

## Ecclesiastes 4:4-12

### “The More the Merrier”

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## Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 (NASB)

4. I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.
5. The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.
6. One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

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## Ecclesiastes 4:7-8

7. Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.
8. There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.

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### Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

- 9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.
- 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.
- 11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?
- 12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

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### Ecclesiastes 4:4-12

- Consumed by Labor
- Consumed by Laziness
- Content Laborer
- The Consequence of Loneliness
- Companionship in Love

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### Overview of Ecclesiastes

- The Problem of Ecclesiastes
- The Pain of Ecclesiastes
- The Pleasure of Ecclesiastes
- The Purpose of Ecclesiastes

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## The Problem of Ecclesiastes

- Ecclesiastes 1:2 NASB "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."
- Ecclesiastes 1:2 NET "Futile! Futile!" laments the Teacher, "Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!"
- Life is Hebel (used twice in superlative vanity of vanities-like holy of holies).

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## The Problem of Ecclesiastes

Koheleth's use of the term 'vanity' describes something vastly greater than that. All life is vanity in this sense, that it is unable to give us the key to itself. The book is a record of a search for the key to life. It is an endeavor to give meaning to life, to see it as a whole and there is no key under the sun. Life has lost the key to itself. 'Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.' If you want the key you must go to the locksmith who made the lock. 'God holds the key to all the unknown.' *And He will not give it to you.* Since, then, you cannot get the key, you must trust the locksmith to open the doors." (J. Stafford Wright, "The Interpretation of Ecclesiastes" in *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, Baker, 1972, p.140)

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## The Problem of Ecclesiastes

Baylis writes, "Ever since the curse of Adam, there is nothing which is observably profitable in this life. For when Adam sinned, God made a very depressing statement to him, "In that day you eat from it shall surely die." Adam had a perfect relationship with his world until he sinned, and then God told him that, not only would he die but his life would be full of frustrations." That qualifies for the most depressing point in man's earthly existence. While modern man worries about losing his job, Adam kept his job but lost all profit. Qoheleth simply observed that what God had said to Adam had come to pass."

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## The Pain of Ecclesiastes

Before the Fall	After the Fall
Everything was Good	All is tainted
Work was fruitful	Work is toilsome/painful
Marriage was perfect	Marriage is difficult
Perfect Relationship with God	Disconnected from God
Good was evident	Evil Seems to Triumph
Life was eternal	Death was imminent

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## Abel = Hebel

- When Abel was born, Eve gave him the name Abel which is Hebel in the Hebrew (the same word that is translated vanity in Ecclesiastes). The word means breath or vapor which gives the sense of fleeting life
- Why did Eve name him this? Baylis writes, "It is obvious, since the curse occurs only a few verses earlier that Eve recognized that life now was not going to be something you could count on, as previously. It could be here and it was gone." So Eve named her child vapor.

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## Pleasures of Ecclesiastes

- There is still hope in the sin-cursed world
  - We still have Work (labor)
  - We still have a Wife (helpmate)
  - We still have Worship (i.e., the opportunity to share intimate fellowship with the Sovereign Creator)
- These things give man purpose and he should spend his brief time enjoying these things.

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## The Purpose of Ecclesiastes

Solomon writes to remind his audience to remember, fear and obey their Creator despite the frustration of life that results from the toil that was a consequence of the fall and the brevity of life by enjoying the blessings of work and a helpmate under the fear of the Lord.

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## Ecclesiastes 4:4-12

- Consumed by Labor
- Consumed by Laziness
- Content with Life
- The Consequence of Loneliness
- Companionship in Love

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## Consumed by Labor

- "I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is *the result of rivalry* between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind" (Ecc 4:4 NASB).
- Too much work is motivated by being better than the Joneses or envying what others have.

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## Death From Overwork

Karoshi is a Japanese word which means "death from overwork." The syndrome is now so common in Japan that it claims as many as 30,000 victims each year. Its increase has caused such concern that since 1990, the Japanese government has been forced to provide restitution to karoshi widows.

