



**“Better Together
FUEL**

Small Group Plan

Sixth century philosopher Aesop told dozens of “fables” or stories, most notably “The Lion and the Mouse” “The Goose with the Golden Eggs” “The Hare and the Tortoise”. Sunday, Gordon read the story of the “The Bundle of Sticks.”

An old man on the point of death summoned his sons around him to give them some parting advice. He ordered his servants to bring in a bundle of sticks, and said to his eldest son: "Break it." The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the Bundle. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful. "Untie the bundle," said the father, "and each of you take a stick." When they had done so, he called out to them: "Now, break," and each stick was easily broken. "You see my meaning," said their father.

Union gives strength.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Why is **individualism** lifted up as an American ideal to strive for?
- Since the term **individual** means “not divisible” “alone” while the term **person** means “face to face” how would you describe the practical difference?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

**THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE
Verses 4-6**

⁴ And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ⁵ The fool folds his hands and ruins himself. ⁶ Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

- **The Industrious Person** (v. 4)
Even though they are working hard, what are they missing?
- **The Idle Person** (v. 5)
Where does zero ambition or aspiration eventually take a person?
- **The Integrated Person** (v. 6)
How is this person different from the first two?

ONE SPOT AT THE TOP Verses 7-8

⁷ *Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:* ⁸ *There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless — a miserable business!*

- What is the connection between the lonely man’s lack of relationships and his endless “toil”?
- Climbing “the ladder of success” has become a modern maxim that many follow. But at the end of the ladder they find another saying – “It’s lonely at the top.” Why is it lonely?
- How would you answer Solomon’s question, “For whom am I toiling?”

TWO ARE GOOD — THREE EVEN BETTER Verses 14-15

⁹ *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:* ¹⁰ *If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him 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.*

- **Mutual Effort** (v. 9) “*A Good Return For Their Work*”
When we are trying to be successful, how can the objectivity of a godly relationship help us?
- **Mutual Support** (v. 10) “*His Friend Can Lift Him Up*”
When we fail, why do we need the friendship of a godly person?
- **Mutual Encouragement** (v. 11) “*Together ... They Will Keep Warm*”
When we are on the edge of giving up, how can an encouraging friend keep us going?
- **Mutual Strength** (v. 12) “*Two Can Defend Themselves*”
When we have exhausted our energy, what kind of person will step in and rescue us? Why?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Think through these verses:

Ecclesiastes 4:6

*Better One Handful With Tranquility
Than Two Handfuls With Toil And Chasing After The Wind*

Proverbs 15:16

*Better Is A Little With The Fear Of The Lord
Than Great Wealth With Turmoil*

Proverbs 16:8

*Better Is A Little With Righteousness,
Than Much Gain With Injustice*

- Why is it sometimes better to be both productive and quiet?
- Yes, together is clearly better, but not easy. David Augsburg has written, *“Healthful relationships nourish an equal balance of firmness and flexibility, equal support and confrontation, equal caring for another and candor with the other. Both sides are indispensable”*
- How can two people find this “healthful” balance?
- What is the difference between being “friendly” and being “hospitable”?
- How can we be truly warm to the stranger?
- Spend some time in prayer asking God to help us see our own need for relationships and the stranger’s need for love.