

MEANINGFULL, PART VI

ECCLESIASTES 4:1-12



INTRODUCTION

- What moments do you recall from your own life in which you were very grateful to have a friend with you?

SERMON REVIEW

- When it comes to living a life full of meaning, relationship matters! That's why being "relationally-connected" is one of our core values.
- Here we find Solomon as an old man, alone in his vast palace, with no one to call friend (Ecclesiastes 4:1-8). This brings him to the conclusion we read in verses 9-12.
- Friendship brings *good return* (difficult tasks become doable, even enjoyable), *help* (someone to come alongside of us in our weakness), *warmth* (when winter comes, intimate friendships keep us warm), and *defense* (there is safety in numbers).
- Why do so few of us have relationships like this?
- Here are five "relationship killers," which are fatal to friendship:
- *Manipulation (v.1)* - If we look at a person as a resource to help us achieve our ambitions or desires, rather than a beautiful reflection of their Creator, we destroy intimacy and damage our soul.
- *Jealousy (v.4)* - Have you ever found yourself celebrating someone else's failure? Or irritated by their successes? This derails relationships. Scripture teaches us to rejoice with the rejoicing and mourn with mourners (Romans 12:15).
- *Laziness (v.5)* - Relationships take work. Refuse to live with your arms crossed! Look to Jesus for help, then roll up your sleeves and get to work.
- *Dissatisfaction (v.6)* - People who are immensely dissatisfied suck the life out of others; they tend to place a lot of blame on others for their own dissatisfaction.
- *Work (v.7)* - The happiest people aren't those who spend money on things, but those who invest their time, energy, and money in their relationships. Within ICB we can pursue this by participating in Basic and Serve Step, in order to get connected to Community Groups and Volunteer Teams – where genuine, life-giving friendships are formed.
- Solomon wasn't necessarily wrong when he said that the oppressed have no comforter (Ecclesiastes 4:1-2). His statement ultimately declared our need for a personal relationship with the coming Savior.
- Jesus is so clearly that Comforter we all long for (Luke 4:18, John 14:16).
- Maybe you have been used and abused, and you need comfort or healing. Jesus can do that! And he can help you do the same for others.

DISCUSSION

- How does Scripture show us that *relationship* is a fundamental need of humanity? (Hint: you can start by looking at the creation narrative, especially Genesis 2:18)
- Do you relate to one particular “relationship killer” more than the others? Why?
- What might cause us to manipulate somebody (that is, use them to achieve our own goals or desires, rather than appreciate them for who they are)?
- What recommendations would you give – perhaps from your own experience – to someone who wants to move beyond jealousy, into friendship?
- Why is contentment more beneficial (than discontentment) to our relationships?
- What can we learn from the way Jesus navigated relationships throughout his life?
- Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. How can your relationship with Jesus (“the God of all comfort”) be the source or motor for your relationships with everyone else?
- What are some practical steps we can take in our own lives to continue building Christ-centred, outward-focused relationships?

CHALLENGE

- Take time to notice the ways in which relationships enrich your life, and give thanks to God.
- Go out of your way to connect with someone in a meaningful way this week!

CLOSING PRAYER