

1. Last Sunday we wrapped up a 4-week study of a passage of scripture in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes.
2. If you are able, I would love for you to turn there with me because I want to review very quickly.
3. The title of this study was Better Together. Solomon, the writer of this passage, gives 4 reasons why we are better together.
4. **Ecclesiastes 4:4-12** 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.
5. Each week we studied one verse, so let me re-cap the message of each verse.
6. The message in verse 9 was that we are better together, because when two people work together, their efforts are multiplied.
7. When two people work together, they accomplish much more than two people working individually would. There is multiplication.
8. The message of verse number 10 was that two are better together because two people together can keep one another lifted up. If one of them falls, they have someone close to help them back to their feet.
9. Beyond just the physical application, there is a deep spiritual application. Each of us is susceptible to falling spiritually.
10. Proverbs 16 says that pride comes before a fall.
11. Psalm 73 reminds us that losing sight of God's truth causes us to fall, not only spiritually, but mentally and emotionally.
12. In Leviticus 26 we are shown that stumbling and falling are the natural result of disobedience to God's ways.
13. Life is a struggle that tends to knock us down. But together we don't have to stay down for the count, together we can help one another get back to our feet and keep moving forward.
14. The message of verse 11 is that two are better than one because together there is this energy that is produced. In the physical sense we see the idea of generating heat. Two lay together and they can keep warm.
15. The opposite of warm however is cold.

16. And the spiritual application is that when our faith begins to weaken, the result is that our love for the Lord can grow cold.
17. Several times in the bible the word cold is used to describe those whose faith is faltering and failing.
18. But together our faith can remain strong. How? Because just as iron sharpens iron, our togetherness keeps us sharp and useful. Hot if you will.
19. And then the message of verse 12 was that two are better than one because two are not easily overpowered. Two or three together can defend themselves.
20. Man, that is so powerful because life is a struggle sometimes. Life is full of battles. Life is not for the faint of heart. Life is tough sometimes. But together we can defend ourselves. Together we are stronger.
21. We used the illustration of a piece of rope. One strand of rope can be easily torn. Two strands are pretty easy to tear.
22. But put a bunch of strands or rope together, and together they are nearly impossible to tear apart.
23. **We are just better together.** (pause)
24. I know I don't always give you insight into my thought process from one series to another, but I felt compelled to share this time.
25. I have really enjoyed this series Better Together. I think God's word on this subject is just powerful. I believe accepting God's word on the subject of togetherness is life changing. On top of that I have received some good feedback about this series.
26. So on the one hand there has been this very real sense of gratefulness for what the Lord is doing and showing us through this idea of Better Together.
27. But at the same time, there has been this feeling of unsettledness flowing under the surface in my spirit.
28. We have shared the message that we are better together four different ways over four different weeks, but the reality is we are living in a world right now that is pushing back somewhat against this idea of being together.

29. For sure it is better than it was a year ago, but there are still some barriers to actually being together.
30. I want to be very careful that I communicate that my intent is not to be judgmental or political in any way.
31. I really just don't want to sugar coat the reality of where we are as a society right now.
32. Recently, my wife invited someone to attend church, and they agreed that they would.
33. As my wife was telling me that, I immediately rushed into thinking how we could connect them and make them a part of our church family as quickly as possible.
34. But then my wife finished telling the story.
35. They are going to attend, but because of health reasons they will probably be cautious about their interaction with others.
36. And I truly understand that logic.
37. I have had an autoimmune disease for the last 5 years. The treatment makes me highly susceptible to infection.
38. Honestly, being around people is a risk for me.
39. So again, this is not me being judgmental.
40. I just know from my experience and from the truth of what the bible tells us that togetherness is more than just a desire.
41. Togetherness is in fact a need. We will see that in the book of Genesis in just a moment.
42. And not only is togetherness a need, togetherness unlocks a whole host of blessings in our lives.
43. So for me personally, here is where I have landed. I have asked myself the question. Which presents the greater risk, and which presents the greater reward?
44. Is being around others and possibly getting Covid, again, the greater risk. Or is missing out on the fulfillment of a God given need for being together with others the greater risk.
45. Is the greater reward avoiding a possible disease, or is the greater reward living in the fullness of the blessings God has for me by being around others?

