

1. We are going to continue this morning with our series, “Better Together”.
2. Our study is found in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 4.
3. Let’s review the first two weeks.
4. **Ecclesiastes 4:9** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:
5. In week one we talked about multiplication. Two working together can accomplish much more than one person working by themselves. Their efforts are multiplied as they work in unison.
6. The weight isn’t as heavy. They don’t tire as easily. In fact, two people can do what one is not able, because some weights in life are too large for one person. They require two lifting and carrying to have victory.
7. We ended week one with the question. What weight are you carrying that is about to take you under, that God never intended for you to carry alone? You need help.
8. Then last week we studied **Ecclesiastes 4:10** 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.
9. Our focus last week was preservation. Beyond just the physical act of falling and needing help to get back up, there are spiritual struggles that can cause us to fall if we do not face them with help.
10. We saw in the scripture that pride can cause us to fall.
11. Losing sight of God’s protection and provision can cause us to fall.
12. Disobedience toward the Lord causes us to fall. And if we get caught up in any of those destructive patterns, without anyone to help bring us back to the truth, we will fall and stumble a lot.
13. But that’s not God’s desire for our lives. Falling is not in His plan. **Psalms 37:23-24** The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; 24 though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.
14. So stumbling will happen, but falling, God desires to protect us from falling by upholding us with his hand.
15. We concluded last week with this question. What if the Lord is reaching out to you to keep you from falling, but his hand is seen in the hand of someone else, brother or sister in Christ, loved one, friend?

16. Much like the four men who let their paralyzed friend down to Jesus through the roof of the house, it was Jesus who did the healing, but it was the love and the strength and the care of those 4 friends who got him to Jesus.
17. Our lives are preserved as we do life together, not by ourselves.

TEXT: **Ecclesiastes 4:11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Now don't laugh at my title today until I explain.

TITLE: **Perspiration.**

INTRO:

1. So as with each of these thoughts there is the physical illustration, and there is the spiritual significance.
2. In this case, the physical illustration is that together we generate heat and we stay warm.
3. I am in this strange place in life. Sometimes I walk into a room and can't remember why I'm there.
4. Other times I lose my train of thought in mid-sentence, and have to stop talking.
5. But other memories are just as vivid and real as they were 45 years ago.
6. I believe I was about 6 or 7 years old. My only sibling, my brother is about 4 years younger.
7. It was the dead middle of winter. It was extremely cold, and on top of that there was an ice storm.
8. Early in the day the electricity went out leaving us with no source of heat except one fireplace in one room of the house.
9. All day long we bundled up and moved around and that kept us warm.
10. But by bedtime it was really cold inside the house.
11. There was a fire in the fireplace. My parents made a pallet in the floor near the fireplace, and the four of us laid down together to stay warm.

12. The most vivid memory I have was what my dad did. Mom and dad were on both ends and my brother and I were sandwiched in the middle, and my dad who has very long arms, reached all the way across to my mom, pulled us all in tight, and together we spent the night together keeping warm.
13. When I read verse 11, that is the memory I have. If two lie down together they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone.
14. Again, we find here the truth that two people together are better than one all by themselves.
15. In the case of warmth, that is true because if two people are laying together, there is the heat from this person and the heat from that person, and together they produce a greater heat than they would alone.
16. In fact, it is possible on a cold night to actually get hot. And when you get hot, then comes perspiration.
17. You sweat. So the physical illustration is that two people together generate more heat.
18. But what I want us to focus the rest of our time today on is the spiritual significance.
19. Though verse 11 doesn't use this word, it is implied. **The opposite of warmth, heat, or hot is cold.**
20. One person by themselves will get cold.
21. That is a very powerful thought because cold is exactly the word the bible uses to describe when our spiritual passion starts to decrease or waver.
22. In fact, on two different occasions, it was the words of Jesus himself who used the word cold to identify a spiritual condition that signifies danger in our walk with the Lord.
23. The first instance I want us to look at is found in **Revelation 3:15-16 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.**
24. Jesus calls somewhere between hot and cold lukewarm. So if we are talking about our spiritual life, we would say, not all that hot or passionate about the Lord, but at the same time not ice cold.

