

1. This morning we are going to finish our series titled **Better Together**.
2. If you are able would you turn to the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 4.
3. Let's get up to speed on what we have studied so far.
4. In verse 9, Solomon says, **Ecclesiastes 4:9** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:
5. We called this the multiplication principal. Two people working together can do more than two people working separately because:
  - a. They feed off one another.
  - b. Two are carrying the load rather than one.
  - c. Two working together don't get tired nearly as quickly, and as a result will be less likely to get discouraged and want to give up.
6. From a spiritual perspective two believers doing life together see a multiplication in their effectiveness at living for Christ.
7. **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.
8. We called this the principal of preservation.
9. Beyond just the physical application, the bible describes various attitudes or behaviors that cause a falling away of our faith.
10. Pride goes before a fall.
11. Losing sight of God's ability to provide and care for us. The writer of Psalm 73 said as for me my feet almost slipped. Discouragement and misunderstanding threatened to cause him to fall away.
12. According to Leviticus chapter 26, Disobedience leads to being on the run when no one is chasing. It leads to falling down and falling away.
13. So in many areas of our life we are susceptible to falling away spiritually. That's why we need to be in close fellowship with other believers. Because when we fall, we have a brother or sister who is near to help us back up.
14. But when we are not in close fellowship with other believers we tend to fall down and stay down.
15. Last week's focus was perspiration. **Ecclesiastes 4:11** Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?
16. The opposite of hot or warm is cold. And that is exactly the word that is used to describe what can happen to our faith.

17. In fact, Jesus made it clear in Matthew 24 that in the last days the love of most (for the Lord) would grow cold.
18. When we are cold spiritually, we tend to stay cold. But in close fellowship with other believers their passion and our passion feeds off one another and the result is that together we are stronger in the Lord.
19. So, this morning let's look at the last verse.

**TEXT:** **Ecclesiastes 4:12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

**TITLE:** **Separation.**

**INTRO:**

1. We will come back to the meaning of our title a little later.
2. But for now, Solomon gives us the last reason why two are better than one. Why we are better together.
3. Two are better than one because together, they are able to withstand attack.
4. Together they are able to defend themselves.
5. Together with other believers, they have the power. But alone they can be overpowered. The power is with the enemy.
6. There is power in togetherness, and there is weakness in being alone.
7. That is one of the primary reasons why our enemy, Satan, tries to cause separation between us and others, because he is very keenly aware that if he can get us separated from other believers, family members, friends, classmates, or co-workers, we will not have the power to defend ourselves against his attacks.
8. I know you already know what I am about to say but hang with me anyway.
9. You have an enemy. Your life is under attack.
10. How many by an uplifted hand would say, I feel like I am under attack much of the time?
11. That's because you are under attack.
12. I think we all know that.
13. Where we need to be reminded is we cannot afford to forget where that attack comes from.

14. Without the truth of God's word we will falsely believe that the attacks we suffer are from other people in our world.
15. We will see the attacks as human and fleshly.
16. But the scripture makes it very clear that the attacks are not from human flesh.
17. **Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
18. In this passage Paul is encouraging the Ephesian believers to be ready for the battles that come as a result of living life in a fallen world.
19. And the encouragement is to put on the whole armor of God.
20. To be fitted with the proper protection and weapons so we can be victorious in this constant battle.
21. But even more important than knowing how to fight is knowing who to fight.
22. Paul says our fight is not with flesh and blood. Meaning, our fight is not with human beings.
23. Our fight is a spiritual fight with the evil, wicked, demonic authorities, and forces of hell.
24. In our spiritual walk with the Lord, nothing will usher in defeat faster than being confused about who are enemies are.
25. In week one of this series we discussed the phrase divide and conquer. The best way to defeat an enemy is to cause the enemy to fight among themselves so they won't have the strength to fight the real enemy.
26. That is one of the most detrimental strategies of Satan. He is constantly working to induce separation between us and the people we need most because he knows that when we are divided, we can be more easily defeated.
27. And so, Solomon points this truth out in Ecclesiastes 4:12 by mentioning three things.
28. **Ecclesiastes 4:12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
29. There is the vulnerability of one. The power of two. And the strength of being bound to other believers.

## The vulnerability of one.

1. One of the oldest tricks in Satan's book is the concept of separation.
2. The enemy does attack groups of people, but generally I believe he only attacks the group after he has singled out and separated out individuals and attacks them first.
3. If we go all the way back to the beginning of time and the beginning of the bible, we see this strategy in the third chapter of Genesis.
4. Keep in mind, at this point in the history of mankind, there are only two people on planet earth. Adam and Eve.
5. And so, the first time we are introduced to Satan, he appears to Eve in the form of a serpent or snake.
6. He appears or approaches Eve alone. **Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
7. Satan didn't speak to Adam and Eve at the same time, he spoke to Eve alone.
8. Then after Eve became deceived by the lie of the enemy, she gave some of the fruit to her husband Adam.
9. **Genesis 3:6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
10. What's interesting is that according to this verse Adam and Eve were physically together.
11. But even while they were physically together Satan was working on trying to divide them.
12. I have often wondered. If Satan convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, who convinced Adam? Eve.
13. I believe it's important to note that she convinced him not because she wanted to deceive him, I believe she honestly believed that the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom.
14. But the reality was they were not on the same page.
15. Lest we place all the blame on Eve. At any time Adam could have spoken up and said, you know what, we can't eat that.

