On Us”

TITLE: Living Life Backwards – A Free Life

ICE BREAKER: Describe a time when you felt the most freedom?

BIG IDEA: *The Free Life is finding Freedom in Christ, and setting others Free*

MAIN SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

### **Oppression, Toil, Friendlessness**

4 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> But better than both  
is the one who has never been born,  
who has not seen the evil  
that is done under the sun.

<sup>4</sup> And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

<sup>5</sup> Fools fold their hands  
and ruin themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Better one handful with tranquility  
than two handfuls with toil  
and chasing after the wind.

<sup>7</sup> Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

<sup>8</sup> 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!  
<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their labor:  
<sup>10</sup> If either of them falls down,  
one can help the other up.  
But pity anyone who falls  
and has no one to help them up.  
<sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.  
But how can one keep warm alone?  
<sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered,  
two can defend themselves.  
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

### **Advancement Is Meaningless**

<sup>13</sup> Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to heed a warning. <sup>14</sup> The youth may have come from prison to the kingship, or he may have been born in poverty within his kingdom. <sup>15</sup> I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king's successor. <sup>16</sup> There was no end to all the people who were before them. But those who came later were not pleased with the successor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

#### OPENING THOUGHTS:

The tragedies of life can feel like they drive us to hopelessness and despair. We have to understand that Oppression doesn't go unnoticed by God and apart from him there is no real freedom from Bondage.

#### MAIN POINTS:

1. Without Christ there's not reason to fight for freedom v. 1-3
2. Envy and Resentment trip us up v. 4-6
3. We're Better Together v. 7-12
4. Don't live under the Tyranny of Acceptance v. 13-16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (questions taken from the book “Living Life Backwards”)

1. Do you think it's true that we spend most of our time thinking about ourselves?
2. How does Ecclesiastes help us to guard against being "trite and simplistic" as we try to help those immersed in a world of pain (see p.69)?
3. What are things that, in your worsts moments, you envy in others?
4. Work out how much time you spent working last week and how much time you spent relaxing with others. Could you spend more or less time on each of those?
5. Who are the "we's " whom you could start to think about more? Take time to list the practical differences this might make to those relationships?
6. What practical steps can you take to help prevent laziness or being overly busy? What might it look like for you to take the middle road?

#### FURTHER STUDY (IF APPLICABLE)

CHALLENGE: Will we live as freed people, who free people?

#### CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, we choose the FREE LIFE! Where we've lost hope, help us to hope again in You and the truth of the GOSPEL. May we cast off the chains of Comparison and Envy, and pick up the baton of complimenting our brothers and sisters. We are one body united under Your headship. Help us to find where we belong, what systems we can support and build up so that Your body would be stronger, faster, and go further. Set us free from our deep desire to be accepted. Remind us that You love us not for the way we perform but who we are in You. Be our strength as we experience rejection in this life for walking in Your truth.