46. For me. I believe God is my protector and God is my healer.
47. According to Psalm 91 he is our refuge and our fortress.
48. Isaiah 53 says that by His stripes we are healed.
49. According to Psalm 139 God is in control of how many days I am going to live on this earth anyway, and I don't even have to worry about it.
50. So if I put that hope together with the belief that God knows better what I need than I do, I have come to the conclusion that being together with others is highly and vitally important to my spiritual health.
51. In fact, being together. Being close. Was something so important and powerful that God designed, clarified, specified, and verbalized his definition of togetherness before Adam and Eve could even understand what it meant.

TEXT: **Genesis 2:18-24** The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

So because I believe it is important that we re-establish what God meant here in this passage, and because our times have changed so drastically, I have given this series the title...

TITLE: **What is together?**

1. Forgive me if you already know this, but I want to put this into perspective for us.
2. Genesis 1:1 starts with a blank slate. There is God, and God has been from the beginning, and God created the heavens and the earth.

3. But the earth, this thing he has made is incomplete. It is formless and empty. It was dark. Not my idea of a great vacation spot.
4. So God then proceeds to make it complete.
5. Day one he creates light and separates it from the darkness.
6. Day two God separates the sky from the earth. The water that is on the earth from the water that is in the sky.
7. Day three God starts causing this earth to flourish. Water and land are made distinct. Every kind of vegetation and plant you can imagine begins to grow.
8. Day four God decides to use the light and the dark as a way to mark time. He creates the stars to compliment the sun and as the light and dark move and pass, we know that time is passing.
9. Day five God creates every kind of living creature in the sky and in the water. On day five there was a party. They were flying and swimming.
10. Day six God creates all of the animals that roam all over the earth. Then he creates mankind in his image, and when he looks over everything he has created, this immense satisfaction comes over him as he says to the Son and the Holy Spirit, this is good.
11. Day six comes to a close, and on day seven God rests from his labor.
12. Then in chapter 2, we have 21 verses that describe what happened on day six when God created man and woman.
13. God creates Adam, shows him everything he has created. Gives it all to Adam and tells him to rule and subdue it.
14. He tells Adam to increase and fill the earth. On top of all that, God places Adam in this beautiful garden with every kind of food he could imagine, and he says here. This is yours.
15. So in my mind, here is Adam. He is on top of the world. He has every earthly thing at his disposal. But God looks at Adam, at the end of everything he has created, and he says to himself, as good as all of this is, there is still something missing.
16. Now immediately we might jump to the conclusion that the thing that was missing was woman. God created the woman and everything was complete, done, finished. And after creating woman, God says, it's all good.

17. Now ladies, I will tell you that I believe that of all the things God created, woman was the most wonderful, beautiful, and powerful of them all. Without a doubt.
18. But in my opinion, if I read this passage correctly, the thing that was missing was not woman. The creation of woman was God's answer to what was missing.
19. What was missing in Adam's life was togetherness. He was alone. In fact, God put it this way. **Genesis 2:18** The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
20. So the problem was that Adam was alone. And God's solution to that problem was to bring someone alongside him to help him, because as we saw over the last four weeks, God knew that Adam would be better with someone else who could compliment him.
21. Help make him more productive, help him when he fell and sometimes help prevent him from falling, to help keep him warm, physically, and spiritually, and to stand with him when things got rough.
22. Adam needed to do life with someone else to succeed.
23. Now, before we go on, please let me clarify something. I realize that God gave Adam a wife. And I believe in the institution of marriage. But this group of messages is not necessarily about marriage. The reason is this.
24. Marriage is a source of solving the alone problem, but it is not the only source of solving the alone problem.
25. In fact, Paul in the New Testament wasn't even sure that marriage was the best solution to the alone problem because he said in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 that it was better to stay single than it was to be married.
26. So alone is not a married thing, and together is not a married thing. Alone and together are a human thing.
27. **None of us were meant to be alone.** According to God himself, alone is not good. We were meant to be together. With friends, family, spouse, church family.
28. So that brings us back to the question. What is together? What does together look like. If we could paint a picture of together, what would it be a picture of.

29. And so God paints the picture for us in Genesis 2:21-24 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

30. God causes Adam to fall asleep. He takes one of Adam's ribs and forms the woman. God brings Eve to Adam, and when he lays eyes on her he says, she is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. In other words, he liked her.

