



Ecclesiastes 4:7-16

Additional workplace challenges (Part 2)

Community is preferred to all forms of isolation

Life is empty for loners who are workaholics (4:7-8)

⁷ *Again, I saw vanity under the sun:*

- Solomon explores more ways finding our identity in our work is meaningless

⁸ *one person who has no other, either son or brother,*

- The person under consideration is a complete loner
- He's too committed to "being successful" to be married or to have children
 - When God created man (Adam), he was in the garden designed by God and he was commissioned to **work** in the garden and **watch over** the garden
 - Genesis 2:15–18
 - Work is a part of life, but it is not what life is all about
 - Genesis 1:27–28
- Work and materialism are not the means to fulfillment for man on earth
 - God's design is for men and women to marry and to have children
 - Together they are to live life worshipfully, embracing the bounty of the earth as God's gift, teaching this glorious truth to the coming generations, propagating blessed worshipers in life

Life is empty for loners who are workaholics (4:7-8)

yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches,

- Solomon describes someone who through circumstances and choice is alone for the sake of material prosperity
- The things of earth are not seen as gifts from God to enjoy, but self-centered idols to gratify earthbound desires of achievement and power

so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?"

- The commitment to work is all-consuming
- He is so blinded to his covetous idolatry of personal power and prestige, he doesn't think about enjoying the gifts of life with a wife and children for the glory of the Lord

This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

- What is the result?
- The fruit of workaholic loners is emptiness and meaninglessness that ends in sadness and sorrow

Companionship is profitable (4:9-12)

⁹*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.*

- Solomon is not focusing on marriage with the statement, “*Two are better than one,*” but he is not excluding it
- The focus Solomon has is on the advanced productivity that happens when you have a companion at work

¹⁰*For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!*

- An associate can provide assistance during a time of need
- We can fall due to weakness or unfortunate circumstances

¹¹*Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?*

- Travel or tasks that take co-workers outdoors meant sleeping outdoors at night
- Staying warm is a great benefit when sleeping at night
- How can one keep warm alone? One can't!

Companionship is profitable (4:9-12)

¹² *And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

- The greater the number of people involved in a task the greater the strength and safety
- We depend on others and others increase our resilience and strength
- You are wise if you recognize how much you need others in your life
- The same is true for followers of Jesus in the church
 - We need each other to promote God-centered wisdom
 - Proverbs 18:1
 - We need each other for mutual ministry
 - 1 Corinthians 12:14
 - We need each other to encourage godliness
 - Hebrews 10:24–25
- We are not intended to go it alone

No one is indispensable (4:13-16)

¹³ *Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice.*

- His evaluation is that it would be preferable to be a poor, but teachable young man, than to be an unteachable old and established king
- A teachable heart is a valuable asset in life

¹⁴ *For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor.*

- Who is the young, teachable man who goes from prison to throne?
- It is possible Solomon is referring to Joseph

¹⁵ *I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place.*

¹⁶ *There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led.*

- From nothing this young man ends up established in the kingdom, gains prominence, and an impressive following

No one is indispensable (4:13-16)

Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him.

- The most prestigious have their day in the sun, but obscurity will come to them as well
- “*The currently unpopular are always replaced by those who are not yet unpopular.*” (Doug Wilson – Joy at the End of the Tether)
 - Exodus 1:8
- The time of viability eventually passes for us all
- Better to be old and teachable than to be old and stubborn and foolish
- Let us follow Paul as he followed Christ
 - 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

- If we are looking for meaning and substance from hard work and prestige in life, we will be disappointed

Questions to Consider

- In what ways have you become a laboring loner on earth?
- How are you seeing the things of earth as self-centered idols to gratify earthbound desires of achievement and power?
- How does our view of marriage, family, and work need to be more biblically defined?
- What are some things you can do to value supportive connections with people in life?
- Realizing you, too, will be replaced on earth, how can your eternal focus be better as you press on to finish the race and keep the faith?



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