

1. This morning we will begin a new series. In this series we will talk about how to defeat one of the major weapons that the enemy uses against us. Specifically in how we relate to others.
2. Just by a show of hands, how many have ever heard the phrase “Divide & Conquer”?
3. This phrase divide and conquer first started to appear in the English language around 1,600 A.D., however, the concept of divide and conquer has been around for centuries.
4. In modern day English we might hear the phrase divide and conquer as it relates to completing a project or achieving a goal.
5. You are able to conquer the issue or the problem or complete the goal by dividing up the responsibilities and having several people work on different areas at the same time.
6. But for centuries, the idea of divide and conquer had to do with warfare.
7. To gain or maintain power by generating tension among others, especially those less powerful, so that they cannot unite in opposition.
8. So in this sense, the goal is to get people to fight among themselves so they won’t unify together to fight a common enemy.
9. Another way of stating this principle is to divide and rule. The way to rule over a group of people is to get them to fight among themselves so they have no energy left to fight the real enemy outside.
10. Forgive me for stating the obvious, but it’s good for us to be reminded that the enemy, our enemy, Satan loves to use the divide and conquer or divide and rule weapon against us in order to bring about our defeat.
11. We are in a war.
12. And even if we forget that truth, Satan never forgets the truth.
13. After being accused of being demon possessed as the reason why he could cast out demons, Jesus made it clear that a divided body of people can’t stand.
14. **Mark 3:24-25** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

15. Because Satan knows if he can get us to fight one another we won't have the time or energy to fight him, he loves to use everything in his power to cause division and strife in our relationships.
16. We can see this principle at work in our nation. I'm not going to say we are more divided now than we ever have been, but I will say the division in our nation right now ranks up there pretty high in our history.
17. At breakfast with a group of men this week the words radical, mad, and fanatical were used to describe the political, social, and economic climate in our nation.
18. But not just our nation. The same can be said about Arkansas. Independence County. Batesville. And even among family and friends in our area.
19. Division and divided are the norms of the day.
20. And Satan just loves it because that means he can just sit back and rest while we defeat ourselves.
21. As believers in Jesus however, we have the weapons at our disposal to defeat this destructive mindset.
22. Over and over again in the Word we are given the tools to navigate the traps set for us by the enemy.
 1. For example, in **Matthew chapter 18** Jesus gives us the recipe for handling conflict with a brother or sister in Christ.
 2. Let me give you the short version.
 - **Go to that person one on one.** If that doesn't work.
 - **Take along an impartial third party.** If that doesn't work.
 - **Take them to a higher authority.** Church. Boss. Teacher. Principle. Etc. And if that doesn't work.
 - **Terminate the relationship.** Treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
 3. One of the reasons it is always a good idea to learn about the art of resolving conflict God's way is that all of us are involved in our own internal conflicts, and our personal conflicts spill over on others, and eventually we have a mess on our hands.
 4. A relational mess and often times an emotional mess.

5. So since conflicts are inevitable, we need to be equipped in how to resolve those conflicts in a Godly and productive way.
6. The second reason why we need to learn how to resolve conflict God's way, is that **terminating the relationship is meant to be a last resort and not a first resort.**
7. When we learn to use the principles of resolving conflict God's ways; the very last and most drastic thing that happens is that the relationship is terminated with no resolution.
8. When we won't learn and use God's principles of resolving conflict, the termination of the relationship is the very first thing that happens. Satan is all about damaging and destroying our relationships with others.
9. When someone sins against me, or injures or hurts me, if I do not follow God's instruction by going to them and talking to them about what happened, there is an immediate barrier and blockage to my relationship with that person.
10. They hurt me. I'm upset about it. And since I'm not talking to them about it nothing can be resolved, and the result is that our relationship is damaged and cannot survive for very long.
11. What we need to know is that is the very last thing that God wants, and it is the very last thing we need.
12. That's why in God's plans, ending the relationship is the very last resort. Why does God want that to be the very last resort? Because we need one another.
13. I shared this truth in September 2019, and I believe the events of the last, almost 2 years in our world make it necessary to share it again.

TITLE: Better Together

1. The key principle is this. **Relationships are not meant to be disposable.** They are intended to be something very different.

