



## SUNDAY - April 26, 2026

### The Grind: Ecclesiastes 4:1-16 - Better Off

#### SERMON SUMMARY:

Ecclesiastes 4 sketches a sobering picture of life under the sun, touching on oppression, envy, work, and isolation. Solomon observes that injustice can become so severe that it makes existence itself feel unbearable, a reality still echoed in modern forms of exploitation and suffering. The response begins in the heart by confronting bitterness, then moves outward through action and advocacy against wrong. He also exposes three distorted approaches to work: envy-driven striving that robs joy, laziness that erodes life, and relentless ambition that gains success at the cost of relationships. Each path, in its own way, leads to emptiness.

In contrast, Solomon highlights the strength found in companionship, where people support, protect, and sustain one another through life's hardships. True presence—simply showing up and carrying burdens together—becomes a powerful antidote to isolation. He also elevates wisdom above status or age, noting that experience alone does not guarantee insight. Wisdom grows through learning, receiving counsel, and humbly seeking God's guidance. Regularly asking for wisdom reshapes daily decisions, keeping a person grounded, relationally connected, and aligned with what truly matters.

#### SCRIPTURE:

Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

#### GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to the passage, what are the three wrong motivations for work that Solomon identifies?
2. What four concrete benefits does Solomon list for having a companion (a "buddy")?
3. What is the distinction made between knowledge, instruction, and wisdom?
4. What is the story of the rags-to-riches king in verses 13-15, and what was his fatal mistake?
5. Solomon claims that it is better to be a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king. Why does age or success not automatically guarantee wisdom?
6. The workaholic is described as lonely, with no one to share his success with. Why does a life dedicated solely to achievement and accumulation often lead to isolation and the loss of meaningful relationships?
7. The "ministry of presence" is described as bringing warmth during life's cold, bitter storms. Why is simply showing up and sitting with someone in their pain often more powerful than having all the right answers?
8. If envy is driven by comparing our lives to others, how does the deliberate act of rejoicing with others serve as an antidote that reshapes our perspective?
9. How does the belief that "God will judge the righteous and the wicked" provide a foundation for forgiving someone who has caused deep emotional pain, rather than seeking personal vengeance?