25. Just in between. And on the surface, in between, or lukewarm, doesn't seem to be an unsafe place to live. In fact, I would venture to say that it's possible we might characterize lukewarm as a very safe place.
26. Hot spiritually. Well that's for those fanatics. Those weird people. You know them? So no, I'm not hot. After all I don't want to get burned.
27. And the comfort for not being hot is that we don't see ourselves as being cold either.
28. Oh no. I'm not dead cold. I'm not lifeless. I have some life. I have some passion. Compared to that person who is just as lost as they can be I'm doing pretty good.
29. Lukewarm is just right for me. But in verse 16 Jesus tells us exactly how he feels about lukewarm.
30. Revelation 3:16 *So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (NIV)*
31. I just read that out of the NIV. The word used here is spit. Because you are lukewarm, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.
32. To spit something out of the mouth is the nice, clean way.
33. But I'm not sure the word spit captures exactly what Jesus means.
34. KJV Revelation 3:16 *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (KJV)*
35. Message Bible. Revelation 3:16 *You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit. (Message)*
36. Spit is one thing. (illustrate)
37. But spew and vomit are very different. I'm not trying to be gross. (illustrate) Spew and vomit are much more graphic. I hate to vomit. I would rather stub my toe than vomit.
38. To vomit or spew is more violent. Jesus says, that's what I want to do. Because as the Message Bible states it, because of the stale and stagnant state of our spiritual relationship with Jesus.
39. Imagine you go to a restaurant after church this morning and you order a sandwich, and when you bite into it the bread is as hard as a rock and it has mold growing on it.

40. You motion for the server and you say, this bread is stale. Hard and moldy. What's up? Oh, don't worry about that. We had that bread left over from last Tuesday and we figured you wouldn't mind.
41. Or you order a glass of water and they bring it out and it is kind of brownish looking and it has a funny smell.
42. Again you call the server over. Hey, something's wrong with this water. Oh don't worry about it. That water came from an old barrel we have out back. It's been there for several weeks, but we figured you wouldn't mind.
43. So now let's imagine Jesus is the person sitting at the table of the restaurant and you and I are the server.
44. He says, come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
45. And in response to his generous offer we bring him our stale, stagnant leftovers and we expect him to be pleased with it. But he is not pleased with it. (pause)
46. Now. I want to be clear this morning. This message is not intended to guilt you into being passionate or on fire for the Lord.
47. I believe all of us would, could, and should be clear that our passion level, our level of intensity, our hot factor if you will, is not always at a ten.
48. I would love to be able to stand up here and tell you I am always hot spiritually. That I never go through times of cooling off. That I always have it together. But I do not.
49. You may not be able to identify, but I have ups and downs. I have highs and lows. I can be on top of the mountain one day (minute) and a day (minute) or so later, I feel like the mountain is on me.
50. So because that is true in all of our lives. Because that is true for every human being who has ever lived on planet earth, Revelation 3:15-16 is not meant to beat us over the head and tell us how bad we are.
51. Revelation 3:15-16 is meant to be a thermometer. It is an indicator. It is God saying, hey. If you find yourself in a not so hot place spiritually, I have a message for you.

52. And even though I have spent a little bit of time drawing it out. The message is not, hey you. I'm looking for any opportunity I can find to spew or vomit you out of my mouth.
53. The point of Jesus' message is that the spitting and spewing is a last resort.
54. God's desire is not the spewing, God's desire is that we will recognize that we need help and we will seek it out. In vs 15 Jesus says I wish you were either hot or cold.
55. The Lord desires transformation, not condemnation.
56. So the question is...how does that transformation take place?
57. To answer that I want us to look at another place where Jesus talks about cold spirituality.
58. That's found in **Matthew 24:10-12** *At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,*
59. Hang with me for just a moment as we work our way backward in this passage.
60. Verse 12 says the love of most will grow cold. The love Jesus is referring to is a love for the Lord. A love for God and his ways.
61. So the word cold signifies that we are not in a committed or passionate relationship with Jesus.
62. Now let's look at what causes this state of cold spirituality.
63. The first part of verse 12 says because of an increase of wickedness. Evil. But where does this increase in wickedness come from?
64. According to verse 11 it is a result of false prophets who deceive or trick many people.
65. But why are false prophets able to come in and deceive so many people? I believe the answer is found in verse 10.
66. Many will turn away from the faith, and will betray and hate each other.
67. So if we put it all together here is what we have. Turning away from the faith and disconnecting from the people we so desperately need go hand in hand.

