

## Ecclesiastes 4 Are You Lonely? True North, Part 4

**I am a people watcher. I enjoy watching people.**

A) Disneyland toward the end of the day – main street – Who had a good time – who didn't

B) Mall – waiting for my wife or one of my daughters – plop myself down – watch.

1) Couples holding hands – enjoying each other  
Old Man VS – Smile

C) But then there is the guy – see him a lot – He is miserable – another store – please no!

D) Then there **is the guy who just looks lost** – Mall is new territory – no clue – alone

1) Must be an anniversary or B Day – He has no idea what to get her.

**Even at Church – interesting – Often tell – Stressed mourning – Heavy hearts –**

A) Some of us are not good at all at hiding – what we are feeling – written all over our faces – Hurt/ Mad / worried.

B) In reality that is not such a bad thing – because if there is any place where you should be able to be real it should be here. – **Family of God.**

C) But most of the time we try to put on a good face-pretend – everything is ok. –

**So I enjoy watching people – I think it opens up great doors for ministry.**

A) Several times I have been in a public place – seen someone look really down

B) **Felt compelled to go up to them and say** – Pardon me for being forward – but are you ok –

1) I am a Christian is there something you need prayer for. – People open up.

C) Solomon was also a people watcher – In this Chapter he reveals some incredible insights about people and why a lot of people are lonely & hurting.

D) In this Chapter he shares his observations about the oppressed, the lonely, and the Leaders.

**V.1-3 The Oppressed.**

A) I want to read – the opening verse of this chapter from the NASB – for I think it gives a clearer description of what is being said here.

B) I have underlined a couple of key words

Ecclesiastes 4:1 “**Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on**

**the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.”**

**Solomon says I looked around – and what I saw was a lot of hurting people – a lot of oppressed people.**

A) As Solomon looked around – what he saw wasn't pleasant, many pp being controlled by the dominant.

B) What really troubled him is seeing the tears of those who were oppressed – no one to comfort them.

1) **Feeling I get every time I am in Africa** – orphans – broken pp – breaks your heart.

C) Potter's Field Ministries – orphanage – next month

**Now Solomon's reaction to what he saw is pretty intense. - V.2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, more than the living who are still alive.**

A) This was Solomon's point of view toward those who had died –

“How fortunate for you to be gone from the earth rather than living under that oppression.”

B) Not saying that what He says here is right – but Solomon is just expressing himself –

1) Illustration of how real the Bible can be – to address our feelings and emotions

C) Anyone who has suffered in any way – has at times wondered – Would I be better off dead.

1)Elijah – Just Kill me – Job's wife – Curse God and die – David Psalm 143:3 **I feel like I am dead.**

**Solomon takes it one step downward in this realistic but depressing view. V3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed, Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.**

A) Better than to be oppressed and died – and put out of your misery –

B) It would have been better to never have been born.

C) That is a heavy statement – one that when you see someone – **oppressed – suffering** –

1) Nothing you can do to help them – It is easy to come to that conclusion – better off never being born

D) Not right –because – the Bible clearly teaches that God wants to be their strength in their weakness

1) But it is easy to feel that way –

**So Solomon is being very real here – in what he is sharing about the oppressed –**

A) He moves from there to talk about the Lonely V.4-12 The Lonely.

B) In verses 4-8 Solomon is going to give some reason why many people **don't have friends**

C) In v. 9-12 He discusses the benefit of having good healthy relationships.

D) Before we get into that – make some observations

**In the last 30 yrs there has been a breakdown in social relationships in the United States.**

Professor ROBERT PUTNAM (Author, "Bowling Alone: The Collapse & Revival of American Community"):

- Card playing is down 25%
- Bars and Taverns down 40%
- Full service restaurants down 25%
- Fast food places have increased 50%.
- Spending a social evening with a neighbor is down 35%

Called to love our neighbor a lot of Christians don't even know their neighbors.

- Family dinner time together down 33%
- Entertaining friends down 45%

**In fact the way that homes are being built today doesn't lend themselves to entertaining.**

A) No more front porches -

B) Smaller – living rooms – given way to larger walk in closets, computer rooms, and home entertainment rooms.

C) We will just stay home and watch TV or a movie.

D) Building of Condos is up across the U.S.

E) Coffee shops {Church attendance down 25%– Services geared at convenience get in get out.

**Over the last 25 yrs the number of Bowlers has increased 10% -- bowling is hugely popular in the U.S. - number of leagues is down 60%**

A) People are bowling alone.

B) So we see there has been a significant breakdown in social relationships in the USA

C) Three reasons:

**#1 Mom entered the work force.** – Mom's were the planners. – No time no energy.

**#2 Television: People are consumed with TV – 400 Channels – more people stay home watch**

A) According to the Nielson Company – the average American watches 5.1 hrs of TV per day in 2009

B) In 1970 6% of sixth graders had a TV in their room. By 2000 that number had risen to 77%. According to the Kaiser Foundation.

