



## ***Ecclesiastes Study - Chapter 4:***

- 1) I returned from my inspections troubled by all the abuse I witnessed: Those that labor hard under the sun were extorted and beaten down. I couldn't forget the tears of the oppressed who knew they had no one to advocate for them. The powerful kept aggressively persecuting: The poor twisted in knots by their abusers.
- 2) I praised the dead for escaping what the living must continually endure.
- 3) Even better off is the one never born: They escape having to see any of the evil done under the sun.
- 4) Again – What is the worth of work? Is it nothing but toil and sweat, no pleasure? Does success breed nothing but jealousy in others? It seems futile to succeed and vain to want success. It hit me like a blast of hot desert wind.
- 5) Yet the idiot sits around with his hands folded, unwilling to work, while he wastes away.
- 6) I suppose resting the hands is still preferable to white-knuckled greedy grasping which is the definition of vain futility.
- 7) I went out to see if what I saw was still true – sure enough! The world is full of futile and desperate striving. Each and every day.
- 8) What of the lonely – the man with no son or brother to work for or with? Even he spends his whole life striving and struggling. Eyes always straining to see when success will arrive. If it ever does, who's it for? I looked at my own work – Who am I working for? I'm no better off than anyone else. It's flat-out depressing.
- 9) I can see good if two work together. They get more done and have each other to lean on.
- 10) If they fall down on the job they can kick each other back into gear. Pity the laborer with no partner. No companionship; no encouragement.
- 11) Moreover – when the job's done and both are worn out, they can keep the chill away. Warm the body and warm the soul. How is one supposed to keep warm and encouraged by himself?
- 12) One can be ambushed. Two can head off an attack. A three-strand braid can hold up to great strain.
- 13) A well-prepared youngster is wiser than a stupid and arrogant king.
- 14) The scrappy slave knows how to fight his way right to the top. He might even overthrow the one feeling entitled and born to privilege. That king will be left destitute.
- 15) I looked out again over all those going about their work like always, imagining what will become of this young usurper once he succeeds at seizing the throne.
- 16) There is no end to the people and their kings. They keep toiling and striving: Most just to survive, some to conquer and rule. Different ambitions; same futility and frustration.

## ***Explain the Context***

From your own reading provide a short answer to the following:

<b>What</b> is the theme of this chapter?	<b>What</b> is the author communicating?
<b>What</b> did the author miss?	<b>What</b> is God trying to say?

Take a moment to consider these questions:

- 1) How do I respond to the tears of the oppressed?
- 2) In verse 2, the king makes a point that if we are alive, we must “go on living”. What does it mean to “go on living”? In our world’s current climate, how does a follower of Jesus do this? (are the dead or unborn really better off?)
- 3) Why is the king so morbid about the pain of the oppressed and yet does nothing to stop it.
- 4) Has envy or jealousy ever been your motivation for achievement?
- 5) How do we view our relationships in light of life’s challenges/adversity?
- 6) How do we view challenges in light of our relationships?
- 7) What do you think is God’s heart concerning our work? Our relationships?
- 8) What does God’s partnership in my labor look like?
- 9) Does God want me to prosper?

## Apply the Scripture

Write the verse that stood out to you while reading [in this translation or your favorite].

---

---

---

---

How does this verse challenge you? Does it reveal an attribute of God's character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### For further study:

Based on the scriptures below, what is God's perspective on work? Add any other scriptures to the list that you find helpful.

- Ephesians 2:10
- Psalm 90:17
- John 9:4
- Colossians 3:22

### Lessons the *author* should have learned:

- When it is in my power to alleviate suffering – I should!
- I am not alone in my labor.