31. Now, as powerful, and as beautiful a reality as that is, if the account of the creation of Eve ended there, it would still be incomplete.

32. Because even though Eve is now in his life, there is still separation. God took the rib from Adam and made a new, distinct, and different person. They were not the same. They didn't look the same. They didn't act the same. They didn't think the same. They were just different.

33. So there they are. They are together. Man and woman. Husband and wife. But the kind of together God had in mind was not just being geographically together, or in the same region. It was a together that was much deeper than that.

34. It was close. It was intimate. It was connected. It was unified.

35. Genesis 2:24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

36. What stands out to me about that verse, is that it is very different then every verse in the bible up to this point.

37. Everything from Genesis 1:1, all the way up to Genesis 2:23 is an account of what God did. God created this and God created that. But what verse 24 communicates, at least to me, is that truly being together. Truly being unified. Truly being one was a choice.

38. Truly doing life together was a series of choices that Adam and Eve would have to make. In order to be one, and as a result enjoy all of the benefits of being one, there was going to need to be action on their part. I will come back to that in a second.

39. Because again I want to be clear. The purpose of this message is not to highlight just marriage, as important as that is. What I hope we will all hear is that all of us need to be one. Every believer needs to be one. How do we know that?
40. In John chapter 17 Jesus knows that his life will soon be coming to an end. So one of the last things he does is he prays for his disciples. But notice with me that it wasn't just the disciples he was praying for. He was also praying for us and every believer in Jesus Christ.
41. John 17:21-23 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one-- 23 I in them and you in me--so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.
42. What is so amazing to me about this prayer is that Jesus doesn't pray for them to be gifted, talented, well to do, or intelligent.
43. He doesn't ask God to make them and us great speakers and teachers and singers. He asks God to make them one.
44. He asks God to make us one. My father, let every believer in Jesus Christ be unified, and one, just as you and I are one.
45. Of all the things he could have prayed for, us being one was at the top of the list.
46. Partly because, that oneness, that unity will be the thing that causes a lost world to believe in Jesus.
47. So again I say. **Being one is not just a married thing. It is a believer thing.** If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then there is a calling on your life and, on my life, to be one, not only with Jesus, but with other believers.

Conclusion: Look at Teresa.

1. But if we go back to Genesis chapter 2 we are reminded that being one doesn't happen automatically. Being one is the result of a series of choices that cause us to become one with others.
2. In the KJV, God said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and he shall cleave unto his wife. The choices are to leave and to cleave.

3. We will look at these choices next week.
4. So as we wrap up today, I want to come back to our question. **What is together?** What does it mean to be together with other believers, and what kind of togetherness will unlock the blessings that are promised in Ecclesiastes 4?
5. Being one. Being intimate. Being unified.
6. For today, we will define together as deep, rather than shallow. Rooted in one another. Grounded in one another. Committed to one another. Unified. One.
7. And yet we are living in a time where this oneness is being pulled apart at the seams.
8. Being one requires being physically together. There are limits to what a text, or phone call, or facetime, or livestream are able to provide.
9. The Lord has established in His Word that being physically together is highly important.
10. **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.
11. Deep, intimate, unified togetherness can't survive long distance for an extended period of time.
12. Encouraging one another and rooting for one another is best accomplished when we are physically together.
13. My mom, who watches our livestream each week on Sunday afternoon after she has attended her church, texted me on Monday to ask me how our business meeting went.
14. I said mom. It was really amazing. The entire meeting lasted about 45 minutes.
15. The first 25 were spent on financial reports and elections. But the last 20 minutes turned into people encouraging one another and bragging on one another and praying for one another.
16. I said, it was one of the best business meetings I had ever been to.
17. We are one. We are family.

1. BFA is a place full of people who want to be one. To be together. To be intimate. To be unified.
2. This place is full of people who believe better can happen here. And that as you get better and I get better, together we are all better.
3. And that is something rare in our world today.
4. I want to close by calling everyone who would like to come to the front.
5. Let's thank. Lord thank you for giving us the opportunity to be one with Him.
6. Let's ask. Lord help us to be one. Unified. Intimate.
7. We come against a spirit of fear.
8. Renew our confidence in the keeping power of our savior.
9. Lord. Let our unity and love draw others to you.
10. Salvation call.