68. When we are disconnected from those we need, we become likely candidates for deception. Because alone we don't see as clearly as we do together.
69. And the result of falling for deception is that wickedness increases and our love for the Lord grows cold.
70. Over 30 years of ministry I have seen this pattern many times.
71. Faith begins to weaken, which causes that person to pull away from family, friends, or brothers and sisters in Christ. We call that isolation.
72. Once isolated, the enemy begins to confuse truth and tell lies, that the person eventually falls for. We call that deception.
73. Once deception sets in, an increase of sin is the natural result which signifies that the love for the Lord has grown cold.
74. Just by a show of hands, how many have ever seen that pattern develop in someone you care about?
75. So what we have here in Matthew 24 is the picture of the downward spiral. But the downward spiral doesn't have to occur.
76. What can be done to help prevent that downward spiral? When we believe and act as though walking in faith is not a Lone Ranger type of lifestyle, that a life of faith is meant to be lived in community with other believers.
77. And when we are committed to community, we are not easily deceived. And when we are not easily deceived it helps ward off sin.
78. And when sin is cut off before it can do damage, there is fire and passion and life, not only for God but for others.
79. So what the Lord wants for our spiritual life is warmth. Heat. Passion. God doesn't want us to be cold spiritually.
80. And the beginning place for warding off that cold spirituality is to recognize, not only do we need faith in God, but we also need togetherness with others.
81. Why? Because, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?
82. So as we prepare to wrap up today, I want to highlight a heat generating aspect of togetherness.

Togetherness sharpens us spiritually.

1. Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.
2. On the History channel there is a show called Forged in Fire.
3. I have only watched it a few times, but I am always intrigued by the process of making knives.
4. It is very labor intensive. The craftsman starts out with a chunk of metal, and after many hours, what emerges is this beautiful, sharp, very useful instrument.
5. The sharpening of a knife or blade is what Proverbs 27:17 is referring to.
6. I don't have time to go into all the specifics, but the reality is, iron sharpens iron. An iron or steel file, used on an iron or steel blade sharpens.
7. So as it relates to our spiritual health. Our spiritual passion: one person sharpens another person.
8. Why do we need one another as believers? Because together we are better in every way than we are alone.
9. I rarely do this, but I want to quote Matthew Henry's commentary.
10. Proverbs 27:17 connects both the pleasure and the advantage of togetherness. One man is nobody;
11. Poring over a book in a corner doesn't accomplish nearly as much as studying together. Why? Wise and helpful communication sharpens men's wits;
12. Even those that have an abundance of knowledge may, by interaction with others, have something added to them.
13. It sharpens the way men look, and, by lifting the spirits, gives them the appearance of being alive and energetic on their face, and gives a man such confidence, that not only does it bring him pleasure, it brings pleasure to those around him.
14. Good men's favor, generosity, and kindness are sharpened by interaction with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by interaction with those that are bad.
15. As iron is sharpened by iron, especially by the file, men, through interaction with others, are filed, made smooth, and bright, and fit for good use (who were rough, and dull, and inactive).
16. This is designed, 1. To remind us of the need for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to be careful who we choose to be with, because the influence upon us is so great either for the better or for the worse.

17. 2. To remind us we must pay careful attention in our togetherness, to make it our goal to improve both others and ourselves, not just to pass away the time or have fun, but to *provoke one another to love and to good works* and so to make one another wiser and better.

Conclusion:

1. Let me sum up what Matthew Henry said.
2. Together we are...
 - Smarter and wiser.
 - More alive, more energetic, and happier.
 - We are more generous and kind.
 - Changed from being rough, dull, and useless, to being smooth, sharp, and useful.
 - We are not just better; others are better.
3. To me that is like being a kid on Christmas day and getting every gift you ever wanted.
4. Wow. I want that. Do you want that?
5. We are better together because we are more alive, more passionate for Jesus, and less likely to drift into cold spirituality.
6. But hears the thing. Togetherness with others doesn't happen automatically.
7. Being in community and fellowship with others doesn't happen automatically.
8. We must be intentional about not only believing that together is better, we must be intentional about practicing being together.
9. Example. Getting to church early, and spending time after fellowshiping.
10. Pray that the Lord will help us to take advantage of the wonderful gift of togetherness.
11. Salvation call.
12. Have people get in groups. Pray that we will be more passionate. (don't pray for them to be more passionate or for yourself to be more passionate, pray we will be passionate together.
13. If you received Christ, tell someone in your group.