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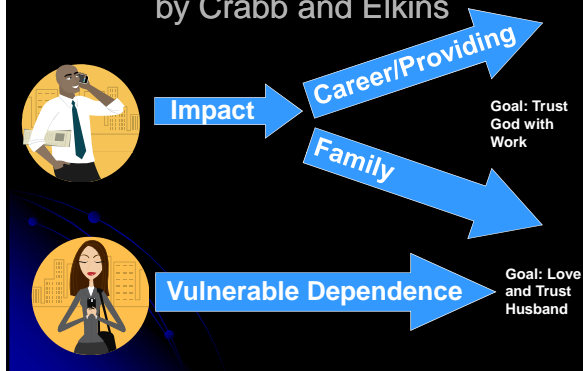
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## Challenges After the Fall by Crabb and Elkins



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## Consumed by Laziness

- "The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh" (Ecc 4:5 NASB).
- At the other extreme some reject the rat race by being lazy and doing nothing. This ultimately leads to their destruction

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## Content Laborer

- “One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind” (Ecc 4:6 NASB).
- One should work and rest. Both are necessary in this life.

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## The Consequence of Loneliness

- Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.  
8 There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches *and he never asked*, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity and it is a grievous task” (Ecc 4:7-8 NASB).

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## The Consequence of Loneliness



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## Companionship in Love

- “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm *alone*? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly torn apart” (Ecc 4:9-12 NASB).

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## Weirsbe Notes

- Two are better than one when it comes to:
  - ❖ Working
  - ❖ Walking
  - ❖ Warmth
  - ❖ Watchcare
- Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 19.

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## Summary of Lesson

- Consumed by Labor
- Consumed by Laziness
- Content Laborer
- The Consequence of Loneliness
- Companionship in Love

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## Closing Illustration



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## Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



My child arrived just the  
other day  
He came to the world in the  
usual way  
But there were planes to  
catch and bills to pay  
He learned to walk while I  
was away  
And he was talkin' fore I  
knew it, and as he grew  
He'd say "I'm gonna be like  
you dad  
You know I'm gonna be like  
you"

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## Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



And the cat's in the  
cradle and the silver  
spoon  
Little boy blue and the  
man on the moon  
When you comin' home  
dad?  
I don't know when, but  
we'll get together then  
son  
You know we'll have a  
good time then

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## Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



My son turned ten just the other day  
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on let's play  
Can you teach me to throw", I said "Not today  
I got a lot to do", he said, "That's ok"  
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed  
And said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah  
You know I'm gonna be like him"

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## Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon  
Little boy blue and the man on the moon  
When you comin' home son?  
I don't know when, but we'll get together then son  
You know we'll have a good time then

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## Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



Well, he came home from college just the other day  
So much like a man I just had to say  
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"  
He shook his head and said with a smile  
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys  
See you later, can I have them please?"

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### Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



And the cat's in the cradle  
and the silver spoon  
Little boy blue and the man  
on the moon  
When you comin' home  
son?  
I don't know when, but we'll  
get together then son  
You know we'll have a good  
time then

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### Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



I've long since retired, my  
son's moved away  
I called him up just the other  
day  
I said, "I'd like to see you if  
you don't mind"  
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I  
can find the time  
You see my new job's a  
hassle and kids have the  
flu  
But it's sure nice talking to  
you, Dad  
It's been sure nice talking to  
you"

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### Cats in the Cradle by Harry Chapin



And as I hung up the phone  
it occurred to me  
He'd grown up just like me  
My boy was just like me  
And the cat's in the cradle  
and the silver spoon  
Little boy blue and the man  
on the moon  
When you comin' home son?  
I don't know when, but we'll  
get together then son  
You know we'll have a good  
time then

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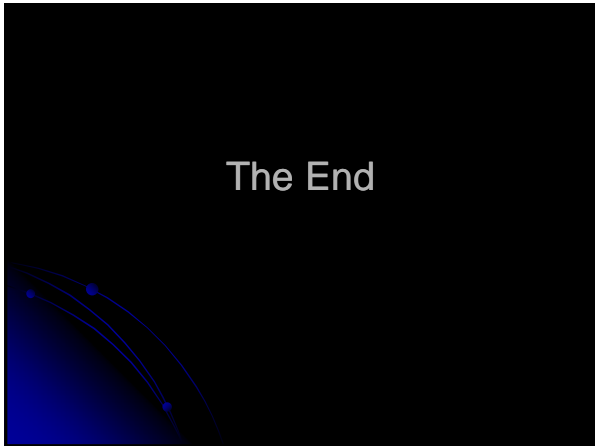
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The End

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