C) Which means even **in TV watching** – most families are do so alone. {3 different rooms – programs

1) Dad in One room – Mom another room – kids different or on Computer – **Generation of isolationist**

### #3 Internet

**D) Facebook – 5,000 friends – but you carry on short little snippets often with several at a time**

**1) No longer have time or know how to have real relationships – Scary**

**So those are some cultural reasons that have led to the break down of social relationships in the USA**

**A) Solomon here in Ch. 4 – deals with heart reasons – universal problems not just cultural problems.**

### #1 Envy V.4

**4 Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.**

**A) First reason we live lonely detached lives is because of envy**

**B) We want what someone else has and thus we don't want to be around them.**

**1) It bugs us – they have a nicer car/house/ job**

**C) Life becomes a competition with our neighbor –**

**1) They earn more / better marriage/ kids are doing better in school – jealousy sets in – friendship gets ruined –**

**D) Rather than deal with our heart – we just avoid the person and the friendship – Pattern develops**

### #2 Laziness V.5

**5 The fool folds his hands And consumes his own flesh.**

**A) Laziness – Friendships take work - Too lazy to put forth the effort to be a friend and have friends**

**B) They don't call – plan or take the time to develop friendships - Lazy – They don't get involved in anything – **meet friends serving** – at church – retreat**

### #3 Work V.6,7

**6 Better a handful with quietness {one hand full with quietness or contentment }- Than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind. 7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:**

**A) Working too much – no time to build friendships – always working always toiling –**

**B) You need to lead a two handed life – work and Sabbath –**

**1) Many people live – one handed lives = working – all the time –**

**C) USA works more hrs than any other nation in the world –**

**1) Not working – talking work – thinking about work**

**Cc) Proverbial procrastinator - I will get more involved with pp when.... Church.... Kids when.....**

**1) Right now – finish this job – this season – honest it never gets finished – leads to new thing.**

### Identity is in what you have or what you do.

**A) Satisfaction is in DOING – rather than BEING -**

**B) Kids don't know you – show love by giving gifts**

**C) The person who lives that way – life is marked by toil no joy – frustrated consumed by work – it is a drag**

**D) Need to learn to live a two handed life- work – rest- enjoy friends – enjoy family**

**1) BALANCE – #1 prayer – I love what I do – and there is a lot to do.**

**E) One shot with my kids! – My wife.**

**1) Criticized day off – vacations – Clear conscience before the Lord.**

**#3 Work #4 Discontentment V.8**

8 There is one alone, without companion:

He has neither son nor brother.

Yet there is no end to all his labors,

Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.

{**He never has enough money – never enough**}

**Some people work because they don't know how to live – validation and purpose from work**

**A) Others work because they are never satisfied – never have enough – always more.**

**B) Rockefeller – how much happy ? A little more.**

**C) So he works and toils but Solomon says But he never asks, "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?" This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.**

**D) Never ask – why am I doing this – Amassed wealth and no one to share it with – to enjoy it with**

**Don't live to work – work to live,**

**A) Know People who have list of things they would like to do – books read – places go- areas serve**

**B) But they never do because they are always working – always trying to get to the next level.**

**C) So those are some reasons why some people don't have friends**

**1) PTL Solomon doesn't leave us there.**

**V.9-12 Solomon lays out some benefits of friends**

**4 reasons -9 Two are better than one,**

**Because they have a good reward for their labor.**

**#1 More productive: Living Bible puts it “Two are better than one because the results are better.”**

**A) We gain a better perspective by having somebody by our side. { Tunnel vision vs broader perspective.**

**B) We gain objectivity – by having someone by our side -We gain courage in threatening situations –**

C) And Most of the time we are more productive –

D) You are more effective working together – do more accomplish more – more gifts

E) **Funniest times here – serving together with brothers here { mix of gifts – great**

1) Mixing of gifts – body function- Better results

**#2 More encouragement**

**10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.**

**But woe to him who is alone when he falls,**

**For he has no one to help him up.**

Listen I don't care who you are – if you are living life – if you are trying to make an impact –Running

A) You are going to have times where you fall fail – make mistakes – fall flat on your face.

B) - Times when you are as one of my friends recently put it – **sucking dirt.**

1) Not making mistakes – not living

C) In those times you need a friend who is willing to get down in the dirt with you and pick you up.

**1 Samuel 23:16 Jonathan found David in the woods – lowest times – strengthened his hand in the Lord.”**

A) It is such an awesome thing – when you are down to have friends who will pick you up.

B)If you are alone – there is no one pick you up and you end up having to pick yourself up – can be hard

1) Broken – you are weak –

C) Having a friend around to pick you up – is such a blessing –

1) Most of us don't know how to do that – so busy – person who is been wiped out needs a lot of care.

**Often times the spouse is not the person to bring that care.**

A) They are too close – they also have been affected

B) Spouses are often looking **for a quick bounce back – not as patient**

1) Where as a friend is more apt to give you the time you need to heal – time to let you mend.

C) Friends are great for mending and picking up those who are fallen.