16. God did tell us not to eat that fruit and he did say we would die. That serpent is lying. But there is no evidence he said anything like that.
17. We see further division when God shows up in the garden and asks who has revealed to them, they were naked.
18. And what ensues next is the blame game. Eve blames the serpent. Adam blames Eve. And everyone is throwing everyone else under the bus.
19. And just like that. Only two people on planet earth. With a dividing attack, Satan divides and conquers Adam and Eve.
20. Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
21. And so that leads us to...

## The Power of Two.

1. One, separated and off by themselves can be over-powered, but two can put up a strong defense.
2. I just love the story of Jonathan and his Armor bearer in 1 Samuel chapter 14.
3. Israel was in a battle with the Philistines like they had been for decades.
4. Israel was being defeated. They didn't have the proper weapons. They were outnumbered. And they were hiding out in caves hoping to escape by the skin of their teeth.
5. But in chapter 14 something powerful happens. Jonathan had had enough. He was tired of being defeated by the enemy. **1 Samuel 14:13-15** Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. **14** In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. **15** Then panic struck the whole army--those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties--and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.
6. Chapter 13 says the Philistines had 3,000 chariots. 6,000 chariot drivers, and so many soldiers in their army that they couldn't be counted.

7. But up jumps Jonathan and his armor bearer, and look what happened.
8. Jonathan rushed toward this group of soldiers, and his armor bearer came right up behind him.
9. Jonathan would knock them down, and before they could come to their senses the armor bearer would come right behind and kill them.
10. Now on that day the victory didn't seem all that great. They only killed about 20 men. But because of their trust in the Lord and because they worked together, a panic set in among the Philistines.
11. Verse 20 says the Philistines were so confused that they were striking one another.
12. Don't miss this. Because Jonathan and his armor bearer stuck together and worked together, in stead of the enemy being able to divide and conquer them, the tables were turned and the enemy became divided and started defeating themselves.
13. Spiritually speaking, another reason why Satan is continually working to separate believers, families, friendships, co-workers is because he knows something we sometimes forget.
14. When we stick together and we work together, together we are more powerful than any attack Satan can muster.
15. Together we are nearly unbeatable.
16. Separated, the battle is un-winnable, but together we are un-stoppable.
17. And so, that leads us to Solomon's final illustration.

### **The strength in being bound together.**

1. Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
2. Everybody understands what I am about to show you next. This is a braided rope.
3. It has strands and strands of fiber woven together. The more strands there are the stronger the rope.
4. This is one single string. We all know that this one single string is not nearly as strong as this rope.
5. But what I want to point out is this.

6. If this rope represents our relationships with other believers, family, friends, etc. and we know that all woven together we are stronger, how does the enemy go about separating us for defeat?
7. I believe this is what the enemies attacks don't look like. (Michael & Josh) Cut the rope.
8. I don't believe the enemy tries to cause separation by cutting us off from one another; I believe he tries to cause separation by unraveling us from one another.
9. He picks. He separates. He pulls at us.
10. We become offended at one another.
11. We don't forgive one another.
12. We don't give one another the benefit of the doubt.
13. We start focusing more on our differences than on what we have in common.
14. We let things get under our skin.
15. We hold grudges.
16. We assume the worst about people rather than the best about people.
17. We let little things that don't really matter get on our nerves.
18. And before long we are as unraveled and as separated and as weak as we possibly can be.
19. And it takes a whole lot more work to get tied back together than it does to separate.
20. And all the while the enemy sits back and laughs and says, we got em' right where we want them.

#### Conclusion:

1. Look around our world right now.
2. Isn't that a perfect example of what is going on all around us?
3. But here's the thing. As believers in Jesus Christ we know the truth.
4. We know the enemy's motives.
5. We know his plan is to divide and conquer.
6. We know we are stronger together.
7. And we know that together we are many times better than we are alone.

8. And so, as believers we must make a commitment to togetherness.
9. It must be one of our highest priorities.
10. But let's be clear what we are and are not committing to.
11. We are not committing to all thinking the same way. Acting the same way. Agreeing on everything.
12. We are not committing to never having differences of opinion. We are not committing to being door mats that get walked all over just for the sake of unity. Not on your life.
13. What we are committing to is the one thing that holds us together when nothing else will.
14. Jesus Christ.
15. **Ephesians 4:11-16** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. **14** Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
16. Jesus Christ is the head and we are the body. What holds us together is that we all belong to Him. And in belonging to Him we all belong to one another.
17. So if we are going to be held together, then it must be Jesus Christ who does the holding, as we hold on to him.
18. In a moment I am going to ask everyone who will to come to the front.
19. I'm going to ask you to take a rope.
20. As we gather around the front, we are going to focus on worshipping Jesus.
21. 'Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus.
22. Pray for unity in Jesus Christ.
23. Take the rope home and put some tape or something on each end.
24. As you do let it be a reminder that holds us together is our love for Jesus.



25. Commit to togetherness through Jesus Christ.