2. These are the words that are meant to describe our relationships.
 - Irreplaceable
 - Necessary
 - Important
 - Indispensable
 - Thick
 - Useful
 - Needed
3. I'm not complaining, I am just making an observation about our society.
4. I believe in many ways we live in a disposable society.
5. We live in a time that for many things, it is easier and cheaper to dispose of the thing than it is to repair the thing.
6. There used to be an entire industry that revolved around repairing things.
7. TV and the tubes in them.
8. VCR.
9. Radio.
10. Toasters.
11. Now days, for many of those things and for a whole lot of other things, it is easier and cheaper to just throw them away and get a new one.
12. Several years ago I bought a chainsaw. Paid \$180. Two years later I started having trouble with it. Called a local repair shop. Explained what was wrong with it. This is what the repair man said.
13. Basically what you have is one of those throw away chain saws. It would cost almost as much to repair it as it would to buy a new one, so my recommendation is to just throw it away and buy new.
14. I did. Now here's the thing. It isn't the end of the world if I do that with my TV, or toaster, or DVD player or whatever else.
15. But it very well could spell the end of my world if I mistakenly take that logic and apply it to things that are never meant to be disposable, like my relationships with other people.

16. Failure to recognize the enemy's attacks and resolve conflict God's way puts us in a position where our relationships become disposable to us.
17. We treat the things that are to be some of our most valued and cherished like they are disposable, and just to be thrown away.
18. We can take the attitude that it costs less to throw that relationship away and get a new one.
19. Please hear my heart this morning. The last thing I want to do is sound harsh or judgmental. The other thing I don't want to communicate is that I think absolutely everybody fits into the category I am about to share.
20. Having said that, it appears to me that in so many cases, people treat marriages as if they are disposable. That when it comes to the institution of marriage, the feeling is that it is easier to throw the marriage away than to invest in that marriage to make it right.
21. I know multiple people, none associated with our church, that have gone through marriage, after marriage, after marriage. And I have listened to them describe those relationships.
22. Not only have they not learned very much from those ended relationships, they talk about those relationships as if they couldn't possibly have had any part to play in the termination; it was all the other person's fault. And on top of that, I know multiple people who joke about those ended marriages like it is comical and funny.
23. On top of that, when I learned that some of those same people are now preparing to enter into still yet another marriage, and I ask them what they are going to do differently this time than you did the last several times, their response is nothing.
24. I don't know that I am going to do anything differently.
25. Again, I want to say that my point is not to judge them. My point is that I grieve for marriages, families, and relationships that are being discarded as if they are not worth it.
26. I grieve that somehow, we have believed that terminating the relationship is one of the first things we do, not the last thing we do.

27. I grieve that we don't see people and relationships as worth fighting for.
28. Now, saying that fighting for relationships is not to imply that fighting for them is easy. Doing the right thing and doing it God's way is not easy. I have never dealt with any conflict that was easy.
29. What I mean is that fighting for those relationships is better than not fighting for them.
30. I believe fighting for the relationship costs much less than throwing it away.
31. Why? Because according to the bible, we are better together than we are alone.
32. We are better people when we are in relationship with others.
33. We are better equipped to handle the difficulties and hardships of life when we are in relationship with others.
34. We are better protected from harm and danger when we are in relationship with others.
35. We are just better together. And so what I want to focus on for the next few weeks is how we are better together.
36. The phrase that kept jumping out at me was this. Two are better than one. Two are better than one.
37. As with most things truly meaningful, that phrase comes straight from the bible. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: **10** If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. **11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? **12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
38. Let me lay down one more little bit of groundwork this morning, and then we will finish up by focusing on verse 9.
39. The book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, the son of David.
40. King Solomon was described as the wisest man to ever live on planet earth. The people of his day would have a conversation with him and would leave saying, I've never met anyone like him.

41. The truth is there wasn't anyone like him. God had given him a truly supernatural gift of wisdom. People loved to be around him, and when they couldn't be around him, they loved reading what he had written.
42. He studied and wrote about everything you could imagine.
43. But as he began to live out his life, he became sidetracked. He lost his way.
44. In 1 kings chapter 11, we are told that Solomon's many wives, who worshiped many different gods, turned his heart away from being devoted to the one true God.
45. And the result of his worshipping and being devoted to all these other gods takes a spiritual and mental toll on his life.
46. So much so that by the time he gets around to writing the book of Ecclesiastes, his view of life is pretty grim.
47. The word that he continually used over and over again to describe life was meaningless. 34 times in twelve chapters he says life is just meaningless.
48. However, at various times in his writing, this truth and wisdom would spring up that brought him back to reality, and serves as direction for all of us.
49. So that's what we are seeing here in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 vs. 9-12. In fact, the message that we discover here in these four verses serve to help us not only avoid that which is truly meaningless, but to identify what is truly meaningful.
50. So the message here in a nutshell is that one of the things that make life meaningful are relationships. Togetherness.
51. The truth that we are better together.
52. And so basically in these four verses, Solomon describes four ways that we are better together. We will study one verse each week.
53. Today is verse number 9. Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:
54. Each week I want to leave you with one word that captures the essence of what the verse says. Today's word is...