**#1 More Productive #2 More Encouragement**

**#3 More Support V.11**

**11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone?**

A) Often when this verse is read pp have a tendency to think of it only in the context of marriage.

B) Yes when a husband and wife lie down together there is warmth – better than an electric blanket.

C) But I think the context of the chapter forces us to take a broader view of thing and not limit it to bedtime warmth.

### Think in terms of cold situations

A) First day on the job- the new guy – many in the company are going to see you as competition.

B) But what a blessing when a co-worker embraces you as part of the team – Asset –

C) First day of School – new kid – Cold –

1) Warmth in a friendly welcome

D) First time coming to a Church – or home group

1) That can be cold - - Engaged – warmth

E) At the wedding or the School function – Your ex is there too – new spouse – Cold – awkward

1) Warmth in a friend – comes along – grabs your hand – I am here – stick close to you today.

Law and order – Police officer trial testify – gruesome { Lawyer previous – scene – didn't do well

Partner – Tell your story to me – stood in the back

A good friend can bring warmth to a cold situation by just being there!

### #4 More Strength.

**12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

A) There is strength in numbers –

B) A friend's presence can invigorate you – Three musketeers – back to back -

C) A true friend can give you confidence to tackle the trial in front of you.

D) Greatest moments in Scripture – Ruth and Naomi – Naomi has lost everything – Husbands sons 1) Changed her name to Marrah = bitter – she is heading back to Israel with nothing.

E) Going there to die in her home land – bits her daughters in law farewell – Ruth steps forward

Ruth 1:16-17

"Entreat me not to leave you,  
Or to turn back from following after you;  
For wherever you go, I will go;  
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
Your people shall be my people,  
And your God, my God.  
17 Where you die, I will die,  
And there will I be buried.  
The Lord do so to me, and more also,  
If anything but death parts you and me."

**That is a Rare kind of loyalty – not seen very often today.**

**A) But you can conquer anything with that kind of loyalty.**

**B) Person is with you thru thick and thin – not there to pull you down – question what went wrong**

**C) Person is simply there to help you fix what was broken – get up and go again.**

**D) Fight with you until the end. – If you can find a friend like that – you are blessed.**

**So as Solomon is looking over the landscape of the people he sees the oppressed, the lonely – last of all THE LEADERS**

**A) Who sometimes are oppressed and lonely.**

**13 Better a poor and wise youth  
Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.**

**14 For he comes out of prison to be king,  
Although he was born poor in his kingdom.**

**15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun;  
They were with the second youth who stands in his place.**

**16 There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king; {One king replaces another – old for the young}**

**Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.**

**Our society is filled with institutions**

**A) And organizations and at the top of every institution and organization is a leader –**

**B) In the case here – ECCl 4 – it is a King**

**C) Here is what happens – if people become unhappy with the quality of their life or with something that is going on in the organization**

**D) They immediately look for someone to blame.**

**But more often than not the reason they are unhappy and the problems they are having – has a lot to do with what is happening in their own personal relationships**

**A) There are issues they are having personally that is affecting the way they view others.**

**B) Affecting their relationships or lack of relationships**

**C) So they are forced to make a choice – look internally and say – what is wrong with me.**

**1) Or look externally and say what is wrong with them.**



D) **Most people choose to look externally** – the problem is with someone else

1) Adam blamed Eve and God.

E) Children blame parents –

1) Students teachers

F) Sheep – Shepherds –

**This is the point that Solomon is making – most of the time pp want to blame the Boss- the leader the teacher- the Pastor – the guy in Charge.**

A) But in reality could the reason be that you don't like your job – is not your boss – it is you.

B) Attitude in your heart – envy – entitlement –pride – you need to deal with?

C) The reason there are problems in your marriage isn't because your spouse is a moron.

1) You **have issues that you need to deal with** and surrender to God.

D) Could it be that the Problems you have with Church – **not the Pastor or another parishioner**

1) But it is the bitterness that you have allowed to settle in your heart.

**See this is what Pp do – they leave a marriage they leave a job - they leave a Church**

A) They never deal with their own issue in their heart

B) They opt for a change of scenery – and they experience an initial honeymoon period –

1) Everything is great – for a while

C) Until something happens that causes that issue to resurface – **because it was never dealt with**

1) The cycle starts all over again.

**Early Church didn't have the luxury that we have today – next church was 50 miles away**

A) You had to deal with your issues –

B) Churches were smaller – couldn't hide in multiple services

1) Today we stunt our growth – by all the opportunities we have.

C) Face the music – Pray like David did: Psalm 139:23-24

**23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;**

**Try me, and know my anxieties;**

**24 And see if there is any wicked way in me,**

**And lead me in the way everlasting.**

**Take away tonight:**

**Do you have friends? Why why not ? What needs to Change?**

**Proverbs 18:24 “He who has friends must himself be friendly.”**

**Family time? Why or why not?**

**Unhappy ? Looking inward – or outward**

**Friends – REJOICE**