Multiplication.

1. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.
2. There was a saying that I grew up hearing that has really stuck with me through the years. Two men working together can do the work of three.
3. Meaning two men working together, can do as much as three men working individually.
4. Now. For this message I wanted more than just a saying. So I started to do some research that would verify that the statement was true.
5. The good news is that I found lots of evidence that this saying is true.
6. The bad news is that all of the evidence I found was in the form of mathematical equations.
7. I'm talking pages and pages full of numbers and formulas.
8. I like numbers, but I'm also pretty simple minded. I don't like complicated.
9. When I read verse 9 the word that came to mind was multiplication.
Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:
10. I love the definition of the word multiplication. One of them is...
the process of combining two things to produce something greater.
11. I also really liked these other words that also mean multiplication.
Growth. Enlargement. Expansion. Extension. Elevation. Addition. Augmentation. Magnification. And my personal favorite...**intensification.**
12. Why are two better than one? Because when one person works by himself, there is a limit to what can be accomplished. He is limited to what he alone can do.
13. But when two people work together. What is produced together, is greater than what could be produced alone.
14. That's the return. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Conclusion:

1. I was reminded of a Saturday several weeks ago.
2. I had gotten up and paid some bills and then headed outside to do some work.
3. The yard was filled with limbs on the ground, and then several trees had limbs hanging out that made it difficult to mow.
4. So I worked and I worked, and at one point, wet from head to toe, I started to wonder if I had overdone it.
5. While I was outside my wife was hard at work inside.
6. Laundry. Dishes. Picking up around the house. Organizing a couple rooms of the house.
7. I came in and got a shower and plopped on the couch, when I made a very critical mistake.
8. I asked my wife how she was doing. To which she responded, I am tired and I have several more things I wanted to get done. Clean the bathroom. Sweep and mop the floors. Dust everything.
9. My first thought was, I'm tired, and I know she is tired. Well I guess that stuff isn't getting done today.
10. And then after a few minutes I had this novel idea. What if I helped. What if I did two of the four things and she did two of the four things and we worked together.
11. When I mentioned it to her it was if there was a jolt of energy that came into the room.
12. We literally both jumped up, divided up the work, and set out to get it done. Working together. In about an hour and 15 minutes, everything was done.
13. The two of us had done together in a short amount of time what it would have taken one of us hours on end to accomplish.
14. And as I plopped down on the couch for the second time. Tired and worn out, but at the same time energized because we had accomplished something together, I was reminded of this passage in Ecclesiastes, and the principle that it teaches.

15. When there is a job that needs to be done and two people choose to work together, because all of the weight is not being carried by either person, but instead is being carried by both of them, there is the multiplication effect.
16. The two don't get tired nearly as quickly as one by themselves. Because they are working together and not carrying all the load by themselves, they are able to accomplish the task at a much faster pace than the one person by himself.
17. And because both of them working together are doing only their share, they are able to accomplish the same amount in a fraction of the time it takes one to do it alone. (Pause)
18. How many are still with me? Let's wrap it up.
19. What load are you lifting, that is wearing you out, to the point that maybe you have even considered quitting all together?
20. What burden is weighing you down that God never intended you to carry alone because you have not place enough value on togetherness?
21. What load is about to take you under all because you mistakenly believed that going it alone is better, when the truth is together is better?
22. You were not meant to go it alone.
23. You were not meant to do life alone.
24. In our society we tend to build walls, when what we need to do is install doors and windows, so we are not trapped behind the very walls we have put up.
25. God is eager to help you, but the truth is that God often channels that help through another human being.
26. Prayer. Stand.
27. Lord renew in me an appreciation for togetherness.
28. Lord, help me to be open to areas of my life where I need to quit trying to do it by myself.
29. Sin is something that can't be carried alone. Only through what Jesus has done on the cross are we able to be saved from our sins. Salvation call.

30. Is there an area of your life where you honestly need to ask for help?
31. It could be that it is a lack of courage.
32. It might be pride that keeps you from reaching out for help.
33. Cry out to God for help.
34. Listen to God's direction to ask someone specific for help.